



# THE drum roll

377th Regular Meeting Volume 39 Number 6 February 4, 2022

## A Civil War Museum in Kenosha?

Friday, February 4, 2022, 7:30 p.m.  
Via Zoom



The artifact collection at The Civil War Museum of Kenosha, Wisconsin, is filled with objects that tell the stories of the Upper Midwestern soldiers, civilians and communities that participated in this pivotal period of American history. Visitors to the museum are often surprised to learn about the region's rich Civil War history and the significant contributions these states made to the Union war effort. During his illustrated program, Civil War Museum Curator Doug Dammann will use these artifacts to teach the audience about the importance of the Upper Midwest during the Civil War and why the museum was created in the first place.

Doug Dammann has worked at the Civil War Museum of Kenosha, WI, for 13 years. He holds a Masters Degree in Historical Administration from Eastern Illinois University and a Bachelors Degree in History from Kalamazoo College.

Before coming to Kenosha, Doug had professional stops at The National Air and Space Museum, The National Museum of Civil War Medicine, and the College Football Hall of Fame. He lives in Kenosha with his wife Holly and two kids, Andrew and Charlotte.

### ZOOM INFORMATION

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## Baseball and the Civil War



Campaigns and battles occupied a minority of the life of Civil War soldiers; until the extended late war campaigns, soldiers were more likely to be found in camp than anywhere else. Given the ample opportunity for leisure time, the Civil War had a profound effect on what was still a growing sport: baseball. On January 7, Bruce Allardice explored the intertwined story of baseball and the Civil War.

He started off by pointing out that in 1861, baseball was still being established as a national sport – indeed, as a national pastime that served not only as sport but as part of the culture, and a way to bring people together. Allardice briefly addressed the long-standing, but thoroughly debunked, canard that Abner Doubleday (himself a Civil War general) had invented the sport in 1839 in Cooperstown, New York. In fact, this myth was propagated around the turn of the 20th Century, when a commission led by Albert G. Spalding determined to find an “American” origin for the game.

The precursors of what we know as baseball actually went back much further – the existence of a similar game was recorded as far back as 1280, by the Spanish. The American game evolved from older ball games such as rounders

and cricket - in particular, a game called One Old Cat seems to have been seminal. Another myth doused by Allardice is that the game was first codified by Alexander Cartwright in 1845. In fact, several different clubs had done the same thing around that time. Gradually, two primary sets of rules emerged: the “New York” and “Massachusetts” rules. (The latter allowed “soaking” a runner – i.e., throwing the ball at him. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the New York rules eventually prevailed.)

Initially, baseball was largely organized and played by gentlemen’s clubs, primarily in Northern cities. One club, the Brooklyn Excelsiors, toured the country in 1860. Contrary to popular belief, the South had plenty of baseball in the pre-war period, also mostly in cities: New Orleans alone had 22 clubs (more than Chicago or Washington, DC.) A number of prominent Civil War personalities played the game pre-war; among them was future Confederate general Basil W. Duke, who was the star pitcher of a St. Louis club. Abraham Lincoln himself certainly played pre-war, and may have received the news of his Presidential nomination while watching a game in Springfield. (While in the White House, he had a diamond laid out on the lawn, and occasionally played the game with children.) Lincoln also, along with fellow candidates Bell, Breckinridge and Douglas, was depicted playing ball in a famous 1860 political cartoon.

Of course, many pre-war baseballers of lesser renown joined the armies of both sides. Allardice presented one unusual case, that of A.T. Pearsall of the Excelsior club. He “went South” and joined the CSA; although he eventually served as a doctor to prisoners of war, he was expelled from the club by members’ vote. Speaking

of POW's, baseball was played in those camps that were large enough to lay out a field, with even the guards serving as spectators. A well-known lithograph of a baseball game in the Salisbury, NC camp was part of the PowerPoint presentation, and Allardice revealed that two teams of largely Louisiana troops – former New Orleans club members – were formed in 1864 at the Johnson's Island camp, and one game had 3,000 spectators.

Ball games were encouraged for exercise/health purposes by the military as well as civilian organizations such as the Sanitary Commission, and contests among the troops in camp were usually held between rival regiments. In one example, a Washington DC set of games between the 71st NY and 165th NY saw the 71st win 41-13, then fall to the 165th 28-13. The home-made bat of David Wheeler of the 27th Indiana now resides in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. There is even a game that was caught in a photograph: in an image of the 48th New York at Fort Pulaski, a game is visible in the background. Occasionally even a high-ranking officer would join the game, General George Hartsuff being one. And occasionally, baseball was played in proximity to battles!

Besides the military, in the North the home front baseball clubs kept operating – in contrast to the South. Allardice pointed out that this was one measure of how much more the Confederacy was stretched for manpower than the Union. And while the game was new to neither section prior to the war, the conflict did spread baseball to soldiers from rural areas, allowing them to carry it to their regions after war's end. Some postwar clubs were named after Civil War leaders (including several Stonewall Jackson

teams in the South; in 1866 Robert E. Lee was made an honorary member of a Virginia club.) The clubs also began hiring talented athletes as “ringers;” this increasing spirit of competition led to, in 1869, the first widely acknowledged professional team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings. Major League baseball was only a couple of years away, with the National Association of 1871 giving way to the National League in 1876. Some 40 Civil War veterans are known to have played in the new professional leagues, and Allardice suggested the actual total may have been around 80.

On behalf of the Round Table, I would like to thank Bruce Allardice for an engaging intertwining of two of my favorite subjects: Baseball and the Civil War.

## February Saturday Discussion

Saturday February 19, all members and guests are invited to participate in the session via zoom.

Pat McCormick will lead the discussion on Generals from the civil war. Everyone is encourage to have a general or two that they would like to discuss. It will start at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday February 19.

Zoom info will be sent out via email.

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