

# American Cricket, 1839-1860: Players, Clubs, and Spectators

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Cricket was America's first modern team sport, but it has received very little attention from sport historians. This paper analyzes the players, clubs, and spectators that contributed to the rise of this sport in the United States before the Civil War. It concentrates on examples from New York City, Brooklyn, and Newark, New Jersey, with some reference to the Philadelphia region, upstate New York, and Massachusetts. It begins with a demographic region, upstate New York, and Massachusetts. It begins with a demographic analysis of players according to their

nationality, age, occupation, wealth, and neighborhood residence. This part includes a comparison of English and native born participants; it explains why these amateur sportsmen played cricket and how they were expected to conduct themselves as cricketers. Next, this paper considers how these men grouped themselves into clubs, according to the characteristics listed above. This discussion of clubs also looks at them as private, voluntary organizations that served as small sub-communities within mid-nineteenth century American cities. It explains how they were organized, how they found suitable playing space, and how they conducted their exercise days, intrasquad contests, and social events. The paper then discussed interclub competition, with examples of friendly matches and those that generated bad feeling and feuds. It emphasizes the conflict between the clubs' efforts to promote social harmony through sport, and the tensions created by athletic competition. Finally, it investigates the topic of spectators at early cricket matches -both international and other special contests and regular games. Here it estimates the number of persons who attended and examines who they were, why they came, what they experienced, and what effect they had on the sport. If time permits I will also present some comparisons between early American cricket and baseball players, clubs, and spectators.