Much of this issue is devoted to that great American pastime—Baseball, from the sandlot games to the dusty leagues to the major leagues and everything in between. The initial article is a letter to the editor, written by Ben Porter. It was discovered in the papers of Royal Holmes and presented to the Alstead Historical Society by his widow, Diane Holmes.

Baseball In Years Gone By
Memories of Ben Porter
(Langdon, NH)

Recently the remembrance of a game in 1938 which I broke up with a screeching two-bagger led me to the pages of an old diary. But memory is a poor servant and I was somewhat chest fallen to discover that in that particular game I actually went zilch for five and made two errors and it was really Kenny Hatch’s bat that put the game on ice.

In those times, any place that had three houses and somewhat of a flat spot, had a baseball team. And the whole countryside resounded with the sounds of bush league baseball on Sunday afternoons. Once, even East Langdon had a team, although there was an importation of players from here and there to fill up the ranks. Sometimes games were played shorthanded or the teams were rounded out with players borrowed from the opposition or retracted from the spectators. Players recruited from among the spectators were not always highly skilled or in top physical condition.

Not many teams had uniforms, at least not uniforms that matched, but those that did had a marvelous, psychological advantage, equal at least, to a five run handicap. Usually the uniform was a cap, a glove, perhaps a pair of spikes, and a hat, although the players often used the team bats, some of which were incendiary broken and taped.

The umpire, too, was recruited from the spectators and usually both teams got on his back and stayed there until inning 99, not paying much attention, because he was dumb and blind and of questionable ancestry, but because it was the thing to do. The big pocket in those old baggy baseball pants was for a bandana and a rule book. And any adverse decision would result in the affronted team surrounding the umpire, rule books in hand in an attitude agitated supplication.

Anyone who has played the infield in Alstead or the old Vilas High School field will agree that there is much to be expected that the last memory to flee my departing soul will be Dan Metcalf, his voice in the high decibels, shouting, "Pick it up Benny, pick it up!" and me wondering how to pick up something that I didn’t even know where it was.

Many of the fields had surfaces that undulated to different degrees. Some had gently slopes and gullies, some had precipitous banks which could cause a player to fall up or down, but perhaps the most remarkable terrain feature was the knob in back of third base in Lempster, behind which a left fielder could catch a fly ball and not be seen from home plate.

All sorts of things got in the way of having good regulation ball grounds:

Spectators enjoying a nice summer evening watching a baseball game being played on Milot Green. Perhaps between the rivals teams from Langdon and Alstead.

Photo by Sylvester Mitchell

Early Alstead team, thought to be from East Alstead

Offers only one of the game balls was new because the coffers were always full to overflowing, being replenished only by passing the hat among the multitude, many of whom were extremely thrifty or at least somewhat careful. For this and other reasons intense vigilance was exercised in retrieving foul balls and wild heaves, and hearts were filled with gloom when a ball was spied bobbing gently on the crest of the river headed for Long Island Sound.

To set the record straight, it must be clearly stated that all the fields upon which we played did not tax the patience and impair the skill of players, or warp the path and impede the progress of baseball. One day in 1937 in a game played at Keene, Harold Washburn spiked a bullet thru shortstop which got between the fielders and was last seen rolling under the hedge in faraway left center field. All of this was long ago, but for all I know that ball is going still, the integrity of its path undistorted, its grace and alacrity unchanged and its velocity and momentum, but slightly diminished. I wish I might say the same for myself.
Maurice Pitcher
Clarence Metcalf
Arnold Keys
Flint Tuttle

Club Members and Players:

Aug. 25
Aug. 23
June 2

TOTALS:
Lempster
Gilsum
Windsor
Walpole Hillbillies  $2.28

Team Played
Contributors
Peg Sutcliffe
Board Member 835
Jeanne Moody
Board Member 835
Syrene Porter
Secretary 835
David Moody
Vice President
Margaret Perry
Board Member 835
Bruce Bellows
Board Member 835

H. Whitman
Fred Davis
William Comstock
Burpee Durling
H. Chandler

2 baseballs $1.38
water boy $1.80

2 baseballs $1.90,
water boy $0.15

8 plates Waterboy, $.15
2 baseballs $1.90.
water boy $.15

$23.71
&DVH/5HF·G
6972
2237
7900

R. H. Jacobs
C. Fuller
George Porter

Pd. Waterboy, $.15
water boy $.15

The following is a copy of the original poem published in the San Francisco Examiner...
Some More Fun Fillers

The Backseat Driver
If he should hit a trolley-car
Or cut a train in two,
Do anything that drivers are
At times inclined to do,
The coroner may find - slack.
Should anyone survive -
That there was someone in the back
To tell him how to drive.

It’s hard to watch the road ahead
And heed the voice behind;
And many people now are dead,
You frequently will find,
Yes, many people are deceased.
Who might be now alive,
Had no one told or tried, at least,
To tell them how to drive.

And many more who occupied
The rear are now at rest,
Yes, many people now reside.
In regions of the blest,
Because they yelled, “Here comes a Truck!”
“Put on your brake!” Oh, I’ve
Seen lots of people out of luck.
For telling how to drive.

So when your wife is driving please
Don’t tell her what to do
To see that other auto she’s
As competent as you.
If you will leave her quite alone
You likely will arrive;
She doesn’t need a megaphone
To tell her how to drive.

In fact the able engineers
Who any car designed
Have put the steering wheel and gears
In front and not behind;
For that’s the place, they all decide,
The best they can contrive;
The rear’s the proper place to ride,
The front the place to drive.

Notes from the Editor’s Desk

It is important to remember that these have been and
may well continue to be difficult times for all of us for a
while. No one of us can predict what the future will bring
when this crisis will end and how many of us will survive.
All we can do is live our lives as normally as we can one
time at a time, remain calm and above all, remain safe.

Because of the virtual shutdown of our world, many of
us must stay that waiting game. Those activities the Alstead
Historical Society had scheduled for the spring, summer
and fall of 2020 have either been postponed or cancelled
due to future scheduling problems. That is to say that we
have entirely given up and are hopeful that somehow
this issue of the Alstead Vintage Times will reach you and
bring you as much pleasure as it has given us to create it
for you.

In addition, we must remind you that this newsletter is
produced to replicate an old fashioned newspaper, the
advertising contained within represents past businesses in
Alstead and are not current.

The Wit and Wisdom of Yogi Berra

Yogi Berra - New York Yankee catcher and batter for 19
series - winner of 10 world series - coach - manager and
well known for his ‘Yogi-isms. These witty, pithy comments not
only exuded humor, but wisdom. Well known author and
journalist, Allen Barra, described these as “distilled bits of
wisdom which, like good country soup and old John Wayne
movies, get to the truth in a hurry”.

You can observe a lot by watching.
We have a good time together, even when we’re not together.
It ain’t over ‘til it is over.
I guess the first thing I should do is thank everybody who
make this day necessary.
If you ask me anything I don’t know, I’m not going to answer.
The future ain’t what it used to be.
When you come to a fork in the road, take it.
If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up
someplace else.
You wouldn’t have won if we’d beaten you.
You should always go to other people’s funerals. Otherwise,
they won’t come to yours.
Baseball is 90% mental and the other half physical.
If you can’t imitate him, don’t copy him.
There are some people who, if they don’t already know, you
can’t tell ’em.
I never said most of the things I said. Then again, I might
have said ‘em, but you never know.

AHS News

It goes without saying that due to the moratorium that
has been visited upon us, the offices of the Alstead His-
torical Society and the museum will be closed until fur-
ther notice. While we may not be able to personally ass-
sist you with whatever questions you may have, we can
certainly answer them either by phone or email. Marga-
ret Perry’s email address is perry419@comcast.net, phone
835-6925; Bruce Bellows can be reached at alstead-
bruce@gmail.com, phone 835-6751; and Marie Harling at
mharling@myfairpoint.net, phone 835-6972.

These are troubled times, many of us are not accus-
tomed to self-confinement. If we aren’t playing the role
of school marm or have an essential job, we may experi-
ence feelings of depression or boredom. The Board of
Director’s would like to offer some suggestion that would
benefit both you and the historical society. Take this
time to begin your spring cleaning and while doing so, go
through your family’s memorabilia, set some of those
items pertaining to Alstead aside to donate to the Alstead
Historical Society museum. If the object has a story,
more the better, it preserves your history and offers oth-
ers an insight into our past. For you gardeners out there,
research and plan a turn of the century kitchen or flower
garden. Hook up with Ancestry.com and research your family
tree, you might be surprised to discover you have some
otherwise unknown relatives living in the area. Take a walk. Try to steer clear of busy parks and instead
find class 6 roads, they are easy walking and not crowd-
ed. Rearrange a room in your home, exchange some of
those hidden treasures stored away in your closet for
those that have been sitting around for a few years.

Interior view of the newly renovated Historical Society office.
Note the work table with the restored charter sitting on it.

Keep a daily diary of your experiences of this pandemic.
Should there ever be a third book of Alstead history writ-
ten, these observances will be invaluable. Write as much
as you can remember about your ancestors, their names,
where they came from, what they did and how you came
to live in Alstead.

In this world of uncertainty, there is a positive. The
Alstead Historical Society is proud to announce the ren-
ovations on their headquarters in the Town Office has
been completed. Many thanks to Bruce Bellows who
conceived the idea, drew the plans, hired the workmen
and put in his own sweat equity. Also thank you to all
those who consulted and contributed to the project over
the past year.

As you can see in the accompanying photograph, not
only is there more room to move around, but the storage
space seems to have doubled. A work table (compliments of Bruce) and chairs have been added to
accommodate those who are searching through records.
It will allow you to spread out, be within the vicinity of
the necessary materials and as well as those who can help
guide you through your research. The lighting has
improved, the room is comfortable and welcoming, it
will be a pleasure to use.

By the same token, another project has been conclud-
ed. The Clerk’s Book C, Town Charter and town map
restorations have been completed and are safely once
again in the hands of the AHS. As with Book A, copies
on disc or thumb-drive of Book C can be obtained from
the library or the historical society for private research.

It may be a while before we return to a normal life. We
must all remember to do as much as we can to stem the
tide of this invasion. We must keep our distance, remain
calm, keep our sanity, keep our interest in life. It is
spring and spring denotes new life, hope and healing.
We will persevere and get through this together.
ly one season. Another attempt was made in 1890 with the Players League, but again failed and plunged into bankruptcy after one season. The loss of players and revenue eventually forced the American Association to close their doors and the best four teams joined the National League.

In 1901, another challenger appeared (or reappeared depending on how it is viewed) as the American League. They raided most of the good players from the National League and naturally the league owners turned on each other. Laws suits were flying and eventually the courts ap pointed a three-man panel from which the baseball commission was born. This did not stop the action and in 1914, yet another rival league was formed, the Federal League. They sued, contending the American and National Leagues constituted a monopoly. The Federal League folded after two seasons and in 1922 the Supreme Court decreed that baseball was exempt from anti trust legislation. The Court acknowledged and confirmed baseball’s monopoly.

The Roaring Twenties saw the zenith of baseball. By 1930, there were only nine active major league clubs. The National League had the New York Giants, the Pittsburgh Pirates, the Philadelphia Athletics, the Chicago Cubs, the Chicago White Sox, the St. Louis Cardinals, the St. Louis Browns, the Cincinnati Reds, and the Brooklyn Dodgers. The American League had the New York Yankees, the Boston Red Sox, the Cleveland Indians, the Detroit Tigers, the Washington Senators, and the Chicago White Sox.

In 1932, the American League created the All-Star Game, which is now played annually. The most notable player in All-Star history is Ty Cobb, who played for the Detroit Tigers. He was the first player to be voted into the Hall of Fame.

The first World Series was played in 1884 between the St. Louis Browns and the Boston Red Sox. The Red Sox won the series. The World Series is now played between the American League champion and the National League champion. The World Series is one of the most anticipated events in American sports.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of great change in baseball. The integration of African American players into the major leagues began in the 1940s with the integration of Jackie Robinson with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. The 1960s saw the integration of the Negro Leagues with the major leagues.

In 1969, the San Francisco Giants became the first western expansion team to win the World Series. The 1970s and 1980s were a time of high drama and excitement. The 1977-1978 playoffs were one of the most exciting in baseball history. The 1977 World Series was played between the Kansas City Royals and the New York Yankees. The Royals won the series, and the 1978 World Series was played between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Boston Red Sox. The Red Sox won the series.

In 1981, the American League and the Players Association went on strike for 50 days. The 1981 World Series was played between the Boston Red Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers. The Red Sox won the series.

In 1982, the American League and the Players Association went on strike for 69 days. The 1982 World Series was played between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Boston Red Sox. The Red Sox won the series.

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In 1984, the American League and the Players Association went on strike for 119 days. The 1984 World Series was played between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Boston Red Sox. The Red Sox won the series.

The 1990s and 2000s were a time of great change in baseball. The 1990s saw the rise of the steroid era. The 2000s saw the rise of the home run derby. The 2010s saw the rise of the analytics era. The 2020s saw the rise of the international talent era.

Today, baseball is played in all 50 states and in countries around the world. The World Series is played between the American League champion and the National League champion. The World Series is one of the most anticipated events in American sports.

Did You Know?

A smattering of baseball history

The first mention of baseball in the Americas was in 1845. He was the first to lay down a set of rules that roughly followed the English game of rounders and began calling it "townball", then "base" and finally "baseball." The first recorded contest was between the Knickerbocker and the New York Baseball Club in 1846. The Knickerbockers lost.

The Civil War saw both a boon and a bust to the game. Many of the established clubs disbanded during the conflict. However, the Union soldiers carried their knowledge and enthusiasm to parts of the country and in 1869, post-Civil War leagues from over one hundred clubs met for what was to become an annual convention. The game has survived the conflict between the states and was alive and well. A testament to the endurance of its popularity.

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