

The Montréal First Nine:  
A Study of English Language Newspaper  
Coverage of Baseball in Nineteenth Century  
Montréal

Paul Michael Henry Braganza

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

October 2005

© Paul Braganza, 2005

**Concordia University**



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file    Votre référence*

*ISBN: 0-494-14194-8*

*Our file    Notre référence*

*ISBN: 0-494-14194-8*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

  
**Canada**

## **Abstract**

### **The Montréal First Nine: A Study of English Language Newspaper Coverage of Baseball in Nineteenth Century Montréal**

**Paul Braganza**

Montréal was the premier economic force in Canada during the nineteenth century. This was matched by a significant interest in recreational activities that increasingly became organized towards the 1860s—crowning Montréal as the leader of sports in Canada.

During the first few decades of the nineteenth century, however, sports were played only by the most privileged Montrealers, mostly from the mercantile and financial élite, and garrison officers. These sports stressed discipline and class distance. But political and economic changes, particularly a shift away from an economic dependence on the trading of raw materials, and increased industrialization, helped establish new kinds of élites, the industrialists and professional bourgeoisie.

These men, some of whom had nationalist leanings, appropriated two First Nations activities, snowshoeing and lacrosse. Lacrosse became so popular that there was little room for other summer sports, including baseball. Frozen waterways in winter also meant that summer was a busy business season, and meant that summer sports such as baseball had little chance of becoming popular in the city before the 1850s.

Eventually, however, ties between Montréal and American industrialists allowed for a cultural exchange which, among other things, brought a new brand of news reporting and baseball. Although Montrealers were not particularly skilled at baseball,

bourgeois and working class men alike enjoyed the game from 1870s onward. Popularity increased so much, that by the early 1880s, Montréal entered its first golden age of baseball. The English language newspapers eagerly reported on the state of club affairs, listed box scores, and covered games. By the 1890s, Montréal could boast four kinds of baseball: industrial, amateur, semi-professional, and professional.

Though it is common for historians of sport to see baseball as virtually non-existent in the Montréal of the latter 1800s, and to attribute its absence to anti-Americanism on the part of the élite, the evidence suggests this perception is far wide of the mark.

## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Graeme Decarie whose help and encouragement has proved invaluable. Dr. Decarie has read countless drafts, offered limitless advice, and pushed me to say things that have not been said. I am forever indebted to him. I must also thank Max Dagenais who provided eyes when mine were looking elsewhere. Without his hard work I could not have completed this task. Without a doubt, Dr. Fransizka Shlosser has been my inspiration throughout this task. Her kind but firm guidance during my undergraduate and graduate years helped me through troubled times. This thesis would not have the direction it has without the help of Matthew Barlow. His reading and shoring up of some of my weaker arguments have made this work far more complete. Thanks to Dr. Fred Bode for harassing me to finish this. His countless arguments about everything but baseball helped me broaden my perspective. Special thanks to everyone in the history department, especially Darleen Robertson and Donna Whittaker, and everyone in Japan who suffered while I was writing this. Finally, and most importantly, I thank my parents for being proud of me no matter what I did.

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Historiography and Methodology	7
Chapter 2: Brief History of Baseball	37
Chapter 3: The Absence of Baseball: Montréal Sports -1860	63
Chapter 4: Baseball Comes to Montréal	79
Bibliography	113

## Introduction

Baseball is usually identified with the United States. Although the origins of the game have frequently been disputed, it became popular during the mid-nineteenth century throughout America, and in Southern Ontario. Hockey and lacrosse, on the other hand, are usually identified with Canada. Lacrosse enjoyed success by the mid-nineteenth century, with hockey arriving later to become a significant sport by the end of the century. Both of these Canadian sports were first standardized in Montreal, and owed their popularity to the local business elite that made significant efforts to organize sports clubs and associations like the Montréal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA). Much scholarly attention has been paid to these two sports, and to the MAAA. Few scholars, however, have attempted to define the importance of baseball in Montréal during the nineteenth century. Eric Coupal and William Humber have attempted to remedy this in recent years. Both scholars suggest that baseball was a minor sport in the city until the last decade of the century. They suggest that baseball's ties to America kept away many Montréal business élite who were economic and cultural rivals to their neighbours to the south. An examination of the English language print media in Montréal, however, reveals something altogether different. By the early 1880s, baseball was eagerly covered by Montréal newspapers. *The Montreal Gazette* in particular ran many kinds of baseball related information, including local box scores, schedules, game reports, club meetings, rosters, and contact information. By the mid-1880s, baseball was covered at least as much and sometimes even more than any other sport, including lacrosse. This suggests that baseball was a significant sport at least 10 years before other scholars have suggested. Also important to this study is the

role the print media played in promoting the game. This has not been adequately done, though the newspaper is the major available source, and is essential to an understanding of the early history of baseball in Montréal. Accordingly, the newspapers are a primary source in the more than the usual sense for this study. It is their evidence that provides the major contradictions of common interpretations of that history, and that suggest a more convincing one.

As with many specialized focuses of historical interest, sport history took longer to establish itself than other historical focuses. Interest in sport history emanated from the 1960s revolution in academia. During these early years, in Great Britain and other parts of Europe, scholars frequently applied Marxist theory to the study of sport. They often saw sport organizers as moralizers or as exclusionists. Sports, it was argued, were simply an extension of power. In America, scholars were interested in how sports appeared to grow from the city. Issues such as urbanization, modernization, and industrialization became the entry points for studies. As well, American exceptionalism was a means of explaining how baseball was a unique and democratic sport. Canadian scholarship fell somewhere between European and American scholarship. Alan Metcalfe, the premier Canadian scholar of sport, was Marxist, yet allowed room for modernization and urbanization. Starting in the 1980s, scholars broadened their focuses. Since then issues such as ethnicity, gender, and sexual preference have become important focuses in sport studies. In Québec, Donald Guay focused on the role of cultural difference between French and English sports enthusiasts. In part based on the methods of Metcalfe, this study will examine the role of class, ethnicity, and the media in shaping how baseball grew in the city.



The second chapter examines the evolution of the game in the United States and in Canada. It also examines the role of the media in the United States. At times, the media could be manipulated by business interests to give baseball a desirable image. This is something of which historians must be wary. Indeed, the media portrayal of baseball was often exaggerated. It frequently overplayed rivalries, and lied about attendance figures.

The third chapter explores reasons why baseball was not popular in Montréal earlier than it was. The immense popularity of lacrosse in particular stifled the growth of baseball. The Montréal business elite promoted lacrosse heavily. Spearheading this movement was George Beers who saw in lacrosse the possibility of establishing a Canadian identity through sport. Other factors such as the work cycle, which was summer-biased due to the frozen ports in winter, also slowed the progress of baseball in Montréal. Importantly, baseball was not rejected because of its American overtones; baseball was simply passed over because there were other things to do.

The final chapter explores the role of the media and the social origins of the players. Contradicting what Coupal and Humber have suggested, the newspapers show that players were from all classes, including the bourgeoisie. Coupal in particular has argued that the Anglo elites rejected baseball; however, evidence proves just the opposite. Montréal elites were very interested in baseball. They formed their own teams, in particular the MAAA club. And they even organized an amateur league. Importantly, there were several leagues, one roughly representing every interest group. There was an amateur league, an independent league, and an industrial circuit.

Alan Metcalfe recognizes that baseball was played in Montréal as early as the

1860s; however, he fails to place it within the larger sports culture of the city. he is vague He suggests that baseball players were working class, but does not, elaborate on whether baseball was popular with other social groups. He simply states that: "...it is likely that baseball appealed to a different section of the population."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Metcalfe is indispensable for his examination of social stratification in sport in Montréal.

Lacrosse and hockey were popular sports during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Montréal; scholars however, have erred in suggesting that baseball was minor in the city. Newspapers, and in particular *The Gazette* prove that baseball was popular by the 1870s, and very popular by the 1880s. It was by the 1870s that Montréal newspapers began to run articles about sports on a weekly basis. *The Gazette* and to a lesser extent *The Montreal Star* began devoting some space, usually tucked away in the back, to élite sports or the occasional lacrosse match. A typical paper from the 1870s was eight pages long. The first page was devoted to international news. This was followed by local and financial news. A good deal of space consisted of classified ads, commodity prices, and newly arrived merchandize at the port. Sports related articles were tucked away in the back pages. This is perhaps reflective of the importance of the business before pleasure attitude espoused by the business élite. By the end of the 1870s, however, sports related news began taking up more and more space. This is likely because of the increased influence of the American press and the growth of sport in general.

Baseball coverage during the 1870s was limited but consistent. The American professional baseball leagues were reported on; particularly after 1876 when the NL was

---

<sup>1</sup> Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Activity in Montreal, 1840-1895," *Histoire Social/Social History* vol. 11, 1978, 150.

formed. For local teams, games were previewed and results were given. Teams wishing to challenge each other used the newspaper to advertise. Teams often mentioned the halls they would convene in for the start of season meetings. However, reporters were not editorializing at this time. *The Gazette* and *The Star* were passive in their reporting of baseball. They printed what came off the news wire, and what local organizers and players issued them.

Moderate editorializing began in the 1880s when *The Gazette* assigned reporters to give detailed descriptions of matches. By the mid 1880s, longer articles appeared. This seemed to coincide with baseball's potential commercial profitability. The main purpose of these articles was to promote the local games and create interest. *The Gazette* had strong interest in the success of local baseball, as it would mean increased sales. Mindful of what was happening in the United States, *The Gazette* was certainly in favour of professionalism as it would not only mean that players and organizers would buy newspapers, but fans too. Perhaps this is why *The Gazette's* enthusiasm was lukewarm during the 1889 season when the league banned professionalism. Indeed, in 1890 when the first of two professional teams that played for Montréal that summer was bought by a club from Grand Rapids and moved, *The Gazette* was fuming. When that club returned to play the second club, *The Gazette* exclaimed "They [the Michigan club] ought to get gail [sp] and wormwood, but instead of that the Montrealers, after they bat them out of all recognizability, will pour oil and brine into their wounds."<sup>2</sup> It was a futile attempt to incite interest. The Montréal team lost to Grand Rapids the next day. A little over a week later the Montréal team was disbanded because the directors felt baseball in Montreal was not profitable. It is possibly that *The Gazette* was fed the

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Gazette*, 30 June 1890, 8.

colourful aforementioned quotation by the directors of the local professional team, much like the way Spalding and others fed lines to the dailies in the United States. Whatever the case, it was clear that *The Gazette* felt that its purpose was to be the voice of Montréal fans. Indeed, one major by-product newspaper coverage was, Stacy Lorenz has stated, the construction "...a community of interest around sport in North America."<sup>3</sup> Whether commercial oriented or not, *The Gazette* coverage created the idea that baseball was a game for everyone, and, in a sense, brought the whole city closer together through the game.

---

<sup>3</sup> Stacy L. Lorenz, "'In the Field of Sport at Home and Abroad': Sport Coverage in Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1850-1914," *Sports History Review*, 2003, vol. 34, 133.

## Chapter 1

### Historiography and Methodology

This chapter will focus on the historiography of sport. At first, it will discuss the evolution of the field, and the arguments and methodologies that have emanated from Europe, America, and Canada. It is important to establish that Canadian scholarship has borrowed from European and American scholarship. Indeed, Canadian scholars, such as Metcalfe, have underlined the importance of class structures in the evolution of sport, a stance largely taking by European scholars, while acknowledging that modernization and urbanization helped shape sport organization, an argument championed by American scholars. After establishing the historiographical origins of Canadian scholarship, references will be made to gaps and remaining questions, in particular the lack of scholarship dealing with the English language press in Montréal and its coverage of baseball during the nineteenth century.

Scholars largely ignored the history of sport until the rise of social history in the 1960s in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. When the topic of organized sport began to interest scholars, four main approaches emerged: a narrative and descriptive approach to North American sports; an approach grounded in contemporary American historical and social science currents of the 1970s; a Marxist interpretation popular among, but not exclusive to, German and English scholars; and a critical neo-Marxist approach to European and American sport and society.<sup>4</sup> However, these

---

<sup>4</sup> Scholars in each of these categories include sociologists, physical educators, and journalists in addition to historians; the main criterion for the categorization was that the main subject of the work concern sport and its place in society or history. As a result, these categories are broad in scope and do not take into account many biographies, and novels that have been written by and about sports figures.

categories were not static, often being influenced by each other or by trends in the fields of history and sociology.

One of the first studies of sport was Foster Rhea Dulles's *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*, published in 1940.<sup>5</sup> It traces the history of recreation from colonial times to the Second World War. However, this work was descriptive rather than analytical or theoretical.<sup>6</sup> Two well-known examples written in the same descriptive vein are Harold Seymour's, and David Voigt's separate studies of baseball. All these works sought to outline major developments in sport without delving into social issues. Though pioneering, it did not inspire other scholars. The lack of scholarly works examining sport before the late 1960s reflects that sport was not yet considered significant or important to academia. Accordingly, Melvin Adelman argues that in the early 1970s, scholars could manageably read all the texts on American sport history.<sup>7</sup> One influential piece from this early era was John R. Betts' doctoral dissertation, completed in 1951, which argues that urbanization and industrialization were responsible for the nature of modern American athletics. Betts' dissertation was later published posthumously as *America's Sporting Heritage*, in 1974.<sup>8</sup> Another significant earlier work was Frederick Paxon's 1917 article, "The Rise of Sport"<sup>9</sup> which posited that the popularity of sport rose due to the lack of a "social safety valve" which the frontier

---

<sup>5</sup> Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*, (New York: Appleton Century, 1940).

<sup>6</sup> Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Melvin L. Adelman, "Academicians and American Athletics: A Decade of Progress," *Journal of Sport History* 10, 1 (Spring 1983), 80-106.

<sup>8</sup> Adelman cites no reference for the dissertation; the book however, is John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974). Betts also published an article which summarized many of the arguments in his dissertation: Betts, "The Technological Revolution and the Rise of Sport, 1850-1900," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, 2 (Sep., 1953), 231-256.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick L. Paxon, "The Rise of Sport," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 4 (Sep., 1917), 142-168.

had previously provided. Benjamin Rader suggests that most scholars up to the mid 1970s accepted this theory.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the analytical approach evident in this work was not emulated in sport history studies until the Betts' work in the 1950s.

In the United States in the 1970s, partly inspired by Betts' work and by trends in history and sociology, there was a methodological shift and a "tremendous explosion"<sup>11</sup> in the number of scholarly articles written on the history of sport. By the end of the 1970s, American scholars had ceased writing narrative histories and begun examining sport through various thematic and conceptual lenses. Adelman sees four themes: sport and social control; sport and the city; sport and demographic groups; sport and modernization.<sup>12</sup>

Robert Wiebe's work inspired the first theme, that of the social order and social control paradigm.<sup>13</sup> Using Wiebe's analysis of the Progressive era, Steven Riess and Don Calhoun each examine how "conservative groups sought to promote sport as a means of controlling social order."<sup>14</sup> Their studies involve not notions of class, but of divergent interest groups securing sporting spaces in a new social order. Riess uses this approach to show how Los Angeles magnates built the Coliseum without the help of political officials.<sup>15</sup> However, the Los Angeles case was exceptional. In other cities such as New York, Atlanta, and Chicago, Riess finds that Progressive-era magnates used

---

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin G. Rader, "The Quest for Subcommunities and the Rise of American Sport," *American Quarterly* 29 (Fall, 1977) 355-69.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>12</sup> Adelman, "Academicians and American Athletics," 83.

<sup>13</sup> Adelman explains how Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), virtually changed the way historians viewed the Progressive era. The crux of Wiebe's analysis lay behind the assumption that the dissolution of the American community had created a need for a new social order.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture*, (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Don Calhoun, *Sport, Culture and Personality* (West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> Steven Riess, "Power Without Authority: Los Angeles' Elites and the Construction of the Coliseum," *Journal of Sport History* 8, 1 (Spring, 1981), 50-65.

their political ties to secure playing fields, which were hot commodities at the time. He is also interested in how contemporary sports writers cast baseball magnates as “benevolent, civic-minded individuals, dedicated to providing their fellow townsfolk with exciting clean entertainment.”<sup>16</sup> However, he notes that this portrait was flattering—if not plain wrong—as he points out that businessmen were often profiteers.

Starting in the 1970s, scholars began examining sport in the thematic context of the city. Adelman’s Ph.D. dissertation, influenced by articles by Oscar Handlin and Louis Wirth, suggests a link between the new industrial city and sport.<sup>17</sup> This theory suggests that the new productive system transformed the city into an economic and communications centre. The new city needed a new social system to keep order. Adelman says this need not only transformed the city, but sport as well. He defines three active components of urban society: physical space, social organization, and collective attitudes. The imposition of order onto these components made former spontaneous games obsolete. Recreational physical activities and games were no longer light-hearted forms of enjoyment but increasingly organized activities.

Benjamin Rader examines the way in which the various ethnic groups spent their leisure time. His arguments rest on the idea that “the ethnic community usually arose from the contradictory forces of acceptance and rejection of the immigrant by the majority [of] society.” Thus, he examines how communities used sport, which he defines as non-threatening to personal beliefs, as a means of acceptance into American

---

<sup>16</sup> Steven Riess, “The Baseball Magnates and Urban Politics In the Progressive Era: 1895-1920,” *Journal of Sport History* 1, 1 (1974), 41-62.

<sup>17</sup> Melvin L. Adelman, “The Development of Modern Athletics: Sport in New York City, 1820-1970,” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: University of Illinois, 1980). Some notable pioneering essays on urbanism by Wirth and Handlin include, Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life” (1938), in *On Cities and Social Life*, ed. Albert J. Reiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants 1790-1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).



mainstream culture.<sup>18</sup>

Of note is the emergence, or perhaps re-emergence, of American exceptionalism as a means of explaining the United States' tendency towards a classless society. Rader, for example, quoted de Tocqueville and Weber to emphasize the breaking down of classes in America and the rise of individualism.<sup>19</sup> American exceptionalism in sport history eventually led to the idea that the way in which baseball developed was a uniquely American phenomenon.

Allen Guttmann and Adelman used Weber's idea to form a different approach, one that sought to soften the rigidity of the often-deterministic Marxist and neo-Marxist ideologies, replacing the monocausal class conflict and structural explanation of the rise of organised sport with more nuanced explanations, including questions of human agency. Sociologists such as Richard Brown, Eric Dunning, and Alan G. Ingham,<sup>20</sup> who emphasized the emergence of regularly scheduled play, standardized rules, leagues, and regional and national associations in modern societies, each influenced Guttmann's and Adelman's work in the 1970s.

Guttmann summarizes the central argument of late 1960s and early 1970s German and British sport historiography by stating that, "men ran, heaved rocks, and cast spears in order to improve their skills as hunters...What was true of the "sports" of the Stone

---

<sup>18</sup> Rader, "The Quest for Subcommunities," 357.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865*, (New-York: Hill and Wang, 1976); Eric Dunning, "The Structural-Functional Properties of Folk Games and Modern Sport," *Sportwissenschaft* vol. 3 (1973), 215-232; Alan G. Ingham, "Methodology in the Sociology of Sport: From Symptoms of Malaise to Weber for a Cure," *Quest* vol. 31 (1979), 198-211.

Age remains true, in different circumstances today.”<sup>21</sup> The feudal lord’s or lady’s interest in hunting or hawking, and the peasant’s involvement in “rude games” such as wrestling and fighting, represented their class relation to the modes of production. In the case of peasants, their games kept them fit for tilling fields and harvesting crops, while for lords, hunting represented a forbidden pleasure exclusive only to the rulers of the land; and games such as jousting and mock wars were a display of political power and physical might.<sup>22</sup>

Continuing his elaboration of the Marxist paradigm, Guttmann explains that nineteenth century sports were viewed as less a display of physical and political strength than an extension of the growing financial incongruities between the classes. Equally important to their arguments were questions of plebeian rough culture versus patrician gentle culture, both predicated on class divisions. Yachting, golf, horseracing, and tennis were not necessarily forbidden to the lower classes as hunting was to the Medieval peasant—but they need not have been—since they were economically unfeasible for low income earners. Moreover, baseball, soccer and other team sports were not forbidden to the elite classes; but these sports, with their tendency to “inculcate subordination and acceptance of authority,”<sup>23</sup> were considered more suitable for the labouring classes.

In extreme cases, Guttmann implies that this model led Marxists to the assumption that sports were tied to industrial capitalism in ways that rendered them vehicles for exploitation. Reactionaries in China and the U.S.S.R. fought against these

---

<sup>21</sup> Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, (New York: Columbian University Press, 1978), 58. Guttmann drew his analysis from several German and English sociologists including, Andrzej Wohl, *Die gesellschaftlich-historischen Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Sports* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1973); Horst Überhorst, *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Verlag Bartels und Wernitz, 1972-); Gerhard Vinnai, *Fußballsport als Ideologie* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagesanstalt, 1970); Peter C. McIntosh, *Sport in Society*, (London: C. A. Watts, 1963).

<sup>22</sup> Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

trends, but in most other nations, organized sports, both professional and Olympic, were slave to the market place, their viability resting solely on the profit gained through ticket sales and advertising revenue.<sup>24</sup>

One work that falls outside the traditional focus areas of Europe and America is C. L. R. James' *Beyond a Boundary*,<sup>25</sup> a work based on the premise that the aesthetics of Trinidadian cricket are a metaphor for the "social resistance against British Colonialism."<sup>26</sup> Though more of a memoir than a traditional historical account, *Beyond a Boundary*, nonetheless raises cricket to the level of an art form as worthy as examination as any opera, ballet, dance or painting.<sup>27</sup> James is particularly interested in how the Trinidadians skilfully appropriated the game. Not only were they good, they were so good as to be cocky and artful while playing. He is struck by the attitude and ability of one player, Arthur Jones, who could, in one stroke, and in this case a cut, symbolize "a belligerent affront to the exigencies of colonial rule."<sup>28</sup> This observation is one that has strong overtones of the anti/post-colonial sentiments evident in the works of Franz Fanon and Albert Camus.

Guttmann ascertained that the closer the Marxist scholars' studies got to the present, the more their arguments became critiques of society. Neo-Marxists typified this passionately critical interpretation of sport and society. Their oft-harsh criticisms of society highlighted how sports represented what they deemed corrupted aspects of society such as professionalism and commercialism. Alan Metcalfe notes how Paul

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-80,

<sup>25</sup> Cyril Lionel Robert James, *Beyond a Boundary*, (London: Hutchinson, 1963).

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Graves, "'Beyond a Boundary': the Aesthetics of Resistance," *Political Discourse: Theories of Colonialism and Postcolonialism*, Journal On-line. Available from <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/james/james1.html>, (2 June, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Hoch's work could be categorized as "either a revolutionary tract which attempts to do new things or as an unscholarly, biased and vicious attack upon American society and sport."<sup>29</sup> Many of these early works demonized organized sports. Yet, despite their revolutionary tone, these works along with Betts' studies, helped to rescue the history of sport from the grasps of chroniclers, archivists, and enthusiasts and, as Metcalfe notes, introduced Marxist ideas to North American sport scholars. Many of these works also introduced race and ethnicity as important factors for analysis. Their predominant theme, however, was the rejection of sports' institutions and leagues. Coaches, administrators and physical educators were also the perpetrators of an inhumane culture of specialization that rendered the athlete, such as the place-kicker in American football and the relief pitcher in baseball as a machine, a number, or a statistic, designed only for one purpose.<sup>30</sup>

Thus far, the evolution of history of sport methodology has been summarized chronologically. Four approaches have been delineated: narrative, Marxist, neo-Marxist, and modernization. This has facilitated tracing the evolution of sport historiography from its beginnings. However, scholars have chosen to explain the historiography in other ways for various purposes.

---

<sup>29</sup> Alan Metcalfe, review of, *Rip Off the Big Game: the Exploitation of Sport by the Power Elite*, by Paul Hoch, in *Journal of Sport History* 1, 1 (1974), 85-88.

<sup>30</sup> For other examples see, Harry Edwards, *The Sociology of Sport*, (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1973) and *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*, (New York: Free Press, 1969); Dave Meggsey, *Out of Their League*, (Berkeley: Ramparts, 1970); Chip Oliver, *High for the Game*, (New York: Morrow, 1971); Jack Scott, *The Athletic Revolution*, (New York: Free Press, 1971).

Some scholars have chosen to divide the categories into two approaches: a liberal or modernizing approach, and a Marxist or hegemonic approach.<sup>31</sup> They have chosen to do so because they focused on the last twenty or so years of research. The first category includes scholars who use modernization models to examine sport. They generally believe that the nineteenth century was marked by a series of transitions and adaptations that led to the democratization of sport. They stress the importance of social order, evolution and integration; conflicts arose only during transitional periods. Human agency is considered in a limited fashion, if not muted completely. Marxist historians of sport form the other group and generally believe that sport was a setting for class conflict to play itself out. While the concept of hegemony suggests that conflict was subdued rather than overt, it nonetheless implies that at least one group struggled for supremacy. Those who use a Marxist approach assume sport is part of a power system that alienates those who are not in positions of power. Scholars who wish to criticize society sometimes use a Marxist approach because of its ideological nature.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint when the various ideologies, perspectives and disciplines began influencing each other, Guttman's monumental 1978 study, *From Ritual to Record*, is one of the most influential interdisciplinary studies of sport; it is frequently cited in many history of sport studies. Part historiography, part critique, and part sociological and historical analysis, his work proposes a Weberian model of analysis of sport. Drawing on the works of both Dunning and Elias, Guttman elaborates on the proposed modernization model, refining it somewhat. He divides the nature of modern

---

<sup>31</sup> Both Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), and Éric Coupal "Histoire de Baseball à Montréal," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Université de Québec à Montréal, 2001), defined two categories for the purpose of simplifying broader socio-historical perspectives.

sport into seven categories: secularism, equality of opportunity to compete, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification and the quest for records, which, with the exception of the last category, are based on the Weberian definition of modern society. He also refutes the idea of American exceptionalism insofar as the development of sport in the United States is concerned. He feels that the differences between modern sports in industrialized nations and non-industrialized nations and between communist nations and capitalist ones were far less than the differences between modern sports and medieval or ancient ones. In this vein, he also refutes reductionist Marxist explanations of industrialism's influence over modern sport, citing Cuba and the then-Communist Bulgaria as examples of high performing sport nations that lack high levels of industrialism or capitalism.

Guttmann avoids the standard periodizations of history; he prefers to define the nature of change rather than chronicle it. While Guttmann is leery of the broad generalizations espoused by Marxist economic determinism, he is one of the few scholars to attempt a universal examination of sport, essentially replacing the Marxist meta-history with one that is Weberian in nature. While not the first to argue for the integration of sociological approaches into American sport historiography, he was the most important and cogent. His knowledge of German and French allowed him to read scholarship to which most Americans had no access. Not surprisingly, the critique of Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches become a focal point for his book; although he does not outright use them as straw-men arguments, he does nonetheless highlight their illogical or unsupported theories. More importantly, he supplements some weaker modernization

models with social theory and fluid writing.<sup>32</sup> Though *Ritual to Record* was published in 1978, it remains one of the most influential, frequently cited, and important history of sport books.

Thus, largely based on Guttman's work, there was much confidence among scholars of sport heading into the 1980s. Deterministic Marxist theories, together with neo-Marxist ones, had lost their privileged position in the analysis of sport history. Studies based on the various modernization models as well as American exceptionalism had also come under fire. Scholars from the various ideologies challenged each other and their theories. This was facilitated through publications such as the *Journal of Sport History*, available in American, Canadian, Australian, and British editions, where scholars shared ideas, engaged in discourse and provided each other with peer-review. The field had overcome its initial insecurities.<sup>33</sup>

A by-product of the periodicals and their discourses was a friendly yet critical dialogue between the leading sport scholars and their approaches. This led historians and sociologists to question, redefine or refine their arguments. Some of their criticisms are worth mentioning here because they can help shed light on the current theories of sports scholars.

The criticism against the modernization model was that it was too easily applied in manner that is both reductive and deterministic. It also failed to include America in a larger international context. This bound the modernization model to the conclusion that the American experience was unique and ultimately free from the Marxist notion of class conflicts. Finally, it fails to account for human agency in a satisfactory manner.

---

<sup>32</sup> Guttman, *Ritual to Record*.

<sup>33</sup> Although defining a field as insecure might seem pretentious, historians of sport have often begun their studies by lamenting the marginalized state of sport as a historical field.

The biggest criticism of Guttmann's attack on the early Marxist approaches (that they were unable to consider anything but class conflict and economic determinism as shapers of society), was that he failed to acknowledge less reductionist Marxist studies. Richard Gruneau pointed to E. P. Thompson's discussion of games and recreation as an excellent example of a Marxist work that succeeded without "falling into...the economistic and reductionist traps that Guttmann claims are characteristics of Marxism."<sup>34</sup> And, Gruneau's point was worthy of consideration as American sport scholars of the 1970s were often hesitant to examine class conflict at all.

The result of the constructive criticisms was the emergence of new models and refined theories allowing for broader studies of sport. Yet, following this period of self-examination, self-criticism, and methodological borrowing, Steven Riess points out in a 1994 article that:

Class remains the central issue in British sport historiography, while Canadians are nearly equally concerned with other factors like colonialism, ethnicity and nationalism, and Americans consider class not much more prominent than race and ethnicity as a major feature of capitalism and urbanization.<sup>35</sup>

Among the important or influential contributions to the American scholarship during the 1980s were books by Reiss, Adelman, Rader, and Guttmann, and in Europe, by Dunning and Elias, J. A. Mangan, and John Hargreaves.

Riess, for his part, focused on the city. Continuing a theme he developed in the 1970s, he debunked many of the myths that suggested baseball was most popular in rural areas. His central thesis is that modern sport were a result of the process of urbanization

---

<sup>34</sup> Richard Gruneau, "Freedom and Constraint: The Paradoxes of Play, Games, and Sport," *Journal of Sport History* 7, 3 (Winter, 1980), 82.

<sup>35</sup> Steven Riess, "From Pitch to Putt: Sport and Class in Anglo-American Sport," in *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 1994), 138.



in walking cities. He argues that baseball was largely a middle class sport played by small entrepreneurs and their employees. Another proponent of the modernization model, Riess sees the development of baseball as something uniquely possible in the urban cities of America. His analysis also reveals that baseball was not a form of social mobility as previously surmised. After their playing career, most ball players took on jobs that were usual for men of their social standing before playing baseball.<sup>36</sup>

Adelman, for his part, proposes a modernization framework for the study of sport in New York City. He is particularly interested in how Brown distinguishes between traditional societies and modern ones. According to the delineation, traditional societies were stable, local, patriarchal, while modern ones are industrial, urban, and dynamic. He suggests that this approach could help an examination of sport on two levels, namely by defining, “the relationship between sport and the modernization of society and/or its components parts; and the evolution of modern sports structures and ideology.” He clarifies what he sees as the failure of historians to explain adequately the complex link between the transformation of the city and the modernization of sport. He claims historians have too often examined the city as a site rather than as a process.<sup>37</sup>

Adelman's model includes six categories for the nature of modern sport: organization, rules, statistics and records, competition, role differentiation, and public information. His aim is to establish how the process of urbanization in the city coalesced around the rise of modern sports. For the purposes of this study, Adelman's greatest contribution is his analysis of baseball and cricket. Contradicting the arguments

---

<sup>36</sup> Steven Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sport*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

<sup>37</sup> Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

of other historians who used modernization models, Adelman disputes the notion that nationalism was central in Americans' choice of baseball over cricket as their national sport. Based on an insightful article by Ian Tyrell, Adelman suggests that baseball gained because cricket had not "solidified its position in America before baseball became so popular." Adelman argues that cricket was not simply an antecedent to baseball, but a competitor that helped shape the nature of sport in the city.<sup>38</sup>

Benjamin Rader's *American Sports: from the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators*, as its title suggests, examines the rise of sport from the colonial era to the advent of the modern age when sports became spectacle. His book is significant because it introduced themes such as the sporting fraternity, the roles of different ethnic groups, the development of youth sport during the Progressive era, and the growth of the modern sporting hero.

In keeping with his ambitious global and timeless vision of sport, Guttmann offers an account of the nature of spectatorship from ancient times to modern ones in *Sport and Spectators*. He examines the social characteristics and behaviours of the fans and tries to explain why spectator violence has decreased over time. Again, very much influenced by sociological ideas, and particularly Elias and his concept of the civilizing process, Guttmann proposes that spectators developed a strong sense of civility or restraint that, coupled with entrepreneurs' needs for order at events, made watching sports safer in modern societies. Guttmann also ran against the grain somewhat when he suggested that baseball was a predominantly lower class sport. He based this theory on photos and drawings of nineteenth century crowds and on lower class newspaper publications that covered baseball extensively.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Also released in 1986 was Elias's and Dunning's *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. Though Elias' interpretation of sport was more sociological, Guttman notes that Elias at least "believes in the importance of historical perspective."<sup>39</sup> More or less a collection of previously published essays, the book is important because it applies the central argument of Elias' *The Civilizing Process* to sport history. Part of that argument, quite eloquently explained by Guttman, describes how "the emergence of the modern state, which claims a monopoly over violence, in combination with the division of labour...has tended to diminish the spontaneous expressive interpersonal violence characterized in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and early modern times."<sup>40</sup> What follows is a series of essays that examine how spectators, players and organizers alike enjoy sport as a form of detachment from civilized everyday life. Of course, the closer to the present the less barbarous sports seem.

J. A. Mangan studies the diffusion of the British Empire's sporting ethos throughout the colonies.<sup>41</sup> He finds that educators, administrators, soldiers and missionaries exported sports to further their didactic purposes. Mangan is particularly interested in how schools in the colonies used sports, and especially cricket and rugby, as reminders of who was in charge (the Empire), and as moral, ethical, and disciplinary guides. He was criticized, however, for ignoring colonial historiography, which led him to give a one-sided account of the process, in favour of the victor.<sup>42</sup> His interpretation relies on the concept of hegemony to explain the process of cultural imperialism.

---

<sup>39</sup> Guttman, review of *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Journal of Sport History* 11, 2 (Summer, 1987), 226-30.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>41</sup> J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (New York: Penguin, 1986).

<sup>42</sup> John Berwick, review of *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*, by J. A. Mangan, *Sporting Traditions* 3, 2 (1987), 247-51.

Although most of the neo-Marxist works were written in the 1970s, John Hargreaves' 1986 study of sport in Britain uses a Gramscian form of cultural hegemony to explain how sport was tied to power and class relations. He suggests that power was never exclusively held by one dominant group, such as the political elite or upper class, but rather diffused unevenly across the entire social spectrum. Additionally, power relations were often delicate and in constant need of adjustment by the more dominant groups. In addition, the transmission of influence was never fully unidirectional, complicating relations of power, affected both the transmitter and the receiver.<sup>43</sup>

Hargreaves was applauded for his consideration of gender, race, age, and for avoiding economic and class determinism. However, he was criticized for providing insufficient data and for making some of his arguments concerning power so abstract as to be disassociated from social determination.<sup>44</sup>

By the late 1990s sports scholars had produced an excellent body of historical material; yet, no one methodology or paradigm dominated scholarship. Historiographical examinations by several scholars revealed that post-modernist queries had helped historians better assess the role of newspapers and contemporary texts; that the crossing of disciplinary lines had bettered the understanding of social forces; and that materialism still remained a solid base for any historical inquiry. Yet, morale was so low that one historian suggested that sport history was in its dying throes. The field as a whole appeared fractured and directionless.<sup>45</sup> That a few seminal works from the 1980s

---

<sup>43</sup> John Hargreaves, *Sport, power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sport in Britain* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> Steven Riess, "From Pitch to Putt"; Richard Gruneau, review of *Sport, power and Culture*, John Hargreaves, *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 6 (November, 1987), 73.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas Booth, "Sports History: What Can Be Done," *Sport, Education and Society* 2 (1997), 191-204.

were republished certainly did not help the image that little theoretical work had been added to the field. Riess' reissued *Touching Base* and included a new historiographical chapter. Rader also reissued his *City Games*, shoring up his analysis by recasting his periodizations.

Scholars continue to refine theories that have been in place since the 1970s. Rather than change the theoretical framework, they have chosen to change the thematic focus of their studies. A number of studies from places outside the traditional geographical focuses of the city and industrialized nations have helped enrich the scope of the field.

Others claim that there has been a broadening of the field and a search for legitimacy, which, according to some scholars has come at the cost of "effectively lo[sing] their ability to communicate with a broader public audience."<sup>46</sup> Despite a growth of studies, according to Riess, sport history largely remains on the fringes of academia. He supports this by stating that American university history departments have not, as of 1999, offered a post for teaching the history of sport.<sup>47</sup>

The only constants in sport history seem to be that scholars have a difficult time assessing what direction the field should take. Pope introduces his *The New American Sport History* with a historiographical chapter suggesting that sport history needs a new paradigm, one that merges modernization models with Marxist ideas.<sup>48</sup>

An important sub-category is the examination of empire and sport, which uses the diffusion model as its main approach. There are two main interpretations of the

---

<sup>46</sup> S. W. Pope, "Sport History: Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Journal of Sport History* 25, 2 (Summer 1998), i-x.

<sup>47</sup> Riess, *Touching Base* second edition. (1999).

<sup>48</sup> S. W. Pope, ed. *The New American Sport History*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

diffusion model. The one used by Mangan explains how the British brought sports to the colonies with the hopes of instilling British morals and values on the host culture. This interpretation is based upon a Gramscian understanding of hegemony. The other interpretation, used by Guttmann in his 1994 *Games and Empires*, and Richard Cashman,<sup>49</sup> explains how diffusion is not uniquely the process by which imperialism destroys the host cultures' native traditions. Rather, diffusion also explains how the host culture imitates, borrows and incorporates ideas from the imperialists. David Cooper borrowed this model in his examination of cricket in Canada. He successfully demonstrated how cricket began losing popularity in the 1860s because Canadian cricketers were plain awful in international competitions.<sup>50</sup>

Riess in his *Pitch to Putt* estimated that Canadian sport scholars were conscious of class, but were also interested in colonialism, nationalism, and ethnicity.<sup>51</sup> Methodologically speaking, however, Canadians were not as diverse. Don Morrow found that 1970s and early 1980s Canadian history of sport studies, his included, predominantly employed narrative approaches.<sup>52</sup> The important exception to this rule was Alan Metcalfe who pioneered a materialist approach, indebted to the bottom-up style of history espoused by the likes of E.P. Thompson, and Raymond Williams. None of the approaches, Metcalfe's work included, employed the modernization models that were commonly in use in the United States; nor did they, with the exception of Richard Gruneau, use the deterministic Marxist models prevalent in Europe.

---

<sup>49</sup> Richard Cashman, "Cricket and Colonialism: Colonial Hegemony and Indigenous Subversion," in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700-1914*, (London: Frank Cass, 1988), pp. 258-272.

<sup>50</sup> David Cooper, "Canadians Declare 'It Isn't Cricket': A Century of Rejection of the Imperial Game, 1860-1960," *Journal of Sport History* 26, 1 (Spring 1999), 51-81.

<sup>51</sup> Riess, *Pitch to Putt*.

<sup>52</sup> Don Morrow, "Canadian Sport History: A Critical Essay," *Journal of Sport History* 10, 1 (Spring 1983), 67-79.

The first serious attempt to establish the study of Canadian sport history as a scholarly research field occurred in the late 1960s. Under the guidance of Maxwell Howell, a graduate program, offering a Ph.D. in physical education, emerged at the University of Alberta with the goal of establishing the history of sport as a viable topic.<sup>53</sup> In May 1970, the field received another boost with the first publication of the *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, later called simply the *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, (CJHS). This initial surge was followed by the emergence of graduate research in sport history at other schools, namely the University of Windsor, Dalhousie University, and the University of Western Ontario. Several Ph.D.s and theses written at these institutions represented a modest but important start to Canadian history of sport.

Morrow categorizes the period from 1972 to 1982 in Canadian sport historiography as the “narrative-descriptive” or “thematic-descriptive” period.<sup>54</sup> In other words, Canadian scholars favoured tracing or highlighting important events or describing themes as opposed to building a theoretical framework to explain change. For example, studies based on thematic topics such as amateurism and professionalism,<sup>55</sup> or the emergence of the influential Montreal Amateur Athletic Association,<sup>56</sup> were far more prevalent than studies like Metcalfe’s examination of social class and sport.

Another study that did not fall under the category of narrative-descriptive approach was Richard Gruneau’s Marxist examination of Canadian sport. Gruneau

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>55</sup> Kevin G. Jones, “Developments In Amateurism and Professionalism in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian Sport,” *Journal of Sport History* 2,1 (1975), 29-40.

<sup>56</sup> Don Morrow, “The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909,” *Journal of Sport History* 8, 3 (Winter, 1981), 20-39.

divides the development of Canadian sport into four stages beginning in pre-Confederation Canada, where the dominant English classes had a virtual monopoly on playing fields and sporting organizations. Gruneau emphasized how the English classes of the mid-nineteenth century stressed discipline in schools and garrisons, and stressed morality and order in their communities. By mid-nineteenth century, he found that elite sports were oriented socially rather than athletically. During the second stage, towards the end of the century, Gruneau suggests that business elites created national sporting organizations that excluded undesirables. Working class sport presented a cultural challenge to these organizations and contributed to a heightened sense of class-consciousness. Gruneau's last two phases, less relevant to this study, included the age of commercialization, and state intervention, both of which occurred in the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup>

Most importantly for this study, Gruneau has suggested that industrialists and bourgeois professionals, such as George Beers who popularized lacrosse, had different economic interests and ideological leanings than their mercantile elite predecessors. These differences altered patterns of recreation organizationally and philosophically. He underscored the importance bourgeois interests placed on developing a Canadian identity, as oppose to a British one.

Though Morrow's period of historiographical analysis ends in 1982, the characteristics of Canadian history of sport have not changed significantly over the past two decades. Scholars continue to write thematic-descriptive articles, rather than approaching the history of sport in Canada with new and different methodological

---

<sup>57</sup> Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983).



focuses, in other words, Canadian historians and sociologists have chosen to fill in narrative gaps in sport history.

Alan Metcalfe is one of the most significant scholars to have examined the history of sport in Canada. He was one of the few Canadian historians of sport in the 1970s to interpret the data with a theory or some system of analysis; as mentioned, that method was a Marxist based approach. According to Colin Howell, however, Metcalfe's view of history is "not Marxist in its arterio-sclerotic, structuralist, or deterministic form," but rather his approach is a "flexible, cultural Marxism rooted in the work of Antonio Gramsci, Edward Thompson, and Raymond Williams, and which focuses on the ways in which culture...is produced and reproduced."<sup>58</sup> In Howell's estimation, however, Metcalfe is also leery of theorists, particularly sociologists and historians, who are "so quick to construct and apply theory, who can write paragraphs that make sweeping claims on the basis of hardly any evidence at all."<sup>59</sup>

In his *Canada Learns to Play*, Metcalfe begins with a quotation from James' *Beyond a Boundary* that criticizes G. M. Trevelyan, Raymond Postgate, and G. D. H. Cole for ignoring a very important part of culture—sport.<sup>60</sup> Metcalfe is a strong critic of professional academic history departments in Canada, arguing that they fail to examine sport. "What little sport history there is" he asserts, "has come from Departments of Physical Education." One important difference from many American historians of sport

---

<sup>58</sup> Colin Howell, "On Metcalfe, Marx, and Materialism: Reflections on the Writing of Sport History in the Postmodern Age," *Sport History Review* 29 (1998), 96.

<sup>59</sup> Metcalfe in an oral, date unspecified, interview with Howell in Howell, "On Metcalfe," 96.

<sup>60</sup> The quotation Metcalfe uses is as follows: "A Famous Liberal historian [G. M. Trevelyan] can write the social history of England in the nineteenth century, and two famous Socialists [Raymond Postgate and G. D. H. Cole] can write what they declared to be the history of the common people of England, and between them never once mention the man who was the best known Englishman of his time [Dr. W. G. Grace]." C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, quoted in Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 9.

is Metcalfe's insistence on not classifying sport in the nineteenth century as modern. Rather, he believes the proper definition should be "organized sport." This is, of course, a rejection of the modernization models espoused by Guttmann and Adelman, which Metcalfe argues carry "the denial of human agency."<sup>61</sup>

Unlike Guttmann's model with seven criteria, and Adelman's model with six criteria for modern sport, Metcalfe uses a four-pronged model to define organized sport in Canada. First, Metcalfe examines the form and structure of the game, noting how it changed from play on non-standardized fields and a lack of standardized times. Second, he examines the structure of competition, which has changed from exhibition- or friendly- challenge based competitions to competitive- and championship- based ones. Third, Metcalfe examines the extent of participation in sports, noting that while it was once limited to elites, it changed to include a broader section of the population, many times eschewing class distinctions. Finally, he looks at the growth of organizations that emerged to codify rules, organize play, and to control the sport in question.

Although Metcalfe does not deny that the growth of organized sport was related to the development of the industrial city, he does not believe that industrialization and urbanization are sufficient conditions in and of themselves to explain the rise of organized sport. He believes a small group of men, particularly Anglophone, mercantile, commercial and middle class men from Montreal and Toronto provided the impetus for organized sport. This is an important difference from the modernization model and should not be understated. Modernization models imply that modern sports rose from the modern industrial city with little or no human agency: organizers and participants were simply acting on impulses that arose because of their environment. Metcalfe

---

<sup>61</sup> Metcalfe, 11.

argues, however, that organized sport arose as a direct result of human intervention, and that the environment only helped shape the nature of what was created by men in the first place.<sup>62</sup> Importantly, Metcalfe also argues that Canadians borrowed their ideology from Britain but in “the real world of sport”, they followed the patterns of the United States.<sup>63</sup>

Metcalfe inspired many scholars both in Canada and abroad. Howell was one of these Canadians, whose admiration for Metcalfe is evident in his article on Metcalfe, Marx and Materialism. Howell’s two significant contributions are *Northern Sandlots* and *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*. In *Northern Sandlots*, he examines the evolution of baseball in the Maritimes. His model, very much influenced by Metcalfe, is based on the Raymond Williams idea that social relations and conflicts are the “integral components of popular culture, indeed of the making of history itself.”<sup>64</sup> Howell suggests, though some argue he does not sufficiently prove,<sup>65</sup> that during the nineteenth century, in both the Maritimes and New England, the baseball diamond was a place where upper class ideals of manliness and respectability fought against lower class reputations of roughness and rudeness. Howell approaches the twentieth century differently, however. His analysis ends with an almost neo-Marxist critique of commercialism, professional baseball, and the Montréal Expos and Toronto Blue Jays’ negative impact on the Maritimes’ regional identities.<sup>66</sup> In *Blood Sweat and Cheers*, Howell examines sport across Canada. It is meta-narrative that tries to give context to the major sporting trends in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His section on

---

<sup>62</sup> Booth would perhaps categorize Metcalfe as a nondeterministic relational structuralist based on Metcalfe’s acknowledgement of human actors and environmental determinants in shaping history.

<sup>63</sup> Metcalfe, *Canada learns to Play*, 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Rader, review of *Diamonds of the North*, by Colin Howell, *American Historical Review* (December 1996), 1654.

<sup>66</sup> Humber *Diamonds of the North*.

baseball suggests that it was ignored in Montréal because of the British presence. Most recently, Howell has been working on a study of the diffusion of baseball to the Mexican and Canadian borders between 1885 and 1911. Largely based on the ideas espoused by Guttman in *Games and Empires*, he predicts his study will discover how the different communities accepted or rejected baseball based on the cultural identities of each borderland region.<sup>67</sup>

In Québec, few French language scholars have examined sport. Of the ones that have, they have done so from a socio-cultural perspective, highlighting the relationships between French-Canadian sport and culture, in addition to the role that institutions have played in influencing the development of sport in French Québec. Donald Guay, Jean-Marc Paradis and Gilles Janson have written the most important studies. Guay is the foremost of these scholars. In his main study, *La conquête du sport*, Guay borrows ideas from sociologist Guy Rocher to explain how cultures are collective and distinct.<sup>68</sup> Each member of a culture is linked by a shared *mentalité* that separates that culture from others; and in Guay's case, that culture is French Québécois.

Janson's narrative-based *Emparons-nous du sport*, traces the evolution of French Canadian sport, which he finds largely influenced by the dominant British elites.<sup>69</sup> He does not suggest, however, that this influence meant that the Québécois emulated the Montréal Anglophones; rather, they reacted by embracing their own distinct brand of recreation. Another narrative is Paradis *100 ans de baseball à Trois-Rivières*, which

---

<sup>67</sup> Colin Howell, "Baseball and Borders: The Diffusion of Baseball into Mexican and Canadian American Borderland Regions, 1885-1911," *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 11, 2 (2003) 16-26.

<sup>68</sup> Donald Guay, *La Conquête du Sport: Le sport et la société québécoise au XIXe siècle*, (Montréal and Paris: Lanctot Editeur, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> Gilles Janson, *Emparons-nous du sport: les Canadiens français et le sport au XIXe siècle*, (Montréal, Que.: Guérin, 1995).

traces the rise of baseball in the Mauricie region of Québec. Like Janson's study, Paradis's book examines how French Canadians developed their own identity despite their juxtaposition next to the dominant British.

Metcalf and subsequent others have dubbed Montréal the sporting centre of Canada during the nineteenth century. The reasons for this are simple. Montréal, Canada's largest city and home to burgeoning middle- and working-class populations, was where the first organized sporting clubs emerged. Moreover, these clubs were diverse in nature, including such sports as lacrosse, curling, snowshoeing, Canadian football, and hockey. Thus, Montréal holds a special place for historians of sport in Canada. Ironically, very few Montréal historians have studied sport in their city as most scholars of sport in Montréal hail from elsewhere in Canada.

Two articles were groundbreaking for students and scholars interested in the history of sport in Montréal. In "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal, 1840-1901", and "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840-1895", Metcalfe, using the local newspapers and the scrapbooks of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (M.A.A.A.) and the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada (A.A.A. of C.) as sources, examines the patterns of recreation among the various classes. He finds that the upper middle class provided the impetus for sport on the local, provincial and national levels; this was because they had the men with organizational and commercial background. As a result, he concludes that if there was any democraticization to sport it only took place on the playing field as organizers remained from the more educated classes.

In one of his studies of sport in Montréal, Morrow examines the rise of the

M.A.A.A. He sees the organization as a great stabilizer for Canadian sport. Its leaders had excellent managerial skills and strong initiative. Although it is admittedly “only a superficial treatment of the concept of power in sport per se,” he does provide a thorough narrative of the development of the association. To bolster his argument, Morrow borrows from Steven Lukes, and Adolf Berle, examining how power is “invariably organized and transmitted through institutions.”<sup>70</sup>

A solid recent contribution to sports history in Montréal is Michael Robidoux’s study of lacrosse and hockey.<sup>71</sup> In it, he examines how traditional, or what he calls “vernacular,” elements of lacrosse appealed to early French Canadians and then to a large number of mid-nineteenth century Montréal males. These vernacular elements, including the rough nature of the sport and the stoicism of the participants, were in direct opposition to Victorian bourgeois definitions of masculinity. Indeed, part of the appeal was that lacrosse defied British sensibilities. Although Robidoux underscores the role that George Beers played in promoting lacrosse through a nationalist, and at times racist, agenda, he warns against accepting Beers proselytizing and “ideological ravings” as the lone factors for lacrosse’s popularity. The first reason for this is that crediting one person does not consider human agency. Secondly, there was a need among a large group of Canadian males to express the aforementioned vernacular elements. Thus, lacrosse was attractive for more than just ideological reasons; it was popular because certain Montréal males needed express their masculinity in a different fashion from what the British bourgeois ideals suggested.

---

<sup>70</sup> Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1978); Adolf A. Berle, *Power*, (New York: Harcourt, 1969); quoted in Morrow, “The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport.”

<sup>71</sup> Michael A. Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: *A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey*,” *Journal of American Folklore* 115, 456 (2002), 209-225.

Importantly, Robidoux acknowledges that modernization did not occur in a linear fashion; it was a staggered process. As he astutely notes, there are vernacular forms of sport today in modern society, such as pond hockey or pick-up ball hockey. Indeed, the crux of his argument rests on the idea that vernacular elements of sports could never fully be removed from Canadian sports. He also points out that a certain part of the emergent class in Montréal, which included bourgeois and commercial class men (and most notably, Beers), responded to British impositions of imperialism by creating a Canadian national identity—which was expressed in part by the adoption of lacrosse. Lacrosse was a native Canadian sport that had achieved legendary status by the time of its appropriation. Beers saw it as a way to bind Canadians. However, not all members of this new class were influenced by nationalism, whether it were Canadian or British. The new class was divergent, filled with men from various walks of life. They were often more interested in expressing their manhood than their political leanings.

Although Humber and Coupal, and to a lesser extent Metcalfe and Guay, have sought to assess and contextualize the importance of baseball in the city, a clear and sound theoretical framework from which to examine the sport in late nineteenth-century Montréal is still lacking.

With so much [in the way of sporting activity] going on it was hardly surprising that leading Montrealers either didn't have time for baseball or considered it too foreign to suit their national interests. Baseball to them was American, and Montréal's English entrepreneurs in particular were economic competitors with cities like Boston and New York for the developing hinterlands.<sup>72</sup>

Humber has used an argument based on the importance of popularity and competitive success; he sees Montréal teams as being less competitive than Ontario teams.

---

<sup>72</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 109.

He also sees baseball as being less popular in Montréal than the rest of Canada. This approach may be described as a *story* of baseball *in* Montréal as opposed to a history of *Montréal* baseball. His highlighting of achievement and popularity undermine his ability to explain the underlying motives of the actors involved or the social context in which choices were made. While he concedes that the game was a popular summer game in Montreal behind lacrosse, he nevertheless hints that baseball was somehow not as popular or as successful as it should have been. He states that competitive success and popularity were possible via only one avenue—professionalism and its incumbent commercialism.<sup>73</sup> Thus, he argues that baseball failed to achieve prominence because “pro sports found powerful forces aligned against them in Montréal.”<sup>74</sup> While he acknowledges that baseball had to compete for popularity with many sports in Montréal, he simply uses this as way to explain how baseball was ignored rather than incorporated.

Humber does not recognize that many Montréal teams in other sports such as lacrosse and curling had achieved competitive success while remaining, for the most part, amateur. Additionally, he fails to underline the importance of what Cashman, Cooper and others refer to as adaptation.<sup>75</sup> Montrealers of different social backgrounds clearly adopted baseball in the 1870s and, in the 1880s, adapted it to suit their needs. Finally, he suggests that Québec’s longer status as a rural province negatively influenced the growth of baseball. This final point is incorrect on two counts. First, Montréal was Canada’s premier metropolis, and secondly, baseball was in fact more popular among rural francophones than urban Montrealers.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> See Cashman, “Cricket and Colonialism,” and Cooper, “Canadian Declare “It Isn’t Cricket”.”



Despite these shortcomings, Humber raises several interesting points, particularly the influence of the American press, and the important role of the railway. However, his insistence that competitive and/or commercial success was necessary for the long-term viability of the sport is reductive at best. The popularity or competitive success of a sport is not a sound measure of its nature and relevance in a city or culture. Nationalism, that baseball was American, did not impede the growth of the sport in the city in the fashion Humber claims.

Coupal's argument rests heavily two separate, though not necessarily independent dichotomies, one pitting amateur sport against professional sport, and the other pitting the values of Anglo elites against the social realities of the French working class.<sup>76</sup> After giving a brief summary of the economic and immigration history of Montréal, largely based on Linteau's work, Coupal proceeds to trace the history of the sport in the city from the 1870s to the start of the nineteenth century. Much like Reiss and perhaps Adelman, Coupal seeks to explain sport in the context of an expanding city. However, he is not quite clear on how the growth of baseball and the expansion of the city are related. His argument also mirrors Humber's, which posits that baseball had trouble growing because it was a foreign American professional game invading a British city that valued amateurism. While there is some truth in this argument, it is nevertheless reductive. Baseball was not ignored; in fact, during the 1880s it was Montréal's second most popular summer sport. Furthermore, some Anglo elites did in fact play baseball, as is evidenced by the creation of McGill University teams and M.A.A.A. teams in the mid 1880s.

---

<sup>76</sup> Coupal, "Histoire de Baseball à Montréal."

Coupal's more important contributions lie in his examination of the sport from 1890s onward when French Canadians widely adopt the game as is demonstrated by the creation of collegial and semi-professional leagues. His work on the role of the French press is informative. However, he relies too heavily on the somewhat Marxist idea of a conflict between the haves and have-nots. He posits that the French adopted baseball because it was not British. This argument was inspired by the idea of the *Americanité du Québec* espoused by French Canadian scholars such as Yvan Lamonde and Fernand Dumont.

Lacking from these examinations is a firm explanation as to why baseball did not appear in Montréal prior to the late 1860s. Also unexplained is the rise in popularity of baseball in the 1870s, and especially in the mid-1880s when leagues were formed. Although Metcalfe has suggested that working class players enjoyed baseball as early as the 1860s, there is no mention of the bourgeois players who enjoyed the game in the 1870s and 80s.<sup>77</sup> There is also no mention of the importance of the Montréal English language newspapers and their role in spreading the game in the city. This study will shed light on these issues by examining economic, socio-historical, and cultural factors endemic to Montréal.

---

<sup>77</sup> Alan Metcalfe, "Working Class Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1860-1895," *Working Papers in the Sociology Study of Sports and Leisure* 1, 2 (1978).

## **Chapter 2**

### **A Brief History of Baseball**

This chapter will look at the game from two angles. First, it will summarize the game's development from a very basic bat and ball game to an organized and popular sport in the United States, Canada, and Lower Canada and Montréal. Finally, it will examine the impact of professionalism and the role of the print media. Baseball quickly became the premier sport of the United States partly because by the 1850s it was well exposed through newspapers. Soon, however, businesses, players and individuals used the press to forward their agendas—which often revolved around profit. The image of baseball became contested but, by the end of the nineteenth century, was synonymous with the United States. The nature of this process is important because, as will be shown in chapters 3 and 4, a similar process occurred in Montréal with lacrosse—though professionalism was less of a factor than in the United States.

It is generally accepted that baseball derived from a number of bat and ball games, including “old one cat,” “goal ball,” “baste-ball,” town-ball and the British game called rounders. However, with the exception of cricket, which was played by adults, children and adolescents were the more usual players of most bat and ball games leading up to the nineteenth century in Europe and North America. By the early nineteenth century, evidence suggests that adults increasingly played bat and ball games in the United States. Although the rules, terms and names of the game varied between regions, the fundamental elements of these games remained the same: two teams, a bat, a ball and some bases. In the eighteenth century in the Boston area, for example, a variation of town-ball, which came to be known as the Massachusetts game, gained popularity and

would eventually compete against the New York game for national supremacy by the 1860s. Lesser-known variations of town-ball existed throughout the rest of the United States. The skill level during these years was uneven and, as a reflection of this, scores were relatively high.<sup>78</sup> In the early nineteenth century, United Empire Loyalists and American merchants imported town-ball to various regions of Canada. Eventually, like in the United States, each region developed its own version of the game. This all happened around the same time that cricket was being played at elite schools and garrisons in Upper- and Lower-Canada. Although cricket, with few exceptions, was never as popular in the United States and Canada as it was in England and its other colonies, it nevertheless was a popular sport that was prominently covered in the newspapers. And in the United States, from the 1840s until the Civil War, it was baseball's main competitor.

Scholars have developed several explanations for why baseball overtook cricket in America and became the national sport. Many have highlighted baseball's action packed nature in comparison to cricket as the reason for its emergence as the most popular game.<sup>79</sup> Others posited that its pace, rules and duration were a perfect match for the new American industrial city.<sup>80</sup> A number have suggested that American nativism played a role.<sup>81</sup> However, other scholars have refused to accept that baseball was

---

<sup>78</sup> Tom Melville, *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2001).

<sup>79</sup> Sports writer Henry Chadwick was the first to argue this in 1856.

<sup>80</sup> For example, see Tom Melville, *Early Baseball*; and Steven Riess, *City Games*.

<sup>81</sup> Riess suggests that "young men took to the sport because it was an exciting, American game similar to, yet simpler than, cricket." Steven Riess, *City Games*, 34. Robert Burk claims that baseball's tradition as a pure American sport can be traced back to the time of Puritans. "If accommodated to Puritan priorities, ball games were ritual occasions for community and spiritual socialization, the display of fellowship and skill, and the acting out of life's tests of harmony and piety by sober, respectable men." Robert F. Burk, *Never Just A Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3.

destined to become America's game. They have stated that national characteristics and sympathies are not valid frameworks for examining this victory.<sup>82</sup>

It is understandable why the process by which baseball became the national American game confused many scholars. In the 1860s, American newspapers were abounding with nationalistic rhetoric. By the reconstruction period, there was a serious effort by many writers and thinkers to focus on the American identity. Sport related nativism became so intense that by the end of the century some journalists were calling for an American version of cricket. For many scholars it was simply easy to see baseball's triumph over cricket as the result of nationalistic sentiments.

Kirsch ascertains, however, that Americans did not choose baseball because it was American. They chose it because cricket was too English. He accepts that in the 1850s, national chauvinism endeared Americans to the idea of a national sport; but he claims that in this era "it was not yet clear which sport would earn that distinction."<sup>83</sup> However, English players dominated cricket in such ways that Americans found it difficult to break into the higher ranks. Fields were harder to maintain. Moreover, cricket was a much older sport with codified traditions that could not easily be changed or adapted. These factors caused cricket to tumble from major to minor sport.

Baseball, on the other hand, was malleable. Players from all groups of society could play. English players did not dominate clubs and organizations. Thus, Americans could shape the game to suit their needs. In fact, cricket was initially more popular than baseball in America. From 1840 to the mid-1850s, newspapers coverage of cricket was

---

<sup>82</sup> Some major examples include Adelman, *A Sporting Time*; Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*; and George B. Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports: Baseball and Cricket, 1838-72*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

<sup>83</sup> George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003) 17.

second only to horse and harness racing. However, baseball's rise, according to Adelman, should be attributed more to cricket's failure to adapt than to baseball's appeal.<sup>84</sup> Another interpretation of why baseball overtook cricket is explained by Ian Tyrell who suggests that baseball appealed to the artisan classes while cricket was increasingly used to express an English and gentlemanly character. This trend reached its height in the 1860s.<sup>85</sup> The 1850s were the height of cricket in North America. Less than a decade later, due to poor leadership, it was easily supplanted by baseball as the major ball game.

A significant transition occurred when standardized rules for one variation of town-ball began to appear in New York City and its environs around the 1840s. It was in this city that the first baseball club, the Knickerbockers, established itself on September 23, 1845. The Knickerbocker Baseball club, led by a book and stationary storeowner, Alexander J. Cartwright, was a social club formed by upper middle class male amateurs seeking enjoyment and social interaction.<sup>86</sup> The Knickerbockers established many of the modern rules.<sup>87</sup> The most important modification was the

---

<sup>84</sup> Melvin Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

<sup>85</sup> Ian Tyrell, "The Emergence of Modern American Baseball, c1850-80," in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan eds., *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History*, (St. Lucia, Australia, University of Queensland Press, 1979), 205-26.

<sup>86</sup> Cartwright's intention was to make the game as gentlemanly as possible. For the first time uniforms were worn and fines were levied against players who argued with their captains, confronted umpires, or used foul language. After the match, the home team treated the visiting nine to a wonderful supper. Off-season events included socials, nights out with wives or girlfriends and other various sponsored events. For Cartwright, baseball was a purely social affair. Some twenty years later, many of the first clubs in Montreal would adopt this philosophy.

<sup>87</sup> At the behest of the 23-year-old Cartwright, Daniel L. "Doc" Adams, and two other team mates, helped draft the first rules.

removal of the soaking, or plugging, rule.<sup>88</sup> By removing most of the physical dangers that were associated with other variations of the game, it has been argued that the Knickerbockers had created a variation of the game perfectly suited to the young urban male.<sup>89</sup> Essentially, with fielders being required to force runners out, games saw far fewer disputes leading to violence than before. However, this contradicts arguments made by Robidoux regarding class and aggression in the last chapter.

From 1845 to roughly 1850, the Knickerbockers were the only stable baseball team, and were often forced to play intra-squad games.<sup>90</sup> Within the next decade, though, gentleman's baseball clubs sprang-up all over New York City. Importantly, these clubs were amateur: members paid membership fees for the privilege to play the sport. As the desire for organized clubs to play each other increased, the necessity of setting standardized rules became apparent. The more civilized rules started by the Knickerbockers were quickly adopted and slightly modified by the other New York clubs. These clubs, and the competition between them, helped give rise to organized baseball. Over the course of ten to fifteen years, this set of standardized rules essentially replaced other folkloric versions of the game across the United States.

The decisions made by other clubs to adopt the New York game were made freely as no one team or individual dominated the sport. The National Association of Baseball Players (NABBP), established 1857, never enforced one set of rules. This freedom reflected the social nature of baseball clubs at this time, since they placed an emphasis on

---

<sup>88</sup> The soaking rule arguably made the game more childish. Instead of forcing offensive players out at the next base, defensive players had to strike the base runners with the ball. This rule encouraged players to chase each other around the field like children. Other rule modifications included setting the limit at nine men a side, nine innings per game, three strikes per at bat, three outs per half inning, a diamond shaped infield, four bases 90 feet apart, and the inclusion of foul lines.

<sup>89</sup> Most recently, Tom Melville, *Early Baseball*; Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports*.

<sup>90</sup> Benjamin Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 5.

interaction, recreation and fraternalism rather than on competition. But while the goal of the association was to bring civility to middle-upper class game-play, it could not completely control all facets of the game. Soon, clubs were playing for honour and prestige, rather than simple social interaction. They challenged each other based on reputation, usually playing by the rules of the home club. The game also spread to players from different social backgrounds. By the late 1850s, a dichotomy quickly emerged between the gentlemanly game and the more competitively oriented game.

Seizing on the newfound popularity of standardized baseball, businesses and even cities began taking controlling interests in clubs and compensating skilled players, many of whom could not afford to play baseball without a salary. This trend soon encouraged skilled players to jump from one team to the next at the end of the season if the compensation was to their liking.

The Knickerbockers, who by nature never played competitively, had lost their influence over the game, which was fast becoming focused on athletic achievement. Following the Civil War the Knickerbockers refused to play any competitive games at all, even to choosing to play some cricket matches in 1870. In 1871, they withdrew from the NABBP after a faction of the organization formally accepted professionalism within the sport, something it had staunchly opposed just fourteen years earlier.

From 1845 to the Civil War, the New York brand of baseball spread throughout the eastern United States. Advancements made in communication and transportation technology facilitated the growth of the game. By 1865, the National Association represented players from 91 baseball clubs, including one from as far west as Kansas. During the Civil War, soldiers on both sides spread the game even further. Soldiers



played their games and then scurried off to war. Such matches burned a positive image of the game in the minds of the spectators. Baseball also had a levelling effect, as soldiers played alongside officers. There was no class discrimination on the diamond; all that mattered was skill. Soon, players from communities quite far from the urban centers of New York and Boston started to actively hone their baseball skills. After the Civil War, decommissioned soldiers continued to spread the game across the country and abroad.

As mentioned, following the Civil War there was an increased interest in baseball. Young soldiers returning to the Midwest and the industrialized centers of the North brought the standardized game with them. This legitimized the game and soon baseball became extremely popular all over the United States. The growing number of teams and the increased level of competition demanded that top teams seek out the best players whatever their social standing. Some of these new players could not afford to play without some sort of compensation, either in the form of a salary or another job, from civic leaders or local businesses.<sup>91</sup>

Anxious to express their civic pride, and pad their pocket books, local magnates, often with political friends in high places, acted on baseball's burgeoning popularity and promoted the game through the newspapers. An increasing number of teams began to compensate their players. By 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings established themselves as the first fully and openly professional baseball club and went on to win every game they played that year. While their desire to win was greater than their desire

---

<sup>91</sup> David Pietrusza, *Major Leagues: The Formation, Sometimes Absorption, And Mostly Inevitable Demise Of 18 Professional Baseball Organizations, 1871 To Present*, (Jefferson, N.C., 1991), 100.

to make money, the Cincinnati team's success inspired many other communities to form professional teams as baseball was seen as an excellent form of civic advertising.<sup>92</sup>

By the early 1870s, the strains exerted on the national association by a growing demand to win at all costs resulted in a schism. With its players unable to reconcile the ideological differences between professionalism and amateurism, in 1871, the NABBP split. Professional players formed the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (NAPBBP). The NABBP continued for a few years before closing through a lack of interest, as the organization proved itself to be ineffective at managing the various teams' schedules during its brief existence. But life for professional teams was also uncertain. Only two years after its unprecedented and never repeated undefeated season, the Cincinnati Red Stockings club ceased paying professional players and reverted to amateur status. The cost of winning had already become too high. More interested in protecting players' rights, the NAPBBP could not force teams to play scheduled matches when the players deemed the matches unprofitable;<sup>93</sup> nor could it prevent players from jumping ship at the end of the season.

In 1876, the National Association of Professional Base Ball Clubs, which later became the National League, replaced the players' association, enforced schedules, and prevented players from leaving teams without clubs receiving compensation. This agreement, known as the "national agreement" and which marked the end of players' rights, would be staunchly opposed by 1880 when what is referred to as the "Brotherhood War" broke out. (As will be seen in the final section of this chapter, the media played a large role in the battle between the NABBP and the NAPBBP).

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>93</sup> Players would often refuse to play games against weaker teams, as this was less prestigious. Many teams also disliked traveling too far as transportation costs would outweigh the value of winning.

With the demise of both national players' associations, a new age of baseball was ushered in on the shoulders of the newly formed professional league. While amateur leagues still operated, the ultimate goal of most skilled players was to play for a professional team. The creation of a national championship helped encourage the prestige of the league. From 1876 onward, being a baseball player meant something entirely different. Fans flocked to professional games. By the turn of the century, outstanding professional baseball players had become national celebrities. Importantly, the players were no longer the caretakers of the game. And the caretakers of the game were no longer mild mannered self-proclaimed gentlemen of the middle to upper-middle classes, but entrepreneurs and politicians often with opportunistic self-interests.

Before the arrival town-ball, most Canadians enjoyed rounders and other less formal bat and ball games. Imported from Europe, these casual games had been played since time immemorial as part of fertility rite celebrations.<sup>94</sup> European settlers likely played these rudimentary games, but references to them are vague and uncommon. Most of these games required a soft ball, or even an old sock, and emphasized throwing and batting skills. These games were more likely played by children rather than by adults. Humber found that rudimentary ball games were played throughout the settlements. As far west as British Columbia, for example, he notes that in the period between 1848 and 1851, youngsters played, among other things, rounders, which he

---

<sup>94</sup> It is very difficult to trace a precise origin for any one bat and ball game as they were played universally and at different times. Early references to ball games include pyramid inscriptions from 25<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Egypt describing fertility rite ceremonial games; and ancient Mayan rubber ball games dating to 1000 B.C.E.

suggested was imported directly from England, as the term was not used in the United States.<sup>95</sup>

The best known Canadian version of pre-modern baseball is the Beachville version, which was loosely based on the New England version of town-ball. Colorado physician and former Canadian Dr. Adam Ford remembered and described a game that was played on 4 June 1838 in Beachville, Ontario.<sup>96</sup> Its rules differed considerably from the modern game: there were five bases; every player on a side got a chance to go to bat in an inning; and the “plugging” rule, which required runners to be hit with the ball instead of being forced out, was still in effect. What is of great interest is that this particular game was played on Military Muster Day, which was part of a traditional celebration of King George III’s birthday. Ford noted that the government had defeated the rebels the year before. A battalion of Scots volunteers, who were still fighting the remaining *patriotes* from the previous year’s uprising, saw the game. Beachville residents and military men had no qualms about watching an American game on a British North American holiday because the game had not yet acquired its nationalistic overtones. For Upper Canadians, it was simply just another casual ball game.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, American émigrés in Lower Canada also introduced town-ball to the locals. In Huntingdon, in the Eastern Townships south of Montreal, locals played one such game, some time during the 1830s (the date of the game is unconfirmed, but one witness claims that it took place during the tense height of the rebellion in 1837, which might help explain the outcome).<sup>98</sup> Two groups, one consisting of settlers from Ireland,

---

<sup>95</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 19.

<sup>96</sup> This letter originally appeared in *Sporting Life of Philadelphia*, (May 5, 1886).

<sup>97</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 17.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Scotland and England, and another of American merchants—importantly not loyalists—played a rather eventful match against each other on one summer evening. According to the report, one of the players, Hazelton Moore, the Canadian pitcher and the driver of the local stage line between Ogdensburg, New York and Montreal, struck the American batter, Fisher Ames, with an inside pitch to the head. An angry Ames charged the mound and whacked Moore in the head with the bat. Moore fell into a coma that night and died the next day.<sup>99</sup>

Such references to bat and ball games remain scarce though this does not necessarily mean that they were not common occurrences. It is quite likely that this particular match in Huntingdon was only recorded because of its tragic outcome. It is impossible to prove how popular these games were, or whether they spread to other regions. However, the complete lack of coverage suggests that contemporaries considered these activities nothing more than casual pastimes.

The spread of the New York brand of baseball in America was helped in part by the prevalence of regionally developed bat and ball games prior to the arrival of the standardized New York rules version. This process held true north of the border as well. Beachville was not the only city, in what is now Ontario, to play town-ball. In Upper Canada, a colony with a large American émigré population, town-ball was a popular game, played in many towns and settlements. As a result, the first formal baseball teams came from Upper Canada. In 1854, Hamilton became the first Canadian city to field organized squads. London followed suit the next year. The formation of these

---

<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, Ames was acquitted on all charges, as according to the doctor, Moore died because his skull was too thin. Ames' case was also aided by the fact that the American merchants apparently bribed Ames wife not to come to the trial (there is no explanation as to how they did this). Ibid., 21.

teams was assisted by the completion of the Great Western Railway, which was built to facilitate trade between Upper Canada and the mid-west. It also allowed baseball teams to travel with relative ease. Humber notes that the formation of these teams marked the evolution of baseball in Canada into a respectable adult sport.<sup>100</sup>

The official transition of baseball from folk game, one played on special holidays or weekends, to serious adult's game, took place in New York City in the 1840s under Cartwright; in Canada, this happened in 1854, with the formation of the Young Canadians, later known as the (grammatically incorrect) Maple Leafs, under the leadership of the Hamilton clerk, Bill Shuttleworth. However, these teams played an older version of the game. The New York game formally arrived in Canada only in 1859, after, as Humber and others have suggested, it had to conquer its own region before moving on to others.<sup>101</sup>

Although American students attending French Catholic institutions in the 1850s and 1860s introduced baseball to Lower-Canadians, it was not until returning ex-patriot French-Canadians introduced baseball that the game started to garner significant interest in Lower-Canada. In the mid-nineteenth century, there was an exodus of large numbers of young French-Canadian men looking for jobs in the United-States. Not wanting to lose touch with their heritage, the family-minded Franco-American decedents of the émigré *Canadiens* were soon sending their children back to French schools and religious institutions in places such as Ste-Hyacinthe, Trois-Rivières, and l'Assomption. Some of these young men brought back, among other cultural influences, baseball, or they called it contemporarily, *la balle au camp*. From these schools and seminaries, baseball spread

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 23-4.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 19.

to the surrounding communities. In fact, Guay goes as far to suggest that Ste-Hyacinthe was crucial to the development of the game:

La petite ville de Saint-Hyacinthe se présente alors comme le principal centre de la diffusion du base-ball au Québec. Son influence est perceptible, non seulement dans les villages environnants, mais aussi jusqu'à Sorel et Montréal. La petite ville reçoit la visite de clubs provenant d'une vingtaine de villes et villages du Québec et des États-Unis. En 1895, Saint-Hyacinthe possède un club professionnel au sein de la Ligue internationale de l'Est. Ce n'est qu'à la fin du siècle, avec la formation de la Ligue de base-ball de la province de Québec, que Montréal va devenir le centre du base-ball au Québec.<sup>102</sup>

Interestingly, when Catholic Americans from the Massachusetts area first brought baseball to college de l'Assomption in the 1850s and 1860s, there was virtually no media coverage; the game was not widely disseminated. Roughly, a quarter-century later, however, according to historian Donald Guay, there was a marked increase in media coverage. This increase in interest coincided with the time when young American men of French ancestry were old enough to come back to study in Lower Canada. The increase in coverage also coincided with a time when players of French Canadian ancestry were making names for themselves playing professional baseball in the United States. Thus, it is quite possible that any cultural resistance to baseball was lessened because French Canadians introduced baseball, as opposed to solely Anglo-Americans—or worse—the British. A counter-argument to this suggestion might be that French-Canadian newspapers, as Guay has noted, were simply not very interested in sport prior to the 1880s. Due to a lack of sources, however, it is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm either argument. What is known is that by 1876, some spiritual leaders were promoting baseball. A well-known example is the 1876 Saint-Jean-Baptiste day celebration in Ste-Hyacinthe where a baseball game was one of

---

<sup>102</sup> Guay, *La Conquete du Sport*, 44.

the principal events. The match was casual and high scoring, revealing, perhaps, the players' low skill level.

French Canadian media interest in baseball slowly but steadily grew in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was so popular by the turn of the century that one 1899 article appearing in Quebec City's *Le Soleil* suggested that baseball was the modern version of an old French game from Normandy and Brittany. While *Le Soleil*'s article offered no proof for such a claim, the writer of the article did highlight similarities between the modern game and the older French ball game 'La Grande Theque.' Humber notes that it was probably not wrong to think that some sort of "residual memory" of the old French game stayed with French Canadians. However, Eric Coupal suggests that the *Le Soleil* article was nothing more than an innocent examination into the historical origins of the game.<sup>103</sup> Whatever the case, baseball had become tremendously popular. Guay shows that by 1899, French Canadians newspapers contained 103 articles about baseball. The following year 200 appeared. This was a substantial increase from the sixteen published in total between 1876 and 1890.

Although Lower Canadian settlers of British origin were made aware of American town-ball in the early nineteenth century, this awareness appears not to have generated enough interest to carry the game forward. Unlike other regions in the United States and present-day Canada, Lower Canada does not seem to have developed a popular local variation of town-ball. Bat and ball games and baseball go almost unmentioned in the English and French language newspapers until 1869, when the all-professional Cincinnati Red Stockings were in the midst of their famous win streak. Humber suggests that the game was not widely played by Montrealers, and Lower Canadians in general, until the

---

<sup>103</sup> Coupal, "Histoire de Baseball à Montréal".



1870s. Ford, who attended McGill University sometime in the late 1840s or early 1850s,<sup>104</sup> in his writings about the Beachville game, never mentions baseball in Lower-Canada. Considering Ford's phenomenal memory and his desire to talk about the differences between the New York game and the Canadian game, it is surprising that he never spoke about the state of the game in Montréal. This suggests that the game was perhaps not widely played in Montréal during this period.

There is one mention of a game appropriately called "bat and ball," which was supposedly played in Canada prior to the 1840s, and exported to the United States where its rules were modified and eventually became the modern game. Coupal, suggests that one possible explanation for this origin theory could be found in a reference to a rather obscure letter appearing in Edouard Zotique Massicotte's compilation of Montreal letters and scrapbooks. In a scrapbook found in the 1930s that belonged to the former assistant curator of the Château Ramesay, P. O'Leary, there contained correspondence that appeared in the open letter section of an unnamed newspaper, referring to a bat and ball game. According to the author of the correspondence, C. E. A. Patterson, an old Montreal *Herald* newspaper article (no date given) declared that a bat and ball game was played in Canada in the 1840s and before. Patterson also mentions that "bat and ball," which was remarkably different from town-ball in that it used three bases, was played on the Champ de Mars in Montreal in 1860. Patterson might have written this letter in response to the Mills Commission's inquiry into the American origins of baseball.

But as Coupal noted, the Patterson letter incorrectly stated that Spalding determined that the first game of baseball was played in 1842, when in fact Spalding said it was played in 1839. Adding to the confusion is the fact that no other dates or

---

<sup>104</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 18.

references are given in the letter. However, given what its contents suggest, it would appear that the letter was drafted after the Mills Commission had completed its task. Thus, that would mean it was written around 1908 or soon thereafter; but there is no way to authenticate this. Even if the letter were authentic, it provides no new information or insight into the origins of the game. Ford had already recounted that town-ball was being played in Canada in the 1830s; and by the 1860s, while Montrealers were still apparently playing 'bat and ball,' the New York game had already swept across the United States and into Upper Canada.

By 1867, the first evidence of organised baseball teams in Montreal begins to appear. In 1869, a *Gazette* article identified three teams. The newspaper also claimed that the sport was gaining in popularity. Metcalfe asserts that it is difficult to discern the exact moment when organised sport in Montreal entered its developmental era, but he suggested that this process gained momentum in the 1860s. By 1871 there were six organised baseball teams taking the field in Montréal. The number of teams steadily increased until 1887, when there were twenty-one teams, but then the number of teams levelled-off thereafter, and soon began to decline. By 1894, there were only ten organised teams.

It is important to note that, for the most part, these teams were amateur or semi-amateur and most of the players paid membership fees in order to play. They also did not last very long. Teams on average lasted no longer than two years before being disbanded. By the time the amateur game was gaining momentum in Montreal, it was fast waning in popularity in the United States. This can be seen in the fact that in 1871, while six amateur teams took to the field in Montréal, a marked increase over previous

years, in New York, the NAPBBP was formed. Thus, while baseball was fast becoming a profession for players south of the border, it was only starting to become a popular pastime for Montreal's amateurs. This discrepancy would hold true for roughly the next two decades. It was only in 1890, long after professional teams had existed south of the border, that Montreal acquired its first professional team—but there was evidence of semi-professional teams. However, these issues will be discussed more clearly in the final chapter.

Montréal's first taste of professional baseball lasted a mere three months. In the summer of 1890, after half a season, the beleaguered International League<sup>105</sup> team folded. Four years later, Montreal got its second chance to have a team, and while the team did finish a full season, it was not around for the next. Better luck (for Montréal, anyway) came in 1897 when the baseball stadium in Rochester, NY burned down and its teams had no better place to go than Montreal. Importantly, Americans owned all of these teams, as Anglo-Montrealers had no interest in promoting baseball. This particular experience with gaining and losing teams within the year was not unique to Montreal. Professional baseball teams were sometimes, certainly in Montreal's case, imposed upon cities and regions. This imposition, as will be discussed in following chapters, was either accepted or rejected by the locals depending on several conditions: not the least of which is what Guttman has referred to as chronological priority as cultural preference.

The quick spread of baseball was due in large part to advancements made in communication and transportation technology. The telegraph and print media informed fans and players of games almost daily; and trains brought teams to towns they would not

---

<sup>105</sup> The International League was an affiliated minor league of the National League. Players belonging to the International League teams were either young and up and coming players, or older less skilled players not good enough to pierce the line-ups of the top teams.

have played in before. The print medium, however, was quickly exploited (as it has often been in history) by various interests. At first, in the 1840s and early 1850s, it was simply used by teams as a way to advertise challenges. By the mid 1850s, publications, seeing a developing market, began devoting significantly more space to baseball. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the print media was used by the caretakers of baseball as propaganda tool.

Importantly, various interest groups, not just baseball clubs, saw the newspapers as a podium to express their own views. William Anderson points out, “when agitation over the industrial trusts produced political and journalistic criticism of the free enterprise system, American businesses used one of the forerunners of public relations—publicity—to help defend their corporations.”<sup>106</sup> American baseball was by the mid 1870s, a business—and it needed to defend its image from public backlash. Players equally viewed the press as a medium that could be used to argue their causes.

The history of baseball publicity began when publisher William Trotter Porter began reporting on baseball in *Spirit of the Times* in the mid-1850s. Soon after, Frank Queen and Harrison Trent founded the New York *Clipper*. In 1858, the *Clipper* hired Henry Chadwick who after seeing an excellently played baseball match in 1856, suggested that the game might be the perfect candidate to become the “national sport for

---

<sup>106</sup> William Anderson, “Creating the National Pastime: The Antecedents of Major League Baseball Public Relations,” in *Media History Monographs* 4, 2 (2001-2002), online media, available at <<http://facstaff.elon.edu/dcopeland/mhm/mhmjour4-2.htm>> [2 Feb. 2005].

Americans.”<sup>107</sup> He had made a name for himself by writing articles for the *New York Times*, *New York World*, the *New York Evening Telegraph*, the *New York Herald*, the *Brooklyn Eagle* and other publications.<sup>108</sup> He quickly became the voice of the game. Throughout his work, he argued that baseball should become the national sport for Americans.

His thoughts were echoed by others. And it became so widely accepted that baseball was American that in 1888, when muscular Christianity was at its height, it was perfectly natural for Walt Whitman to have reputedly said to his friend Horace Traubel:

I like your interest in sports—ball, chiefest (sic) of all—baseball particularly: baseball is our game: the American game: I connect it with our national character. Sports take people out of doors, get them filled with oxygen—generate some of the brutal customs which, after all, tend to habituate people to a necessary physical stoicism. We are some ways a dyspeptic, nervous set: anything which will repair such losses may be regarded as a blessing to the race.<sup>109</sup>

But as the years went by, comments such as these somehow got confused with the history of the game. Soon, facts got intertwined with political, financial, or ethical agendas—and myths were born. By the 1950s the Franco-American scholar, Jacques Barzun, in one of his many books on American culture, observed that, “whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball, the rules and realities of

---

<sup>107</sup> Also known as the “Father of Baseball,” a title given him by Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Chadwick was born Exeter, England and at the age of 13, he emigrated with his parents from England to Brooklyn in 1838. He enjoyed cricket as a young man, but became intensely interested in baseball after seeing a match between two organized clubs in New York in 1856. He is credited with inventing the baseball box score and many of the modern day rules. Chadwick was also a vocal critic of gambling and profiteering. He believed players should behave in a civilized manner. He published the first rules book in 1859 (although there were other drafted guides before this, Chadwick’s was the first that was published and came in book form). He also wrote the first baseball guidebook in 1860. Chadwick, through his writing, was instrumental in spreading the game in America and abroad.

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, “Creating the National Pastime,” 6.

<sup>109</sup> Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1876) 4, 508. This quote is also frequently used in baseball studies; again, for perhaps the same reason as Barzun’s: the author was well respected. It is also often misattributed directly to Whitman, or slightly modified with the terms “brutal customs” and “race” removed for political correctness.

the game—and do it by watching first some high-school or small-town teams.”<sup>110</sup>

Barzun was not simply conjuring images. There existed, by his time, a pervasive belief that baseball’s origins could be found in bucolic small-town America; and the sport could only be pure when set apart from commercialism, consumerism and greed (Riess and others have since demonstrated that baseball was an urban game that quickly spread to rural America).<sup>111</sup> Barzun also likened the game’s image to American democracy; which might not have been an outlandish opinion considering that only seven years before Barzun published his observations, Jackie Robinson broke professional baseball’s colour barrier by joining Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League.<sup>112</sup>

However, Barzun’s and Whitman’s comments were clearly more reflective of the times they were written in than the actual history of baseball. Chadwick never considered the game to be rural, or even American in origin. Furthermore, the game as Barzun and even Whitman recognized it was highly organized and standardized, and clearly the product of an industrialized society.

---

<sup>110</sup> Jacques Barzun, *God’s Country and Mine; a Declaration of Love Spiced With a Few Harsh Words*, (Boston: Little & Brown, 1954). Gerald Early notes that Barzun’s quotation was popular among baseball enthusiasts and writers because Barzun commanded significant intellectual weight. Early suggests that Barzun’s comments can be understood in light of the United States’ implementation of the Marshall Plan and America’s unwillingness to remain in the shadow of Europe. Early also described how baseball is a metaphor for America and that it has always been a “symbol of American civic religion.” He feels Barzun’s comments are tautological, as Americans had already presumed that baseball was American, and that America was seen through baseball. Gerald Early, “Birdland: Two Observations on the Cultural Significance of Baseball,” *American Poetry Review* (July/August 1996), 9-10

<sup>111</sup> Riess, *Touching Base*.

<sup>112</sup> Robinson had actually broken the colour barrier the year before, with the Montréal Royals, the Dodgers’ top farm team. Though many outside the game saw Robinson’s presence as a great event, those who were part of the game did not necessarily welcome it. Fifteen out of sixteen Major League club owners felt that Robinson’s arrival was in opposition to the best interests of the game. Jackie Robinson was not, in fact, the first black professional baseball player integrated into the major Leagues. Segregationist rules had dominated the sport for so long that Robison’s arrival appeared to be the first made by a black man. Several all-black professional teams played in the 1880s; and before this, all-black amateur teams had existed in the 1860s. In 1884, Moses Fleetwood “Fleet” Walker became the first Major League black player when his integrated minor league team joined the American Association. Soon after, rules prohibiting teams from signing black players were drawn-up. David Kelley et al., “Baseball, the Color Line, and Jackie Robinson,” in *American Memory*, online journal. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/jrhtml/jr1860s.html#nine.html>> [2 January 2004].

So when did the history of the game get distorted? The answer is not so clear, but perhaps an important phase in the appropriation of the image of the game appeared when professionalism became standard. At first, the player-organized NAPBBP league received public backlash because free agency encouraged players to change teams frequently for higher salaries. As Anderson points out, a critical point of public resentment was reached when Chicago club owner William Hulbert signed four of the Boston club's best players in 1875.<sup>113</sup> Fearing even more public resentment, Hulbert and one of his newly signed players, Albert G. Spalding, decided to form a new league, the National League of Professional Base Ball Clubs (NL). Hulbert and Spalding agreed that the new league should be run as a business, and importantly, as a cartel much like the large trusts of the day.<sup>114</sup>

To safeguard their new business, the league implemented a four pronged strategy. First, the league wanted to clean-up the game to make it as enticing as possible to the middle classes. They suggested that alcohol be prohibited, the use of profanities be discouraged, and that Sunday games be banned. Second, they decided that each club have a geographic monopoly over its area. Third, based on sound economic principles, they deemed that power be placed in the hands of few. And finally, they decided that players should be removed from financial decisions thereby increasing owner revenues.<sup>115</sup> With ticket sales on the line and money to be made, owners of teams began using the press as publicity.

One of the first major publicity moves the new league made was to ask its associate, Lewis Meachem, who was an editor of *The Chicago Tribune*, to declare in an

---

<sup>113</sup> Anderson, "Creating the National Pastime," 7.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 7

editorial that Henry Chadwick was “dead weight on the neck of the game.”<sup>116</sup> His article’s main purpose was to suggest that the new league would remove drunkenness and cheating. However, it also made efforts to forestall any backlash the new league might receive from the prolific, and by then famous and widely-read, Chadwick. Chadwick was viewed as a conservative who still promoted cricket, and upheld sportsmanship, a value that was contrary to competitive American ideals.<sup>117</sup>

Chadwick charged back by saying that he also wanted honesty in the game and that the new league was in fact anything but honest in its dealings with players and the public. He declared that the NL was anti-American because it excluded clubs and held secret meetings. Meachem, retorted that the NL was the most significant move the history of the game had ever seen. But, the public was still dissatisfied and Spalding felt it best to start his own publication in the form of *Spalding’s Official Base Ball Guide*. He also wrote an apology to Chadwick which seemed to appease him. And, importantly, he asked Chadwick’s newspaper to run his ads—which meant income for Chadwick’s side.<sup>118</sup>

As Anderson notes, the NL learnt that the press was powerful but could be manipulated. Chadwick and other sports writers covered the NL because the best talent played there. As long as the NL possessed the best talent, the organizers knew the newspapers would cover their league, and that meant free publicity.

The players were the clear losers in all of this. The NAPBBP did not survive the creation of the NL. That is not to say that the NL profited; the league lost money in its

---

<sup>116</sup> Lewis Meachem, “Some Further Account of the Formation of the National League of Base Ball Clubs,” *Chicago Tribune*, 7 February 1876, in William Anderson, “Creating the National Pastime,” 8.

<sup>117</sup> Anderson, “Creating the National Pastime,” 8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



first few years of operation. As a result, they instituted the “reserve” clause that prevented players from leaving teams without being paid to the team losing the player. The league also set a salary cap of 2,000 dollars per year per player. However, the players would not go down without a fight. In 1885, players formed a union known as the Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players in order to counter owner power. The NL initially ignored the union, but due to media pressure, the owners were forced to recognize the Brotherhood.<sup>119</sup> However, the peace was short.

After a few squabbles, the union decided to start up their own league. In 1889, the Players League (PL), after securing financing, began their publicity campaign, arguing in the press that they could not play for owners who cared little for the game but only for money. Chadwick, who was initially against the NL but now received compensation from them for his contributions to *Spalding's Guide*, suggested that the NL gave fans what they wanted. The war continued in the press all season long with barbs being thrown back and forth. Spalding was behind much of the rhetoric, even paying reporters to invent attendance figures in an attempt to discredit the popularity of the new PL. Eventually Spalding's dishonest tactics worked and the PL backers crumbled and gave way once again to the NL.

Perhaps the most famous, and now infamous, use of the press occurred around the turn of the nineteenth century when Spalding attempted to solidify baseball's status as an American sport worthy of respect. In 1905 Spalding requested that a special commission, which came to be known as the Mills Commission, be assembled in order to inquire into the origins of baseball. An article written by Chadwick was one of the main impetuses for prompting this request. Chadwick claimed that baseball derived from the

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

English game of “rounders.”<sup>120</sup> After two years of research the Mills Commission concluded that Colonel Abner Doubleday, who went on to fame during the Civil War, first codified the rules of baseball in 1839 in the rural town of Cooperstown, New York, and that the first official game of ‘Base Ball’ was indeed played there.

The committee members, all of them picked by Spalding, were granted a spot on the commission with the sole purpose of proving that baseball’s origin was American.<sup>121</sup> The committee members shared a strong sense of patriotism, but the evidence supporting their claims was weak. Yet, against strong evidence to the contrary, by 1907 the commission had concluded that Doubleday had derived baseball from town ball, a distinctly American variation of older bat and ball games of European origins.<sup>122</sup>

The commission’s attempt to show that the creation of baseball occurred in the United States was a simply the extension of much older desire Americans, and especially

---

<sup>120</sup> Chadwick, although he truly loved baseball and wanted it to be America’s national game, firmly believed the game’s origin lay overseas in rounders.

<sup>121</sup> The committee members were Colonel A. G. Mills of New York, a Civil War veteran who played baseball prior to and during the war and was the fourth president of the National League from 1882 to 1884; former Governor and then Senator from Connecticut, the Honorable Morgan G Bulkeley, who served as the National League’s first president in 1876; Maryland Senator, Honorable Arthur P. Gronman, a former player and ex-president of the National Baseball Club of Washington; Nicholas E. Young of Washington, D.C., a former player and the first secretary and then fifth president of the National League from 1884 to 1902; two former players and prominent Boston business men, Alfred J. Reach and George Wright; and James E. Sullivan of New York, the president of the Amateur Athletic Union.

<sup>122</sup> The strongest proof the commission had for the Doubleday theory came in the form of a letter from an aged Colorado man, Abner Graves, who claimed to be there with Doubleday on the day of the game. However, Doubleday himself never claimed to be the inventor of baseball—in fact, he denied it; and incredibly, the Mills group never realized (or perhaps ignored) the fact that Doubleday was not even in Cooperstown in 1839. Ultimately, the commission tried to debunk Chadwick’s ‘rounders’ theory because they said he was a British expatriate and invariably biased.

Spalding,<sup>123</sup> had to claim a national sport. Britain had cricket, but the United States itself had no such gentlemanly sporting tradition to call its own. Having a national sporting tradition was part of a much larger post-bellum process at the time. Starting in the Reconstruction period and peaking in the Progressive Era, America became intensely involved in an economic and cultural competition with other nations.<sup>124</sup> Sport, and specifically baseball in America, quickly became a way of demonstrating national pride and strength. However, before baseball could help to demonstrate American values to the world, it needed to look respectable. Doubleday, although not of his own accord, became part of the process of civilizing and institutionalizing baseball and its history. For the Mills Commission proving that the game was invented in a quiet and bucolic American village by a war hero was vastly more romantic and appealing, not to mention respectable, than a complex story about a sport that evolved from European children's games.

The American origin theory generally remained unquestioned until 1939, the supposed centennial anniversary of baseball, when historians critically assessed its

---

<sup>123</sup> Spalding's life had revolved entirely around baseball. As a player Spalding was the first pitcher to win 200 games; as a promoter, he toured his baseball clubs in England, Ireland, Hawaii, Italy, California, Australia, Ceylon, and Egypt; and as a businessman he founded one of the most successful sporting goods companies of its era. Although it no longer conflicted with his pocket book because he had by this time withdrawn from his sporting goods company, which was bolstered by baseball equipment sales, it did conflict with his sense of pride: "the magnate must be a strong man among strong men. Everything is possible to him who dares." For Spalding, proving that baseball was American was more than just a patriotic act; it was essential to justifying his lifelong involvement in the game. His propaganda campaign worked. Americans for the most part eagerly accepted the commission's conclusions, which would become part of the collective memory of baseball, as well as that of the nation as a whole. Chadwick, Spalding's friend through all of this, and a great supporter of baseball, admired the commission's patriotism and good intentions (to promote baseball), but otherwise criticized what he deemed a misguided study. *A. G. Levine, Spalding and the Rise of Baseball* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Geoffrey C. Ward, *Baseball: An Illustrated History* (New York: Knopf, 1994) 29.

<sup>124</sup> National expressions of pride include the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and the St-Louis World's Fair in 1904.

merits.<sup>125</sup> It was then decided by historians that baseball evolved over many years and from many sources, and was truly given its modern character in New York City's urban environment. However, despite the best efforts of historians to neutralize it, the popular idea that baseball was created in a mythic pastoral setting lingered-on.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> The necessity to set a creation date and place for baseball, as opposed to elaborating on the game's evolution, was interestingly similar to the contemporary debates that pitted biblical creationism against Darwinian evolution.

<sup>126</sup> The Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown still recognizes Cooperstown as the official birthplace of baseball. Some other obvious modern references to the rural or modest origins of baseball that have been corrupted by commercialism or gambling are movies such as *Field of Dreams* and *The Natural*.

## Chapter 3

### The Absence of Baseball: Montréal Sports to the 1860s

This chapter will first briefly outline the history of sport in Montréal from the start of the nineteenth century until the late 1860s while considering the significant events, relations between ethnic and social groups, and other factors endemic to the city. It will also examine reasons for the conspicuous absence of regionally played bat and ball games during the first half of the nineteenth century in Montréal. At times, it will be necessary to examine the theories and arguments presented in other studies of Montréal sport and compare them to the arguments laid out in this study.

In the nineteenth century, industrialization, mass immigration, cultural influences from Britain and the United States, human agency, and the weather affected Montréal and the local culture. Likewise, recreation in the city was also influenced by these factors. In 1805, the population of Montreal stood at 9,020. Roughly a century later the population had swelled to 267,730.<sup>127</sup> This growth occurred as a direct result of immigration from Europe, primarily Ireland, as well as migration from rural Québec. During this period of demographic, political, and social change, Montrealers, like the residents of many other North American cities, struggled to find or hold on to their identities. Montréal possessed several communities or groups, each with its own characteristics, conflicts, traditions, and forms of recreation. Although they sometimes shared common playing grounds, these groups lived in different realities. And, although these communities experienced urbanization and industrialization, they reacted to these external determinants in different ways. Some embraced change; some adapted their existing traditions, and some resisted change outright. Occasionally, intense rivalries

---

<sup>127</sup> Paul-André Linteau, *Brève histoire de Montréal*, (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), 7.

developed between ethnic groups and, eventually, sports provided a means to express these animosities.

Until at least the 1830s, Canada was an imperial hinterland that supplied raw materials to European markets.<sup>128</sup> Gruneau, in reference to the development of recreation in Canada, and drawing from the works of several scholars, has argued that the effects of this situation can be measured in three areas. First, industries were retarded while commercial institutions such as banks and retail trading companies became overdeveloped. Second, the conscious attempt to safeguard traditional European modes of landed power, coupled with the overdevelopment of commercial institutions, helped the growth of a strong merchant class in urban areas. This class eventually shared its dominance with the remaining colonial ruling class, the Church, and the few Empire Loyalist élite. Finally, the merchant class and the state generally opposed laissez-faire political-economics, usually associated with industrial capitalism, and rational utilitarian ethics, which later became the base of liberal-democratic thought in industrial England.

These patterns affected how games, recreational activities, and sports were developed and perceived in the first half of the nineteenth century. In effect, "...the fun and spontaneity ostensibly associated with colonial games [were] mediated by the effects of a conservative political economy, the rigors of frontier life, and the constraints imposed by a semi-feudal class structure."<sup>129</sup> Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the emergence of almost all recreational clubs in Montréal was due to the efforts of the garrisons and the merchant élite, who maintained dominance over resources and

---

<sup>128</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 64.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

culture.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, as Gruneau suggests, “In their various folk and élite forms...games and pastimes...appear to have been symbolic statements of differential life chances and social location;” and, “highly paternalistic and antidemocratic in nature.”<sup>131</sup>

The first instance of élite Montrealers organizing recreational activity took place on 22 January 1807, when a number of Scots formed the Montréal Curling Club. A group of some twenty merchants gathered on the frozen banks of the Fleuve St. Laurent for a wee match that was followed by a “convivial” luncheon at a local coffee house, Gilles Tavern near Molson’s brewery.<sup>132</sup> For them, the score was irrelevant; the convivial luncheon, however, was a significant event which took place after recreational activities and was a tradition that lasted until the twentieth century in Montréal.

Even before founding the curling club, Scotsmen enjoyed fortnightly gatherings at the famous Beaver Club founded in 1785. The initial mission of the beaver club was to provide the gentlemen of the fur trade, including the voyageurs who had been out in the wild for 7 or 8 months, with a relaxing atmosphere in which they could share their adventures.<sup>133</sup> The gatherings were held from December to April. By the start of the nineteenth century, Montréal’s most wealthy and influential men frequented these gatherings. The influence of the Scottish merchants was to last throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Despite being small in numbers, the Scots

---

<sup>130</sup> Peter Lindsay, “The Impact of the Military Garrisons on the Development of Sport in British North America,” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* (May, 1970), 33-44.

<sup>131</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 65.

<sup>132</sup> Quebec Thistle Council web site, <<http://www.thistlecouncil.ca/members7.htm#rmcc>> [12 Aug. 2003].

<sup>133</sup> Members of the fur trading North West Company (NWC) formed the majority of the Beaver club membership, which meant that prior to the companies’ merger in 1821 no member of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) could set foot inside the Beaver Club unless invited. The rivalry between the fur trading giants heightened in 1804 when the NWC tried to buy the HBC. The attempt failed, as did an attempt to secure the rights to the HBC’s trading routes. This dampened the spirits of the Beaver Club members. Participation in the gathering dropped between 1804 and 1807—which interestingly coincides with the formation of the Montréal Curling Club.

had wealth and influence that allowed them to build curling sheds, and in the 1870s, buy land for golf courses. Importantly, Scottish Montrealers firmly held onto their traditions and refused to relinquish them even in the face of change.

The English sporting presence in Montréal was felt both through the garrisons and through the business élite. At first, Montréal garrison officers were drawn to the aristocratic pleasures of the old country, as is shown by the formation of a hunt club in 1829, a tandem club in 1837, and a racquet club in 1839.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, as Gruneau, based on Lindsay's work, has argued, "...the values of manly character and conspicuous leisure which had long characterized the ritual games and field sports of European life...served as a means of self-assertion for the dominant class...which stressed the 'naturalness' of hierarchy, deference, and class distance."<sup>135</sup>

However, the ideals and cultural legacy of the dominant class were neither homogenous nor ubiquitous. This left room for non-traditional forms of recreation to enter the dominant culture. The English business élites seemed prepared to adapt their recreational patterns to Canada's different environments rather than continue playing the old activities. Montréal élites began experimenting with lacrosse in 1836 and, by the winter of 1839, snowshoeing.<sup>136</sup> Despite being activities originally practiced by native peoples, these activities were modified to continue a legacy that emphasized the natural superiority of the ruling class.

---

<sup>134</sup> Lindsay, "The Impact of the Military Garrisons."

<sup>135</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 66.

<sup>136</sup> As mentioned in a previous footnote, the *Canadiens* had already adopted lacrosse and snowshoeing as forms of recreation. Though there is no way to confirm this, the British may have adopted native and *Canadiens* forms of recreation as way to legitimize Imperial rule, perhaps thinking they could beat their colonized at their own games. Indeed, there were voyageur and aboriginal competitors in the first snowshoe competition.



The merchant élites' domination over recreational activities was not permanent. Following the war in 1812, many members of the middle class began to push for a more democratic society. Soon, tensions between the élites, and the emergent bourgeois, voyageurs, artisans, and manufacturers (not to mention the *patriotes*) changed patterns of recreation. Problems for the dominant groups were compounded by an increase in immigration and the mechanization of production and trade, which favoured manufactured goods over raw materials. Finally, the repeal of the British Corn Laws in 1846 essentially severed the paternalistic colonial mercantile-based relationship between Britain and Montréal and the Canadian hinterlands. Though the reciprocity treaty (1855-1866) temporarily recalibrated the economy in favour of raw materials, the wheels of competition were set in motions. As a result, the middle of the nineteenth century was characterized by a struggle between those who sought to protect traditional and privileged patterns of recreation and those who attempted to democratize recreation. The precise point at which, what Donald Creighton referred to as, the "first commercial empire of the St. Lawrence" and its anti-democratic values were toppled is difficult to surmise.<sup>137</sup> However, it was not until the 1860s that sports started to become noticeably democratized.<sup>138</sup>

Before then, however, as mentioned, two indigenous sports started to become hugely popular during this era. Perhaps the novelty of something "savage" being mastered by "white men" inspired Montréal English élites to popularize snowshoeing and

---

<sup>137</sup> Donald Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).

<sup>138</sup> Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Activity in Montreal, 1840-1895." *Histoire Social/Social History* 11, 21 (1978), 144-66; Metcalfe, "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal: 1840-1901," in Richard Gruneau & J. Albinson eds., *Canadian Sport: Sociological Perspectives* (Toronto: Addison Wesley, 1976), 77-101.

lacrosse.<sup>139</sup> However, it is likely that, as Robidoux has suggested, starting with the *Canadien*, men of European decent became fascinated and enthralled by the stoicism native athletes exhibited while competing.<sup>140</sup> Although there is no record of Montrealers snowshoeing recreationally before 1840,<sup>141</sup> fur traders were quite adept at the practice. Of course, spending months on end in the harshness of the Canadian hinterlands changed these men significantly. In fact, as Carolyn Podruchny argues, many voyageurs “underwent continuous transformations in identity and their culture came to be shaped by liminality.”<sup>142</sup> Instead of honouring British aristocratic sensibilities of manliness, voyageurs took pride in their rough, independent, and risk-taking natures. Of course, this caused problems with their élite masters at the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company. However, the masters attempted to offset these tensions by lavishing special treatment on the voyageurs in the form of attire, ritual celebration, and access to greater resources.<sup>143</sup> These attempts were not entirely successful, though, and masters often had to resort to the legal system to keep insolent voyageurs in check. The master/voyageur hegemonic relationship was not unidirectional. Soon, the élite also admired certain elements ideals and practices of the voyageurs, including snowshoeing.

By 1840, snowshoeing had become quite popular with Montréal élites. In 1843, the highly influential Montreal Snow Show Club (MSSC) was formed. By creating a club that excluded all but élite members, organizers attempted to remove “vernacular”

---

<sup>139</sup> Don Morrow, “The Knights of the Snowshoe: A Study of the Evolution of Sport in Nineteenth Century Montreal,” *Journal of Sport History*, 15, 1 (Spring, 1988), 20-39.

<sup>140</sup> Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity.”

<sup>141</sup> Morrow, “The Knights of the Snowshoe,” 7.

<sup>142</sup> Carolyn Podruchny, “Unfair Masters and Rascally Servants? Labour Relations Between Bourgeois and Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1770-1820,” *Labour/Le Travail* 43 (Spring 1999), 43-70.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

(traditional) elements from the activity.<sup>144</sup> For 50 years, it remained at the center of the winter sports scene in Montréal. However, most important of all, it was through this organization that lacrosse gained legitimacy. The MSSC was behind the organization of numerous events, including the 1844 Olympic Games, various cricket matches, and occasional lacrosse matches between Indians and Anglo élites. As several scholars have noted, the fact that different prizes were offered to different participants depending on their class reflects the continuing distinction between classes.<sup>145</sup> In short, the Olympic Games in 1844, and other sporadic competitions, must not be seen as a democratization of sports. This would have to wait at least 10 years.

Democratization was not something that occurred without conflict. The first signs of dissent in the MSSC occurred following the foundation of Montréal Lacrosse Club (MLC) in 1856. The MLC grew out of the MSSC. Most of the lacrosse players in the club were MSSC members looking for a summer-time diversion.<sup>146</sup> However, by 1858 a splinter snowshoe group had formed. Morrow suggests that this may have stemmed from the formation of the MLC. Though it is difficult to prove, it is possible that many members, perhaps mercantile élite members, did not approve of the rough, uncivilized nature of lacrosse. Whether this true or not is difficult to confirm; however, members of the MLC were in fact bourgeois, and not from the old élite dominant class.

The real push came from George Beers, who promoted the sport very effectively.<sup>147</sup> Dubbed a “flaming lacrosse evangelist,” even by his peers, Beers did for

---

<sup>144</sup> Robidoux suggests that the term “vernacular” is preferable over the term “traditional” because the latter implies that rural or tribal elements or games existed only in the past. He argues that vernacular sports or elements of games exist in modern society. Examples are pond/road/ball hockey. 210

<sup>145</sup> Metcalfe and Gruneau are the two most significant.

<sup>146</sup> Morrow, “The Knights of the Snowshoe,” 7.

<sup>147</sup> Lindsay, “The Impact of the Military Garrisons Peter Lindsay.”

lacrosse what Chadwick did for baseball in the United States. Snowshoeing and lacrosse formed such a powerful winter-summer combination that few sports of this era could approach the popularity of the pair. By the 1860s, there was little else on the minds of Montrealers but snowshoeing and lacrosse. The lone possible exception to this would be cricket, which according to Metcalfe, reached its peak in 1860 before a steady decline in Canada.

Beers was a prominent member of the emergent bourgeois class. As such, he was part of a growing group of Montrealers that rejected British imperialism. A staunch nationalist, Beers almost single-handedly made lacrosse the sport for Canadians. He rejected cricket and anything remotely British in sensibility. In fact, as Robidoux argues, Beers and others embraced lacrosse precisely because its violence and brutality were decidedly un-Victorian. That the game was a First Nations game only prompted Beers to exclaim that “just as we claim as Canadian the rivers and lakes and land once owned exclusively by Indians, so we now claim their field game as the national field game of our dominion.”<sup>148</sup> In an attempt to eliminate the symbolic ties to the First Nations, Beers codified the first rules and published them in *The Gazette* in 1860. Robidoux argues, however, that many vernacular elements of the game could not be removed.<sup>149</sup> These elements, including the extreme violence and brutality of the game, turned out to be the very elements working class men embraced when they started playing lacrosse in the late-1860s. This will be more fully discussed in the next chapter. However, for now it is enough to say that nationalists convinced many Montrealers and Canadians that lacrosse was the ideal sport for the emergent nation. Cricket was rejected, and baseball

---

<sup>148</sup> Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity,” 215.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 210.

was never even considered. However, it would be wrong to assume that baseball was purposely ignored because it was American.

Until the 1840s, most recreational events took place during the winter months when the waterways were frozen and trading was reduced. This is something that did not change significantly until the 1850s when the impact of the newly constructed Lachine canal and railways was felt. As a result, Montréal had very few summertime recreational facilities available to the public.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, in contrast to other American and Canadian cities, with the exception of Toronto, the frozen harbour significantly affected the commercial sectors that, as result, could not trade. This meant increased leisure time for many, including the *Canadiens* who enjoyed skating on the frozen waterways at this time. Winter carnivals were also enormously popular at all levels of society. From 1803 onward, Montrealers took great pride in showcasing their city during the carnivals. Later on in the century, members of the snowshoe club proudly dressed up and led candle-lit processions through the streets. Activities such as ice-skating, tobogganing, and of course snowshoeing highlighted what was considered one of the premier festivals of the year.<sup>151</sup> Given these patterns of recreation, it is not surprising that few summer sports were very popular prior to the 1850s.

From 1837 to 1867, the period that coincided with the emergence and rise of baseball in the United States, Anglos made up just over half the population of Montréal. But there was no sign of the sport in Montréal at that time. Humber suggests that the professional and commercial classes who were leaders in organising sporting clubs, ignored baseball because they considered it foreign and because they were economic

---

<sup>150</sup> Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montréal."

<sup>151</sup> Dufresne, Sylvie, "Le Carnaval d'Hiver de Montreal, 1803-1889," *Urban History Review* 11, 3 (1983), 25-45.

competitors of cities like Boston and New York.<sup>152</sup> However, leading Montrealers, infuriated by responsible government in 1849, and advocating annexation with the US, were pleased at the reciprocity treaty of 1854. This was hardly a time of animosity.<sup>153</sup>

Indeed, this conclusion is flawed on several fronts: baseball and town-ball at that point, as argued by several scholars, were not yet unequivocally identified as American.<sup>154</sup> They were casual pastimes played all over North America by children and young adults. Furthermore, most of the Anglos in Montréal were anything but insecure, particularly the merchant élites and garrisons. They had been prosperous for several decades, and the rise of burgeoning merchant class only bolstered their cultural and economic dominance. Strong in their beliefs, traditions and customs, if anything, Montréal's Anglo élites were extending their culture in hegemonic fashion throughout the Canadas and the British North American hinterlands.<sup>155</sup> Finally, Humber's claim that Montréal's trade routes were aligned in a fashion that was not conducive to the spread of baseball is overstated.<sup>156</sup> Montréal had north-south train lines and the professional and commercial classes were in contact with their American counterparts. As a result, it is unlikely Anglo élite Montrealers consciously rejected baseball or town-ball (indeed, given their British roots it is highly likely that these games were played on a purely spontaneous basis by children and young adults).

However, baseball and town-ball were considered children's games in England.<sup>157</sup> During this era, baseball still made use of the plugging rule that sometimes

---

<sup>152</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 109.

<sup>153</sup> R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Thomson Nelson, 2004), 343-6.

<sup>154</sup> See for example Adelman, Cashman, and Tyrell.

<sup>155</sup> Linteau, *Brève histoire de Montréal*.

<sup>156</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 109.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

forced players to chase each other around the field randomly until the offensive player was called out. Due to this childlike randomness, there was likely little reason for the garrisons to play it at any organized level since they could not show off their athletic abilities or manliness. Athletic competitions such as the Montréal Olympic Games in 1844, and the irregular snowshoeing races dominated by garrison officers were more than enough to satisfy their athletic needs. For garrison officers, who were responsible for the formation of many athletic clubs, cricket was still important until the peak of the sport around 1860. Thus baseball and town ball were not necessary diversions.

In short, baseball and town-ball were awkwardly positioned in that they were neither traditional adult British games, nor traditional Canadian or aboriginal activities. For several reasons, it was unlikely that Montréal garrison officers and élites would have played baseball. However, were other Montrealers interested in baseball?

There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that First Nation teams played town-ball, baseball, or any other known precursor to baseball. This is an understudied area, however, it is sufficient to say here that aboriginals enjoyed their own sports of snowshoeing and lacrosse for their own reasons. The result is that baseball was neither something they were familiar with, nor were inclined to be. Finally, baseball was not a sport through which the aboriginals would have expressed their ethnic pride.

French *Canadiens* on the other were more likely candidates because of their disdain for all things British and their allegiance with Americans during the *Patriotes* uprising. The French speaking Upper-Canadians resisted most forms of British sport throughout the nineteenth century, with the notable exception of horseracing.<sup>158</sup> The game of horseshoes was also a popular recreational activity. Yet, as Guay notes, apart

---

<sup>158</sup> Guay, *La Conquête du Sport*, pp. 53-136.

from that, during the first half of the nineteenth century *Canadiens* were either too busy trying to earn a living in the city or on the farm or too restricted by the moral domination of the church to organize or enjoy any games. The *Canadiens* also had nowhere to enjoy any form of organized activity within the city. They were restricted to the frozen river in winter, which significantly dampened any chance that they would pick up baseball as a serious form of recreation.

Early exceptions to this Franco resistance of the British were the Francophone fur traders who socialized with the Scots in the Beaver Club and some voyageurs who participated in the British run snowshoe races. However, of course, these men were not typical Francophones and their habits would never be appropriated by the *Canadiens*. In short, they were anomalies.

The cultural and social effects of returning emigrated *Canadiens* did not peak until after the period in question; and its impacts on games would only be felt during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the seminaries where American Irish Catholics introduced baseball in the 1850s were not near the city. Thus, if baseball were played, it was done so in the southern regions of present day Quebec, as is seen by the 1837 Huntington match, or at the seminaries in Ste-Hyacinthe, Trois-Rivières, and l'Assomption.<sup>159</sup> However, French speakers on the island obviously were less in contact with Americans and were less exposed to baseball.

The most likely group to adopt baseball or its precursors was the Irish. It had disdain for the English, and brought little in the way of tradition, at least in the realm of sport, to North America. It is no coincidence that the Irish in the United States,

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.



Ireland,<sup>160</sup> and Canada rejected cricket due to its English origins. In addition, Irish Montrealers were aware of baseball as their cousins in other parts of North America were playing the game—the influx of canal workers from the South, after the digging binge in the United States died down in the 1840s, certainly helped expose Irishmen to baseball and town-ball. However, a couple of factors worked against the possibility of the Irish appropriating baseball in Montréal. Firstly, the members of the dominant class that controlled most of the playing spaces were of mostly English or Scottish ancestry. There was a shortage of living space in Montréal throughout the nineteenth century. The significant waves of international immigration between 1830 and 1854 were especially trying on the lower classes. By 1852, green spaces dotted as little as 12 percent of the city. Many areas of the city were crowded and often unsafe. Griffintown, for example, where most of the city’s Irish contingent lived, saw devastating fires and floods. Given that it was hard enough to find a reasonable place to live let alone play, it is little wonder that most of the city’s recreational facilities were in Anglo wards where inhabitants had both wealth and power to construct buildings and parks dedicated to leisure. This point should not be understated.

Though, as Metcalfe notes, some concerned citizens were aware of the lack of recreational facilities as early as 1844. He cites the editor of the *Montréal Transcript* in a August 20 1844 article: “There ought to be a piece of ground set apart in the neighbourhood of every city for the practice of manly sports—for cricket, and all other kinds of sports. Montréal, unfortunately, possesses no such place, nor is there a single public walk or garden in which those who compose the humbler classes can go either for

---

<sup>160</sup> This has recently been examined by Elaine Sissons, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood*, (Cork City, Ir.: Cork University Press, 2004), 116-18.

exercise or recreation.”<sup>161</sup> Indeed, nothing was done until much later in the century—well after the emergence of baseball in the city. The list of recreational areas before the 1840s was short: a racquet club, the Garrison Cricket Grounds on Sherbrooke Street, and the river in winter.

Further crippling baseball’s chance was lacrosse’ popularity. Although originally a First Nations’ game, it was eventually promoted and organized in Montréal by élites, and then by bourgeois, some with nationalistic tendencies, whereas in the United States baseball was first organized by the middle- to upper-middle- classes, and arguably book store owner Alexander Cartwright. This is significant because the élites in Montréal were considerably more influential in their hometown than the middle- to upper-class élites in New York. This is seen by the relative ease with which playing grounds for lacrosse, usually the cricket grounds on Sherbrooke Street, were acquired in Montréal, in contrast to the annoying relocation of baseball lots in the early years of the game in New York. In a sense, this means that lacrosse become legitimate faster and with less resistance than baseball.

Lacrosse was also quickly adopted as a means to express manliness and class, ethnic and nationalistic pride. Baseball was not initially organized as such a highly competitive fashion. Furthermore, the men who organized and played baseball played against each other. For them, it was simply a way to promote “health, recreation, and social enjoyment among the members.”<sup>162</sup> Lacrosse, on the other hand, by 1844 provided a platform for British supremacy in the “whites” versus “Indians” matches. This was eventually transformed into Canadian ethnic pride by Beers and others.

---

<sup>161</sup> In Metcalfe, “The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montréal.” 145.

<sup>162</sup> Adelman, *A Sporting Time*, 123.

Importantly, while baseball was growing in popularity only in the 1840s, lacrosse had already been introduced as a sport that was well suited for “whites,” as early as in 1834.<sup>163</sup> By 1859, a date many regard as the official adoption of lacrosse as Canada’s national game, Chadwick had barely begun popularizing baseball in New York dailies. In short, lacrosse was a legitimate sport in Montréal long before the New York rules version of baseball was likely to have been introduced to the city.

Unlike lacrosse, Montréal journalists did not cover baseball until the 1870s. And it was not until the 1880s that any serious coverage of local games took place. Lacrosse, however, was aggressively promoted by George Beers by mid-century. The sport grew rapidly in part because Beers was a prominent member of the community. In New York, Henry Chadwick equally promoted baseball and cricket. Both sports profited from this exposure. Cricket maintained its level of popularity for some years, while baseball enjoyed a significant period of growth. Chadwick’s interesting articles and his invention of the box score helped legitimize the game as a serious form of recreation. Montréal, on the other hand, had no comparable personality to promote baseball. As a likely result, the game was never perceived as an attractive form of recreation. One wonders what might have happened had Henry Chadwick come to Montreal instead of New York to promote baseball, or if some garrison officer had taken a liking to the game and decided to promote it. This was not the case however, and lacrosse was quickly adopted as the national sport with no resistance whatsoever. By 1869, the motto of lacrosse’s governing body (the first of its kind for any sport in the country) was “Our

---

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Vennum Jr., *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War*, (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

Country—Our Game.” Like Chadwick, Beers, in 1869, wrote a guidebook for the sport. He was a key factor in the spread of lacrosse across the country and abroad.

Prior to the 1860s, baseball and town ball were scarcely played by Montrealers. However, these games were neither resisted nor consciously rejected. Rather, they were generally passed over in favour of games that were better suited to the contemporary patterns of recreation. At first, the harsh realities of Montreal winters prevented trade but increased leisure time. Summer games were generally not played because it was the work season. Later on, by the 1840s, as tensions between Montréal’s increasingly divergent communities developed, sports became vehicles for class and ethnic expression and pride. When improvements were made on the Lachine canal, lacrosse was appropriated as a summer season counterpart to snowshoeing. These two sports dominated the Montréal sporting scene at the detriment of other sports such as baseball and town ball.

## Chapter 4

### Baseball Comes to Montréal

Montréal's English-speaking financial élites dominated the city sports scene from the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to roughly the 1840s. Accordingly, their curling and snowshoeing clubs became models for subsequent nineteenth century sports clubs. The increasing influence of these rising groups showed itself in the creation of modern lacrosse. By the mid-1840s, the Canadian economy was reorienting itself away from raw materials and moving towards manufactured goods. This gave increasing power to artisans, industrialists, and professionals. In 1856, a prominent Montréal dentist, who was a noted Canadian nationalist and member of the bourgeois circles, George Beers, created the Montréal Lacrosse Club, and dubbed lacrosse the national sport for Canadians. In 1860, in order to remove native elements from the game, he wrote the first rules. By 1867, to coincide with Confederation, he helped establish the first national association and codified his set of rules in a published guidebook.

Partly because of these efforts, and partly because of the aggressive nature of the game, industrial and professional class men, who had been gaining influence in the city, quickly appropriated lacrosse. Labourers, perhaps attracted more to the rough nature of the game than any ideological aspect of it, were drawn to lacrosse as well. Its growth was also facilitated in the late 1860s by an intensification of rivalries between ethnic and social groups that had existed since at least the 1830s. Soon, lacrosse became a vehicle for expressing ethnic and class pride, as can be seen by matches between Irish, Indian, and English teams.

This may well have been a reason why baseball was not adopted sooner. The men who would have played baseball were playing other sports, particularly lacrosse, which were better suited to their needs. The old dominant class composed of members of the financial élite and military officers was more interested in exclusive games that reinforced its social status, such as curling, or games that taught discipline such as cricket. The working-class Francophone population for its part was still only interested in casual forms of recreation that required minimal organization, such as skating or horseshoes. Horseracing and gambling was also popular among *Canadiens*, however, these activities was soon controlled by the dominant Anglo classes.<sup>164</sup> Importantly, the Francophone population that adopted baseball towards the late 1860s was not yet in a position to field organized teams in any sport as they lacked such traditions. Other factors, such as the seasonal work cycle, which made winter sports more popular, and the lack of a vocal and influential supporter, like Beers for lacrosse and Chadwick for baseball in New York, sealed baseball's fate as a very minor, if not totally ignored, sport prior to the 1870s.

Scholars of the game, however, have largely neglected these factors, and so have sometimes attributed the absence of baseball in Montréal prior to 1870 solely to anti-American sentiments. However, this argument ignores the evidence that Montrealers adopted lacrosse, which represented the single greatest threat to the growth of baseball, as a legitimate sport even before baseball was unequivocally considered an American game. (Chadwick suggested that baseball was a game suitable for Americans in 1856). Indeed, Beers promoted lacrosse specifically to counter British imperialism, not American.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, not all decisions concerning choice of sport should be

---

<sup>164</sup> Guay *La Conquête du Sport*.

<sup>165</sup> Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity."

attributed to political or ideological leanings. Indeed, many people cared little for the symbolic nature of the sport they participated in. Rather, they cared about how enjoyable and accessible a sport was. Lacrosse was attractive to those seeking a more aggressive and invigorating game—which, arguably, baseball was not.

Eventually, however, baseball did find a following in Montréal—though it is important to note that during the period in question this popularity was not gained at the expense of lacrosse. Sometime during the late 1860s, baseball clubs were formed. During the 1870s, baseball gradually made its way into Montréal's mainstream sporting culture—which is to say, a mixture of French and English bourgeois men of the newly emergent industrial and professional classes began playing the game at an organized level. By the 1880s, clubs were getting larger and more skilled. From 1883 to 1888 Montréal experienced the first golden years of baseball in the city as according to the newspapers, which covered the sport with great enthusiasm, fans flocked to matches. But soon, the momentum baseball had gained started to wane. The press, which had played a significant role in organizing and advertising matches, became disenchanted with how the game was being played and run in Montréal. By 1889, baseball was apparently returning to minor sport status.

In reality, the newspapers had overstated the importance of baseball as a spectator sport and then exaggerated its demise. Furthermore, from 1888 to 1890 there was a brief dip in the popularity of all sports in Montréal, as the parks movement was at its height. However, even during the first golden years in Montréal, baseball was far more popular among participants than among the fans. Lacrosse matches frequently drew 5000 to 10000 fans while baseball was lucky to get several hundred. The

Montréal newspapers, largely influenced by the American press, saw baseball, and all sport for that matter, as a way to raise circulation. If covering games and creating rivalries could increase interest, the newspaper would profit—and if this meant lying about attendance or creating imagined excitement, then so be it.

However, the press faced several obstacles. First, fans could only watch sports on Saturdays, as Sunday games were banned for religious reasons (though, as Metcalfe has found, this did not stop the working class from playing baseball and other sports), and weeknight games would have to await the spread of electric lighting (which arrived in 1880 for lacrosse). Furthermore, mid-week afternoon spectator sports were not all that popular in the city yet—mainly because that was when most wage earners worked. Thirdly, purely amateur sports were not all that popular among fans. The exception was, of course, lacrosse, which was officially amateur. But professionalism had made its way into the game—making it more competitive and exciting. For the most part, Saturday amateur sports were geared more towards the athlete than the spectator. Finally, Montréal baseball teams were bad. Organized baseball had taken longer to take root in Montréal and as a result, the teams were less skilled. Obviously, baseball was not as entertaining as lacrosse which featured highly motivated and skilled players.

The impact of the press will be examined more closely later. For now, however, this chapter will discuss the rise and nature of baseball in Montréal from 1870 to the start of the 1890s (Coupal's thesis covers the period after in a thorough fashion). It will begin with an outline of the evolution of baseball in Montréal, while highlighting some key events, from the first mention of local baseball teams in 1869, to the arrival of a professional team and the creation of both an amateur league and an independent league



in 1890. This will be followed by an analysis of these events and an attempt to interpret them within the broader context of the city—and when necessary it will recast some of the existing theories and interpretations. It will also examine the groups of men who played baseball. And will also underline some important themes, and in particular, the amateurism/ professionalism conundrum, and the cultural influence from America, referred to by Québécois scholars as *américanité*.

In 1890, Montréal was officially introduced to the world of professional baseball. *The Gazette* immediately commented on the event, perhaps lamenting how long it took, perhaps wondering whether it would last:

The idea of bringing a really good [baseball] team to Montréal has long been talked of. Many saw the feasibility of it, but of these many very few were capitalists and of these few none were enthusiastic enough to let their thoughts take the tangible form of coin of the realm.<sup>166</sup>

The author of this article raises an interesting question: why were so few Montréal capitalists of 1890 enthusiastic about baseball? The writer suggests that Montrealers were not “...used to going to outdoor pastimes in the afternoons,” and furthermore, “...the few attempts that [were] made in this direction [to promote spectator sports] were not decided successes.”

In short, the author was convinced that capitalists would not profit from sponsoring a team in Montréal. But because of the popularity of the game just a few years earlier, such an opportunity might have seemed like a lucrative business venture. However, given that Montréal was in a state of flux over how society should regard traditional and modern influences, no sport, not even lacrosse was guaranteed stability.

---

<sup>166</sup> *The Montreal Gazette*, June 4, 1890.

This, coupled with the fact that baseball had not solidified its position in the city as a spectator sport, and the fact that the professional team in question was imported by an American entrepreneur—and was dreadful—led to the failure of the 1890 professional team. But before discussing its first period of waning, baseball's rise to prominence should be outlined. Most of the information about that phenomenon has been drawn from *The Gazette*, as it was the best source for information concerning local baseball.

The unprecedented and never repeated undefeated streak posted by the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings professional baseball club was so famous that it was even mentioned in the Montréal dailies. Perhaps its curiosity having been piqued, *The Gazette* decided during that summer to mention some local baseball. In the first known mention of a game being played in Montréal, two teams combined to score 111 runs, revealing the players' limited skills.<sup>167</sup> On August 12 of the same summer, a notice in *The Gazette* from a Canadian living in New York challenged Montréal's three local baseball teams to a game.<sup>168</sup> A week later, *The Gazette* announced, with great fanfare, a game between a Montréal club and a club from Atlantic Canada.<sup>169</sup> Thus modestly began Montréal's affair with baseball.

A photo of the 1871 Montréal Base Ball Club that travelled to the Maritimes provides a glimpse of who these men were.<sup>170</sup> Although some of the men look scruffy, two men dressed in suits look quite dapper. One of them had an elaborate moustache and sideburns then fashionable among contemporary gentlemen. This seems to have

---

<sup>167</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 109. This may have been the first mention of a game, but as Humber and others have discovered, in 1865 the city of Montréal issued a by-law that would fine anyone who was caught playing cricket or baseball in the street.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 110.

been a typical team of the day composed of men from various segments of the population. Officers of the league were also from various levels of society. Two league officers for 1876 for example, A. Felix and J. B. Pardelian, were listed in the Montréal directory as machinist and picture gallery employee (exact profession not mentioned) respectively.<sup>171</sup>

An illustration of an 1874 Typographers Union match on Ile St-Hélène shows about 18 dapper men and three well dressed women watching some uniformed players playing a match.<sup>172</sup> This suggests that the first local games had some bourgeois and industrialist overtones. Games were played on an honour-based system. That is to say, teams agreed to use no professional players. And, much like the Scottish curlers of the first half of the century, the host team paid for a lavish meal after the game.

Although articles and reports in the press concerning baseball were brief and sporadic at first, there was a gradual but noticeable increase in baseball coverage throughout the 1870s. This was matched by an increase in the numbers of clubs. In 1871, for example, there were 6 clubs. Six years later the number increased to 14.<sup>173</sup> The articles in the press were usually quite short. Games were usually played on weekends or holidays, and reports were restricted to notices and box scores. As the numbers of clubs and players increased, so did the coverage. By 1880, newspapers, and particularly *The Gazette*, began to cover games on a more regular basis. The writers also began to write longer and more thorough descriptions of club and game related affairs.

---

<sup>171</sup> Lovell's Montreal Directory 1876-82.

<sup>172</sup> Humber, *Diamonds of the North*, 110.

<sup>173</sup> Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation," 149.

By 1884, articles were becoming quite detailed and more informative. Writers offered game and club information, editorials, and perhaps even a little advertising. For example, *The Gazette* on July 18, 1884 included this item:

The Comets of Point-St-Charles are now in flourishing condition. Membership at present numbers is over 50. They have improved a great [deal] in play since the beginning of the summer and expect to give the Clippers a hard fight for the championship. They would like to hear from the Maple Leafs, Le Dollard and other city clubs. All communications are to be addressed to the secretary, W. Rainsforth, GTR offices, Point-St-Charles.<sup>174</sup>

Perhaps encouraged by an exciting championship game between the Clippers club and *Le Canadien* club the previous year, *The Gazette* began devoting as much space for baseball articles as it did for lacrosse. From team schedules, to lists of club officers, to game summaries and box scores, *The Gazette* wrote about as much as it could about the game. The sport had entered its golden years in Montréal. Intense rivalries developed between teams such as the Beavers and the Clippers; and the newspaper was an excellent medium to bring life to these exciting stories. It was not long before teams and individual players gained local fame.

Montréal's first recognizable baseball family was the Cuthbert family of Point-Saint-Charles. The family members, William, John, David, Joshua, Alfonse, C., and SW. Cuthbert, helped to form easily the most famous baseball club of this era in Montréal. They called it the Beaver Club, (known in 1884, their first year, as the Comets, and again by that name in 1892). It dominated the Montréal baseball scene from 1884 to 1888. During their run, the Beavers captured the imagination not only of

---

<sup>174</sup> *The Gazette*, Wednesday 18 July, 1884, 8.

the Grand Trunk Railroad employees who supplied most of their players, including the Cuthberts, but the hearts of Montréal fans. Winning most of its games by wide margins, the team quickly found itself the envy of other teams. In 1885, after winning just about everything it could against Montréal teams, the Beaver team decided to play a squad from Rouse's Point, New York. Over 1000 fans, including 75 from Rouse's Point attended the game that *The Gazette* reported was the high point of the summer, and perhaps one the best games ever played in the city. The article detailed every aspect of the game including the dramatic post-game celebration that included fans rushing onto the field to carry the pitcher and catcher on their backs after the exciting last inning, come from behind victory.

In the early part of the game, the visitors had the upper hand. Their pitcher had the Beaver hitters at his mercy. But, after the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, things change. The Beavers tied the score. After a run by Rouse's point, the Beavers were still loosing in the bottom of the ninth. The first Beaver hitter reached 1<sup>st</sup> on an error by the short stop. He threw the ball over the head of the 1<sup>st</sup> base player. On the error, the hitter made it to third. Brown then hits safely, bringing the man of third base home. Brown then steals second and third base. Patterson then hits a single that brought Brown home and won the game. The teams' friends in the stands thus rushed upon the field and carried Brown and Patterson on their shoulders.<sup>175</sup>

The success of the Beavers was unquestionably beneficial for the sport. And the sport's coverage in the newspapers had reached its greatest height to that point and there was talk of forming a league. By May 1885, delegates from several teams attempted to organize a schedule (baseball had made an unusual appearance on page 2 of *The*

---

<sup>175</sup> *The Gazette*, Sunday 1 August 1885, 8.

*Gazette*).<sup>176</sup> However, two months went by and there was still no league and no schedule. This was perhaps because no one had any idea how many clubs there were, or what kind of league organizers wished to form—semi-professional, industrial, commercial, or amateur. In July, *The Gazette* asked secretaries of all the baseball clubs in Montréal and the vicinity to send their names and addresses to the sporting editor of the newspaper.<sup>177</sup> The summer went by, however, with no league. Teams continued to play games on a challenge basis. For popular teams like the Beavers, this meant it was hard to accept all the challenges they received: “City and country clubs wanting to play the Beavers this season had better make arrangements at once. They have very few dates open.”<sup>178</sup> However, it was not until the 1887 season that a league was formed.

On April 23 1887, *The Gazette* announced the creation of the Montreal Amateur Base Ball League (MABBL). A schedule listed four clubs: the Clipper BBC, the Beaver BBC, the Montréal BBC (Mostly MAAA players), and the Gordon AAA (Amateur Athletic Association—and formed mostly of defecting MAAA players).<sup>179</sup> All games were scheduled for Saturdays—which, in light of the long standing tradition not to play on Sabbath day, made sense. *The Gazette*’s announcement importantly reports that amateur teams, as oppose to semi-professional or professional teams, would vie for the championship. The involvement of the MAAA organizationally surely signalled that amateurism would prevail over professionalism.

In the middle of the successful 1885 season, even before the creation of a league, the Beavers’ and their rivals began to bolster their rosters. The Beavers’ arch rivals, the

---

<sup>176</sup> *The Gazette*, Monday 25 May, 1885, 2.

<sup>177</sup> *The Gazette*, Monday 20 July, 1885, 8.

<sup>178</sup> *The Gazette*, Monday 3 August, 1885.

<sup>179</sup> *The Montreal Star*, Saturday 4 June, 1887.

Clippers, who were deemed city champions in 1883, “gained the services” of an Ontarian, Dan Collins, in July 1885. The vague explanation suggests that the player was either professional or semi-professional.<sup>180</sup> Later the same year, the Clippers added ‘Billy’ Little and ‘Doody’ Watt from Guelph, Ontario to their lineup (players with nicknames were usually remarkable ones). Again, these players might have been semi-professional given the fact they came from Guelph, then at the forefront of Canadian organized baseball.<sup>181</sup>

Although this will be examined fully later on, at this point it is sufficient to remark that there appears to have been very little resistance to professionalism in baseball in Montréal. This was in stark contract to lacrosse, which was highly regulated. This was due in part to the fact that there was no national baseball ruling organization as there was for lacrosse and other sports. Thus, there was initially no way for organizers to exclude undesirables, such as unruly men or hired players, from competitions.

To make up for the lack of a ruling body, teams regulated themselves based on an honour system. Before a challenge, an informal agreement between teams was reached. Better teams, such as the Clippers, Gordons, and Beavers, had two teams, a first nine and a second nine. These eighteen players were obviously the most skilled of the club, which sometimes could have as many as 80 members. Occasionally, teams would schedule intra club matches between the first and second nines. More common, however, were games between the first nines from of top flight teams. Also frequently, second nines from the top teams would play the first nines from lesser teams. If these informal rules were broken, that is too say, if a top team used too many of its star players,

---

<sup>180</sup> *The Gazette*, Tuesday 21 July, 1885.

<sup>181</sup> Guelph was one of the first Canadian towns to establish an organized team. Humber, *Diamonds of the North*.

opposing teams protested. In 1886, for example, when the second nine of the Gordons was playing against the first nine of the Victorias, the latter team protested after the Gordons attempted to send Rainsforth (of sudden fame) of their first nine out to play.<sup>182</sup> As a result, the game was postponed and rescheduled for a time when the Gordons could field an all second nine team.

However, many, including the MAAA, felt a need to regulate the system even further. The creation of a league was not only a way to level the playing field and establish a solid replacement for the old championship format, it was an attempt to curb the use of professional players and remove any vernacular (un-gentlemanly) elements of the game. On 4 July 1887, only one month after the newly formed league had begun play, the team delegates decided to expel the Gordons from the league because they were considered professional. Although the league dropped the Gordon team, the next week 400 fans showed up to watch the Gordon team beat the Montréal St-Lawrence team, on St-Lawrence grounds, 18-4. Two days later, there was talk that the MABBL and the Gordons team would play a team composed of star players from the MABBL (including two Cuthberts). This suggests that fans and many players were less concerned with the amateur/professional status of clubs than certain league organizers, and particularly the MAAA, were.

Along with the creation of a league came the need to control and improve the image of the game. By 1887, a committee of the Montréal Base Ball League decided: "Gentlemen are requested to bring as many ladies as they can at the ball game."<sup>183</sup> At some time during the middle of the 1880s, and certainly by 1886 when the MAAA

---

<sup>182</sup> *The Gazette*, Tuesday 31 August, 1886.

<sup>183</sup> *The Gazette*, Tuesday 31 May, 1887.



became involved in a significant way, it was decided that women should come to watch games. Various promotions were advertised, such as this one from the August 4, 1886 edition of *The Gazette*: “admission is 25 cents, ladies come in free,” ran one 1886 *Gazette* advertisement for a match.<sup>184</sup> At this time in North America, women spectators were seen by men such as Spalding as a way of civilizing and legitimizing sport among the middle and upper-middle classes. In Montreal, even back in the 1870s, team members were requested to bring wives or female friends to banquets or suppers. While they were not yet in a position to participate in the actual sporting events (and there is no evidence to suggest either way whether they wanted to play baseball), women were nevertheless becoming more involved in the social events associated with sports. Importantly, baseball organizers opted to give baseball a gentlemanly image as opposed to the sort of unruly and violent image which lacrosse had.

In this sense, baseball was a battleground where bourgeois and industrial class men fought over two philosophies: a traditional, at least for Montréal, elite and exclusive brand of sports, and a modern more competitive and democratic sport culture that was largely influenced by trends in Ontario and the United States. The MAAA, which played a fundamental role in the formation of an amateur league in 1887, and other teams like the McGill club, certainly supported the move to keep professionalism at bay. However, many other teams and players, and even *The Gazette*, seemed to be eager to appropriate less traditional and more American practices. Several teams, including the GTR backed Beavers, were caught in the middle of the amateur/professional debate. The GTR had long backed amateur sports such as the popular rowing club. However, being a railroad, the GTR saw baseball as a way to increase profits. By sending teams

---

<sup>184</sup> *The Gazette*, Wednesday 4 August, 1886.

and fans abroad, and by receiving challenges from foreign teams, the GTR felt it could gain a considerable advertising advantage by promoting baseball. Ultimately, in 1887, the league decided that amateurism should prevail—a decision that would prove to be unpopular among fans and the dailies.

The 1888 season was a litmus test for enforced amateurism. The Beavers, with no fewer than seven Cuthberts in the lineup, dominated play all season long. *The Gazette*, however, seemed less than enthused. Even the teams seemed less interested in performing. In August, after the first of two championship games the Beavers would play that year, *The Gazette* reported that the game was in a very precarious situation in Montréal, “this [a 10-0 win over the Belmonts] game almost killed baseball in Montreal because it was one-sided and uninteresting.”<sup>185</sup> After the second game three weeks later, *The Gazette* gave no details, no box scores, and no player’s name—they listed only the score: 15-2 for the Beavers. With virtually all fan interest gone, according to the newspapers, the league would have difficult decisions ahead of it.

During the 1889 season, *The Gazette* barely even mentioned anything about baseball until on 8 June it said: “Baseball in this city had not up to present shown any signs of remarkable vitality.”<sup>186</sup> By 27 June, after printing a poem about how baseball has made inroads everywhere, *The Gazette* lamented that “Montréal hasn’t caught it yet.”<sup>187</sup> There was very little interest in local teams. At the start of the season, the league decided to break up the powerful Beavers and send some of the better players to other teams such as the Clippers. But this attempt at parity was futile. It ended up watering down the talent pool. Instead of improving the overall quality of the league, it

---

<sup>185</sup> *The Gazette*, Monday 27 August 1888, 8.

<sup>186</sup> *The Gazette*, Saturday 8 June 1889, 8.

<sup>187</sup> *The Gazette*, Thursday 27 June 1889, 8.

decreased it. Teams were less inclined to play each other. The amateur experiment, spearheaded by the MAAA, seemed to fail to develop significant interest. Amateur baseball in the city was in a precarious situation.

1890 was a watershed year for the sport. Although there had been independent teams for some time an independent league began operation, which meant teams could use semi-professional or professional players. This seemed to match what was already taking place in the city: a shift away from elite amateur club or association based sports to middle-class city or company based sports. *The Gazette* and the fans were far less interested in amateur baseball than they had been the decade before. Nevertheless, participation in amateur baseball remained high, with over 16 amateur teams. An amateur league still operated and it printed up its rules and schedules in *the Gazette*. Public interest for amateur matches, which was never very high, lessened because professional baseball had made its debut in the city. Amateur teams and leagues also moved away from their elitist slant. Eventually, towards the end of the century, a full shift in sport ideology took place. This shift was one of the reasons why baseball regained its popularity after 1895.

This chronology has touched on some of the issues which need to be addressed. However, there remain questions. Why did baseball suddenly become popular after it was ignored for over 20 years? Who were the players and organizers involved? What role did local industries and businesses play? How did the debate over amateurism and professionalism affect the sport? How much did influences from the United States affect the local baseball culture?

The first half of the nineteenth century in Montréal was marked by tensions between anti-democratic élites and an emergent liberal-democratic bourgeoisie. These tensions were largely the result of a reorientation of the economy away from raw materials and in favour of manufactured goods. The second half was marked by an increase in industrialism, a broadening of the middle class, and the emergence of a third significant force—the working class. The emergence of this third group, which included a significant number of Irish immigrant labourers and transplanted rural French *Canadiens*, as a cultural force in the city, coupled with the presence of the First Nations, forced the bourgeoisie to limit its interpretation of democracy. The appearance of amateurism in sport was due in large part to a rather undemocratic interpretation and application of power. Indeed, as soon as the new dominant class felt threatened by those it deemed inferior, it created rules excluding them. Thus, the bourgeois dominant class was democratic insofar as democracy did not interfere with its sense of superiority, and insofar as it allowed bourgeois men to participate in activities practiced by those it deemed socially superior. The creation of amateur clubs, associations, and leagues, as well as the offering of prizes at competitions was in part the product of these insecurities.

One of the first examples of this, as Morrow has found, was snowshoeing, which he discovered to be quite a discriminatory sport. At first, snowshoeing was an exclusive recreational élite sport practiced by only the most privileged of Montrealers. By the mid 1860s, a period recognized as a watershed for organized recreation in Montréal, the sport had become competitive. During this industrial-era period, races were often fixed so that bourgeois snowshoers never directly competed against aboriginal or voyageur athletes, for fear of losing. First Nations' entrants were often mocked and ridiculed by

the press, despite the fact that most natives were vastly superior at snowshoeing. Songs ridiculing French Canadian participants were also sung.<sup>188</sup>

However, this bigotry was not restricted to snowshoeing, nor restricted to ethnicity. Professional athletes were barred from competing with and/or against amateurs in many sports. The term “professional,” (not to be confused with the same term applied to another group of lawyers, dentists, and the like, in this text), was applied to a broad category that included all men who used their hands to earn a living, such as labourers. In effect, the liberal-democratic nature of the bourgeois class was self-serving. Gruneau suggests that the urban club movement of the mid-1860s which had started to democratize, did so, “...not on the basis of eliminating discriminatory patterns of membership selection and recruitment, but rather through the proliferation of the clubs themselves;” indeed, this brand of democratization, he continues, “merely reinforced existing class distinctions and shaped them into new organizational forms.”<sup>189</sup>

This kind of amateurism was that of the gentlemanly sportsman. It was influenced by Victorian sensibilities, and borrowed heavily from the previous dominant class’s ideals of exclusiveness and class distance, as well as the military’s emphasis on discipline. But the bourgeois notion of class status included some conflicting notions of manliness. Many snowshoers had become quite vain. “The juxtaposition of wine, women and manly snowshoers was literally enshrined in song by 1858.”<sup>190</sup> The reasons for the different views of manliness within one group are in part related to freedom of choice—human agency. Robidoux points out that, “One of the primary reasons lacrosse served as a viable alternative to imported British sports such as cricket was its emphasis

---

<sup>188</sup> Don Morrow, “The Knights of the Snowshoe,” 12.

<sup>189</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sport, and Social Development*, 75.

<sup>190</sup> Morrow, “The Knights of the Snowshoe,” 12.

on physical aggression, volatility, and danger.”<sup>191</sup> Although not all agreed with this point of view, many took to it. Robidoux argues élites did not realize that lacrosse also signified “class, gender, and ethnic values.”<sup>192</sup> Eventually, as Gruneau points out, “Upwardly mobile industrialists and skilled labourers utilized the dominant class as a reference group...however...the ideal of the true “gentleman-amateur” was only remotely attainable...and not always culturally appealing.”<sup>193</sup> Subsequently, working class men used skilled labourers as a reference group. By the time lacrosse was passed on to the working class, it was stripped of all its Victorian notions of manliness.

However, class distance was very difficult to achieve in the city the size of Montréal. Indeed, one of the reasons for the increase in tensions between social groups in large cities, it has been argued, was the growing lack of living space in urban areas. With less and less physical space made available, social groups had to fight even harder to maintain their cultures and identities. For those on the bottom of the social ladder, times were hard. Although there were reformist movements, Gruneau suggest that the “reformist concerns merely gave legitimacy to an expedient strategy of political domination.”<sup>194</sup> Gruneau’s is a decidedly Marxist interpretation, but the fact remains that Montréal was infamously slow in addressing housing, sanitary, and health issues. The amalgamation of suburbs was an attempt to remedy the degrading housing situation. However, it was not before the first decade of the twentieth century that living conditions began to meaningfully improve. If there were any reforms made, they usually benefited

---

<sup>191</sup> Robidoux, “Imagining a Canadian Identity,” 2.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 78.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 70.

the middle to upper middle classes, such as the founding of several parks including Mount Royal Park in 1874, Park Lafontaine in 1889, and parc Sohmer, also in 1889.

Baseball's place in this rubric of political and cultural domination over space is hard to define. This is because the middle class that appropriated baseball from the 1860s onward was characteristically liminal. While many bourgeois of the upper-middle class were strong supporters of Canada, and Victorian ideals, many other bourgeois and middle class men cared little for the ideological ravings of their social equals, or, at least practically, realized that they were closer to the working class than to the *élites*. It has been suggested that this is because the "industrialists [who] generally considered themselves to be the 'proletariat' of the Canadian business community," were usually from humble origins.<sup>195</sup> And the mercantile bourgeoisie that still held considerable power in the city, was naturally *élitist*, and from wealth. This created a rather broad and incohesive middle class.

In the physical world, this meant that baseball was sometimes played on lacrosse fields (usually bourgeois grounds), while at other times on unnamed lots or empty fields owned by the GTR or other companies that played baseball. The first important example of baseball entering the physical space of the *élite* was in 1885 when the Beaver's BBC hosted the Rouse's Point team on the MAAA grounds. And this had to be approved by the MAAA. But there were tensions. While baseball at times seemed like it was making inroads into middle class culture, there were times when it was pushed back. There was a noticeable drop in the number of games played during the 1889 season. The reason was simple. The fields that had been used for playing games were turned into walking parks for the middle class. Logan's Farm, sometimes referred to as

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 78.

Logan's Park, was a very popular place to play games but was turned into Lafontaine Park in 1889.

In addition to limiting playing spaces, the cramped urbanization of Montréal highlighted the poverty of the working class, emphasized the wealth of the *élites*, and assisted in the broadening of the middle class. There were recognizable residential patterns relating class to living space. However, in some Montréal wards, notably Point Saint Charles, where many baseball and lacrosse players came from, employers often lived next to labourers. In the middle of this mix, there were machinists, clerks, skilled craftsmen, engineers, and other men with specialized trades, all forming a rather large and varied social unit—making it a difficult task to assign athletes to various classes. Fortunately, however, Metcalfe has delineated three social groups involving themselves in three types of sport in Montréal during the 1870s and 1880s, which help give some sense to the confusion. The first group was comprised of the political and economic power *élite* (he names the Allans, Crawfords and Molsons as examples). The next group had some younger members of the *élite* group and a mixture of commercial and professional men, university students, graduates, and schoolchildren. The final group, Metcalfe claims, was an expanding group of socially heterogeneous individuals.<sup>196</sup> This group, which included men involved in industry, and some professionals, bares some similarities to the one that Gruneau suggests thought of itself as being part of the proletariat.

The first group enjoyed exclusive tandem and hunt clubs (and perhaps cricket can be added to that list), which excluded all but the highest levels of society. The second group, which was broader but still somewhat exclusive, enjoyed sports such as golf,

---

<sup>196</sup> Metcalfe, "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal," 88.



hockey, football, lawn tennis and bicycling. The final group was the most democratic of the lot and enjoyed, among other sports, lacrosse and baseball.<sup>197</sup>

Metcalf's groupings suggest that members of the *élite* played very little, if any baseball at all. A sample of players taken from *The Gazette* and cross-referenced against *Lovell's Directory* reveals that a varied lot played baseball, with the lower-middle classes and the bourgeoisie making up over 85 percent of the total players (table 1). These numbers compare somewhat with those of the United States where Tyrell has argued that the growth of baseball was largely contingent on its appeal with the artisan classes. These numbers also contradict Coupal's claim that "dès son arrivée, le baseball américain a été snobé par la grande bourgeoisie Anglophone."<sup>198</sup> And they cast doubt on Humber's assessment that the commercial classes and business *élite* shunned the American sport out of economic jealousy.

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Coupal, "Baseball, Américanité et Culture Populaire," 75.

Table 1. <sup>199</sup>			
Social Standing	Occupation	Number	Total
<b>Working Class</b>			
	Labourer	15	15
<b>Upper Working/Lower Middle Classes</b>			
Industrial	Skilled Worker	24	
Industrial	Machinist	17	
Industrial	Foreman	7	48
<b>Upper-middle class/Bourgeois</b>			
Commercial/Mercantile/Financial	Clerk	17	
Commercial/Mercantile/Financial	Merchant	12	
Professional	Engineer	3	
Professional	Legal	2	
Professional	Publisher	1	
Professional	Journalist	1	
Professional	Teacher	1	
Professional	Photography	1	
Professional	Caretaker	1	39
<b>Others</b>			
Shipping	Captain	1	
Shipping	Sailor	1	2
<b>Total</b>			104

From these numbers, it is clear that a large segment of men taking part in organized baseball was from the middle-class that there was some working class involvement; and that there was no elite involvement. Men from industry made up the largest single contingent of players at over 45% of the total. Their trades included fitters, machinists, shoemakers, glassblowers, foremen, carpenters, carriage makers, and cam travellers (popular GTR trade). Industrialization and the all-season waterways provided many men with leisure time that was not available to men of similar social status some 20 years earlier. Bourgeois men made up a significant 37.5% of players, with, merchants and clerks making up the vast majority of this group. Not to be forgotten are the

---

<sup>199</sup> Figures were taken from *The Gazette* and *The Star* from 1880 to 1893 and cross-referenced against Lovell's Montreal city directory.

labourers who made up just over 14% of the total number of players in the survey. However, it should be noted that these numbers do not include players from the many company teams in the city during this time, simply because the newspapers generally printed only the name of players from the top teams. It is likely that the number of working class players might increase if these figures were available. Metcalfe has shown that there was a significant amount of sport played on Sunday despite restrictions on this practice. He also finds that many working class men were drawn to baseball. It is hard to know exactly how many men played baseball, but given that most of the games were played in the Irish wards of St. Anne and Pointe-Saint-Charles, it is fair to say that a large number of participants were working class.

The figures from table 1 suggest that a varied lot played baseball. An example of the heterogeneous and socially diverse nature of baseball players can be seen even in one family. The Cuthbert family for the years 1884-5, saw three of their kin listed in the city directory with three different level of jobs: David Cuthbert (Fitter, GTR, 129 Magdalen), A. Cuthbert (machinist, 129 Magdalen), and Wm. Cuthbert (Clerk fuel agent's office GTR, 129 Magdalen).<sup>200</sup> In fact, baseball teams represent a varied group of men. The Beavers/Comets teams from 1884 to 1889 somewhat replicate what Metcalfe suggests was the standard growth pattern for sport clubs of the era: "initiated by the clerical staff in the various offices and played by clerks. The mechanics, machinists, and shop workers were conspicuous by their absence except for periodic challenge matches."<sup>201</sup> Indeed, the top players of Beaver/Comets clubs of 1884-5 consisted of a fitter, two machinist, three clerks, a lawyer, a shoemaker, and a secretary at the GTR

---

<sup>200</sup> Lovell's Montreal Directory.

<sup>201</sup> Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Activity in Montreal," 145.

superintendent's office.

Although most sports clubs during this time were administered by clerks and other bourgeois, baseball seems to have followed a different pattern. In a July 18 1884 notice in *The Gazette* that asked that all communications for GTR be addressed to "the Secretary" W. Rainsforth. Rainsforth, the Beavers/Comets' right fielder, was a GTR machinist. By 1888 Rainsforth was a committee member and player for the Gordon team that was asked to leave the league because it was considered professional. For Rainsforth, baseball was more than just a game; it was a way to express his self-worth. Through it, he could achieve moderate fame (his name was often mentioned in the papers); he could be paid, or compensated in some other way, for playing; and he could be respected. Other examples include Andrew Patterson, blacksmith, and president of the Beavers BBC in 1886, his neighbour, J. Millington, GTR foreman, and vice-president of the Beavers in 1886, T.S. Brophy, cam traveller, and secretary of the Montréal BBC 1880, and A. Felix, machinist, and president of the Montréal BBC in 1882. All told, from 1880 to 1887, out of 20 baseball club officers who could be identified using the city directory, 12 were from the industrial sector, including 4 machinists, 3 skilled craftsmen, 2 foremen, and 3 labourers. The 8 others included 5 clerks, 3 photo gallery operators, and 1 merchant. Compared to Metcalfe's figures for lacrosse and snowshoeing, baseball was significantly different in that the working class and the lower middle class had much greater control over the administration of the sport. Gruneau also found that for national organizations, only 2 percent of the administrators were skilled labourers, while 48 percent were business men, merchants, and bankers. In short, baseball, in contrast to

many other sports, provided men of lower social status the chance to actively control their leisure time, and thus gain a little more control over their lives.

This was almost impossible in lacrosse. Irish working class men certainly achieved considerable fame through their sport. However, while the Shamrock top-flight teams of 1868-1886 were manned by the working-class, they were run by Montréal élites. The teams depended on the administrative and financial support from prominent Irish Montrealers such as Montréal Mayor James McShane, and C. J. Doherty, Q.C.<sup>202</sup> Baseball never enjoyed the backing of élites but, on the other hand, its supporters were not limited by it either. A machinist right fielder, such as Rainsforth could easily make his way to the top of the amateur organizational ranks, switch to a professional team, and then return to the amateur ranks after his team was disbanded.

Something should be said about the ethnicity of the players. Although using surnames can be very confusing because of intermarriage and the fact that only the most popular teams received detailed coverage, from a sample of 121 player surnames taken from 1880 to 1886, 58 were British, 38 were Irish, and 35 were French. These were taken from 12 organized club teams. This might help explain why there are more British names than other French or Irish, given that British men were more likely to be members of clubs than men from other nationalities. There were 3 predominantly French teams (*canadien*, *st-henri*, and *st-laurent*), 2 predominantly Irish teams (Shamrocks, and Pastime), 3 predominantly British teams (Victorias, Dominions, and the MAAA), and 4 mixed teams (Montréal BBC, Clippers, Beavers, and Gordons). What is significant is that 8 out of these 12 teams were ethnically based, and none of them had any players with Scottish surnames. Players and teams perhaps derived some kind of

---

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

ethnic or community pride through playing baseball. However, given that an individual's ethnicity often reflected his social status, it may be that intermingling between social classes was not altogether acceptable in organized clubs.

A rather simplistic analysis might suggest that the Reciprocity Act of 1854 was responsible for the growth of baseball in the city. But, Montréal was not really a baseball town before the 1870s, some 15 years later. Nevertheless, the roots of Americanization, and in part baseball, in Montréal can in part be traced to the aforementioned 1854 act. Industrialization, including the establishment of mills along the Lachine Canal in 1847, and the opening of the Montreal Telegraph Company that same year, and the start of the GTR in 1852, did not initially force trade with the United States; it did, however, change lifestyle patterns. Metcalfe, and many others, suggest that this process was largely responsible for the creation of organized sports (many American scholars would argue that this process signalled the commencement of "modern" sports). What the Reciprocity Act did was to establish a link between Montréal's industrialization and demand in the United States—a sort of "branch-plant character of production" that existed across Canada.<sup>203</sup> These ties grew to be very strong, at times stifling local industrial dynamics. Gruneau argues that "despite the economic nationalism of the late 1870s, the American domination of Canadian industrial production...continued to act as a serious constraint to the development of *indigenous* and independent industrial power."<sup>204</sup> The cultural ramifications of this North-South treaty were delayed, but nevertheless felt in several areas. The two most important for this study are the press and baseball.

---

<sup>203</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 78.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Montrealers adopted an older version of baseball, at least an organizationally older version. The first games played in Montréal resembled the games the knickerbockers had played. Social in nature, high in score, and accompanied by a fine supper afterwards, these first games in the city might easily have been mistaken for New York matches circa 1845. But this soon changed and Montréal adopted a suitable brand of baseball found in Ontario and The United States. Despite the scholarly focus on the professional leagues, it is a misconception that baseball was inextricably tied to the major leagues or other professional leagues. From the 1870s onward, semi-pro teams were wildly popular. As Seymour points out, in the United States, semi-professional teams were usually more “semi-amateur” in that they were largely amateur in constituency but supplemented with a few ringers. These teams usually hailed from companies, or were hired by towns. Many players were industrial workers who hired themselves out on weekends for extra income. Sometimes these players even took on full-time jobs at the plants for a higher salary.

Early teams in Montréal did not entirely follow this pattern. The first Montréal baseball teams were seemingly bourgeois, with players coming both French and English élite circles. The players were mostly drawn from the professional and commercial ranks, with some industrial workers also in the mix. However, these first teams in Montréal were not paid to play. Nevertheless, they were influenced by American and Ontarian teams. That is to say, they were self-funded from top to bottom, but played against and mimicked the playing styles of teams from other cities. As time passed, local teams began to resemble American teams more and more. As the newspapers reveal, by the early 1880s, players from Ontario and America frequently came to practice

or play with Montréal teams. The Rouse's Point Beverwycks club was a frequent opponent. However, more importantly, as Metcalfe has suggested, working class men found baseball appealing. Perhaps this was because baseball did not come with the ideological baggage that lacrosse and other local sports had.

The American influence was clearly significant in other ways. An announcement in *The Gazette* for an 1883 meeting of old members of defunct Montréal teams lists the old teams' names as: *Red Stockings*, *Excelsior*, *White Star*, and *Union*. These were all names of popular teams in New York and Boston. (Interestingly, these names were soon all changed to more Canadian sounding names such as Beavers, Victorias, Dominions, and Maple Leafs). More direct American influence came when Montrealers began hiring umpires from out of town. In 1885, a Mr. Kelley, from Boston, umpired one of the Beavers' games;<sup>205</sup> and J. Call of Ulster county in the United States umpired a Clippers game;<sup>206</sup> J. Bell from Chicago called a Montrealers versus Maple Leafs game. It was during this time in the United States that players who could not make major league squads sought work anywhere they could find it. Although Metcalfe, Humber, and Coupal have highlighted the brief existence of local clubs, and suggested that it was a sign of instability, this aspect is perhaps overstated. Teams all over North America had trouble staying together. Teams were constantly being organized and disbanded. Players from these teams would then take the next train to the next town that could offer them work. One such group of players from the disbanded Indianapolis team made its way to Montréal to umpire an important match between the

---

<sup>205</sup> *Gazette* 5 June 1885, 8.

<sup>206</sup> *Gazette* 14 June, 1885, 2.



Clippers and Beavers for the championship of 1885.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, unlike lacrosse teams which were usually affiliated with snowshoeing clubs, and thus could forge lasting relationships between players, baseball teams were strictly summer clubs. Again, very few teams in America lasted more than a few years. Metcalfe also suggests that this is perhaps why baseball “failed to make an impact on Montréal;” no national bodies led to clubs banding and disbanding quickly. Again, this is overstated as teams across North America suffered the same fate, with or without national organizations.

Again following what was going on elsewhere, there was increase in city teams—as oppose to club teams which had once been the bastion of Montréal sports, like the MSSC, MLC, or the various MAAA clubs. In 1886, city or community run teams included, among others, Dollard, Montreal, Point-St.Charles (including the Shamrocks, and the Methodist Sunday school team), St-Laurent, St-Henri, St-Cunegonde; Chambly and Beloeil (South Shore of Montréal); Farnham, Lennoxville, and Waterville (Eastern Townships). Teams which played against the Beavers team included, Plattsburg, N.Y. Chazy, N.Y. (challenge refused by the Beavers), Kemptville, and Rouse’s Point. Importantly, these teams were amateur or semi-professional industrial or city teams, including the American ones. They were not entirely professional teams. But this did not mean they were not competitive, or did not try to acquire good players.

As seen before, several teams began to bolster their rosters. In 1885 alone, *The Gazette* listed 6 players who were acquired from out of town, including 3 Americans and 1 Ontarian, and 2 players from the “west”. Considering there were only six significant teams, the number of imported players was important. What is also remarkable is that *The Gazette* seemed unperturbed by the obvious use of professional players. But, as

---

<sup>207</sup> *Gazette*, 26 June 1885, 8.

mentioned earlier, this trend did not last forever as resistance to these practices grew. In 1887, the newly formed league made it clear that professionalism was not acceptable. Eventually, just like in lacrosse, penalties were levied for using professional players, as demonstrated by the expulsion of the Gordons from the Montréal league. And this was because professionalism, or even semi-professionalism, was not accepted by a segment of the population.

In another sign of American influence, baseball was used as a means to advertise or garner profits for the sponsoring companies. The GTR was particularly interested in this aspect. On several occasions, the GTR offered discounts on train fare to any fans wishing to see the Beavers' away games. On one such occasion when the Beavers were playing in St-John's (Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu) against a team from Granby, "Special rates [had] been secured [because] it [was] thought that a great many members and their friends [would] go down to see the game."<sup>208</sup> This had also occurred for the famous rower Ned Hanlan. As has been pointed out, Hanlan helped formally introduce the idea of professionalism. Railway companies seizing on the opportunity of increased passenger travel, offered to pay Hanlan travel fees.<sup>209</sup>

Indeed, companies played a significant role in the development of baseball. The two most obvious examples are *The Gazette*, and the GTR. The GTR stood to gain a lot from the popularity of baseball. As mentioned, it reduced ticket fares to encourage fans to travel. The GTR teams also frequently played out of town matches, and challenged teams from surrounding areas which could be reached by rail. Perhaps more convincing is the fact that, as Metcalfe finds, over 71% of baseball games were played in the working

---

<sup>208</sup> *Gazette* 5 June 1885, 8.

<sup>209</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 152.

class wards of Point-Saint-Charles, Saint-Anne, and Cote-Saint-Henri. The GTR offices were located in Point-Saint-Charles and the company exerted considerable influence in the area. The Comets/Beavers, the Shamrocks, the Dominions, the Clippers, and numerous other teams came from these areas. To increase the sport's popularity, the GTR began offering prize money at certain baseball matches such as the Grand Union picnic of the GTR engineers and firemen in 1885.<sup>210</sup>

But the GTR was not the only one to get involved; in 1886 alone, company sponsored teams included the names of the Royal Electric Light Co., *The Witness* (newspaper), *The Gazette* (newspaper), Canadian Pacific Railway, Pettner Shoe Machine Co., JC Watson Co. (industry unknown), and Colin McArthur & Co. (wallpaper manufacturer). Nevertheless, the GTR teams were the most famous at the time.

Although the GTR had considerable influence over the game locally, it had little or no influence over national sports organizations. Consequently, it not surprising that GTR teams and players were ambivalent in the stance on the amateurism/professionalism question.

The amateur/professional debate raging in Montréal during the late nineteenth century has sometimes been explained as a dichotomy pitting élite amateurs against commercially oriented industrialists promoting professional sports.<sup>211</sup> Coupal and Humber have suggested that this dichotomy was behind the resistance to baseball; they have implied it was only commercially oriented. However, this explanation is oversimplified. There are several points that must be considered.

---

<sup>210</sup> *Gazette*, 14 August 1885, 2.

<sup>211</sup> Coupal "Baseball, Américanité et Culture Populaire," 74.

1) Although amateurism became an important code of conduct for many Montrealers during the mid-nineteenth century, non-amateur/non-professional vernacular sports remained popular. As Metcalfe has shown, spontaneous forms of recreation took place frequently all over the city—baseball included. There was even a working class Sunday subculture of recreation. In short, amateur sports were not the only kinds of recreation taking place in Montréal, and baseball did not arrive as a commercially oriented sport in Montréal—it was a casual game.

2) Montréal's changing social structure changed the definitions of amateurism and professionalism. These changes actually helped baseball survive as both an amateur and a commercially oriented game. For amateurism, Gruneau has suggested that a shift in ideology from fairness of play to technique made "...distinctions between amateur and professional sporting activities [seem] less 'real' and more arbitrary," because the desired and net result was improved performance.<sup>212</sup> This transformation was apparent in the mid-1880s. Teams like the Beavers were only ever half amateur. And the MAAA based teams were just as interested in gate receipts as any professional team in the United States was.

3) The liminality of the middle class that popularized baseball in the city, coupled with the fact that baseball was not by default commercially oriented (amateur and industrial leagues were still popular in the United States when baseball came to Montréal), meant that amateur, industrial, semi-professional, and professional baseball could be supported by a coalition of working class and middle class participants and fans. By 1890, three leagues in Montréal coexisted: an amateur league, a semi-professional independent league, and a professional league (or at least one team from a professional

---

<sup>212</sup> Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, 82.

American league). This was in addition to all the company-based, school, and city teams which still used a challenge system. Lacrosse, on the other hand, had an ideology and a national body. Even the working class Irish players had to follow certain rules (though these rules were often ignored). Baseball did not have such constraints. This meant that baseball was appealing to a much broader segment of the population than its main competitor.

Overall, while the amateur/professional debate affected many sports and patterns of recreation, its effect on baseball was not debilitating. The sport, although identifiably American, was not inextricably tied to professionalism and its incumbent commercialism, as some have suggested. And because baseball did not possess one ruling ideology, Montrealers of various ideological persuasions were able to enjoy baseball.

Newspapers, and particularly *The Gazette*, were instrumental to the development of baseball in the city. The dailies not only provided information about the games, but excited fans by highlighting rivalries. Clubs used the newspapers to exchange information, offer challenges to other teams, and even to provoke other clubs into heated confrontations. Newspapers benefited from this increased interest as it generated sales. American dailies were well aware of this by the early 1860s and exploited it. As suggested in chapter 2, the rise of baseball owed much of its success to the press. However, this symbiosis took longer to occur in Montréal where baseball was not popular yet.

The field of sport history is no longer a minor one, neither in breadth of topic nor in depth of analysis. The many areas of sport that have been examined have opened new windows into the past and allowed scholars to understand choices made by groups

and individuals in a different light. Fortunately, there remain many sports and areas to be examined.

This study has attempted to bring to light how Montrealers viewed baseball in the nineteenth century. Past studies of the same topic have suggested that baseball was an ignored sport at least until the final decade of the nineteenth century, in part because it was American. However, it has been suggested here that Montrealers of many different walks in life enjoyed baseball thoroughly as early as the 1870s. It has also been suggested that baseball was initially passed-over in the 1850s and 60s, not because it was American, but rather because Montrealers already had a sport that suited their needs, lacrosse.

Baseball arrived in Montréal in the 1870s as a sport with no ideological strings attached to it. The bourgeoisie, industrial workers, working class labourers, and all but the very privileged élites enjoyed baseball in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Baseball also proved resilient during the years when amateurism and professionalism were contesting ideologies. This was due in part to the city's middle class being varied socially, economically, and ideologically. Baseball could be adapted to suit the needs of various interest groups. By the early 1890s, baseball was prospering despite a brief dip in 1889 caused by the parks movement, which saw many of the fields used for baseball being converted into walking parks. Various types of baseball were played in the city, and organizations at all levels were established, including an amateur league, an independent semi-professional league, a professional minor league teams affiliated with the United States, and various industrial, city, and school teams. In short, baseball was a significant sport in Montréal starting from the 1880s.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Newspapers

*The Montreal Gazette*. Montreal, 1860-1895.

*The Montreal Star*. Montreal, 1860-1895.

#### Directories

Lovell's Montreal City Directory. Montreal, 1860-1895.

Goad, Charles Edward. Map of the City of Montreal: prepared expressly for Lovell's Montreal Directory. Montreal, 1903.

### Secondary Sources

#### Books

Adelman, Melvin L. *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Barzun, Jacques. *God's Country and Mine; a Declaration of Love Spiced With a Few Harsh Words*. Boston: Little & Brown, 1954.

Betts, John R. *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974.

Burk, Robert F. *Never Just A Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Calhoun, Don. *Sport, Culture and Personality*. West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1981.

Creighton, Donald. *The Empire of the St. Lawrence*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937.

Dulles, Foster Rhea. *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*. New York: Appleton Century, 1940.

- Francis, R. Douglas, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith. *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*. 5th ed. Toronto: Thomson Nelson, 2004.
- Guay, Donald. *La Conquête du Sport: Le sport et la société québécoise au XIXe siècle*. Montréal and Paris: Lanctot Editeur, 1997.
- Guttman, Allen. *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*. New York: Columbian University Press, 1978.
- Gruneau, Richard. *Class, Sports, and Social Development*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983.
- Hargreaves, John. *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sport in Britain*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1986.
- Howell, Colin. *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
- Humber, William. *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- James, Cyril Lionel Robert. *Beyond a Boundary*. London: Hutchinson, 1963.
- Janson, Gilles. *Emparons-nous du sport: les Canadiens français et le sport au XIXe siècle*, Montréal, Que.: Guerin, 1995).
- Kirsch, George B. *The Creation of American Team Sports: Baseball and Cricket, 1838-72*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Baseball in Blue and Gray*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Levine, A. G. *Spalding and the Rise of Baseball*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Linteau, Paul-André. *Brève histoire de Montréal*. Montréal, Canada: Boréal, 1992.
- Mangan, J.A. *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
- Melville, Tom. *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2001.
- Metcalf, Alan. *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987.



- Pietrusza, David. *Major Leagues: The Formation, Sometimes Absorption, And Mostly Inevitable Demise Of 18 Professional Baseball Organizations, 1871 To Present*. Jefferson, N.C., 1991.
- Pope, ed. *The New American Sport History*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).
- Rader, Benjamin. *Baseball: A History of America's Game*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Riess, Steven. *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture*. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sport*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Seymour, Harold. *Baseball: The Early Years*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Baseball: The Golden Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Sissons, Elaine. *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood*. Cork City, Ir.: Cork University Press, 2004.
- Traubel, Horace. *With Walt Whitman in Camden*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1876.
- Vennum Jr., Thomas. *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War*. Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.
- Voigt, David Q. *American Baseball*. 2 vols. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966, 1970.
- Ward, Geoffrey C. *Baseball: An Illustrated History*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

## Articles

- Adelman, Melvin L. "Academicians and American Athletics: A Decade of Progress." *Journal of Sport History* 10, 1 (Spring 1983): 80-106.
- Benjamin G. Rader. "The Quest for Subcommunities and the Rise of American Sport." *American Quarterly* (Fall, 1977): 355-69.
- Booth, Douglas. "Theory: The Foundation of Social Change." *Sport History Review* 34 (2003): 103-32.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sports History: What Can Be Done." *Sport, Education and Society* 2 (1997): 191-204.
- Cooper, David. "Canadians Declare "It Isn't Cricket": A Century of Rejection of the Imperial Game, 1860-1960." *Journal of Sport History* 26, 1 (Spring 1999): 51-81.
- Dufresne, Sylvie, "Le Carnaval d'Hiver de Montreal, 1803-1889." *Urban History Review* 11, 3 (1983), 25-45.
- Early, Gerald. "Birdland: Two Observations on the Cultural Significance of Baseball." *American Poetry Review* (July/August 1996): 9-10.
- Gruneau, Richard. "Freedom and Constraint: The Paradoxes of Play, Games, and Sport." *Journal of Sport History* 7, 3 (Winter, 1980): 68-86.
- Howell, Colin. "On Metcalfe, Marx, and Materialism: Reflections on the Writing of Sport History in the Postmodern Age." *Sport History Review*, 29 (1998): 96.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Baseball and Borders: The Diffusion of Baseball into Mexican and Canadian American Borderland Regions, 1885-1911." *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 11, 2 (2003): 16-26.
- Jones, Kevin G. "Developments In Amateurism and Professionalism in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian Sport." *Journal of Sport History* 2,1 (1975): 29-40.
- Lindsay, Peter. "The Impact of the Military Garrisons on the Development of Sport in British North America." *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 1 (May, 1970): 33-44.
- Lorenz, Stacy L. ""In the Field of Sport at Home and Abroad": Sport Coverage in Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1850-1914." *Sports History Review*, 2003, 34, 133.
- Metcalfe, Alan. "Working Class Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1860-1895." *Working Papers in the Sociology Study of Sports and Leisure* 1, 2 (1978).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Evolution of Organized Physical Activity in Montreal, 1840-1895." *Histoire Social/Social History* 11, 21 (1978): 144-66.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal: 1840-1901." In Richard Gruneau & J. Albinson eds., *Canadian Sport: Sociological Perspectives* (Toronto: Addison Wesley, 1976, 77-101.
- Morrow, Don. "Canadian Sport History: A Critical Essay." *Journal of Sport History* 10, 1 (Spring 1983): 67-79.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909." *Journal of Sport History* 8, 3 (Winter, 1981): 20-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Knights of the Snowshoe: A study of the Evolution of Sport in Nineteenth Century Montreal." *Journal of Sport History* 15, 1 (Spring, 1988): 20-39.
- Paxon, Frederick L. "The Rise of Sport." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 4 (Sep., 1917): 142-168.
- Podruchny, Carolyn. "Unfair Masters and Rascally Servants? Labour Relations Between Bourgeois and Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1770-1820." *Labour/Le Travail* 43 (Spring 1999): 43-70.
- Pope, S. W. "Sport History: Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *Journal of Sport History* 25, 2 (Summer 1998): i-x.
- Riess, Steven. "Power Without Authority: Los Angeles' Elites and the Construction of the Coliseum." *Journal of Sport History* 8, 1 (Spring, 1981): 50-65.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Baseball Magnates and Urban Politics In the Progressive Era: 1895-1920." *Journal of Sport History* 42,1 41-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "From Pitch to Putt: Sport and Class in Anglo-American Sport." in *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 1994), 138.
- Robidoux, Michael A. "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: *A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey*." *Journal American Folklore* 115, 456 (2002): 209-225.
- Strauna, Nancy L. "Beyond Mapping Experience: The Need for Understanding in the History of American Sporting Women." *Journal of Sport History* 11, 1 (Spring 1984): 120-134.
- Tyrell, Ian. "The Emergence of Modern American Baseball, c1850-80." In Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan eds., *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History*. St. Lucia, Australia, University of Queensland Press, 1979. pp. 205-26.

## Reviews

- Berwick, John. Review of *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*. By J. A. Mangan, *Sporting Traditions* 3, 2 (1987): 247-51.

- Gruneau Richard. Review of *Sport, power and Culture*. By John Hargreaves, *Contemporary Sociology* 16, 6 (November, 1987): 73.
- Guttmann, Alan. Review of *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. By Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Journal of Sport History* 11, 2 (Summer, 1987): 226-30.
- Metcalf, Alan. Review of *Rip Off the Big Game: the Exploitation of Sport by the Power Elite*. By Paul Hoch. in *Journal of Sport History* 1, 1 (1974): 85-88.
- Rader, Benjamin. Review of *Diamonds of the North*. By Colin Howell. *American Historical Review* (December 1996): 1654.

### **Dissertations and Theses**

- Adelman, Melvin L. "The Development of Modern Athletics: Sport in New York City, 1820-1970." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: University of Illinois, 1980.
- Coupal Éric. "Histoire de Baseball à Montréal" Unpublished M.A. thesis. Université de Québec à Montréal, 2001.

### **Online Sources**

- Graves, Benjamin. "'Beyond a Boundary': the Aesthetics of Resistance," *Political Discourse: Theories of Colonialism and Postcolonialism*. Online Journal. Available from <<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/james/james1.html>> [2 June, 2002].
- Anderson, William. "Creating the National Pastime: The Antecedents of Major League Baseball Public Relations." *Media History Monographs* 4, 2 (2001-2002). Online media. Available from <<http://facstaff.elon.edu/dcopeland/mhm/mhmjour4-2.htm>> [2 Feb. 2005].