

2 The Early Years of Baseball, 1845-60

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Between 1845 and the outbreak of the Civil War, baseball evolved from a simple, informal child's game into an organized sport with standardized rules. The formation of the National Association of Base Ball Players in 1857, the increasing press coverage of baseball, the rising spectator interest, the emergence of statistics, and the appearance of baseball's first guidebook in 1860 further exemplified the modernization and growing popularity of the sport during these years.

Baseball propagandists have long sought to give the sport a pastoral image, but from the outset organized baseball was an urban product.¹ In the pre-Civil War years New York City and Brooklyn virtually dominated the development of baseball, even though numerous northeastern cities boasted their own teams, as did a handful of midwestern and southern cities. In fact, by 1860 a baseball club had been established as far west as San Francisco, although the "New York game" triumphed over all other styles of play.

The emergence of baseball as an organized sport can be traced to a dozen clubs that sprang up in Manhattan and Brooklyn between 1845 and 1855, beginning with the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club. In 1842 several gentlemen in search of outdoor exercise and social enjoyment had gathered at a vacant lot at the corner of Twenty-seventh Street and Madison Avenue in Manhattan to play a child's ball game. The growth of the city's residential and commercial community eventually forced them to seek another playing field further north, and after three years of unorganized play Alexander J. Cartwright, Jr., recommended the establishment of a permanent club and promised to recruit more members. The team accepted Cartwright's proposal, drew up a constitution, devised rules for the game, and secured a permanent site at Elysian

Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey, for a fee of seventy-five dollars per year for both the field and the dressing room.²

Historians universally accept the Knickerbockers as baseball's pioneer club, even as many of them recognize the existence of earlier teams. Those teams, they are quick to note, were either unorganized, in existence for only a few years, or played some other variation of baseball, such as town ball. One of the pre-Knickerbocker teams, known as the New York Club, did attract more interest than the others, but as Henry Chadwick wrote in 1861 the Knickerbockers deserved "the honor of being the pioneer of the present game of Base Ball." Interest in the New York Club derived mainly from its one-sided, 23-1 victory in 1846 over the Knickerbockers, in what was once believed to be baseball's first match. The New York Club's crushing victory indicates that their players were not novices; in fact, Duncan F. Curry, the first president of the Knickerbockers, later claimed that several of the opposing players were experienced cricketers.³

Several references in the *New York Herald* late in 1845, unnoticed by other historians, provide further insights into the New York Club and the early history of organized baseball. On October 21 the *Herald* noted an upcoming match between the New York Club and a team known as the Brooklyn Club. The newspaper did not report the outcome of what must now be considered the first interclub contest, but four days later it indicated that in a rematch the New Yorkers had defeated the Brooklyn squad, 37-19.⁴ In a more revealing statement the *Herald* reported on November 11 that members of the New York Club were gathered on its diamond at Elysian Fields to mark the team's second anniversary, making it clear that they had been meeting regularly since 1843. The fact that they played at Elysian Fields and probably paid a rental fee suggests that they were organized, although not, in all likelihood, to the same degree as the Knickerbockers with their formal constitution.⁵

As the sport's first important and long-term club, existing until 1882, the Knickerbockers served as the organizational model for the multitude of baseball teams that emerged in the 1850s. Its major contribution was the establishment of the basic patterns and rules of baseball. A far cry from the rules that now govern the sport, these early rules were certainly more sophisticated than the ones used in the child's game of baseball. Today's fans would find the Knickerbocker game both crude and amusing, yet they would recognize it as baseball.⁶

The Knickerbocker Base Ball Club generally has been portrayed in the literature as a group of urban gentlemen with a certain standing in the community who sought to restrict the game of baseball to their own kind. More

a social club than a sports team, the Knickerbockers supposedly felt that congeniality on the field and postgame dinners were as important as winning. In spirit and tone they were more akin to upper-class sportsmen, such as cricketers and tennis players, than later ball players with their win-at-all-cost philosophy. Many writers also believed that the Knickerbockers sought to establish themselves as the social arbiters of baseball, following the example set by the Marylebone Cricket Club.⁷

This popular portrayal contains some grain of truth, but it is marked by inconsistencies and is based on limited evidence that suffers from serious gaps in the literature. Available biographical information and economic data on New York ball players, while scarce, do permit a profile of the social class of the Knickerbockers if we examine their known occupations and extrapolate from what they were not. The majority between 1845 and 1850 had white-collar jobs, yet only slightly more than one-third of the forty-four ball players whose occupations could be identified were involved in commerce and finance, a far lower percentage than among members of the St. George Cricket Club, for example. Doctors and lawyers constituted one-fourth of the club members, and the remaining two-fifths engaged in nonmanual, but less financially rewarding, occupations, with clerks and similar lower-level white-collar workers making up slightly less than one-sixth of baseball's first organized team.

The occupational structure of the Knickerbockers indicates that the members were drawn at least from the middle class, but there is no evidence to support the contention that on the whole they were from the city's upper class or were wealthy urban gentlemen. Certainly, some men in the club were financially well-to-do, such as Benjamin C. Lee, whose father, James, was an honorary member and worth an estimated \$20,000 in 1845. Another member, J. Paige Mumford, was the son of a well-known merchant; however, his father was worth only \$3,000 in 1845, enough for a comfortable, but hardly an opulent, lifestyle.⁸ Thus, while some of the Knickerbockers may have come from the upper-middle class, the majority appear to have been prosperous middle-class New Yorkers, much like Alexander Cartwright, at whose suggestion the club was formed. A few years prior to leaving the city in 1849, Cartwright, who had been a clerk, and his elder brother had opened a bookstore.⁹

In terms of social class, then, the Knickerbockers hardly conformed to the typical image of status-seekers. Nor did the intent of the club or its initial action reveal a desire to limit baseball to the upper-middle class. Rather, the sole purpose seems to have been engaging in an activity that promoted health, recreation, and social enjoyment among the members. The most striking fea-

ture of the Knickerbocker Club during its early years is the almost total absence of outside competition, suggesting that these men attached limited importance to baseball *per se*. After the game against the New York Club in 1846, the Knickerbockers did not engage in contests with any other clubs until 1851. They neither emulated the semiorganized New York Club, which played several games against a group of Brooklyn cricketers, nor followed the lead of New York's first cricket club in challenging teams outside the city. While the Knickerbockers adopted their own rules, they must have been aware that numerous variations of baseball had long been played in the Northeast. Yet club records reveal no effort to find out if gentlemen elsewhere had organized baseball clubs. In an important but unpublished piece of research, Robert Henderson helps us understand why the Knickerbocker Club made no apparent effort to engage in friendly contests with other teams: the club was itself on the verge of collapse during the early years because many of its members often failed to show up for schedule practices.¹⁰ The club's condition and the casual attitude of its members contrast sharply with the popular contention that the Knickerbockers sought to become the social arbiters of the sport.

Another problem with the prevalent view is that it does not explain why there was no mention of baseball in the press until 1853, with the exception of a few references to the New York Club in 1845. The absence of information cannot, however, be interpreted as any one group's desire for exclusivity, since status confirmation involves not the absence of publicity but quite the opposite, its demonstration. This was clearly the pattern in all upper-class sports.¹¹ The failure of the Knickerbockers to ensure public recognition of their organization probably indicated a defensive posture toward involvement in baseball. Given their social status and the prevailing attitude toward ball playing, their reaction is not surprising; after all, they were grown men of some stature playing a child's game. They could rationalize their participation by pointing to the health and recreational benefits of baseball, but their social insecurities and their personal doubts concerning the manliness of the game inhibited them from openly announcing the organization.

A rash of baseball clubs came into existence in the New York City area between 1850 and 1855, probably in response to the increasing encouragement of many forms of outdoor recreation and with the example of organized cricket already a decade old. The Washington Club, later renamed the Gotham Club, began playing around 1850 on the field of the St. George Cricket Club in Harlem. Several members had played on the New York Club in 1846, indicating that they were not novices and strongly suggesting that

prior to 1850 other adult men besides the Knickerbockers played baseball, if only informally and on an irregular basis.¹² In 1851 the Washington squad challenged the Knickerbockers to a home-and-home series. The annual contests between the two clubs attracted some public interest, and in 1853 both the *Spirit* and the *New York Mercury* reported briefly on one of the games.¹³ Three more clubs—the Eagle, the Empire, and the Baltic—were organized in Manhattan during 1854 and 1855, while seven teams were formed in Brooklyn. The Excelsiors, Brooklyn's first baseball club, were organized in December 1854 by John H. Suydam and several of his friends, who had witnessed a contest between the Knickerbockers and Eagles that fall.

The Eckford Club was the second organized squad in Brooklyn. Historians maintain that the club, composed of shipwrights and mechanics who could keep practice only once a week (in contrast to other teams that met twice weekly), marked the first break with the Knickerbockers' notion of baseball as a gentlemen's game.¹⁴ While formation of this club undeniably symbolized a change in the economic and social composition of baseball players in the early years, the extent of that change has been grossly exaggerated. For example, individuals who worked in New York's shipyards, the center for such construction in the United States and, at times, the world, were the best-paid craftsmen in the city. These shipwrights had been able to insulate themselves from the kinds of social and economic changes that undermined the pay and prestige of artisans in other crafts, in general earning a sufficient annual income to allow them to live within reach of the middle class. It is also significant that between 20 and 25 percent of the Eckford members were employed in nonmanual occupations.¹⁵ Thus, there do not appear to have been radical economic differences between members of the Eckford and Knickerbocker clubs, although clearly there were social differences. But did these translate into varying behavioral patterns?

While we can never be sure, several interrelated factors suggest that members of the Eckford Club belonged to the segment of the working class that held many middle-class values. The presence of white-collar workers on this largely manual-skilled team was in part an extension of the paternalistic relationship between master shipbuilders and their workers, but it was also an indicator of shared beliefs, as was the selection of the club's name. Henry Eckford, a Scotch-Irish immigrant, was New York's richest and most successful shipbuilder in the antebellum period. By identifying with him, these craftsmen gave testimony to their faith in middle-class values, especially upward mobility. One final point: when the issue of professional baseball first emerged in the late 1850s, Francis Pidgeon, president of the Eckford Club, opposed

compensation for players, maintaining that the game was for pleasure, not profit.¹⁶

To ascertain more precisely the social class of Brooklyn and New York ball players we must examine in some detail their types of occupations during different time periods.¹⁷ Between 1850 and 1855 most ball players engaged mainly in nonmanual forms of employment (see table 2-1). No unskilled workers were on baseball teams in either city; but skilled craftsmen made up about one-fourth of the players, a fact that indicates widespread knowledge of the game at this early stage and further confirms the absence of an effort to restrict baseball to the "better class." However, there were striking occupational differences between ball players of the two cities. There is no clear-cut reason for this, since both groups had access to the same kinds of jobs.¹⁸ Indeed, it may have been only a temporary development, because the differences were less evident during the next fifteen years. Brooklyn players still came from more plebeian backgrounds, a trend that no doubt persisted as a result of the greater availability of open space on which to play. Even more critical, perhaps, was the fact that Brooklyn's economic growth did not keep pace with its population, which increased from about 7,000 in 1820 to slightly less than 100,000 three decades later. Moreover, in contrast to the cosmopolitan nature of New York City, Brooklyn retained much of its small-city atmosphere; hence, its ball players were more likely to be drawn from middle-level occupations.¹⁹

Baseball's growth in the mid-1850s corresponded with, and was stimulated by, the coverage it was receiving in the *Spirit* and some daily newspapers. Beginning in 1853 the press provided brief reports of contests, usually no more than three or four lines, often accompanied by a crude box score; they also noted the formation of new clubs. In response to the increasing number

Table 2-1. Occupational Structure of Area Baseball Players, 1850-55

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	26	41.9	9	28.1	35	37.2
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	28	45.2	9	28.1	37	39.4
Skilled Craftsman	8	12.9	14	43.8	22	23.4
Total	62		32		94	

of baseball clubs in the metropolitan area, the *Spirit* published the Knickerbockers' rules in 1855, along with a diagram of the playing field.²⁰ The *Herald*, impressed with the rising number of clubs, maintained that baseball "bids fair to soon be as popular as the favorite game of cricket," an opinion that was shared by the *Spirit* despite its close ties with cricket: "The interest in the game of Base Ball appears to be on the rise, and its bids fair to become our most popular game." That prediction proved absolutely correct.²¹

Baseball grew tremendously in the five years prior to the Civil War, replacing cricket as the nation's leading ball game. From only a dozen clubs in Brooklyn and New York in 1855, the number of organized teams increased eightfold in just three years, to seventy-one in Brooklyn and twenty-five in Manhattan. Counting ball clubs already formed in nearby New Jersey, Westchester County, and on Long Island, there were over 125 teams in the metropolitan area. It is impossible to say exactly how many people played baseball in the neighboring cities. The *Herald* claimed in 1859 that there were more members in Brooklyn and New York City baseball clubs than in all the other clubs combined. The statement is no doubt inaccurate, but it reflects the extent to which the press was awed by the surging popularity of baseball.²²

The rapid increase in the number of clubs and contests created the need to clarify and codify the various rules of the game. At the end of the 1855 season the *Herald* reported that a preliminary meeting was held as the first step toward creating a central governing body for baseball, but the absence of a follow-up story indicates that nothing apparently came of it. *Porter's Spirit* noted in October 1856 that a convention of baseball clubs to amend the rules seemed imminent. In December of that year the Knickerbockers, in an effort to "promote additional interest in baseball," and quite possibly because they were prodded by other clubs, called for a convention of teams from New York City and vicinity. Delegates from fourteen clubs, all from Manhattan and Brooklyn, met in 1857 and elected Dr. Daniel D. Adams of the Knickerbockers as president. They reconfirmed the rules of baseball's pioneer club with one major change: adoption of the nine-inning game (instead of ending a contest when a team scored twenty-one runs, or aces). The most significant debate, however, revolved around the Knickerbockers' proposal that to retire the batter the ball be caught on the fly instead of on the first bounce. The delegates rejected such a change and continued to do so every year until 1863, despite wide support in the press.²³

The presidents of New York's four oldest clubs—Knickerbocker, Gotham, Eagle, and Empire—called another meeting in 1858, and the number of clubs represented increased to twenty-six. The convention adopted the name National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), even though all the teams represented came from what is currently New York City, with the exception of one team from New Brunswick, New Jersey.²⁴ The association basically reconfirmed the rules established the previous year and elected new officers. The Knickerbockers were conspicuous by their absence from the executive council, leading baseball historians to erroneously interpret this as a blunt rejection of the club and its effort to be the social arbiter of the sport.²⁵

Again, the events simply do not support the contention that the Knickerbockers were trying to become baseball's equivalent to the Marylebone Cricket Club. In 1857 they decided to restrict their contests to those clubs who practiced on their grounds at Elysian Fields, a policy chastised in a letter to *Porter's Spirit*.²⁶ I contend that the Knickerbockers' desire for the company of their own kind when playing baseball illustrates that for them the game continued to perform mainly a social rather than a competitive function. In fact, they showed no desire to govern baseball, even though as the oldest club and the sport's earliest rule maker, new teams and the press looked to them for leadership. Instead of consolidating these advantages into a position of power, the Knickerbockers shied away from asserting any leadership role whatsoever.

While some disenchantment existed with the Knickerbockers' lack of leadership, their failure to be elected to any "national" office in 1858 was not the product of a revolt from below by "democratic" delegates disenchanted with their supposed aristocratic policies. The new association officers all came from clubs with occupational structures similar to the Knickerbockers'. Of the NABBP's six executives, there were three lawyers, a doctor, a merchant, and one whose occupation could not be ascertained. William H. Van Cott was a deserving choice as president of the NABBP, having been a member of the Gotham Club since at least 1851 and its president since 1856; he also wrote the first letter to the press about baseball in 1854.²⁷ Contrary to charges by later scholars, the press did not comment on the absence of the Knickerbockers from the executive council, and baseball's pioneer club articulated no displeasure with the outcome of the election. Moreover, they were not totally eliminated from a position of influence: from 1858 to 1862 Dr. Adams served as the head of the important NABBP rules committee.

Popular opinion aside, the Knickerbockers' attitude toward other clubs was clearly revealed in a debate over the admission of junior clubs.²⁸ When the convention overwhelmingly rejected the credentials of these young men, by

a 34-to-8 vote, the press unanimously disapproved. *Porter's Spirit* blamed the outcome on "a clique of men" who have "plenty of money, and a proportionate lack of strength of body and energy of spirit . . . [and who] wish to make the game a means of showing off their figures in fancy dress, and their wealth in fancy dinners." The paper recommended that the junior clubs call their own convention, and in 1860 thirty squads established the National Association of Junior Baseball Clubs.²⁹ Not only was Adams among the handful of men who supported junior clubs, but he wrote the minority report favoring admission of all teams. While the Knickerbockers preferred to participate in sports with their own social peers, they clearly did not want to restrict the growth of baseball in any way, nor emerge as the equivalent of the Marylebone Cricket Club.³⁰

The formation of the NABBP was pivotal in the history of the sport, "marking the close of one baseball era and the beginning of another, in which the players and their representatives would meet annually in convention to revise the rules, settle disputes and control their own game."³¹ Although often weak and ineffective, baseball's first centralized organization governed the sport for the next thirteen years. By the eve of the Civil War, membership in the NABBP had increased to over sixty clubs, the majority still being from New York and vicinity, again illustrating that organized baseball was concentrated in this region. As the sport's popularity spread rapidly in the 1850s, clubs were established in most northeastern cities and in other parts of the country. While the NABBP did not reflect baseball's growing national character until after the Civil War, the 1859 election of Henry Schriver of Baltimore's Excelsior Club as the association's second vice-president symbolized the growing presence of non-New York teams.³²

Although one of the functions of the NABBP was to centralize the rules of baseball, the *Spirit* noted in 1859 that differences still existed in how the game was played in the East. Within several years, however, the New York-style game emerged triumphant. The earlier organization of the sport in New York City and the establishment there of the NABBP naturally contributed to this development, but the major reason that this particular style dominated was that it was used in America's sports-communication center, where all the national sports journals were located.³³ This centralization of the rules did little to alter the style of play, however. Prior to the Civil War baseball remained essentially a hitter's game, as demonstrated by the number of runs scored (frequently at least twenty per team).

Despite the primitive play, a fair degree of sophistication began to emerge in terms of the execution of the game. One correspondent to *Porter's Spirit*

noted that during a run-down infielders should throw the ball as seldom as possible and the pitcher should occupy the uncovered base; and in case a runner attempted to steal third base, the shortstop should back up the third baseman to safeguard against an errant throw by the catcher. There were no called balls and strikes, but the same writer pointed out that "many think that a ball that will curve as it approaches the striker is much more difficult to bat than one that takes a straight course."³⁴ There were numerous other suggestions as to how to make baseball a more "scientific" sport, such as a recommendation in the press that ball players specialize at one position.³⁵ Yet the change most frequently advocated—and the one most hotly contested—was the adoption of the fly rule, universally endorsed by sports journalists. Their rhetoric and sharp denunciation of the NABBP for failing to act suggests that the controversy went beyond merely refining the game. Underlying their advocacy of a more skillful sport were the inevitable comparison with cricket and the question of the manliness of baseball.

The Knickerbocker Club first proposed the fly rule, quite possibly the brainchild of James Whyte Davis, at the 1857 convention.³⁶ Opponents maintained that catching a fly ball hurt the player's hands and would make baseball too much like cricket. *Porter's Spirit* denied that such catches were injurious and countered that many ball players were former cricketers anyway. It urged that the fly rule not be rejected merely because it was used in cricket and then based its support of the rule on nationalistic considerations: "What an Englishman can do, an American is capable of improving upon."³⁷ This invocation of patriotism is not surprising since baseball was already being described as the national pastime and its supporters were painfully aware of the fact that it required less skill than the English game of cricket. However, the need to make baseball a more skillful sport went beyond nationalism. A more important motivation for support of the fly rule was to remove from baseball the vestiges of its heritage as an unmanly child's game.³⁸ One journalist commented that an important improvement in the match he watched was "several fine catches being made on the fly, instead of the child's play, 'from the bound.'" The change proved "not only more manly, but adds very much to the quickness of perception, and nerve and determination, which makes up the necessary qualifications of a complete fieldman, either at Base Ball or Cricket."³⁹

Baseball propagandists pointed to the healthful benefits to be derived from their brand of outdoor recreation, and even more than cricketers they emphasized the moral benefits as well. One sports journal went so far as to suggest that baseball clubs were an "important and valuable adjunct to the

church, inasmuch as a healthy bodily condition is undoubtedly essential to the enjoyment of a peaceful and religious state of mind."⁴⁰ However, virtually absent from the discussion of baseball's positive social contributions were references to its role in instilling character values, an argument that was used to confirm the manliness of cricket. The fact that the press ignored the same theme indicates that they were unsure of the manliness of baseball despite repeated claims to the contrary.

Rule changes, especially in the early stages of a developing sport, derive from an effort to meet the contingency of new and changing situations. Yet arguments in support of the fly rule ran counter to the basic direction of change in baseball—to create a balance between offense and defense. "What is more annoying to an admirer of good fielding," *Porter's Spirit* wrote in advocating adoption of the fly rule, "than to see a splendid hit to the center field, such as would merit a home run, entirely nullified by the puny effort of waiting until the force of the ball is spent on the ground and then taking it on the bound."⁴¹ The idea of penalizing a good hit by allowing an easier catch was justification enough for changing the rule, but the focus here and elsewhere was always on fielding and the improvement of this phase of the game, not really on the disadvantages to the hitter. This approach is surprising, but since baseball was already overwhelmingly a hitter's game, supporters adopted this argument.

Besides the absence of any structural reason for the fly rule, there is another perplexing problem with the press's support of this innovation. In their analyses of the popularity of baseball and cricket they conceded that cricket was the more complex and scientific sport but that baseball was more popular because it was "more simple in its rules, and a knowledge of it is more easily acquired."⁴² Then why tamper with a good thing, especially since the stated objective of ball playing was to beckon the city dweller into the outdoors for healthful exercise? This desire to make the national pastime more difficult further demonstrated the need to make it a more manly sport.

In 1859 the Knickerbocker Club decided to use the fly rule during its contests. The press noted that the experiment clearly proved the superiority of the rule and its positive influence on the sport, and they fully expected it to be passed at the next convention. Although Van Cort, the NABBP president and a longtime opponent of the fly rule, shifted his position "out of courtesy to those gentlemen who seem so earnestly to believe that it would be a desirable improvement," efforts to approve the change failed again and continued to fail for another three years.⁴³ Henry Chadwick and other sportswriters repeatedly chastised the delegates for failing to adopt the innovative rule, insisting that

the players themselves desired a more skillful game. Whether true or not, the momentum was clearly swinging in favor of change. Other clubs began experimenting with the fly rule as players became more proficient fielders, in part through concurrent participation in cricket. The NABBP finally passed the fly rule prior to the 1864 season, by which time organized baseball had changed dramatically.⁴⁴

Symbolic of the growing participant and spectator interest in baseball in the late 1850s was the arrangement of an all-star match in 1858 between players from New York City and Brooklyn clubs. Besides attempting to discover which area had the better players, the series served to show off the sport (as is still the case in the annual confrontation between the National and American leagues). The Fashion Course was rented for the best-two-out-of-three series because it was a neutral site and, more important, because it could accommodate thousands of spectators. To cover expenses an admission fee was charged, making it the first time Americans paid to see a baseball game.⁴⁵

The first game was scheduled for July 13 but was postponed on account of rain, even though nearly 2,000 spectators were on hand. Rescheduled for a week later the initial game in the series drew an "immense concourse" and was a closely contested event, with the play on both sides of the "very highest order." Brooklyn jumped to a 7-1 lead in the third inning, but the New Yorkers rallied to tie the score in the fourth and then outscored their opponents 7-4 in the fifth. Each team scored two runs in the sixth and one in the seventh, then Brooklyn pushed across four runs in the top of the eighth to lead, 18-17. New York countered with five runs, and when they held their opponents scoreless in the ninth they took a one-game lead in the series. The second game, played a month later, attracted a somewhat smaller crowd. Both squads made changes in their lineups. Brooklyn jumped to a 17-3 lead after four innings and coasted home to an easy 29-8 win. The entered the deciding game as a slight favorite, although none of the contests attracted heavy betting. The teams changed lineups once again, with the Brooklyn players coming solely from the Atlantic (six players) and the Eckford (three players) clubs. The Brooklynites scored twice in the top of the first inning, but the New Yorkers countered with seven runs and never relinquished their lead, winning 29-18.⁴⁶

The press agreed that the all-star games had been a huge success and were "extremely favorable to the progress and popularity of the game of Base-Ball."

While the New York City players drew first blood in the battle, Brooklyn teams would dominate the sport in the decade that followed, revenging the 1858 defeat in 1861 and winning baseball's unofficial championship from its inception in 1861 until 1867.⁴⁷ In a display of boosterism and civic pride, long an integral part of American sport, the Brooklyn *Eagle* proudly told its readers, "Nowhere has the National game of Baseball taken a firmer hold than in Brooklyn and nowhere are there better ballplayers." Given the area's inferiority complex, overshadowed as it was by the giant across the river, it is not surprising that the newspaper was especially pleased when a team from Brooklyn was victorious over a New York City club. "If we are ahead of the big city in nothing else," the *Eagle* wrote, "we can beat her in baseball."⁴⁸

By the end of the 1850s the national pastime had made significant advances both in the New York metropolitan area and throughout the country, although baseball contests remained purely local affairs. The Excelsior Club of Brooklyn broke with this policy prior to the start of the 1860 season when it announced a two-week tour to play teams in the western part of the state. The *Eagle* responded favorably to the idea, noting that "the excursion would not only be an exceedingly pleasant and enjoyable one but it would add greatly to the advances of the popularity of the game in every locality visited." Baseball's first extended road trip proved to be successful as the visitors easily won all six games against less experienced teams. Returning to Brooklyn the Excelsiors took on the Atlantics in a match described as a battle to decide the best baseball team in America. The expected classic confrontation between two equally matched teams turned into a rout, with the Excelsiors manhandling the Atlantics, 23-4, before a huge crowd estimated at 6,000-8,000. The next day the *Eagle* reported that the Atlantics never looked worse and the Excelsiors never looked better. Fresh from victory the Excelsiors went on another tour, going as far south as Baltimore and continuing to attract considerable interest despite one-sided victories over hometown heroes.⁴⁹

The impact of the Excelsior Club on baseball went beyond the interest its tours generated or its success on the field. The club represented changes that were already underway in baseball as a result of the growth of the sport and the increasing competitiveness of the game. Initially composed of the merchants and clerks who formed the club for the benefits to be derived from healthful exercise, the team was totally revamped between 1857 and 1860 as winning took on greater importance and symbolic meaning. Newer and better players were added in a merger with another Brooklyn club, by the decision of two members of the New York Cricket Club to join the baseball team,

and with the recruitment of four players from the Star Club, a leading Brooklyn junior squad.⁵⁰ Yet with all these changes the Excelsior Club was still considered a club for gentlemen. Many of the new recruits came from respectable families, although the starting nine included players whose economic and social standings placed them below other members. While talent was by no means the sole criterion for membership, it was clearly a major factor in the recruitment of some players.

Of the new Excelsior players none was more important as both a ball player and a symbol of baseball's future than James Creighton, the sport's first superstar, whose arrival in 1860 turned a good team into a powerful one. A reporter for the *Eagle* heard so much about Creighton's prowess as a pitcher that he felt compelled to go see him perform. He noted that the nineteen-year-old threw a "speed ball," but as speed alone was not difficult to hit, he also curved the ball. The reporter claimed that Creighton delivered his pitches "within a few inches of the ground and they rose up about the batsman's hip, and when thus delivered, the result of hitting at the ball is either to miss it or send it high in the air."⁵¹

Creighton was not only the sport's first premier player, he was, more significantly, baseball's first professional player. How the Excelsior Club compensated him, whether in money or a job, is unknown, but why they chose to violate the NABBP ban against paid players is easier to comprehend. Apparently the young man was from a respectable middle-class family, and considering that his father was only a clerk at city hall, his social standing was probably higher than his economic one. The Creightons were most likely down on their luck, and the Excelsiors agreed to compensate their star pitcher because he lost time at work when on tour and because they had no fear that he would succumb to the evils often associated with professional athletes. While Creighton is the only known baseball professional in the pre-Civil War years, other players probably received gifts or at least had their dues paid by grateful club patrons.⁵²

After returning from their southern trip the Excelsiors played the Atlantics again, this time losing in a close game, 15-14. The third, tie-breaking game drew a record crowd of 14,000-20,000, but the contest never reached a conclusion. With the Excelsiors leading 8-6 in the sixth inning their captain pulled the team off the field to protest the unruly behavior of the Atlantic fans after several close calls.⁵³ While the press absolved both teams of the incident, the deportment of the crowd was symptomatic of the growing rowdiness, excessive questioning of umpires' decisions, and especially gambling and partisanship.⁵⁴ "If admirers of this manly pastime desire its future welfare," the *Eagle*

pointed out, "they should at once proceed to adopt stringent rules among the various clubs, *against betting on the results of matches played*, for it is unquestionably a regard for their pockets alone that led the majority of those pecuniary interested in the affair to act in the background manner that they did." The *Clipper* saw the problem of gambling as part of "the *spirit of faction* that characterises a large proportion of the community, and in which the foreign element of our immense metropolitan population, and their native offspring especially, delights to indulge."⁵⁵ Such problems would continue to plague not only baseball but all highly competitive (especially team and spectator) sports. These problems derive from the shift in the intent of the activity from play to sport, where the seriousness of the process yields to the seriousness of outcome. This shift becomes especially charged when victory takes on communal significance and importance.

Despite these difficulties the press insisted that the 1860 baseball season "may justly rank as the most brilliant one in the brief annals of our national game."⁵⁶ The rapid and continuing growth of the sport naturally led observers to seek out its cause, which they attributed to the inexpensiveness and simplicity of the game; the health and moral benefits derived from the activity; and the familiarity of many Americans with the game from their childhood and its association with boyhood frolics. By the outbreak of the Civil War the press had also adopted a fourth, and eventually dominant, explanation for baseball's popularity—namely, that baseball expressed and was suited for the American character and temperament.⁵⁷ Ever since then writers have sought to explain baseball's special place in American life. Most have relied on the nebulous idea of baseball's relationship to the national character, although several have focused on other, more interesting interpretations. For example, Allen Guttman maintains that the major reason for baseball's preeminent position among American sport is its place in the cycle of seasons and its tendency toward extreme quantification.⁵⁸ While such explanations contain some validity, they do not provide, even collectively, a satisfying framework for understanding why baseball has long been America's number-one sport.

The most important factor in explaining baseball's leadership role is its emergence as a popular pastime at a critical juncture in the history of American athletics. Baseball was not the first organized sport, the first successful spectator sport, nor the first sport to enjoy widespread popularity. However, it was the first sport to take advantage of the changing attitude toward athletics. More than any other sport of its day baseball fulfilled the requirements

of the new sporting universe created by the changing social and urban environment of the antebellum period. The rapid spread of baseball clubs illustrated "a great popular want" for outdoor recreation,⁵⁹ and while other sports could have served this need, few had baseball's advantages. Not only was it inexpensive, but it combined individual play within a team setting. It is no coincidence that there was an increasing emphasis on team, at the expense of individual, sports with the shift from premodern to modern sport. While several factors shaped this development, one contributory reason was that team sports more readily served the character-value argument so important to the justification of athletics.⁶⁰

The unquestioned acceptance of baseball as the national pastime contributed greatly to its preeminent position in the sports world. Both the absence of an entrenched competitor and timing played a vital role here. As early as 1857 the *Spirit* claimed that baseball "must be regarded as a national pastime," yet organized baseball at that time was confined to the New York metropolitan area, although various children's forms of the game were well known throughout the country. This premature description might have reflected a certain parochialism on the part of the New York-based sports journal, but the desire to promote an American sport was probably the real reason for this contention. In an article entitled "National Sports and Their Uses" the *Times* argued that strenuous athletic activity was necessary to combat the physical degeneracy of urban residents and that the more extensive participation in sport in England was responsible for Britons' longer lifespan. "To reproduce the tastes and habits of English sporting life in this country is neither possible nor desirable," the newspaper maintained, but "to develop analogous tendencies of an original and specific character appropriate to our national trials and opportunities is both very possible and desirable." A statement in *Porter's Spirit* clearly suggested that baseball "ought to be looked upon in this country with the same national enthusiasm" as cricket in England because "there should be some game peculiar to the citizens of the United States." Its advocacy of baseball was not based on the fact that the sport was manly, healthful, or a pleasure to the young, since that would "say nothing specifically in its praise, because all movements of the body in the open air are so." Instead, *Porter's Spirit* rested its support for baseball on the belief that the time had come "that some attempt was made to set up a game that could be termed a 'Native American Sport.'"⁶¹

The search for a national pastime grew out of the sporting revolution of the antebellum period. As with other cultural forms, the maturation of sport in this country led to the desire on the part of Americans to emancipate their

games from foreign patterns. Such nationalistic overtones were already present in harness racing, but this nonparticipatory sport could not emerge as a symbol of an athletic movement with healthful exercise as its major rationale. Since baseball filled the bill, the press prematurely dubbed the game the national pastime, a symbol of, and spur to, America's athletic changes.

The erroneous popular belief that baseball was indigenous to America facilitated the contention that baseball was indeed the national pastime. Robin Carver had delineated the relationship between baseball and the English game of rounders as early as 1839 in his *Book of Sport*. While the children's book was quite popular, many adults were probably unfamiliar with its content, while others no doubt forgot or ignored the relationship. Many Americans innocently presumed that the game was native to this country since they had been playing it for so long and since rounders attracted no public attention in England.⁶² As baseball gained in popularity, however, a letter to the *Herald* in 1859 pointed out that English schoolboys had played baseball under the name of rounders for more than a century, and the following year Henry Chadwick, an English-born sportswriter living in America, also noted baseball's English origins. Given Chadwick's authoritative position and the presence of Englishmen on the baseball diamond, the reassertion that baseball evolved from rounders went virtually unchallenged until years later, when Albert G. Spalding and his self-appointed commission sought to purify the game through the propaganda of the Abner Doubleday Myth.⁶³

Having raised doubts as to just how American the national pastime was, Chadwick immediately reassured his adopted countrymen that "this invigorating exercise and manly pastime may be now justly termed the American game of Ball, for though of English origin, it has been so modified and improved of late years in this country, as almost to deprive it of any of its original features beyond the mere groundwork of the game." Significant changes in baseball had already taken place, but that any Englishman could easily recognize the game as a variation of rounders indicates that such a claim was a bit premature. Chadwick clearly felt that Americans needed a sport they could call their own and that baseball was well suited as the national pastime because it was peculiarly adapted to the American character. He never insisted, however, as many writers did, that baseball was an inherently better game than cricket—it was simply an excellent way to popularize physical education and a healthy outdoor sport.⁶⁴ His argument, adopted by other writers, contained elements of the truth, for a radical change in the character of the sport had taken place—if not by 1860, then clearly by 1870. As a "game" form baseball was not a native product but had evolved from earlier ball games of which

rounders was its most direct ancestor. As a "sport" form baseball was indigenous to America, for it was in this country that baseball was organized and the rules standardized. In essence, while baseball originated as an English game, it became an American sport.

The acceptance of baseball as the national pastime and the perception of it as the embodiment of the American temperament was critical to its long-lasting preeminent position. While criticism of baseball was evident even after 1870, it mostly concerned the professional game. By 1900, when college football first came out from behind ivy-covered walls, criticism of baseball had not only abated but the sport was unquestionably accepted as one of America's finest democratic institutions. In 1919 the eminent philosopher Morris Cohen claimed that baseball was the American religion. Indeed, thanks to a pervasive and popular ideology and mythology, baseball had an incalculable head start over any of its serious sports rivals.⁶⁵

Through all this the press never hesitated to point out its contribution to the growth of baseball as a national sport. Although that view was self-serving and slightly exaggerated it was not entirely without merit. Increasing coverage of the sport in the 1850s corresponded with the growing number of clubs and contests and the public desire for such news. The press, especially sports journals such as *Porter's Spirit* and the *Clipper*, disseminated information on how to play the game, how the clubs were organized, what the various teams in New York City and vicinity, and the country as well, were doing—in other words, they publicized the game. Baseball reporting made only minor advances during this period as newspapers continued to provide only brief summaries of contests and crude box scores that merely detailed the runs and outs made by each player. By the end of the 1850s, however, sports journals began to compile annual statistics of players and teams, as they did for cricket, as a means of assessing performances.⁶⁶ The pre-Civil War period also saw the rudimentary beginnings of a baseball literature. In 1857 a frequent correspondent to *Porter's Spirit* noted that many cricket books existed and that one was needed for baseball, too. *Beadle's Dime Base-Ball Player*, edited by Henry Chadwick and published in 1860, was the first annual guidebook for the sport; approximately 50,000 copies were sold. Essentially a rehash of Chadwick's newspaper articles, the guidebook discussed the origins of baseball, published the NABBP rules, provided statistics from the previous year, and offered a brief statement as to the physical and moral benefits of baseball.⁶⁷

The occupational structure of New York City and Brooklyn ball players changed significantly with the rising popularity of the sport. Baseball shifted from an upper-middle-middle-class game to one dominated by men from the

middle-lower-middle classes. While professional-high white-collar and low white-collar-proprietor workers made up slightly more than three-quarters of the ball players of these neighboring cities between 1850 and 1855 (see table 2-1), the latter group, along with skilled craftsmen, composed roughly the same proportion during the next five-year interval (see table 2-2). This change was almost directly related to the increasing percentage of skilled craftsmen and the declining proportion of professional-high white-collar workers. The evidence clearly indicates that baseball in Brooklyn and New York City had become a broadly based sport by the outbreak of the Civil War, although unskilled workers, roughly one-third of the work force of each city, remained virtually absent from the diamond. It should be further noted that roughly half of the skilled craftsmen were connected with crafts that were able to minimize the negative impact "metropolitan industrialization" had on a large section of New York's skilled craftsmen. Besides those in the shipping industry, discussed earlier, ball players in both cities worked in the printing, construction, and especially the food industries (one-sixth of all New York ball players were in the food industry, while one-tenth of all Brooklyn players engaged in food-related occupations, including ten men from the Atlantic Club). While many of the skilled workers came from the more prosperous crafts, the fact that one-sixth of all New York and Brooklyn ball players worked at jobs where they barely earned a living wage testifies to the broad appeal of the national pastime.⁶⁸

The general membership of New York City and Brooklyn baseball clubs was from the middling ranks, but middle- to upper-middle-class men were elected officers of these clubs: over three-quarters of them were from the two higher-status occupational groups (see table 2-3). The 12.9 percent difference between baseball officers and total club membership resulted almost exclusively from the shifting proportion of professionals and skilled craftsmen. This

Table 2-3. Occupational Structure of Area Baseball Club Officers, 1856-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	23	33.8	21	30.0	44	31.9
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	34	50.0	28	40.0	62	44.9
Skilled Craftsman	11	16.2	21	30.0	32	23.2
Total	68		70		138	

change was evident in both cities, although Brooklyn officers, like Brooklyn ball players, had more plebeian backgrounds. NABBP delegates between 1857 and 1860 held even more lucrative jobs (see table 2-4). Since officers and delegates were a more visible group, they were more easily identifiable—constituting probably no more than one-fourth of the membership, they accounted for 41.5 percent of the known ball players. When baseball's nonofficer membership is examined, the sport's middle-class character emerges even more clearly (see table 2-5). Between 1856 and 1860 only one-eight of the nonofficers were drawn from the more prestigious and lucrative occupations; the remaining players were divided roughly equally between the next two groups, with only a minute percentage being unskilled workers.

Although variations existed between officers and nonofficers there were no differences between members who participated in ball games and those who did not. The occupational structure of the ball players who engaged in at least one game (on the first team of their respective clubs) during this five-year

Table 2-4. Occupational Structure of Area NABBP Delegates, 1857-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	14	43.8	6	35.3	20	40.8
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	12	37.5	7	41.2	19	38.8
Skilled Craftsman	6	18.8	4	23.5	10	20.4
Total	32		17		49	

Table 2-2. Occupational Structure of Area Baseball Players, 1856-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	41	21.9	31	18.2	72	20.2
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	83	44.4	73	42.9	156	43.7
Skilled Craftsman	61	32.6	63	37.1	124	34.7
Unskilled Worker	2	1.1	3	1.8	5	1.4
Total	187		170		357	

Table 2-5. Occupational Structure of Nonofficer Members of Area Baseball Clubs, 1856-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	16	14.4	10	10.2	26	12.4
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	45	40.5	43	43.9	88	42.1
Skilled Craftsman	48	43.2	42	42.9	90	43.1
Unskilled Worker	2	1.8	3	3.1	5	2.4
Total	111		98		209	

interval was remarkably similar to the total membership (compare tables 2-6 and 2-2). Active participants—those who participated in four first-team games during any one year, or ten games in five years—varied significantly from the general membership (see table 2-7). Skilled craftsmen made up nearly half the ball players of the two cities who engaged frequently in baseball contests, with 40 percent of these men employed in the food industry. The next highest occupational group constituted another 36.1 percent of the active participants, with clerks (and similar workers) accounting for 40 percent of this group. Thus, clerks and food-industry workers together made up one-third of the active participants, while those engaged in the most and least lucrative occupations together made up less than one-sixth of the city's leading ball players.

By the mid-1850s baseball in New York City and Brooklyn began to slip from the polite hands of the urban gentlemen, becoming a sport for all social

Table 2-6. Occupational Structure of Area Baseball Players, 1856-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	21	11.9	13	18.1	34	20.2
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	40	41.7	28	38.9	68	40.5
Skilled Craftsman	33	34.3	29	40.3	62	36.9
Unskilled Worker	2	2.1	2	2.8	4	2.4
Total	96		72		168	

Table 2-7. Occupational Structure of Active Area Baseball Players, 1856-60

	New York City		Brooklyn		Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional-High White-Collar	8	17.8	3	7.9	11	13.3
Low White-Collar-Proprietor	18	40.0	12	31.6	30	36.1
Skilled Craftsman	18	40.0	22	57.9	40	48.2
Unskilled Worker	1	2.2	1	2.6	2	2.4
Total	45		38		83	

classes, with the notable exception of unskilled workers. On the playing field, clerks, a select group of proprietors, and skilled craftsmen in particular dominated the sport. The high percentage of craftsmen among baseball's active participants, especially in Brooklyn and even before the commercialization and professionalization of the sport, indicates that they were not lured to baseball by these later developments; instead, their presence in large numbers was vital to the emergence of this later stage.

Several factors contributed to the involvement of skilled craftsmen in baseball. The inexpensiveness of the sport and the fact that they could easily engage in it without disturbing their work schedules (or, in the case of ball players who worked in the food industry, had occupations that were completed by midday) facilitated participation. A high percentage of baseball's craftsmen, most notably those in the shipping and food industries, engaged in occupations where the relationship between master craftsmen and their employees was generally good. In fact, one possible reason for the considerable number of ball-playing members from the butcher community is that master craftsmen in this industry may have promoted and sponsored clubs. Clearly, these men were frequently the officers and NABBP delegates of clubs composed of butchers.⁶⁹

Most important of all, craftsmen had a rich sporting heritage in general, especially among those artisans who belonged to the group Bruce Laurie describes as "traditionalist." New York butchers were typical of this group, known as lusty chaps who glorified in their stamina and physical prowess. While they engaged in a variety of sports, baseball held a special attraction for them and for other artisans. Unlike other sports they participated in, such as boxing and animal sports, which were illegal, publicly castigated, and usually

conducted surreptitiously, baseball was socially respectable and favorably reported on in the press. Participation in baseball thereby provided butchers with an arena to demonstrate that they were part of the respectable community at a time when they had an unrivaled reputation for forming gangs and for drunken carousing. One reason master craftsmen in this industry, who were regarded as respectable, sober, and substantial, may have promoted baseball clubs among their employees was to counterbalance this negative image and to provide an alternative recreation to those frequently engaged in.⁷⁰ Finally, baseball offered artisans a vehicle for enhancing their prestige and influence within their own communities, which had long appreciated and rewarded physical prowess and sporting success. With the growing popularity of baseball, artisans also could win prestige within the large community of players and fans, thereby further enhancing their standing in their own communities. Thus, it was a search for fame rather than fortune that initially attracted these workers to baseball.

The game of baseball made significant advances in the fifteen years after the Knickerbockers organized the first club. Now a popular participant and spectator sport, baseball was well on its way toward modernization by the outbreak of the Civil War. The growth of the game and the rapid advances it made, especially between 1855 and 1860, set the stage for the tremendous changes that would occur during the next decade.

Notes

1. For a discussion of baseball's pastoral image, see Allen Guttman, *From Rite to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 100-106; Bruce Catton, "The Great American Game," *American Heritage* 10 (April 1959): 16-25; Richard C. Crepeau, "Urban and Rural Images in Baseball," *Journal of Popular Culture* 9 (1975): 315, 318-24; Murray Ross, "Football and Baseball in America," in John T. Talamini and Charles H. Page, eds., *Sport and Society: An Anthology* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 103-104; Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1980), 227-68.
2. For the formation of the Knickerbockers, see Harold Seymour, *Baseball, 2 vols.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960-71), 1:15; Robert W. Henderson, *Ball, Bat and Bishop: The Origin of Ball Games* (New York: Rockport, 1947), 161-62; Charles A. Peverelly, *The Book of American Pastimes* (New York, 1866), 339-40; Al-

bert G. Spalding, *America's National Game* (New York: American Sports, 1911), 47-88.

3. Henry Chadwick, ed., *Beadle's Dime Base-Ball Player*, 6 vols. (New York: Beadle, 1860-65), 2:6. Also see Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:6, 18, 33; Henderson, *Ball*, 146-47, 161, 168; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 55; Irving A. Leitner, *Baseball: Diamond in the Rough* (New York: Criterion, 1972), 31-32; Harold Peterson, *The Man Who Invented Baseball* (New York: Scribner, 1969), 76-77. For Curry's view thirty-one years after the contest, see Alfred H. Spink, *The National Game* (St. Louis: National Game, 1910), 56.

4. *New York Herald*, October 21, 25, 1845. For further discussion of this theme and an examination of the composition of the Brooklyn Club, see Melvin L. Adelman, "The First Baseball Game, The First Newspaper References to Baseball and the New York Club: A Note on the Early History of Baseball," *Journal of Sport History* 7 (Winter 1980): 132-35.

5. *Herald*, November 11, 1845. In 1865 Alexander J. Cartwright wrote that the Knickerbockers were baseball's first club, "for the old New York Club never had a regular organization." See his letter to Charles Debest in Peterson, *Man Who Invented Baseball*, 175. The statement suggests that the New Yorkers had some organization even if they lacked the formality of the Knickerbockers.

6. Henderson, *Ball*, 162, 167, 196; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:17-20, 38.

7. For the conventional wisdom about the Knickerbockers, see Peverelly, *American Pastimes*, 340; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:15-17; David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966-70), 1:8; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 65-69; John A. Krout, *Annals of American Sport* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1929), 117-18; Foster R. Dulles, *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), 187; Leitner, *Baseball*, 33.

8. For the view that the Knickerbockers were from the upper class, see Leitner, *Baseball*, 33; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 51, 66; Robert Smith, *Baseball* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), 37; Robert Boyle, *Sport—Mirror of American Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 16. None of the Knickerbockers were among, or descendants of, the wealthiest 1,000 New Yorkers in 1845. See Edward Pessen, "The Wealthiest New Yorkers of the Jacksonian Era: A New List," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 54 (1970): 161-72. Harold Seymour notes that the Knickerbockers were professional men, merchants, and white-collar workers. While he never suggests that they were from the upper class, he parallels baseball's early years with the effort of the upper class to restrict other sports to its own social class. He further asserts that one fact that contributed to baseball's popularity was that "the upper class had given their imprimatur to the game." See *Baseball*, 1:16, 31. A major drawback of Seymour's discussion of the Knickerbockers is that he considers the club's development between 1845 and 1860 in a singular analysis. Although certain similarities in policies and practices persisted throughout these fifteen years, changes naturally

occurred as a result of shifting membership and the overall growth of the sport. Seymour draws data for his analysis of the club members from the membership rosters for 1859 and 1860, which also give the year each member of those two teams joined the club. Since many of the Knickerbockers between 1845 and 1850 were no longer club members in 1859 and 1860, his analysis can hardly be accurate in terms of the occupational structure of baseball's pioneer team during its early years. Voigt's examination of social class among the Knickerbockers is similar to Seymour's. See *American Baseball*, 1:8.

9. Peterson, *Man Who Invented Baseball*, 53, 90-106, 164-76. When the Knickerbockers were formed in the 1840s they were not men of absolute leisure but rather from the mercantile class. See Wilkes' *Spirit of the Times* 19 (January 23, 1869): 359.

10. Robert W. Henderson, "Adams of the Knickerbockers," unpublished manuscript in the New York Racquet and Tennis Club. The Knickerbocker club book reveals no effort to arrange a baseball game, although they did play intersquad contests during this period. See Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York, "Game Book, 1845-1868," 5 vols., Manuscript Room, New York Public Library.

11. Elite social clubs indicate the desire of men of eminence to "proclaim their status, to identify to peers and inferiors as dramatically as possible." See Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1973), 229.

12. *Porter's Spirit of the Times* 1 (January 3, 1857): 293, 3 (November 7, 1857): 148; Preston D. Orem, *Baseball, from Newspaper Accounts* (Altadena, Calif., 1961), 10.

13. *Spirit of the Times* 23 (July 9, 1853): 246; Orem, *Baseball*, 10-11; Leitner, *Baseball*, 37.

14. *Porter's Spirit* 1 (January 10, 1857): 309; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 59-61; Leitner, *Baseball*, 38-39; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:23-24; Dulles, *Recreation*, 187.

15. For a discussion of New York shipwrights, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 134-37, 405-7. For the economic status of shipwrights in Philadelphia, see Stuart Blumin, "Mobility and Change in Antebellum Philadelphia," in Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett, eds., *Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969), 168-69. The occupations of only eight of the eighteen Eckford players who appeared in the 1855 box scores could be identified. Of these players, four were nonmanual workers (two clerks, a doctor, and a merchant), so if every other player was a manual worker, then 22.2 percent of the club members would have been nonmanual workers.

16. *Porter's Spirit* 6 (March 26, 1859): 52; Chadwick, "Scrapbook," 26 vols., Spalding Collection, New York Public Library, vol. 3. Henry Eckford was among

the wealthiest 300 New Yorkers in 1845. See Pessen, *Riches*, 323. For a typology of the different working-class groups and attitudes, see Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, Shoemakers and Industrial Morality," *Labor History* 15 (1974): 367-94; Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

17. For the method used to collect and collate the data, and the problems that arose, see the appendix.

18. I compared the Brooklyn work force, compiled from the *Census of the State of New York for 1855* (Albany, 1857), 178-95, with Carol Kaestle's work on New York for the same year. See *The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 201-202. The largest variation between the economic universes of the two cities was 6.7 percent, for common laborers; no other category had a difference larger than 2 percent.

19. For the development of Brooklyn, see Henry R. Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn*, 3 vols. (Brooklyn: Subscription, 1867-70).

20. *Spirit* 25 (May 12, 1855): 147; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:33.

21. *Herald*, November 3, 1854; *Spirit* 25 (June 2, 1855): 181.

22. *Herald*, July 20, 1859. For a contemporary view of the growth of baseball, see *ibid.*, December 22, 1856; *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 2, 1858; *Porter's Spirit* 1 (September 6, 1856): 13, 3 (December 5, 1857): 212; *Spirit* 26 (January 3, 1857): 558; *New York Times*, July 14, 1858.

23. *Herald*, December 7, 1855; *Porter's Spirit* 1 (October 11, 1856): 93. Also see *ibid.*, 2 (March 7, 1857): 5; *Herald*, December 22, 1856; *Spirit* 26 (January 3, 1857): 558, (January 31, 1857): 603. For the relationship between the expanded number of teams and games and the formation of a national association, see Chadwick, *Baseball's Dime* (1860): 9.

24. *Herald*, March 14, 1858; *Porter's Spirit* 4 (March 20, 1858): 37; *Spirit* 28 (March 20, 1858): 65; Henry Chadwick, "Scrapbook," vol. 7.

25. Spalding, *America's National Game*, 70; Voigt, *American Baseball*, 1:8-9; Krout, *Annals*, 118; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:35-36.

26. *Porter's Spirit* 3 (October 31, 1857): 132, (September 5, 1857): 4; (January 16, 1858): 309, 2 (March 7, 1857): 5; *Spirit* 26 (January 31, 1857): 603.

27. For the view that the events at the 1858 convention were a democratic revolt, see Krout, *Annals*, 118; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 67-70. Voigt leaves the impression that the 1858 convention was a palace revolt. See *American Baseball*, 1:8-9. For Van Cott's letter, see *Spirit* 24 (December 23, 1854): 534; *Tribune*, December 19, 1854.

28. The term "junior club" was given to those teams whose delegates were less than twenty-one years old. With the passage of time it came to connote teams that were composed mainly of boys and young men (usually ages fourteen to twenty-

one). The NABBP had no age restrictions for members of senior clubs as long as they were not delegates. Most senior teams had some players who were less than twenty-one years old.

29. *Porter's Spirit* 4 (March 20, 1858): 337. For a similar view, see *New York Clipper* 5 (April 3, 1858): 396. Also see *Herald*, March 14, 1858; *Spirit* (March 20, 1858): 65. For the formation of the National Association of Junior Base Ball Players, see Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1861): 50.

30. *Herald*, March 14, 1858; *Spirit* 28 (March 20, 1858): 56.

31. Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:37.

32. For the growth of baseball outside of the metropolitan area, see *ibid.*, 1:24–29; Voigt, *American Baseball*, 1:9–10; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 62–63.

33. *Spirit* 29 (May 21, 1859): 169. New Englanders had their own version of baseball and in 1858 held their own convention. For a discussion of the New England game, see *Porter's Spirit* 1 (December 27, 1856): 176–77, 4 (May 29, 1858): 196, 3 (October 24, 1857): 117; Leitner, *Baseball*, 21, 46–47; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:26–28. For the suggestion that the New York game won out because it was a better one than the New England game, see *ibid.*, 1:37–38.

34. *Porter's Spirit* 3 (December 26, 1857): 261, (November 7, 1857): 148, 2 (March 7, 1857): 5.

35. *Ibid.* 1 (December 6, 1856): 229; *Clipper* 7 (March 31, 1860): 496, 8 (May 26, 1860): 43.

36. Orem, *Baseball*, 16. See *Porter's Spirit* 1 (December 20, 1856): 260 for its recommendation that a game have six outs per inning and that a ball caught on the first bounce would constitute one out but if caught on the fly would count as two outs.

37. *Porter's Spirit* 2 (March 7, 1857): 5.

38. The concept of manliness was critical in overcoming the view that baseball was a game suitable only for children. The press described baseball as mainly amusement on numerous occasions but, as was the case with cricket, never precisely defined the term. The strong link to physical prowess and skill found in the cricket argument did not appear in the baseball argument, however, and seriously affected attempts to justify the sport as manly. It also suggests that while the press was certain that cricket was a manly sport, it was not so sure about baseball. For the contention that baseball was a manly sport, see *Porter's Spirit* 1 (January 31, 1857): 357, 4 (April 3, 1858): 68; *Clipper* 7 (February 18, 1860): 349; *Herald*, November 3, 1854, October 16, 1859; *Spirit* 26 (January 31, 1857): 603; *Eagle*, July 28, 1858, August 3, 1859, May 10, 1860.

39. *Porter's Spirit* 1 (November 8, 1856): 165. The Knickerbockers, "with a view of making the game more manly and scientific . . . proposed that no player should be out on a fair struck ball, if it was only taken by the fielder according to the old rule." *Ibid.* 2 (March 7, 1857): 5.

40. *Porter's Spirit* 2 (June 20, 1857): 245.

41. *Ibid.* 6 (August 20, 1859): 388; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:19.

42. *Spirit* 28 (March 27, 1858): 78, 29 (December 3, 1859): 505; *Porter's Spirit* 4 (April 3, 1858): 69, 6 (March 19, 1859): 35.

43. *Clipper* 7 (July 9, 1859): 95; *Porter's Spirit* 6 (July 9, 1859): 292, (August 13, 1859): 372. For Van Cort's statement, see Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1860): 45.

44. Chadwick analyzed the voting at the 1860 convention to illustrate that the players supported the fly rule. He noted that the newly admitted clubs, who voted 26–7 against the proposition, had been responsible for the defeat of the bill by 9 votes. Closer scrutiny demonstrates that among older teams, the fly rule was overwhelmingly desired by only those from Brooklyn. Delegates from clubs in that city voted 18–5 in favor of the bill, but New York City clubs and teams from outside the metropolitan area voted 12–10 and 8–7 against the bill, respectively. See Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1860): 46–47. For the argument that the players favored the fly rule, also see *Porter's Spirit* 3 (January 16, 1858): 308; *Eagle*, August 6, 1860.

45. *Porter's Spirit* 4 (June 12, 1858): 228, (June 26, 1858): 260, (July 17, 1858): 313; *Clipper* 6 (July 24, 1858): 110. Two baseball historians contend that it cost fifty cents to witness the all-star game; the only newspaper reference was to a ten-cent admission fee, with a one-horse vehicle costing an additional twenty cents and a two-horse vehicle costing an additional forty cents. The latter fee structure, rather than a flat rate, was the one commonly used at the New York tracks. See *Herald*, July 11, 1858; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 71; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:25.

46. *Spirit* 28 (July 17, 1858): 270, (July 24, 1858): 288, (August 21, 1858): 330, (September 18, 1858): 373; *Porter's Spirit* 4 (July 24, 1858): 332; *Times* 14 (July 21, 1858); *Eagle* (July 21, 1858); *Clipper* 6 (July 24, 1858): 110.

47. *Porter's Spirit* 5 (September 18, 1858): 36; *Times* 14 (July 14, 1858); *Clipper* 6 (September 18, 1858): 174. For the supremacy of Brooklyn teams, see *Porter's Spirit* 6 (August 6, 1859): 361; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:25. For the 1861 all-star game, see *Eagle*, October 3, 22, 1861; Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1862): 40–41; *Clipper* 9 (October 5, 1861): 194, (October 12, 1861): 202.

48. *Eagle*, September 3, March 12, May 10, 1862.

49. *Ibid.*, April 30, July 18, 1860. For the importance of the tour, see *ibid.*, July 9, 13, 1860; Chadwick "Scrapbook," vol. 1; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:32; Spalding, *America's National Game*, 79–81.

50. For a more detailed discussion of the reconstruction of the Excelsiors, see Melvin L. Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics: Sport in New York City, 1820–1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1980), 345–46.

51. *Eagle*, August 6, 1860.

52. For the view of Creighton as the first professional baseball player, see Chadwick, "Scrapbook," vol. 7. Also see Orem, *Baseball*, 26; Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:47–48; Voigt, *American Baseball*, 1:13.

53. *Eagle*, August 10, 24, 1860; *Herald*, August 24, 1860; *Clipper* 8 (August 31, 1860): 154; *Times*, August 14, 1860.

54. *Eagle*, August 27, 1860; *Clipper* 8 (September 8, 1860): 163. For earlier problems, see *Porter's Spirit* 3 (November 28, 1857): 196, (September 5, 1857): 4, 5 (October 30, 1858): 135; *Clipper* 8 (July 21, 1860): 107; Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1861): 53-54.
55. *Eagle*, August 24, 1860; *Clipper* 8 (September 8, 1860): 164. The *Clipper* also noted that the problems of the Atlantic-Excelsior contest were rooted in the different social status of the two teams. The Excelsiors were reportedly American-born merchants and the Atlantics were artisans, many of them Irish-American. Also see *Spirit* 19 (January 23, 1869): 359; Spink, *National Game*, 361.
56. *Eagle*, October 30, 1860; *Clipper* 8 (February 2, 1861): 322.
57. *Herald*, December 22, 1856; *Eagle*, September 18, 1858; *Times*, August 28, 1858; *Clipper* 7 (February 18, 1860): 349; *Spirit* 27 (March 27, 1858): 78.
58. Guttman, *Ritual*, chap. 4. For problems with Guttman's view, see Adelman, "Modern Athletics," 376-77, n. 100. For other explanations of baseball's special place in American life, see Catton, "Great American Game," 16-25; Voigt, *American Baseball*, 1:80-96; Riess, *Touching Base*, 221-35; Ralph Andreano, *No Joy in Mudville: The Dilemma of Major League Baseball* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1965), 3-39.
59. *Eagle*, September 1, 1858.
60. Guttman, *Ritual*, 136-57. For a discussion of the connection between team sports and the character-value argument, see the conclusion.
61. *Spirit* 26 (January 31, 1857): 603; *Times*, June 5, 1857; *Porter's Spirit* 1 (January 31, 1857): 357.
62. Robin Carver, *Book of Sport* (Boston, 1834). For a discussion of Carver's work, see Henderson, *Ball*, 152-60. For the belief in the American origins of baseball, see *Porter's Spirit* 1 (January 31, 1857): 357, 3 (October 24, 1857): 117; *Spirit* 26 (January 31, 1857): 103; *Eagle*, August 3, 1859; *Herald*, December 19, 1854.
63. *Herald*, October 16, 1859; Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1860): 5.
64. Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1860): 5; Chadwick, "Scrapbook," vol. 7.
65. Morris Cohen, "Baseball," *Dial* 19 (July 26, 1919): 57-58; Riess, *Touching Base*, 5-8, 221-33.
66. *Eagle*, May 30, 1864; *Baseball Chronicle* 1 (June 6, 1867); Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:32-34.
67. *Porter's Spirit* 3 (October 24, 1857): 117; Chadwick, *Beadle's Dime* (1860); Seymour, *Baseball*, 1:44.
68. For a discussion of metropolitan industrialization and its impact on New York's various crafts, see Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 107-42.
69. Biographical material on New York and Brooklyn baseball players is lacking, but there is some evidence to suggest that wealthier master craftsmen within the food industry were officers of several baseball clubs. For example, Seaman Lichtenstein, the treasurer of the Gotham Club from 1857 to 1859, made his fortune in pickles and went on to become one of the city's most prominent produce

merchants. A lover of fast horses, Lichtenstein was a member of the Elm Park Trotting Association and drove his horses with Cornelius Vanderbilt and other well-to-do gentlemen. See *Times*, December 25, 1902. Robert G. Cornell, an officer of the Baltic Club, was the brother of Charles G. Cornell, a wealthy butcher, carriage maker, and member of the city council. Charles Cornell was also a member of the Elm Park Trotting Association, as well as New York's prestigious American Jockey Club. See S. R. Harlow and H. H. Boone, *Life Sketches of the State Officers, Senators and Members of the Assembly of the State of New York in 1867* (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons, 1867), 85-86. For the relationship between master craftsmen and workers in the butchery and shipping industries, see Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 135-36, 139.

70. Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 139; Laurie, *Working People*, 54-60; Alvin F. Harlow, *The Old Bowery Days: The Chronicle of a Famous Street* (New York: Appleton, 1931), 151.