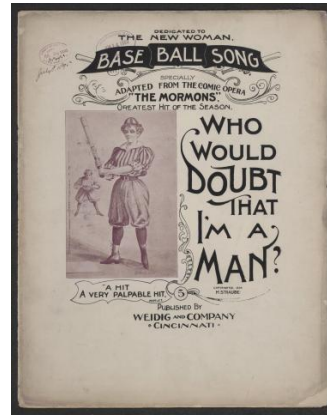


0. WOMEN PLAYERS in the 19TH CENTURY - Story
Preface

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As baseball became more and more popular in America, females started to play the game. This image depicts the cover of sheet music, published in 1895, asking the question: "Who Would Doubt that I'm a Man?" It features two "Bloomer Girls"—one a batter, the other a catcher—wearing uniforms of the day. Online via the Library of Congress. Click on the image for a full-page view.

After the Civil War, as people throughout America played or watched baseball, its popularity soared.

As early as 1858, people wrote songs about the game. Corporate marketers pushed products with it. Even before the first professional team was paid a salary, Americans looked forward to the "boys of summer."

It wasn't just men who played ball, however. In 1866, Annie Glidden - a student at Vassar - wrote a letter to her brother in which she describes baseball for women on campus. A year after President Lincoln's assassination, Annie was playing ball at the new university. According to her April 20, 1866 letter:

They are getting up various clubs now for outdoor exercise. They have a floral society, boat clubs, and baseball. I belong to one of the latter, and enjoy it hugely, I can assure you. . . We think after we have practiced a little, we will let the Atlantic Club play a match with us. Or, it may be, we will consent to play a match with the students from College Hill [a local boys' prep school], but we have not decided yet.

One of the Vassar teams was called the Resolutes, and a picture of their 1876 starting nine survives.

Were female teams commonly accepted at that time? Sophie Foster Richardson's comments help to answer that question. Like Glidden, she was a member of a Vassar baseball club:

The public, so far as it knew of our playing, was shocked, but in our retired grounds, protected from observation by sheltering trees, we continued to play in spite of a censorious public.

An 1868 article, published in a local Peterboro, New York newspaper, tells us that women were not just playing baseball at a university. Two female clubs in upstate New York, playing against each other, drew crowds of spectators. The illustrated story was reprinted in *It's the Day's Doings*.

The commentary is interesting:

We hear on all sides of woman - of her rights and of her wrongs . . . and lately, some of the more favored portion of our rural districts have beheld her as . . . a player of base-ball. In the latter capacity, at least, she deserves our unqualified attention and commendation . . . Every well-wisher of woman - (and what man with a wife, sweetheart, sister or daughter is not such a well-wisher) - will wish our female base-ball clubs, and similar organizations, all success, and only wish that there were more of them.

Then, using words - and employing attitudes - of the time, the larger New York paper quotes the local one:

The last success in female base-ball, occurred at Peterboro, a thriving little village in New York State, and is thus recorded by the local paper:

"The young women of Peterboro, N.Y., jealous of the popular sports enjoyed by the more muscular portion of mankind, have organized a baseball club, and have already arrived at a creditable degree of proficiency in play. There are about fifty members belonging to it, from which a playing nine has been chosen, headed by Miss Ninnie Miller as captain.

"The nine have played several games outside the town and away from the gaze of the curious. Having thus perfected themselves, this nine lately played a public game in the town of Peterboro, as may well be supposed, before a multitude of spectators."

The first women's professional team was formed in 1875. A player's attire was a hindrance on the field. Adding up to thirty pounds of weight, a baseball outfit of the time included underskirts, a long over skirt, a high-necked blouse with long sleeves plus high-button shoes.

Stealing bases, on a hot day, was probably not a feature of that game!

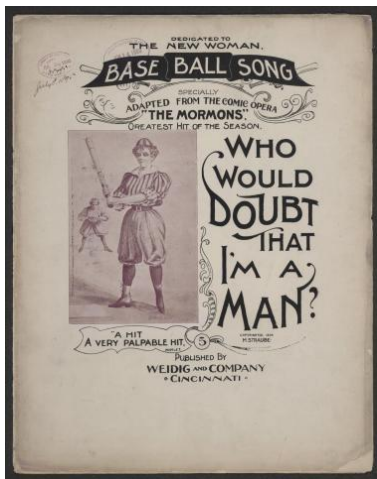
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WOMEN-PLAYERS-in-the-19TH-CENTURY-Baseball-Cards>

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Media Stream



Female Baseball Players in the 19th Century

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Baseball Songs in 1858

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Live Oak Polka

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Vassar Resolutes Baseball Team

Image online, courtesy the Vintage Baseball Association website.

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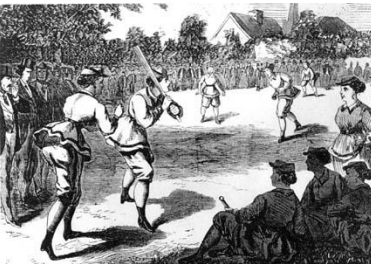
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Peterboro, New York

Image online, courtesy the epodunk.com website.

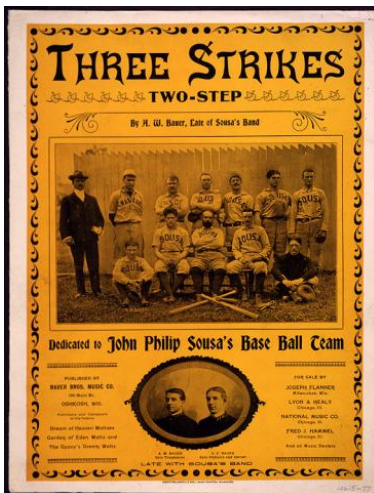
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Women Playing Baseball

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Three Strikes Two-Step

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