

later. By the way, to me, the 4000 word essay is a “machine-gun” of forty paragraphs—far too many. And, unfortunately from my point of view, some of the very best material in the paper appears in overly long explanatory footnotes.

Honestly, I’m pleased that Peter Wagner chose to explore this fascinating and important topic. Puritan attitudes only began to radically change in the last decade of the seventeenth century. That’s why I think the study would have been significantly more germane if he had looked at the eighteenth century. Wagner has clearly pointed out that these early and brave New Englanders, even those self-elected, starchy leaders—Calvinists to the core—did not hate fun and games per se. It was their maniacal (to many of us) “detestation of idleness” that turned them inexorably away from significant play involvement. The record seems clear to me. Seventeenth century New Englanders did, on occasion, indulge in physical recreation—and sometimes in surprising ways. Yet their great joy and passion was working hard in the vineyards of the Lord. My own research has convinced me that the simplistic approach of the first two generations of New Englanders is wrong; they did, on occasion, play in a fretful way. I still must go along with the clever analogy that in the seventeenth century “sport grew up in New England like a flower in a macadem prison yard.”



Sports and Games in New England Schools and Academies, 1780-1860

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Ideas concerning the value of games and sports for school children changed gradually in New England between 1780 and 1860. Early in the period, instruction in these activities was not considered part of the school’s responsibilities. Samuel Moody, Timothy Dwight, and William Alcott advocated providing instruction in games and sports during recess for physical and moral development. Other educators debated the merits of supervised sports participation for providing moral guidance during recess periods. Few indications were found that these educators considered the enjoyment aspect of sports, though sports of a utilitarian nature were advocated as wholesome activities to pursue during non-school hours.

During the later part of the period some sports were advocated as healthful, useful, and pleasurable physical activities for both boys and girls. The need of physical activity for girls was increasingly stressed in women’s magazines. Horseback riding, swimming, battledore, badminton, bowling, and skating were recommended as healthful activities that permitted young ladies to maintain their decorum. Resistance to sports in school exercise programs decreased by 1860, but it was not until after the Civil War that educators began to consider sports and games as appropriate activities in supervised physical exercise programs.

Between 1780 and 1840 there was a gradual increase in the number of schools and academies that included sports in their school programs. Prior to 1800 swimming was

taught at Dummer Academy and sports and games were encouraged at Greenfield Hill Academy. By 1840 various sport activities were provided for students in more than twenty academies. Girls held bowling contests at Litchfield Academy and played battledore and coronella at Greenfield High School during their assigned exercise periods. Boys were taught swimming, boxing, fencing, archery, and running events in academies such as Round Hill, New Haven Gymnasium, and Hartford Grammar School. At Exeter Academy students formed interclass teams for football and rounders. In a number of other academies students organized and played sports during non-school hours.

Between 1840 and 1860 approximately eighteen additional schools and academies began to include sports in their exercise programs. Instruction was given in horseback riding, boating, swimming, billiards, and baseball. Sport clubs were organized by students to compete against outside teams in baseball, football, and boating. Hartford High School Students were given a one week recess to enjoy “such sports as their fancy shall dictate.”

The Gunnery was one of the few academies at which sports were considered an integral part of the educational program. Frederick Gunn believed that through sports young boys developed self-reliance, pure morals, manhood, and character. During the 1850’s the Gunnery students participated in baseball, football, roly-boly, sledding, skating, hunting, and fishing. Baseball teams were organized under Gunn’s supervision to compete against men’s teams from surrounding communities.

Interest in sports and games as part of exercise programs developed gradually during the early nineteenth century in New England. As concern for providing healthful physical activity for students in schools increased a few educators began to add games and sports to their programs as one type of appropriate physical exercise. Though games and sports continued to remain student organized recreational activities in most institutions until after the Civil War there is evidence of some earlier attempts to include various sports in school physical exercise programs.

The Colonial Quarter Race Horse

by

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The Chronicle of the Horse, Middleburg, Va.

The most spectacular manifestation of the tremendous increase of interest in horseback riding (otherwise known as the “horse explosion”) which has taken place since World War II, is the growth of the American Quarter Horse Association. Since the first volume of its Stud Book was published in 1941, the Association has registered more than a million horses, a numerical record far greater than that of any other equine breed association, including the Thoroughbred whose Stud Book goes back to 1791. The foundation stock of the Quarter Horse is the western cowpony based largely on descendants of the horses brought from Spain by the conquistadors, with additional bloodlines—Thoroughbreds, Morgans, Arabians and gaited horses—brought from the East by pioneer settlers moving westward, many of them fast race horses at a quarter of a mile and therefore known as