

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

Take Me Out to the Ball Match

In 1868, baseball was new to the U.S. and Columbia.



This photo of the 1891 MU baseball team is one of the earliest images of the sport at Mizzou. Photo courtesy of University Archives, University of Missouri.

Story by Marcus Wilkins

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For most fans, baseball in the 1860s conjures grainy images from Ken Burns' PBS series and faded tobacco cards. The athletic craze

was spreading from coast to coast in 1868, and like so many other national trends, Missouri was right in the thick of it.

The following articles from the *Columbia Statesman*, a city newspaper now 100-years defunct, detail the first “match” between University Base Ball Club No. 1 and the Columbia Base Ball Club. Ladies were “‘specially’ requested to be present,” the game itself is inexpertly described as “all movement and dash,” and in a letter to the editor, a reader suggests a more productive use of the young male participants’ time.

Special thanks to Eric Ferguson, a proposal writer at MU, for submitting the articles to MIZZOU magazine.

Base Ball — Match Game, &c. — *After many attempts for the establishment of this game in Columbia, it can at last boast of a club, the members of which are all citizens of Columbia. This club is known by the name of the “Columbia Base Ball Club.”*

The students of our University have also organized among themselves two clubs, known respectively as “University Base Ball Club” No. 1 and 2. As we have understood, No. 1 consists of the older class of students: older in respect to age and practice of this game.

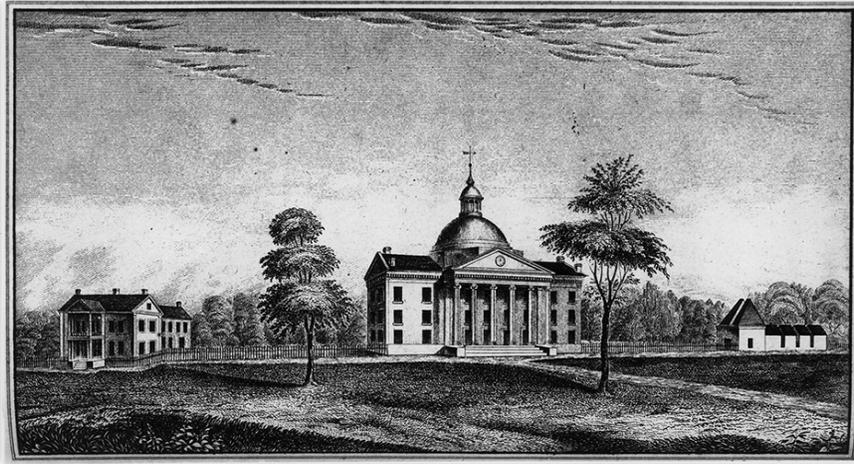
The University Club No. 1 having challenged the Columbia Club for the championship and the challenge having been accepted, it was decided that

the first game (for it requires three games to be played before a decision can be rendered) will be played on the “Columbia Club” grounds, about three hundred yards north of the Court House, known as the Turner pasture, on Friday, 31 of April, 1868, at 2 o’clock P.M.

We are authorized to extend an invitation to the public, and especially to the ladies, urging their presence on that occasion. Therefore ladies you are all “specially” requested to be present. Arrangements are being made for comfortably seating those who may attend.

This game has an extraordinary fascination for the players and lookers-on, which it is thought is due mainly because of the rapidity of the actions. It goes right along without pause after it is once begun. It is all movement and dash — hurry, hurry, hurrah! This suits Americans, whether young folks or old folks; whatever else we may be, we are not a deliberate people.

The popularity of base ball is immense, and is of recent growth. The regular clubs are numbered by thousands, extending from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific, and their immense number is not more remarkable than the enormous crowds of people who attend the great matches near our large cities as spectators.



“Base ball” was quickly becoming America’s favorite pastime in the late 1860s. Mizzou’s campus, as depicted in this lithograph from circa 1870, probably saw impromptu games sprout up frequently between classes during this era. Photo courtesy of University Archives, University of Missouri.

Base Ball — The Match Game — We have now the pleasure of making record of the first match game of Base Ball ever played in Columbia.

The English game of Rounders (from which Base Ball is derived) is a very simple game, and one designed only for relaxation during interval between study in schools, and is wanting in the many manly features that characterize Base Ball, as played in America. Boys and even girls can play “Rounders” without difficulty; but Base Ball, to be played thoroughly, “requires the possession of muscular strength, great agility, quickness of eye, readiness of hand, and many other faculties of mind that make the man of nerve.”

But it is needless further to comment on the meritorious features of this game; suffice it to say, that it is a recreation that any one may be proud to

excel in, as is order to do so, he must possess the characteristics of true manhood to a considerable degree.

In pursuance of a public invitation, rendered to the public through the columns of our last issue, quite a crowd (numbering about 300) assembled on last Friday at 2 o'clock P.M., to witness the "match game." The game continued until about 6 o'clock when an even number of innings had been played, the committees on arrangements met and agreed to finish the "match" on Monday (last) at 4 P.M. The time having arrived, the crowd again assembled, the game was concluded with the following result from the Scorers' book:

Editor's note: Unfortunately, the "Scorers' report of Match Game between the University and Columbia Base Ball Clubs" is illegible in the print version.

Base Ball vs. Fire Companies

Mr. Editor,

It was my privilege Friday afternoon, to witness the Base Ball match game between the Columbia and University clubs. It was highly entertaining and at times quite exciting, the young gentleman of each club showing great skill and activity. While seated there quietly looking on, it occurred to me how much more useful these zealous gentlemen (so enthusiastically engaged in this game) could be

employed if formed into a Fire company. This might not at all times prove to be so pleasant a recreation but in my humble opinion much more useful. Do not understand me, Mr. Editor, as objecting to this Base Ball club, for I am not, but I do think something ought to be done about getting up a fire company in Columbia. If the houses were all new and of solid stone or brick there might not be so much danger of fire, but there are interspersed old frame "huts," inhabited by a class of beings who have no interest in anything — have nothing to lose, and who would enjoy the excitement of a "big fire" — knowing that at such times valuables are thrown carelessly around, making quite a harvest time for the vagabonds who infest the villages and towns of late years. No selfish motive prompts me to this, my honor is not endangered by adjoining any other home, but it seems a little strange that merchants having thousands of dollars worth of goods in one store, and that one in close proximity to these inflammable houses, have not made some effort to get up a fire company — it will hardly be worthwhile after half the town is burned up. I think it would not be amiss just here to suggest that Mr. James L. Stephens hand around a subscription paper — heading it with a liberal donation himself. I mention Mr. S. because he is one of our most liberal public spirited citizens, and a very zealous man in every cause which he thinks is for the promotion of happiness and prosperity.

April 6th,

1868

X.Y.Z.

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