

WAHCONAH PARK TIMES

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5 Cents

TODAY'S GAME — VINTAGE BASE BALL

Underdog Hillies Face Unbeaten Hartford Senators

First Meeting in 74 Years

Wahconah Park

The current Pittsfield Hillies team — the original Hillies played in Pittsfield from 1919-1930 — are a collection of local amateur ballplayers, assembled in less than six weeks after eight “tryout” practices. By way of contrast, the reconstituted Hartford Senators have been playing vintage base ball since 2001, and have established themselves as the premier team among the 150 or so clubs that participate in that brand of play. Fur-

thermore, the Senators are currently on a fifteen-game win streak.

The Hillies best hope for a good accounting of themselves will come from the able leadership of manager Chuck Garivaltis, and coaches Tony Ferdyn, Ed “Itch” McMahon, Paul Procopio, Joe Zavattero, and Ray Woitkowski — all Pittsfield sports legends.

Describing the situation, manager Garivaltis endeavored to be optimis-

Cartoon That Appeared in 1920 Hartford Newspaper



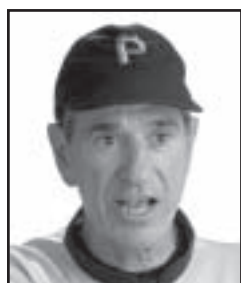
tic, “It won’t be easy,” he said, “but I believe we can make a game of it.”

Both teams will be competing under the 1886 rules of the game and will adhere to the equipment, and conduct of play from that era.

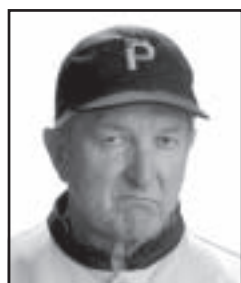
Game to be Broadcast Live by ESPN Classic

For four hours, beginning at 7 PM, fans from around the country will be transported to historic Wahconah Park. Veteran announcer Rod Thulin will provide the play-by-play and will be joined by Bill “Spaceman” Lee for the color commentary.

Meet the Hillies



Mgr. - Chuck Garivaltis



C - Tony Ferdyn



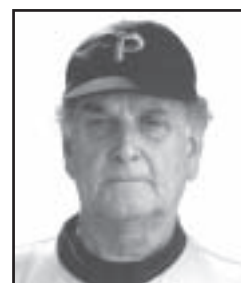
C - Ed “Itch” McMahon



C - Paul Procopio



C - Ray Woitkowski



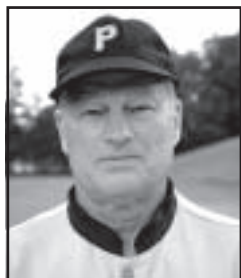
C - Joe Zavattero



Cpt. - Bob Moynihan



Terry Bishop



Jim Bouton



Joe DiCicco



Jamie Di Massimo



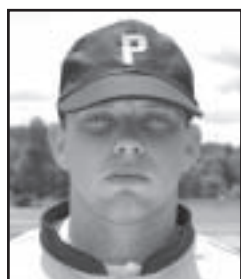
Ken Ferris



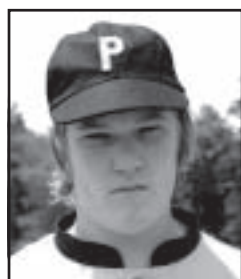
Dave Galvagni



B.J. Jefferson



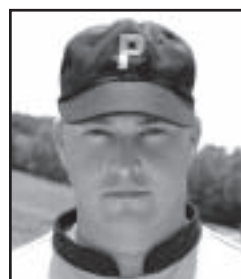
Darren Jefferson



Brett Martin



Mike Massery



Mike McHugh



Sean McMahon



Ron Piazza



Steve Pshenishny



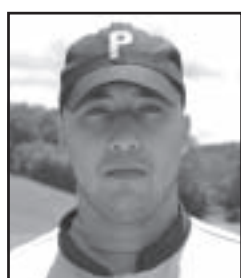
Jeff Reynolds



Tom Rizzo



Pat Ryan



John Sinopoli



Shaun Sottile



Ben Tyer



Brian Uliasz

Photos not available: Mike Bissailon, Tim Flaherty, Mike Hagmaier, J.P. Murphy, Mark Ringie PHOTOS: SANDY MCNAY

Hillies and Senators Eastern League Rivals



1921 Pittsfield Hillies



1923 Hartford Senators*

* RECREATION OF 1923 TEAM

The Pittsfield Hillies

The Pittsfield Hillies originally roamed the field at Wahconah Park from 1919-1930, during which time they developed an intense rivalry (not unlike today's Yankees-Red Sox rivalry) with the Senators. The last time the Hillies played the Senators was in 1930, when they defeated their rivals. The Hillies, like the Senators, featured a long list of baseball greats including eventual Hall of Famers Herb Pennock and Hugh Duffy.

The Hillies won the first of two Eastern League pennants, in 1919 and again in 1921. However, a last place finish and Depression-era financial woes caused the Hillies to disband in 1930.

The Hartford Senators

The original Hartford Senators played from 1902-1934. During the majority of that time, the team was a member of the minor league system's Eastern League, where they had a fierce rivalry with the Pittsfield Hillies from 1919-1930. In 1931, the Senators posted a season record of 97-40 which ranks among the best winning percentages by a professional baseball team.

Lou Gehrig played only one season of minor league baseball with the Senators in 1924, when he hit 24 HRs (one of them at Wahconah Park) in 59 games before being called up by the Yankees. Jim Thorpe, Leo Durocher and Hank Greenberg also played for the Senators.



Vintage Base Ball — The Way The Game Was Meant To Be Played

VINTAGE BASE BALL IS A GROWING sport that features amateur clubs adhering to the rules, uniform styles, equipment and etiquette of baseball in the 19th century. Since the inception of the Vintage Base Ball Association* (VBBA) in 1995, the sport has grown from its 12 charter clubs to nearly 150 clubs in 25 states. Games are most often played by the rules of baseball as they were in the

1860s, 1870s, and 1880s and are a combination of living history, competitive play and theater. The majority of vintage baseball clubs have adopted the name and uniform style of an actual professional or amateur club that once existed in their locale, researching the local baseball history legacy when establishing the club.

* *Base Ball* (two words) was the original spelling.

1886 Rules

- There are seven balls and three strikes. The batter is awarded a base after seven balls.
- There is just one umpire, positioned 10-15 feet to the side of batter. The umpire is always addressed as "sir" by the players and may smoke a cigar throughout the game.
- Home plate is a 12"x 12" wood base that rests loose on ground. Bases are loose at each location and filled with sand, sawdust or hay.
- Batters request a "high" or "low" strike zone before their at-bat. "Low" zone is from the belt to the knee, the "high" zone is from the belt to shoulder.
- There is only one base coach, and he must be either the team captain or assistant captain.
- Foul balls are not counted as strikes.
- A hit batsman results in a dead ball, with no base awarded. The pitch is ruled a ball.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- The players' gloves are not much larger than their hands.
- Any foul tip caught by catcher is an out, regardless of the count or number of outs.
- Foul balls into the stands must be put back into play. Baseballs are not replaced unless lost.
- There are no balks. Fake throws and "quick" pitches are legal. The pitcher, for example, can fake two throws to first base then quickly deliver the pitch to the batter.

- There is no pitcher's mound or rubber. There is a pitcher's box measuring four feet by six feet, outlined in chalk. The front of box is 50 feet from home plate. The pitcher must remain entirely in the box on each pitch.
- The Gentleman's Ruling: In

the event an umpire is not able to have a clear view of a play, he can request a "Gentleman's Ruling". Players involved in play tell what transpired and the call can be reversed. The umpire also has the option to ask for input from fans in the stands.

Era Base Ball Terms and Vernacular

Vintage ball players will oftentimes incorporate era jargon into their on-field chatter, including:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • "cranks" = fans | • "muff" = error |
| • "hands down" = out | • "ginger" = determination |
| • "hurler" = pitcher | • "striker to the line" = |
| • "striker" = batter | batter up |
| • "captain" = manager | • "ballist" = ballplayer |
| • "ace" = run | • "whitewash" = shutout |
| • "leg it" = running hard | • "garden" = outfield |
| • "sky ball" = pop up | • "daisy cutter" = hit grounder |
| | • "behind" = catcher |

Historic Wahconah Park

The first baseball game on the site of present day Wahconah Park is said to have taken place in August 1892, when a semi-pro team in Pittsfield defeated a team from Albany in a rain-shortened game. The first professional team played there in 1913-14, and the field took on roughly its present-day shape sometime around 1919, when the land was deeded to the city.

The park is unusual in that the batter faces west, meaning that late in the day they are looking directly into the setting sun. This worked when games were played in the early afternoon, but as games began to be played later, “sun delays” were common — until trees grew in that blocked the sun. The park is also known for its artificial owls that hang in

the rafters, intended to keep birds from nesting in the rafters above fans.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission recently found the park eligible for listing on the Register of Historic Places at the state and local level. An application is pending for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. A decision could come as early as 2005.

Home to Many Teams

YEARS	TEAM	LEAGUE	YEARS	TEAM	LEAGUE
1892	The Pittsfield Team		1965-69	Pittsfield Red Sox	Eastern
1894	The Pittsfield Team	NY – State	1970-71	Pittsfield Senators	Eastern
1901	The Pittsfield Team		1972-75	Pittsfield Rangers	Eastern
1913-14	Pittsfield Electrics	Eastern Assoc.	1976	Berkshire Brewers	Eastern
1919-30	Pittsfield Hillies	Eastern	1985-88	Pittsfield Cubs	Eastern
1941-42	Pittsfield Electrics	Can-Am	1989-00	Pittsfield Mets	NY – Penn
1946-48	Pittsfield Electrics	Can-Am	2001	Pittsfield Astros	NY – Penn
1949-51	Pittsfield Electrics	Can-Am	2002-03	Berkshire Black Bears	Northeast

Host to Great Players

Wahconah Park has seen a Who’s Who list of ballplayers appear within its confines. Here are just a few among the hundreds, including local stars (L) and Hall of Famers (HOF):

1920	Ed “Big Red” Walsh (HOF)	1946	Al Rosen	1967	Sparky Lyle		Fred Lynn
	Chief Bender (HOF)	1949	Sweetwater Clifton		Robin Roberts (HOF)	1974	Willie Randolph
1921	Herb Pennock (HOF)	1950s	Satchel Paige (HOF)		Bobby Bonds	1980s	Turk Wendell (L)
	Hugh Duffy (HOF)		Art Ditmar (L)	1968	Jim Palmer (HOF)	1986	Greg Maddox
1922	Jim Thorpe	1960s	Tommy Grieve (L)		Joe Morgan (HOF)		Rafael Palmiero
1924	Lou Gehrig (HOF)	1965	Carl Hubbell (HOF)		Thurman Munson	1987	Mark Grace
1925	Casey Stengle		Earl Weaver	1969	Carlton Fisk (HOF)		John Smoltz
1940s	Gene Hermanski (L)		Lou Piniella		Bill “Spaceman” Lee	1988	Curt Schilling
	Dale Long (L)		George Scott	1970s	Jeff Reardon (L)		Ken Griffey, Jr.
	Earl Turner (L)		Mark Belanger (L)	1971	Mike Schmidt (HOF)	1989	Tim Wakefield
	Vic Raschi	1966	Ted Williams (HOF)	1972	Jim Bouton	1992	Jerry Koosman
	Pete Gray		Bobby Doerr	1973	Jim Rice	1997	A. J. Burnett

Wahconah Park To Undergo Restoration

Excerpted from Berkshire Trade and Commerce, July 2004

A new plan to upgrade Wahconah Park and prepare it for a return of the American pastime is shifting into high gear.

This spring, a licensing agreement was finalized between the City of Pittsfield, which owns the property, and a new Berkshire-based venture, Wahconah Park Inc.

The proponents of Wahconah Park Inc. plan to invest an estimated \$3 million to refurbish and upgrade the aged facility and bring a minor league franchise team there by summer 2005. Construction is slated to start this summer.

Wahconah Park Inc. was initiated by a partnership that includes author and former New York Yankee pitcher Jim Bouton of North Egremont, Donald (Chip) Elitzer, an investment finance specialist who lives in Great Barrington, and Eric

Margenau, a sports psychologist and entrepreneur who lives in New York and has a part-time residence in West Stockbridge.

If their plans bear fruit, the beloved-but-frayed ballpark will acquire a new sheen. In addition to enhancing the experience of attending games, the proponents plan to revitalize Wahconah Park in a larger sense. They hope to transform the park into a lively gathering spot that will provide a stimulus for the city’s redevelopment efforts and also help to broaden the base of Berkshire County’s tourism economy.

One goal is to enhance Wahconah Park’s appeal beyond those who are baseball fans, with the addition of a food court, shopping arcade and other attractions that will draw people to the park who may not be going to the game itself.

“We want Wahconah Park to

become a center of public activity in Pittsfield,” said Elitzer. “We envision it becoming like a town square, where people come to gather and enjoy themselves on summer evenings.”

They also are bringing a new twist to local baseball with the Berkshire Hillies, a vintage amateur baseball team that will also be based in Wahconah Park.

The partners also are pursuing a business plan that is intended to reinforce its identity as a community-based enterprise by selling shares in Wahconah Park Inc. This will enable local residents to have a stake as investors and owners - a concept similar to the ownership structure of the Green Bay Packers football team.

“Pittsfield has always been at the mercy of migrant team owners from elsewhere,” said Bou-

ton. “We thought it would be nice to turn that system upside down and have a fan-owned team.”

They are currently in the midst of a share offering, which will continue through July. The shares are being limited to investors in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut. Particular preference in allocating shares will be given to residents of Berkshire County.

Their goal is to raise some \$4 million from approximately 350 to 400 investors, based on shares in units of \$728. “It will be a mix of small and large investors,” said Elitzer. “We see this as a community resource as much as a business, so we wanted to give people in the community an opportunity to acquire a stake in its ownership.”

— John Townes

Pittsfield Makes News Around the World

INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune

THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITED IN PARIS AND PRINTED IN BELGIUM

THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2004

Baseball discovers its 'Garden of Eden'

By Brian Macquarrie

Abner Doubleday, the mythic inventor of baseball, has some explaining to do.

Cooperstown, New York, where Doubleday reputedly first played the game, has long been debunked as baseball's birthplace. But now officials in Pittsfield, a town in the picturesque Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts, have released a 1791 document that the National Baseball Hall of Fame called "irrefutable" evidence of the first written reference to the game ever found.

The document, a town meeting ordinance found buried and forgotten in the public library, forbids Pittsfield residents from playing "baseball" within 80 yards of the new meetinghouse and its fragile windows.

"For the Preservation of the Windows in the New Meeting House," the town meeting bylaw reads, "no Person or Inhabitant of said town, shall be permitted to play at any game called Wicket, Cricket, Baseball, Football, Cat, Fives, or any other game or games with balls, within the Distance of Eighty Yards from said Meeting House."

The document, released Tuesday, has been authenticated by the



Corbis

Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Massachusetts.

Ted Spencer, vice president and chief curator of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, said it regarded the document as an undisputed precursor to the earliest previous reference to baseball: an 1823 newspaper article about "base ball" in New York City.

"This is a wonderful story," Spencer said. "This is a great piece of history in the development of the game."

The Pittsfield reference was found by John Thorn, a baseball historian, about a year ago in a 19th-century book

about the city's history.

Thorn relayed the news last month to Jim Bouton, a former New York Yankees pitcher who is a partner in a project to renovate and reopen Pittsfield's historic Wahconah Park, a favorite of baseball traditionalists where the game has been played since 1892.

Then the original document was located, verified by the conservators, and displayed Tuesday at a news conference at which James Ruberto, the mayor of Pittsfield, declared his town to be baseball's "garden of Eden."

Thorn said he had stumbled on the discovery during a serendipitous Internet search about the origins of baseball.

"What's so delicious about it is its accidental quality," Thorn said. "Its existence was unknown. Baseball's history is far earlier than we would have thought 10 years ago."

Spencer said baseball's true birthplace might never be known. A soldier at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, during the American Revolutionary War, for example, wrote about "playing at base." But Pittsfield is entitled to some crow-

See BASEBALL, Page 4

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ing, according to Spencer.

As Bouton sees it, baseball had been a nuisance in Pittsfield for decades before the national pastime was born in Cooperstown in 1839, as legend formerly had it.

That story, Spencer said, is "a total myth." In fact, he said, the first written rules for the game date to 1845 and a New York team that was called the Knickerbockers.

"I'm tremendously excited," Ruberto said of the discovery. "Pittsfield has had a long tradition of minor-league baseball, and this just fits with everything we have known about Pittsfield being a baseball town."

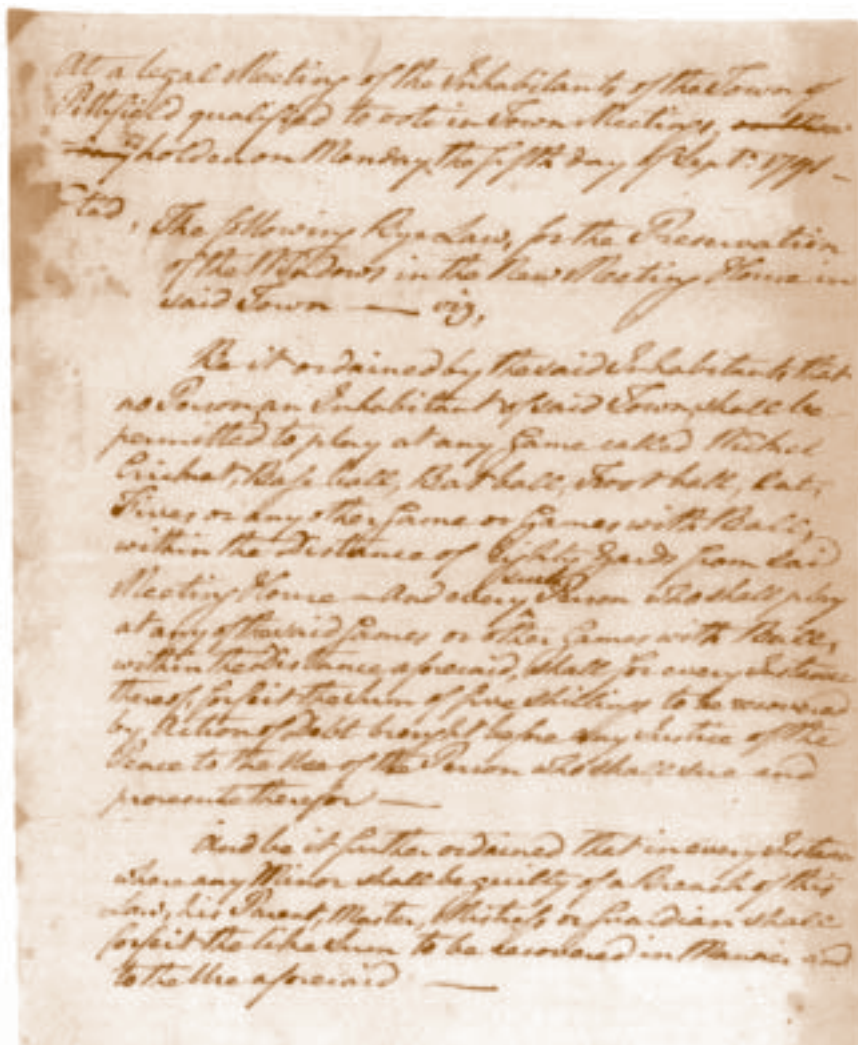
Wahconah Park, located on a site where baseball has been played since 1892, had long been an attraction for baseball traditionalists until minor-league baseball there ended last season. Bouton said he expected to begin renovations on Wahconah Park in July, and to have the park lovingly "downgraded" with old-fashioned wooden seats in time for the 2005 season.

"This was a bolt from the blue," he said. "Baseball, to me, has always been about the past."

Thorn said Pittsfield could lay claim, with some justification, to the Pittsfield mayor's Garden of Eden boast.

"I think that's pretty fair because they're celebrating the spirit of early baseball," Thorn said. "The message here is that baseball grew up in rural areas, and in urban areas, too. It was growing everywhere, like a field of dandelions."

The 1791 Broken Window Bylaw PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS



The 1791 Broken Window Bylaw TRANSLATION

At a legal Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town of Pittsfield qualified to vote in Town Meetings, holden on Monday the fifth day of Sept. 1791 —

Voted, The following ByeLaw, for the Preservation of the Windows in the New Meeting House in said Town — viz,

Be it ordained by the said Inhabitants that no Person or Inhabitant of said Town, shall be permitted to play at any game called Wicket, Cricket, **Baseball**, Batball, Football, Cats, Fives or any other game or games played with Ball, within the Distance of Eighty Yards from said Meeting House — And every such Person who shall play at any of the said games or other games with Ball within the Distance aforesaid, shall for every Instance Thereof, forfeit the Sum of five shillings to be recovered by Action of Debt brought before any Justice of the Peace to the Use of the Person who shall sue and prosecute Therefore —

And be it further ordained that in every Instance where any Minor shall be guilty of a Breach of this Law, his Parent, Master, Mistress or Guardian shall forfeit the like Sum to be recovered in Manner, and to the Use aforesaid —

Congratulations

To the Pittsfield, St. Joe's, and Drury high school baseball teams for winning the Western Massachusetts District Baseball Championship in their respective divisions, and to Pittsfield and St. Joe's for making it to the state finals!

Thank You

To Pete's Motor Group in Pittsfield and Great Barrington; Quality Printing, Bagels Too, The Lantern, Tim's Sports Zone, Bobby Hudpuckers, and Teo's in Pittsfield; Kwik Print in Great Barrington; and the Old Country Store in North Egremont.

Hip! Hip! Huzzah!

To our Vintage Base Ball partners: The Hartford Senators, vintage baseball mogul Greg Martin, and the Vintage Baseball Factory in Hartford, CT (www.VBBF.com).

Apologies

To all for anything that may have been less than satisfactory at our very first event. Prior to organizing this party for 4,000 guests, our hosting experience was limited to grilling hamburgers in the backyard.
— Jim Bouton and Chip Eltizer