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Baseball Takes Root in Oregon, 1866–1869

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Baseball Takes Root in Oregon, 1866–1869

Mark E. Eberle

In September 1863, two months after the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg during the US Civil War, far from Oregon, the editor of Portland's *Morning Oregonian* bemoaned the lack of activity near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers with which he could fill his "City" column.

It is almost an impossibility to scare up a respectable three-line item, at the present time. Our city is exceedingly dull. It would be a good idea if some of our citizens on Front street would introduce the game of "foot-ball," which was all the rage [in] one remarkably dull season, several years ago.¹

The game he mentioned was some early form of soccer or rugby. Standardized rules for each were being established in England in 1863. American football was yet to be created at colleges in the Northeast during the late 1870s and early 1880s.² Regardless of which version of football the editor referred to, his wish was not granted.

At the close of the Civil War, the first baseball clubs were organized in numerous cities in western states and territories. Military units in the West also organized baseball clubs.³ The first club in the Pacific Northwest was established in 1866 by a group of men "fond of athletic sports" in Portland. They held meetings on May 28 and June 2 that resulted in the organization of the Pioneer Base Ball Club (BBC). Boys had played ball on the Nicolson pavement of wooden blocks on Front Street, but there had been no organized clubs to this point. As with most early ball clubs, members of the Pioneer BBC were businessowners and other young men who could take time during the day to practice or play games, while most men held jobs requiring them to work long hours during a six-day workweek.⁴

Initially, the Pioneer BBC played games in the evenings with teams picked from its members. There were no other clubs with whom they could compete. Notices of upcoming meetings and practice games were published in newspapers, but on August 3, the club played its first advertised game that the public was encouraged to attend. As such, the ball ground would feature an upgrade not available at their earlier practices. "Seats will be provided on the field for the accommodation of lady visitors." The attendance was "fairly tolerable," although some spectators arrived near the end of the game, which started at 4:00 or 4:30, before businesses would have closed. The club's diligent scorer, Harry T. Levins, provided local newspapers with a summary of runs scored by each player and other details. By a score of 28–24, the "Batting Nine" defeated the "Fielding Nine."⁵ Spectators had stopped to watch the club during practice games in June and July, but this was the first formal game played by the Pioneer BBC, as reported in a note submitted to the *New York Clipper*.⁶

THE PIONEER
Base Ball Club!
WILL
PLAY A MATCHED GAME AT THEIR GROUNDS
At 4 o'clock P. M. To-Day.
T. H. MINKEL, Pres't.

Table 1.—First nine of the Pioneer Base Ball Club from Portland, Oregon in 1866 listed on a team photo and in a box score. The game was played with the Clackamas BBC from Oregon City on October 13. The names are listed in the sequence on the team photo (left to right, top to bottom).

Position	Player
Catcher	Theodore F. Miner
Pitcher	Edward Quackenbush
First Base	W.K. Witherell, captain
Second Base	William Wadhams
Third Base	Frank M. Warren
Shortstop	James B. Upton
Left Field	Joseph Buchtel
Center Field	James Steel
Right Field	P.W DeHuff



The baseball ground used by the Pioneer BBC in June and July was west of the Oregon Iron Works, which would be destroyed by a fire in 1867. (It was rebuilt at the south end of Front Street on the site of the former state penitentiary.) At the end of July, the club moved to a baseball ground on Oak Street between Fifth and Sixth streets. They also played “on the common at East Portland” (across the Willamette River) “a few rods south of the Stark street ferry landing.”⁷ Games and practices among the club’s members continued through September on both fields,⁸ but the nature of the competition would change in October.

Late in September, the Clackamas BBC was organized in Oregon City, about 15 miles upstream (south) on the Willamette River. Although their later start afforded them less time to practice, they sent a challenge to the Pioneers for a game on Saturday, October 13. The challenge was accepted, and practices dutifully continued.⁹

While ball clubs in the east could ride trains to other cities for games, that was not an option in Oregon in 1866. Instead, the first nine of the Pioneer BBC (Table 1) and their supporters traveled up the Willamette River on the steamboat *Senator*. At the time, Willamette Falls at Oregon City was the first obstacle to riverboat travel up the river, so the *Senator* was able to transport the group unimpeded to their destination. Leaving at 6:00 on Saturday morning, the party from Portland was met at the landing by the Clackamas BBC and the Oregon City Brass Band. The assembled group walked to the Barlow House for breakfast and then made the one-mile trek to the baseball field.¹⁰

Upon arriving at the ball ground, the teams discovered a problem with the orientation of the field for their morning contest. All the fielders, except the catcher, faced into the sun. “This was unfortunate, as the playing was made unpleasant by this disposition of the men.” Nevertheless, it affected both teams equally, and the day was otherwise “pleasant.” The Oregon City Brass Band “discoursed fine music throughout the game.” The longer

weeks of practice showed for the Pioneers, who led after the second inning, 42–9. In the remaining seven innings, the Pioneers scored 35 runs to 36 for Clackamas. With a commanding lead, the Pioneers were shutout in the last two innings, 21–0, suggesting they eased up considerably. The final score of 77–45 and the seven homeruns on the unenclosed field were probably due, in part, to the fielders facing the sun.¹¹

After the game, the teams and their guests returned to the Barlow House for lunch, followed by champaign and toasts until it was time for the *Senator* to return downriver. Thus ended “the first match game ever played in the State[,] and it is a splendid beginning.” The *Morning Oregonian* and the *Oregon City Enterprise* published box scores (runs and home runs), and the *Oregonian* included Levins’ detailed scorer’s notes.¹²

The custom of the day was a home-and-home series. Accordingly, the Pioneer BBC prepared to host the Clackamas BBC on the ground in East Portland. Unfortunately, the November weather did not cooperate. The game was scheduled three times and rained out each time. The first season of baseball in Oregon had ended, but the editor of the *Morning Oregonian* offered a final thought. “We hope that during the next year many new Clubs will be established throughout the state.”¹³

In the meantime, one last bit of business remained for the Pioneer BBC in December 1866, but it took place in New York, site of the tenth annual convention of the National Association of Base-Ball Players. As the national authority on baseball rules and other matters, clubs from around the country were welcome to join, though most were in the Northeast and Midwest. Delegates of the clubs did not have to attend the convention, as long as dues were paid. However, H.B. Hall represented Portland’s Pioneer BBC in 1866. In addition, A.H. Ruan and Henry Chadwick were joined by Robert H. Law of Portland on the Printing Committee. Law was a merchant in Portland for building materials, including eastern hardwoods. He had pitched for the Pioneers in the game on August 3.¹⁴

The *Morning Oregonian*’s wish for more clubs in 1867 came true. Several baseball clubs were organized in the state and across the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington Territory (Table 2). Among the new clubs in Oregon were the Athletic BBC in Corvallis, the Dysodia BBC in Eugene, and several clubs in Salem, including the Willamette BBC. Yet most of these clubs only played games between teams picked from their members, sometimes divided into nines of married and unmarried men. In 1867, the *Corvallis Gazette* noted the intercity contests among teams from Portland, Oregon City, and Vancouver, but their Athletic BBC was “a little too distant to challenge ... the above rival clubs.” Talk of a club in Albany brought hope of an intercity match with Corvallis, but the Albany club failed to organize until 1868.¹⁵

The Pioneer BBC met in April to reorganize for the upcoming season. They practiced initially on the ball ground in East Portland while they waited for their ground on Oak Street to be “fitted up for that purpose.” During meetings held in May at Joseph Buchtel’s Photographic Gallery,* the club’s officers, captain, and umpire were selected.¹⁶

* Joseph Buchtel moved from Illinois to Oregon on a 60-wagon train in 1852. He had served as a deputy sheriff in Illinois, where he knew Abraham Lincoln. Buchtel became a photographer and charter member of the Pioneer BBC, playing on the team for several years (*Oregon Daily Journal*, 11 August 1916, p 9).

Table 2.—List of baseball clubs organized in Portland and Oregon City, Oregon and in Vancouver, Washington Territory during 1866 and 1867, the first two years of intercity baseball games in the region. A few clubs played in subsequent years. Some sponsored first and second nines, and some were composed of “juvenile” players. For example, the Young Pioneer BBC and Tumwater BBC players were 12–17 years old.

City	Club	Years
Portland	Pioneer BBC	1866–1877
	Wide-awake BBC	1867
	Spartan BBC*	1867–1868
	Athletic BBC	1867–1869
	Eclipse BBC	1867
	Clear-away BBC	1867
	Young Pioneer BBC	1867–1869
	Young America BBC	1867
	Atlantic BBC	1867
	Pacific BBC	1867
	Active BBC	1867
Oregon City	Clackamas BBC	1866–1869
	(Scotch) Highland BBC	1867–1868
	Tumwater BBC	1867–1868
Vancouver	Occidental BBC	1867
	Sherman BBC	1867–1868
	Continental BBC	1867
	Washington BBC	1867–1868

* The Wide-awake BBC disbanded, and the Spartan BBC was organized by former Wide-awake players.

The Clackamas BBC also reorganized and elected officers. They selected a new baseball field on “the public square east of Center street, on the Bluff.” However, the team lost the services of Abel Mattoon, “among the best of their players,” when both bones in his left forearm were broken by a falling tree.¹⁷

As the two ball clubs reorganized for a new season, there were hints in April that a new club in Portland “will be organized and have a name within a short time.” At a meeting held at Buchtel’s Gallery on May 17, the Wide-awake BBC of Portland was organized, with Joseph Buchtel’s younger brother, Samuel, chosen as captain.¹⁸

While anticipation grew for baseball games among the growing number of clubs, another competition was already underway in Portland. It was not the rebirth of “foot-ball” from “several years ago.” The Portland Library Association, led by Mr. Russell, and the Germania Literary Society, led by Mr. Blumenthal, agreed to a chess match. Initially, the contest was to end when one side won five games, but it was later reduced to three, as the first match lasted several nights. Nevertheless, “The game is exciting great interest among the members of the two societies, and many of them sit as spectators in their respective rooms throughout the hours of playing.” After losing the first game, the Germania Literary Society won the next three games and the match, which ran from May 11 to June 4.¹⁹

Back on the baseball field, with three baseball clubs already practicing, word came of another challenger. The Occidental BBC was organized in Vancouver, across the Columbia River and adjacent to Fort Vancouver. Some of the players worked at the military post. It was the Occidental BBC that first challenged the Pioneer BBC to a game on May 29 to open the season. In addition to the baseball game, the Occidentals planned to host a grand ball, with tickets priced at \$2, "in coin." The "Honorary Committee" for the dance included members of the Pioneer, Clackamas, Wide-awake, and Occidental BBCs.²⁰

On gameday, the river steamboat *Cascades* delayed its departure from Portland until 6:00 on Wednesday morning to accommodate the players and their supporters. The boat landed at Vancouver at 8:15. The passengers were met by the Occidental BBC and escorted to the ball ground "just in the suburbs of the town." The game began at 9:00 and went reasonably well, although the Occidentals were apparently not fully familiar with the latest rules approved at the national convention. The Pioneer BBC won the first contest of the new season, 79–62. After the game, the Occidental BBC treated their guests to lunch at the Alta House before the Pioneers departed on the *Cascades* at 3:00, apparently choosing to skip the dance that evening. Shortly after the game, a letter from "B.O.R." was sent to the *Portland Herald*, charging willful bias against the first umpire, E.D. Backenstos of the Portland BBC. Custom allowed the visiting club to supply the umpire. After complaints by the Occidentals, he had been replaced by a member of the Clackamas BBC in attendance. Both clubs quickly published resolutions denying the letter's accusations of intentional bias, and relations between the clubs remained collegial.²¹

In the days following the game, the clubs continued to practice. The Pioneer BBC also held meetings resulting in the organization of a second nine captained by S.B. Parrish. In addition, the Sherman BBC was organized in Vancouver. Some of its members had recently served with General Sherman. It did not stop there, and the number of clubs continued to increase throughout the season (Table 2). Amidst all this activity, the Pioneer BBC challenged the Clackamas BBC to a game in Portland.²² The weather in June would be more cooperative than it had been the previous November.

As usual, gameday began with a trip on a steamboat, the *Alert* from Oregon City. Round-trip fare was \$1 per person. The Pioneer BBC met their opponents at the landing and escorted them to the ball ground. The Pioneers won the afternoon contest, 78–36. The editor of the *Morning Oregonian* was impressed by the uniforms of both clubs, which bore the initials of the club names. Following the game, the Pioneer BBC treated their guests to supper at the Western Hotel, followed by the usual toasts and speeches. The Pioneer BBC also accepted a challenge to play the Clackamas BBC in Oregon City on the Fourth of July.²³

Thus began a full season of intercity games. Table 3 lists 36 games between baseball clubs reported in the *Morning Oregonian*, *Oregon City Enterprise*, and *Vancouver Register*. Box scores were published for 23 of these games, and some were quite detailed, most of which were published in the *Morning Oregonian*. The *Oregon City Enterprise* was a weekly paper, so it had less space to devote to baseball. The *Vancouver Register* deferred to the *Oregonian*'s wide distribution. "We do not publish the game [result] in full as it has already appeared in the *Oregonian*, which paper has deservedly a large circulation among our circle of readers." One

unusual game report featured a line score showing the typical lists of runs per inning for the Pioneers and Occidentals, but this was followed by lines that documented the number of minutes each half inning lasted.²⁴

In 1867, the Pioneer BBC was undefeated in eight games, including three with the Clackamas BBC and three with the Occidental BBC. The record of the Clackamas BBC was 1-5, though the two losses to the Occidental BBC were close. Their single victory against the Occidentals was an 81-32 rout. The Occidental BBC was the most active club, compiling a record of 5-7. It was also the only club in Vancouver to play the Pioneer BBC or Clackamas BBC, although the Sherman BBC defeated Portland's Spartan BBC twice. The games and scores summarized in Table 3 suggest the Pioneer BBC was clearly the top team in the region in 1867, while the Clackamas BBC, Occidental BBC, Sherman BBC, Spartan BBC, and Washington BBC were evenly matched in the second tier. None of the games among these top clubs was played on Sunday, when large numbers of working-class fans might have watched. At the time, Sunday baseball was a contentious issue.²⁵

Not everything ran smoothly during the season, though the issues that arose were relatively minor. For example, the teams held frequent practices announced in the newspaper. However, some club members apparently were not arriving on time. On July 1, President Theodore Miner of the Pioneer BBC asked for a notice to be published in the *Morning Oregonian* reminding club members, "punctuality is absolutely essential when called upon to practice. Be on the ground at the minute announced in the call, and others will not have lost time (nor patience) in being as all should be—punctual." The following day, the president of the Wide-awake BBC published the same notice. Later that month, the two clubs began practicing together, perhaps to the benefit of the less skilled Wide-awakes. Then, in early August, it was advertised that nine or ten members of the Wide-awake BBC had moved out of Portland, and new members were welcome to join. Instead, the club disbanded on August 20, and some of the remaining members, including Samuel Buchtel, organized the Spartan BBC six days later. There was also talk that the Occidental BBC and Sherman BBC had folded, and that the Columbia BBC had organized in their place, but that rumor was quickly denied.²⁶

In early September, the Pioneer BBC advertised that they would receive a challenge from any ball clubs in the region to play them in October at the State Fair in Salem. As a result, fair officials decided to host a baseball tournament, with prizes offered to the top ball club and the top boys' club. Salem's Willamette BBC was the first to challenge the Pioneers, and they were followed by the Clackamas BBC. In addition to these three

Challenge !

A T A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIONEER BASE BALL CLUB, held Sept. 2d, 1867, the following resolution was adopted.

Resolved, That this Club is prepared to receive a challenge from any Club in this State or Washington Territory, to a match game of Base Ball, to be played at Salem during the coming State Fair (Oct. 7th to 12th)

Challenges will be received up to the 25th September.

sep7dtd
G. A STEEL, Sec'y

clubs, the Tumwater BBC of Oregon City would play the Union BBC of Salem in the juvenile contest. The Tumwaters defeated the Unions, and the Pioneers first defeated the Willamettes and then Clackamas to claim their prize. In both cases, the prize was a trophy

Table 3.—Baseball games played between clubs in the region around Portland, Oregon in 1867 (see Table 2 for clubs and cities). Winning clubs are highlighted in bold print and underlined. Days of the week are abbreviated in parentheses with the date. The number 2 in parentheses indicates the club's second nine. Games on October 8–11 were played at the State Fair in Salem. Information was taken from the *Morning Oregonian*, *Oregon City Enterprise*, and *Vancouver Register*.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clubs</u>	<u>Score</u>
May 29 (W)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> at Occidental BBC	79–62
June 17 (M)	Clackamas BBC at <u>Pioneer BBC</u>	36–78
July 4 (Th)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> at Clackamas BBC	55–44
	Wide-awake BBC at Clackamas BBC (2)	?
	<u>Scotch Highland BBC</u> vs Tumwater BBC	?
July 15 (M)	<u>Occidental BBC</u> vs Clackamas BBC at Portland	52–44
July 26 (F)	<u>Clackamas BBC</u> at Occidental BBC	81–32
July 27 (Sa)	<u>Young Pioneer BBC</u> vs Clear-away BBC	65–43
July 29 (M)	Wide-awake BBC at <u>Occidental BBC</u>	21–73
August 3 (Sa)	<u>Athletic BBC</u> vs Eclipse BBC	60–26
August 13 (Tu)	<u>Occidental BBC</u> at Clackamas BBC	63–59
unknown	<u>Clackamas BBC (2)</u> vs Scotch Highland BBC	?
August 17 (Sa)	Clackamas BBC (2) vs <u>Scotch Highland BBC</u>	61–76
	Young Pioneer BBC at <u>Tumwater BBC</u>	?
August 21 (W)	Occidental BBC at <u>Pioneer BBC</u>	32–66
August 24 (Sa)	<u>Clackamas BBC (2)</u> vs Scotch Highland BBC	?
August 31 (Sa)	<u>Tumwater BBC</u> at Young Pioneer BBC	56–44
September 3 (Tu)	<u>Occidental BBC (2)</u> vs Continental BBC	69–53
September 4 (W)	<u>Occidental BBC</u> vs Sherman BBC	80–25
September 10 (Tu)	<u>Occidental BBC (2)</u> vs Continental BBC	?
September 13 (F)	Occidental BBC vs <u>Sherman BBC</u>	38–44
September 21 (Sa)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> at Occidental BBC	56–22
September 26 (Th)	Occidental BBC vs <u>Sherman BBC</u>	25–52
September 27 (F)	<u>Spartan BBC</u> at Tiger BBC of Forest Grove	47–15
September 30 (M)	Pioneer BBC (2) vs <u>Spartan BBC</u>	40–63
October 5 (Sa)	<u>Athletic BBC</u> vs Spartan BBC (2)	39–33
October 8 (Tu)	<u>Tumwater BBC</u> at Union BBC of Salem	96–23
October 9 (W)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> at Willamette BBC of Salem	92–25
October 11 (F)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> vs Clackamas BBC at Salem	58–53
October 19 (Sa)	<u>Sherman BBC</u> at Spartan BBC	27–26
	<u>Athletic BBC</u> vs Spartan BBC (2)	48–43
October 23 (W)	Occidental BBC vs <u>Washington BBC</u>	52–77
October 30 (W)	Pioneer BBC (2) vs <u>Spartan BBC</u>	37–66
October 28–November 1	<u>Occidental BBC</u> vs Washington BBC	62–57
November 12 (Tu)	Spartan BBC at <u>Sherman BBC</u>	30–31
November 16 (Sa)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> vs Spartan BBC	57–29

bat. The trophies were presented at ceremonies in Oregon City and Portland in September 1868, almost a year after the State Fair. The bat presented to the Tumwater BBC was described as being made of “Oregon wood, and tipped with the tusk of a walrus from Alaska,” with an engraved silver plate attached. The bat presented to the Pioneer BBC and displayed at Buchtel’s Gallery on First Street was made of four kinds of wood—“white and black walnut, Oregon maple, and mahogany.” It also bore an engraved silver plate.²⁷

The 1867 season closed in mid-November, and once again, the Pioneer BBC was represented at the National Association of Base-Ball Players convention in December. This time their delegate was Theodore Miner, who had been president of the club and a member of the first nine. He moved back to the Northeast and was able to travel to the convention in Philadelphia. He sent a letter from Albany, New York describing the convention proceedings in detail, portions of which were published in the *Morning Oregonian*.

During the calling of the roll much enthusiasm prevailed. When the names of the most prominent and popular clubs, such as the Atlantics, of Brooklyn; Athletics, of Philadelphia; Nationals, of Washington; Mutuals, of New York, etc., were called, the delegates were applauded. But to the credit of Oregon, be it said, that upon the Pioneers of Portland, Oregon being called, their delegate responded present, [and] *the house came down*.²⁸

Other than Oregon, the westernmost state represented at the convention was Nebraska. Miner went on to explain in his letter that he expected state associations to be represented at future conventions, but they must have a minimum of 10 clubs, except in states and territories that do not have that many.²⁹

Thus, the Pioneer BBC called a State Convention of Base Ball Players to be convened in Portland on 21 February 1868. Delegates were seated from the Pioneer BBC, Spartan BBC, Clackamas BBC, Highland BBC, and Washington BBC. A state association was created through the adoption of a constitution and by-laws, “providing generally for the government of all the clubs ... belonging to the Association.” The name chosen was the Oregon and Washington and Idaho Territories Association of Base Ball Players. Joseph Buchtel of the Pioneer BBC was chosen as the group’s first president.³⁰

Preparations by clubs for the upcoming season also began early in the year. Members of the Clackamas BBC were called to practice on January 11 “on the lake, near [the] Highland Ground.” In Portland, the Pioneer BBC opened a gymnasium on Second Street for players “to ‘get your wind’ and ‘raise your muscle’ [to be] ready for the Base Ball Season.” They planned to keep the gym open until the baseball season was underway. As the weather allowed, players also headed outdoors for exercise and practice. After one such practice on February 28 on the grounds in East Portland, the players “returned in the drizzling shower, toward evening, under the impression that they had had a bully time.”³¹ The season was also filled with club meetings to elect officers, captains, umpires, and scorers.³²

In the first game of the year, played in Vancouver on April 7, the Washington BBC defeated the Sherman BBC, 56–32. It is unknown why the Sherman BBC never joined the regional baseball association organized after the 1867 season, but they apparently were not

very active in 1868. Table 4 lists the games between members of the association. Noteworthy is the absence of games featuring Portland's Spartan BBC and Oregon City's Highland BBC. In fact, there was no mention of the latter club playing any games in 1868. The Spartan BBC was easily defeated twice by Portland's Athletic BBC (the first game was played at the "old picnic grounds" on Ross' Island). The Athletics also split a pair of close games with the Washington BBC, losing the first by seven runs and winning the second by three runs. Earlier, the Athletics had challenged the Clackamas BBC, but no game was played, perhaps because the Athletic BBC never joined the baseball association. The only five games played by the Clackamas BBC in 1868 were against association members.³³

Similarly, the Pioneer BBC played only five games in 1868, and all were against other association members. They easily defeated the Washington BBC twice to begin their season, but they lost all three games with the Clackamas BBC. These were the first losses the Pioneers had experienced, and the opening loss was by the unfathomable score of 123–76. Neither the *Morning Oregonian* nor the *Oregon City Enterprise* offered an explanation for the extreme score. The game lasted 4 hours and 55 minutes. Even their first game in 1866, when the fielders all had to face into the sun, was not so embarrassing. Each of the nine players for Clackamas scored 13–15 runs. The magnitude of the score is even more surprising when compared to the respectable score (for that era) of 26–22 in their second contest.³⁴

The Pioneer's third loss to Clackamas came with some controversy. The *Morning Oregonian* reported that the Clackamas BBC had declined a challenge from the Pioneer BBC to play at the State Fair, so the Pioneers made no plans to take their team to Salem. Then they learned that the Clackamas BBC had gone to Salem "to achieve the State championship by evading the most skillful club in the State." Hearing this, the members of the Pioneer BBC headed to Salem, hoping to arrive in time to play. They did, and Clackamas won its third game of the season against the Pioneers, 65–53. The following spring, the Oregon City club received an engraved silver championship cup from the State Agricultural Society. Shortly after the fair, however, letters from both clubs sought to

Table 4.—Baseball games played in 1868 between clubs in the Oregon and Washington and Idaho Territories Association of Base Ball Players (see Table 2 for clubs and cities). Winning clubs are highlighted in bold print and underlined. Days of the week are abbreviated in parentheses with the date. Information was taken from the *Morning Oregonian* and *Oregon City Enterprise*.

Date	Clubs	Score
June 27 (Sa)	Washington BBC at <u>Clackamas BBC</u>	40–57
July 4 (Sa)	Clackamas BBC at <u>Washington BBC</u>	?
July 28 (Tu)	<u>Pioneer BBC</u> at Washington BBC	54–32
August 6 (Th)	Washington BBC at <u>Pioneer BBC</u>	30–48
August 22 (Sa)	Pioneer BBC at <u>Clackamas BBC</u>	76–123
September 5 (Sa)	<u>Clackamas BBC</u> at Pioneer BBC	26–22
October 2 (F)	<u>Clackamas BBC</u> vs Pioneer BBC at Salem	65–53

address the controversy concerning the challenge. Based on these letters, the Pioneer BBC had challenged the Clackamas BBC, who declined. Passing through Oregon City en route to the fair, a few of the Pioneers “made very urgent appeals” to Clackamas club members to bring the team to Salem for a championship game. Thus, the Clackamas BBC traveled to the fair, and the Pioneer club members already there sent a telegram to Captain Buchtel in Portland to bring the rest of the team at once. If none of this had come to pass, the silver cup might have gone unclaimed. After winning the championship at the State Fair in 1867, the Pioneers would endeavor in 1868 to “bear defeat philosophically, and [be] stimulated to greater effort in the healthful and excellent game of base ball.”³⁵

During the 1868 season, the Washington BBC was the most active of the association clubs, playing at least nine games against the Sherman BBC (1–0), Clackamas BBC (1–1), Pioneer BBC (0–2), Athletic BBC (1–1), and Oriental BBC (2–0). During the year, there were also games by juvenile clubs and second nines, including the Active BBC, Athletic BBC, Tumwater BBC, Young Grant BBC, Young Pioneer BBC, and Young Washington BBC. However, there were not as many games reported as during 1867. The initial, widespread excitement of 1866 and 1867 was somewhat diminished.³⁶

The Oregon and Washington and Idaho Territories Association of Base Ball Players held its annual meeting in Portland on October 10. Notice of the meeting was published in the *Morning Oregonian* and picked up by an unknown number of other newspapers. Nevertheless, when the meeting convened, the group still consisted of only five clubs—Pioneer BBC, Spartan BBC, Clackamas BBC, Highland BBC, and Washington BBC. The annual dues of \$5 should not have presented a problem for other clubs, so why they did not join is a mystery. Among the business transacted was approval of a motion clarifying that members could play games with “clubs not belonging to this association, [but] such games cannot be counted as match games.” In other business, S.D. Pope of the Clackamas BBC was elected president, and Theodore Miner would once again be asked to serve as their delegate to the national convention. However, there was no mention of him or any other representative in the proceedings of the 1868 convention in Washington, DC.³⁷ Perhaps Oregon, Washington, and Idaho were viewed as having enough potential members that they should meet the 10-club minimum for state associations recognized at the national convention. The northwestern association was no longer active after 1868, possibly frustrated in its ability to attract clubs or, perhaps, the national move toward professionalism. The previously amateur National Association of Base-Ball Players would allow professional clubs in 1869 and give way to the National Association of Professional Base-Ball Players in 1871.³⁸

It was not just the baseball association that had lost steam. The number of games played by organized clubs dropped substantially in 1869. The Pioneer BBC reorganized for the season in March, and the Clackamas BBC did the same in April, although they needed a new ball ground. In March, they received the engraved silver cup for their victory in the 1868 State Fair. Yet, no games between clubs were played that spring, even among the juvenile clubs. A call was issued on May 27 by Joseph Buchtel inviting “all base ball players of this city to meet at the Plaza ... for practice and consultation.” What came from that meeting is unknown, but it was not activity on the baseball field beyond practice.³⁹

In July, teams of younger players began to engage their peers. That same month, a game between “two picked nines, without regard to clubs,” was played on the ground in East Portland. The result was a 30–30 tie after nine innings, when it became too dark to continue. Little detail was published, but members of the Pioneer BBC participated.⁴⁰

In August, the number of games increased. Clubs of younger players were part of this, but the Pioneer BBC issued a challenge accepted by the Clackamas BBC. The game was played in East Portland on August 7, the first match for the Pioneers all year. The Pioneers won, 56–37, reclaiming some of their lost glory. A second game between the clubs was played in Oregon City on August 21, which was another easy victory for the Pioneers. And with that, the season was over. There were still practices and meetings, but no more matches with other clubs. The Pioneer BBC invited the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the first openly professional club, to Portland during their tour through the West, but the Reds returned home by train in early October after their games in San Francisco.⁴¹

That was not the end for the Pioneer BBC, which survived longer than its peers from the 1860s. The last known mention of the club, other than in an historical context, was 1877.⁴² Baseball teams engaging in intercity competition were still organized in Portland during most of the nineteenth century, but the names of the teams changed, as did the players.

In 1879, the Owl BBC, associated with Columbian Engine Company Number 3, was one of four fire department companies to organize a team to compete among themselves and with teams from other cities. In September, a meeting of the “base ball players of Portland” was called at Buchtel’s Gallery to discuss organizing one or two ball clubs. The apparent purpose was to field a team in a tournament at the Territorial Fair in Olympia, Washington Territory. Buchtel’s Gallery was also the site of an organizational meeting in June 1880, though there was little mention of ball clubs or games in Portland that summer.⁴³

In the early 1880s, it was the turn of the Star BBC, with a familiar surname at shortstop—Buchtel. Joseph Buchtel of the Pioneers still had his hand in the sport but not as a player, though one of his sons played. In August 1881, the Star BBC made a trip by steamboat to Oregon City to play a game “on the bluff” against the local Haymaker BBC. It was a repeat of events 14 years earlier by clubs of different names. The Stars were later joined by other clubs, such as the Portland BBC. These clubs began to add players from other cities and states, and they sometimes played for a purse.⁴⁴ The amateur gentlemen’s clubs might have become a relic of the past, but they had provided the foundation for the future of the sport in Oregon, beginning with that first game in Oregon City between the Pioneer BBC and Clackamas BBC in October 1866 and a season full of baseball in 1867.

Acknowledgements

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The Pioneer BBC was resurrected in 2006 as a vintage base ball club that was still active at the time of this writing. For me, conducting this project under travel limitations

imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic was a chance to take a virtual vacation back to Oregon, where I lived years ago (in Coos Bay–North Bend), and where I have returned for several visits since moving to Kansas.

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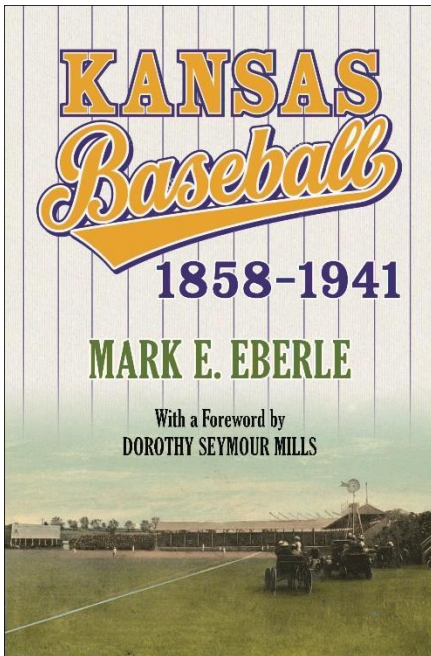
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You can learn more about the early history of baseball played by early teams in the book *Kansas Baseball, 1858–1941*, published in 2017 by the University Press of Kansas and available in paperback or e-book through bookstores and online retailers.

The book explores the early game played by hundreds of town teams composed of white males, as well as teams of women, African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans. Also described are the regional minor leagues and major league tours, along with the histories of towns still playing baseball in the state’s oldest ballparks constructed between 1924 and 1940.