

## THE RISE OF BASEBALL IN MINNESOTA

FOLLOWING THE DEMOBILIZATION of the armies in 1865, there came a rapid and widespread development of baseball clubs. Minnesota pioneers, however, were familiar with the game even before the war. In August, 1857, for example, the citizens of Nininger decided to organize a baseball club. A meeting was held at the office of the *Emigrant Aid Journal* on August 3, and twelve days later the first game was played. G. H. Burns and Charles Ledie were chosen president and secretary of the club. The editor of the Nininger paper hoped the venture would stimulate the young men of neighboring towns to organize clubs so that "matches and return matches" could be played for "assembled thousands."<sup>1</sup>

In St. Paul, a baseball organization claimed the attention of newspapers as early as the summer of 1859, when it was scheduled to play on the "ground near Dr. Pattison's Church" at least twice a week. Apparently most of the competition was provided by matching the married men against the bachelors. The club showed a lack of vigor in 1860, and late in the summer William Wilson "requested all members" to hold an organization meeting. The result was the formation of the Olympic club, which took part in a baseball game on September 11, 1860. During the next few years, events of more significance absorbed the attention and energy of citizens.<sup>2</sup>

In 1865 intercity baseball competition began. In the issue of May 17 the *Saint Paul Press* announced that the North Star club of St. Paul was scheduled to play a game with the

<sup>1</sup> *Emigrant Aid Journal of Minnesota*, August 1, 15, September 12, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul), July 30, 1859, August 11, September 11, 1860; *Saint Paul Press*, March 31, 1864.

Excelsior club of Fort Snelling. A victory for the St. Paul club was predicted because many of the best players on the Excelsior club had recently been discharged. The game was played before a large crowd and the North Star club won by the overwhelming score of 38 to 14. Despite the large score, the contest was completed within two hours. The *Press* did not present a box-score summary, but it did publish the score by innings and a list of the players. On May 26 the North Star club announced that it had prepared "sheltered seats for ladies and other visitors," and that it was planning "to obtain a neat uniform" and to "erect a building for meetings and as a depository for property of the club." Another indication of its "flourishing condition" was its practice schedule: "Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 4 to 6 P. M."<sup>3</sup>

The North Star boys challenged the sportsmen of Hastings to "match play." The first game was played at Hastings on July 1. The people of St. Paul were "indebted to Mr. Squires, the telegraph operator," for news of the victory of the North Star club. Not until July 7 did the *Press* publish a complete account of the game as given in the *Hastings Conserver*. The Vermillion club of Hastings had been organized the "day preceding the match" and its members "had never played together before." Walter C. Cowles of the Vermillion club was umpire. After the contest "both clubs, and visitors from St. Paul, assembled at the Herndon House," where supper had been "prepared by the Vermillion Club" in honor of the North Star boys. An account of the affair concluded with a prophecy: "We believe that this friendly meeting will long be remembered by victor and vanquished, and will mark an important era in the history of the game in the State." The Vermillion club played the second and final game of the match at St. Paul in September, the North Stars winning by a score of 49 to 16. "A large attendance of ladies and gentlemen"

<sup>3</sup> *Press*, May 13, 14, 19, 1865.

were so absorbed in the game that a rainstorm did not drive them away. De Kay, left fielder of the Vermillion club, "held some flyers in a masterly manner"; Paine of the North Star made some "brilliant catches"; and Wilson was applauded for "audacious and fortunate play between bases." After the game the "gentlemen of the two clubs" enjoyed a dinner at the International Hotel, where there was "a general good time—sparkling wit, happy repartee, genial jokes, explosions of laughter . . . in fact, just such a time as two or three score of intelligent gentlemen *can* have, when they have the disposition."<sup>4</sup>

In 1865 the North Star club showed consistent activity. Although it was inactive the next year, baseball prospered in St. Paul. On April 14, 1866, "all interested in forming a Base Ball Club" were called upon to meet at the grounds of the North Star. By July 27 two clubs had been organized. The Olympics selected Russ Munger, C. S. Wilson, H. C. Wilkinson, and E. Stone Gorman for officers; the Saxon club officials were Charles Wilson, W. J. Coulter, Freeman Strong, and Loren Collins. The first game between the rival clubs was won by the Olympic nine by a score of 20 to 18. The rivalry between the two teams was especially keen because the Saxon club represented Lower Town and the Olympic, Upper Town. The Saxons next challenged the Olympics to a "match game," which would require the winning of two out of three contests. The first game of the series was won by the Saxon nine, although the umpire had to stop the game at the end of the seventh inning because of rain. Needless to say, the Olympics believed they would have won if nature had not intervened. The second game, a smashing victory for the Olympics, was played late in August. This team also won the final game on October 29 and became the city champions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Press*, July 2, September 21, 1865.

<sup>5</sup> *Press*, August 4, 1865, April 14, 28, May 1, 17, July 27, August 22, 23, 28, 29, October 30, 1866.

In the fall of 1866 the second nines of the Saxon and Olympic clubs played two games, each winning one. There was also a match between two boys' clubs, the Liberty and Independent. In the same year the Champion club of Winona was organized, and a club was reported in Red Wing. At the end of 1866 baseball had a firm hold in St. Paul, a good beginning in Hastings, and a start in both Winona and Red Wing. The stage was set for the banner year of 1867.<sup>6</sup>

During the first week of April, 1867, "old members" and all others interested were requested to meet in Munger's Hall to reorganize the North Star club. Enthusiasm ran high; at the first practice game there were "twelve or thirteen" players on each side. By the first week in May the club had selected "new grounds on Dayton's Bluff," and at the regular meeting for May the first nine was selected to play "against the field." An omnibus, which left "Bridge Square at three thirty o'clock precisely, stopping at Munger's, Merchants' Hotel, and the International," was obtained to haul the members to the playing grounds. The first match game of the season was played with the Minneapolis club on May 27, and thirty-five members of the North Star went to the neighboring city for the occasion. The results were most gratifying for the visitors, who won the game by a score of 56 to 26.<sup>7</sup>

Two days after this victory, a special meeting of the North Star club was held for the purpose of choosing a uniform. Every member was ordered to attend the June meeting or "be subject to a fine." Arrangements were made for a benefit performance to raise funds, for if the club was to keep on a "good playing basis, many things are necessary besides tact and muscle." The benefit, which was

<sup>6</sup> *Press*, October 13, November 5, 1866; *Goodhue County Republican* (Red Wing), April 12, 1867; *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times*, 14:262 (June 23, 1866).

<sup>7</sup> *Press*, April 6, 18, May 5, 8, 9, 18, 23, 27, 1867.

held in the opera house, drew a large audience. A second game with the Minneapolis nine was played in St. Paul before a large crowd "of ladies and gentlemen." The omnibus was unable to transport all those who wished to see the contest, and many "livery teams" were in use. Seats placed along one side of the grounds were "well filled, mostly by ladies." Although the game was played in St. Paul, "the crowd seemed desirous that Minneapolis should win." The North Star club again was victorious, however, by a score of 47 to 29. When the game was finished after three and a half hours, each side gave the other three cheers and the players then went to the International Hotel, where an "elegant supper" was served. Besides a lengthy account of the game, the *Press* included a summary which resembled the present-day box score. The players were listed in columns with the number of runs and outs made by each.<sup>8</sup>

In less than a week after the second triumph over the Minneapolis nine the North Star club challenged the Crescent club of Red Wing. Since the challenger had to travel for the first game of a match, the North Star nine and members who wished to watch the game took the Milwaukee road to Red Wing and arrived at midnight. Some members of the Crescent club were waiting to take charge of the visitors, who were "furnished in a very hospitable manner with everything necessary" for their comfort. In the morning members of the "Crescent Club took their guests about the city and exhibited to them all the sights," or "entertained them in a very handsome style" until the time of the game. When the players reached the fair grounds, where the game was played, many people had "congregated to witness the sport." For six innings the game was evenly contested, but the St. Paul boys batted hard in the closing innings to win by a score of 52 to 34. The St. Paul *Press* tabulated some of the important facts of the game, naming

<sup>8</sup> *Press*, May 29, June 2, 6, 8, 9, 15, 1867.

the umpire, L. A. Hancock of the Crescent Club, and the official scorers, J. D. Wilson of St. Paul and C. H. Bosworth of Red Wing, and giving the number of home runs, fly catches, and passed balls, and the line-ups and batting order.<sup>9</sup>

The North Star club continued to arouse interest in the great game of baseball by going to Mankato in July. In order to arrive on July 10 ready for play, members of the St. Paul nine had to leave home two days earlier. The trip was made by train and boat. Since the Frontier club had been organized only a short time, it was no match for a nine "so well disciplined as the North Star," whose members were hailed as the "Champions of the State."<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile in St. Paul, the Saxon club of Lower Town was reorganized by "boys from twelve to sixteen years of age." These youngsters were given plenty of opportunity to develop by the North Star club, which had a membership sufficient for more than three nines. The third team played the Saxons on July 7 for the first time, and was soundly trounced. The spectators were considerably amused by the sight of "full grown men" being beaten by a team of youngsters. A month later the third team of the North Star, reinforced by three players from the second nine, had to play ten innings to defeat the Saxons, who won the third and deciding game by the impressive score of 50 to 31. All the games were played on the North Star grounds on Dayton's Bluff.<sup>11</sup>

Early in September, 1867, the North Star club announced the opening of a new diamond on St. Anthony Hill, "near Doctor Day's residence." Press reports indicate that boys took possession of the old grounds on Dayton's Bluff. During October and November five new clubs, at least two of

<sup>9</sup> *Press*, June 16, 23, 1867; *Goodhue County Republican*, June 21, 28, 1867.

<sup>10</sup> *Press*, July 12, 1867.

<sup>11</sup> *Press*, July 7, 8, 10, August 9, 11, 31, 1867.

them for boys, were named in the newspapers. The last game of the season, on November 23, was between teams from the Dixon and Adams schools.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear that much of the credit for the popularity of baseball in Minnesota in 1867 should go to the North Star club. For an amateur organization it was excellently directed. It held meetings regularly each month during the season, and issued many special calls. The first nine was selected from the membership, which totaled fifty-seven names. Regular practice and social games between the first and second nines gave the members a chance to prove their skill. In July it was rumored that the club would send representatives to the Detroit baseball convention. Ten of the members accompanied the Minneapolis team on a trip to Hastings and Red Wing in August.<sup>13</sup>

Many other Minnesota towns had baseball clubs in 1867. The Lake City Union Base Ball Club was organized on July 10 with a total membership of twenty-five. On August 10 the first and second nines of the Crescent club of Red Wing went to Lake City to play two games with the Union club. The editor of the *Lake City Leader* rejoiced in the meeting of the "youth of the neighboring towns" and declared that if baseball had no other claims, it must be praised as a "glorious game." The Red Wing group also traveled to Rochester for a game with the Gopher State club. The crowd that saw the game was estimated to number a thousand. The Rochester boys won the game easily by a margin of twenty-six runs. Upon returning home members of the Crescent club adopted resolutions expressing their "thanks to the Gopher State club and the Rochester citizens, their commendations to the people of Rochester for interest in the game, and to Captain Shaw for being umpire." The Gopher State club played at Owatonna on July 29 and 30,

<sup>12</sup> *Press*, September 2, October 15, 20, 27, November 3, 10, 16, 23, 1867.

<sup>13</sup> *Press*, July 13, 14, 19, 20, August 1, 4, 1867.

losing both games. Captain Olin of the North Star club was the efficient umpire for the contests. The Winona club was defeated by the Gopher State club at Rochester in August. A team from St. Peter was beaten by the Frontier club of Mankato before five hundred spectators.<sup>14</sup>

Many other clubs organized in 1867 apparently did not participate in intercity matches. The St. Croix Ball Club was formed at Stillwater sometime during July. According to the *Goodhue County Republican* a club was organized at Cannon Falls. The Minnehaha club of Northfield and a club at Faribault were in the field and helped to organize the Minnesota State Association of Base Ball Players, as did clubs from Dundas and St. Cloud. The formation of this association was the outstanding feature of Minnesota baseball history in 1867. A step in this direction was taken at Rochester in June, when Dr. E. C. Cross proposed to the Minnesota State Agricultural Society that a "free tournament" be held during the state fair — an idea that was rejected by the state fair board. The St. Paul *Press* of August 20 took the next step by calling a "Base Ball Players' Convention."

In accordance with an expressed desire of a majority of the Base Ball Clubs throughout the State, a delegate convention of Base Ball Players is hereby called to meet at Ingersoll's Hall, in the city of St. Paul, Minn., on Wednesday, the 4th day of September, 1867, for the purpose of organizing a State Association, and to transact any other business which may come before it.

All regularly organized Clubs which have adopted the rules and regulations of the National Association of Base Ball Players, will be entitled to two delegates each.

All newspapers in Minnesota were urged to reprint this notice, which was signed by the presidents of the baseball clubs at St. Paul, Owatonna, Hastings, Minneapolis, Red Wing, Northfield, Winona, Faribault, and Mankato. The North Star club of St. Paul, which had played at Minneapolis, Red

<sup>14</sup> *Lake City Leader*, July 13, August 16, 1867; *Goodhue County Republican*, July 26, August 2, 1867; *Saint Paul Press*, August 1, 16, 1867.

Wing, and Mankato, and had been represented by umpires at Hastings, Rochester, and Owatonna, was the leading spirit in the movement to create a state organization.<sup>15</sup>

The convention was held as scheduled. The first session was called to order by Judge Charles Taylor of Dundas; R. C. Olin of St. Paul was chosen chairman pro tem; and R. E. Grant of Faribault, secretary. The committee on credentials seated delegates from the Gopher club of Owatonna, the Crescent club of Red Wing, the Faribault club, the Minnehaha club of Northfield, the Adriatic club of Dundas, the North Star and Saxon clubs of St. Paul, the Arctic club of St. Cloud, the National club of Lake City, and the Minneapolis and High School clubs of Minneapolis. A committee on permanent organization was appointed. The convention ignored the delegates and active ballplayers in electing as president General Henry H. Sibley, who was famed not only as a soldier and a statesman, but also as a sportsman. R. C. Olin was made vice-president; J. K. Rodgers, secretary; and Sidney Mills, Jr., treasurer.<sup>16</sup>

A constitution and bylaws were drafted and adopted, and the organization was officially named the "Minnesota State Association of Base Ball Players." Its purposes were to "improve, foster and perpetuate" the game of baseball and to cultivate "kindly feelings among the different members of the Base Ball Clubs." Each member club was to be represented by two delegates. In order to enter the association, a club must, "thirty days previous to the annual meeting," submit "a written application signed by the President and Secretary" which will give the "name of the club, date of organization, days and places of playing, names of officers and delegates, and the number of members." The commit-

<sup>15</sup> *Goodhue County Republican*, August 2, 1867; *Press*, June 20, July 13, 30, August 22, September 5, 1867.

<sup>16</sup> *Press*, September 5, 1867. For some of Sibley's own accounts of his adventures as a hunter and sportsman, see "A Buffalo and Elk Hunt in 1842," and "Sibley as a Wild Game Conservationist," *ante*, 15: 382-394, 18: 415-419.

tee on nominations would receive the application and then "investigate and report." If the petition received a two-thirds vote, the applicant was admitted as a member, and "any informality or irregularity in the application" could be waived by a two-thirds vote. In order to be eligible for admission, a club had to have "at least eighteen active members," and it was required to sign the constitution and pay dues of five dollars at or before the annual meeting. The officers of the association were elected for one year, or until officers were elected to supplant them. One important duty of the secretary was to publish the decisions of the judiciary committee. The annual meeting was to be held on the third Wednesday in March, "at such a place as may be designated by the officers of the Association," with "eight delegates" constituting a quorum. The rules and regulations of the National Association of Base Ball Players were "to govern all match games" played between clubs belonging to the state association. Three standing committees were specified in the constitution — the judiciary, rules and regulations, and nomination.<sup>17</sup>

The bylaws adopted at the St. Paul convention contained a few items of interest. Every member present at a meeting of the association was "required" to vote unless "directly or personally" interested in the question under consideration. A two-thirds vote by the members present at any meeting was necessary for expulsion. For settling disputes, "All charges against any member, or Club, must be submitted in writing to the Secretary . . . within three days from the occurrence of causes . . . and the Club or person against whom said charges are made will be furnished with a copy thereof." Then the judiciary committee would investigate and "render judgment thereon within fifteen days . . . which decision shall be binding and final," unless upon appeal it was reversed by a two-thirds vote of the association.

<sup>17</sup> The *Press* of September 5, 1867, published the constitution and bylaws of the association.

The convention undertook to select a location for the first state tournament, for which Minneapolis, Faribault, and St. Paul were bidding. Faribault sponsors promised to raise five hundred dollars; and St. Paul, six hundred. A committee of five, with General Sibley as chairman, was appointed to conduct the tournament after St. Paul was chosen. That city was to raise six hundred dollars "for providing prizes and paying expenses," and if unable to obtain that amount, the committee was at liberty to locate the tournament in a city that would. The convention decided that any club that applied for membership and indicated its willingness to comply, in all respects, with the provisions of the constitution and bylaws one week before the tournament would be allowed to participate.<sup>18</sup>

At the evening session of the convention the officers were inaugurated. Sibley accepted the presidency in a brief speech in which he expressed the belief that "Base Ball was destined to become emphatically a *National Game*, and that the best thing that the community can do will be to encourage its development. It not only develops the muscles," he continued, but it contributes to the "health of the devotee," promotes a "general acquaintance by bringing men together from a distance," and occupies their time and prevents them "from visiting places and indulging in habits which are improper and ought to be avoided." He added that "seeing their elders engaged in this amusement encouraged young boys to engage in it and had a tendency to keep them out of bad company." In closing, Sibley pledged himself "to do all in his power to forward the interests of the association, though only a *passive* member of a club."<sup>19</sup>

At St. Paul, under the leadership of the North Star club, a committee composed of Sibley, Olin, Theodore Borup, Captain C. E. Graves, and Damon Greenleaf, was appointed to raise funds for the state tournament. It may be assumed

<sup>18</sup> *Press*, September 5, 1867.

<sup>19</sup> *Press*, September 5, 1867.

that the necessary sum was raised, for the tournament was held in St. Paul. An imposing list of prizes was offered for the winning club and outstanding players. The rules provided for two classes of competition, and an entrance fee of five dollars had to be paid on or before September 17. Only five clubs entered the tournament—a cause for bitter disappointment. They were the Arctic club of St. Cloud, the Vermillion club of Hastings, the North Star and Saxon clubs of St. Paul, and the St. Croix club of Stillwater.<sup>20</sup>

September 24, the first day of the tournament, was perfect for baseball, according to the *St. Paul Press*. The event was a gala one; even the omnibus horses were decorated with miniature flags in honor of the occasion. Preparations had been made at the North Star grounds to entertain a portion of the crowd in “elevated seats erected on the border of right field.” Probably most of the spectators sat on the ground or in the carriages which fringed the field. The first game between the St. Cloud Arctics and the North Stars was called off at the end of the sixth inning, with the St. Paul team leading by fifty runs. The second game, between the North Star and Vermillion nines, was a real test of skill; but the North Stars finally took complete command of the game and scored twenty-one times in the eighth inning. The final score was 58 to 40. In the second class the Saxon nine defeated the St. Croix team in the first game, but lost to the same club in the second game. Since the St. Croix club had to leave before the end of the tournament, the Saxon nine won the second-class championship by a toss of a coin. For the first-class championship, the North Stars played the Vermillions after the latter had disposed of St. Cloud by a score of 100 to 44. The final game attracted a large crowd, including so many boys that it seemed as if “all the schools in the city had made a special holiday.” The umpire was H. S. Seymour of the Niagara

<sup>20</sup> *Press*, September 24, 1867.

club, Buffalo, New York. The summary of the game in the St. Paul *Press* indicates an interesting contest.<sup>21</sup>

NORTH STAR	OUTS	RUNS
Olin, pitcher .....	4	5
W. Wilson, catcher.....	4	5
Paine, first baseman.....	1	6
C. Wilson, shortstop.....	5	3
Tostevin, second baseman.....	3	3
H. Wilson, left fielder.....	2	5
Oakes, center fielder.....	2	6
P. Wilson, third baseman.....	3	5
Noyes, right fielder.....	2	5
Totals .....	27 <sup>22</sup>	43

VERMILLION		
Greiner, catcher .....	4	3
Van Inervan, third baseman.....	4	4
Norton, pitcher .....	1	5
Crozier, second baseman.....	3	4
Kinzie, left fielder.....	5	1
Jones, shortstop .....	4	3
Twitchell, center fielder.....	2	5
Etheridge, first baseman.....	2	5
Torrence, right fielder .....	2	5
Totals .....	27	35

Innings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Totals
North Star	0	0	10	12	10	8	0	1	2	43
Vermillion	1	2	1	5	11	6	5	1	3	35

Home runs .....Tostevin 1; Crozier 1.  
 Fly catches .....North Star 10; Vermillion 9.  
 Passed balls .....North Star 6; Vermillion 14.  
 Struck out .....North Star 3; Vermillion 2.  
 Bases on called balls.....North Star 4; Vermillion 4.  
 Time of game.....2 hours and 25 minutes.

Following the victory of the North Star nine, President Sibley awarded the prizes. The championship prize, a silver ball, was, of course, presented to the captain of the

<sup>21</sup> *Press*, September 28, 1867.

<sup>22</sup> This column actually totals only 26.

North Star team, W. Wilson. The second prize, a silver-mounted rosewood bat, was awarded to the Vermillion club. The Arctic club of St. Cloud received the third prize, a silver goblet. In the second-class competition, the first prize, a set of four flags with silver-mounted staffs, was presented to the Saxon club of St. Paul; and the St. Croix club of Stillwater received the second-place trophy, a set of silver-mounted bats. The presentation to the North Star nine of a prize for being "white-washed" most often during the tournament was the occasion for "loud and repeated applause" from the spectators. Medals went to Greiner of the Vermillion club as the best catcher, and to the following members of the North Stars: Olin as the best pitcher, Paine as best batter, and Charles Wilson as best shortstop and thrower. The latter threw a ball 285½ feet.<sup>23</sup> "After the presentation of the prizes, the different clubs formed a procession in two ranks, open order, and marched down town preceded by the Great Western Band, which had, with its soul-inspiring music filled up the intervals in the afternoon's exercises." The parade which disbanded at the International House, brought to a close the first state baseball tournament ever held in Minnesota.<sup>24</sup>

Regulations for future "match play" for the championship trophy, published in the *St. Paul Press* of October 8, 1867, defined the manner of challenging and of paying fees and expenses. To obtain the silver ball a team must win two out of three games, all players on the competing nines "must have been members of the club in good standing for thirty days prior to the match," and the *Base Ball Players' Book of Reference* published in 1867 by J. C. Haney and Company was made the basis for settling disputes not covered by rules of the state association. The mere creation of rules, however, did not smooth all the bumps in the path of championship play; in fact, they seemed to make new dif-

<sup>23</sup> *Press*, September 24, 25, 28, 1867.

<sup>24</sup> *Press*, September 25, 1867.

faculties. Bickerings, accusations of unfairness, and sometimes disputes so bitter as to interrupt a game, now arose.

Following victories over teams from Faribault, Hastings, and Hudson, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1868, the Minnehaha club of Northfield challenged the North Star nine to defend its title. The North Stars who had been inactive since winning the championship insisted upon strict adherence to the rules requiring the challenger to play the first game at the home of the champion, and the Minnehaha boys "unanimously resolved to go to St. Paul at whatever cost." Through the kindness of the Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad, the telegraph was used to make the final arrangements for the game. A controversy over the thirty-day eligibility clause threatened to wreck the match. When the teams arrived on the playing field on July 17, the North Star club was planning to use a certain William Miller of Stillwater as pitcher. The St. Paul boys admitted that Miller had pitched for the St. Croix team, but insisted that he "was now coming to St. Paul to live" and therefore should be allowed to play. After wrangling for more than an hour, the teams submitted the question to the umpire, Walter C. Cowles of Hastings, who barred Miller from the game. Another quarrel arose when the game was stopped by rain in the eighth inning, with the score of 78 to 38 in favor of the Minnehaha nine. Much of the latter's scoring had been done after the rain began. Although the St. Paul papers condemned the North Stars for being "unprepared to play," they asserted that the game might have been a victory for the St. Paul team if the play had been suspended as soon as the rain began and resumed when it had ceased. After considerable argument, the North Stars finally conceded the game to the Minnehaha nine, but pointed out the legality of the St. Paul claims by several references to Haney's rules. The *Saint Paul Pioneer* described the action of the North Stars as "very graceful and proper," but

expressed doubt about the right of the club to make a game out of what "the rules declare is not a game." Before the second and final game was played, the teams had difficulty in deciding on the lapse of time between games. The Northfield nine, however, decided to waive all technicalities, insisting only that every North Star player should have been a member of his club "thirty days prior to the game." On August 14 the Minnehaha team claimed the championship trophy by defeating the North Stars 40 to 38.<sup>25</sup>

The North Star club, which had been so active in inaugurating organized baseball in Minnesota, did not continue very long after losing the championship emblem. In fact, the club did not receive any further newspaper publicity until the spring of 1869, when the fifty-seven members were named as defendants in two lawsuits. In one they were sued for a livery bill amounting to \$251.00, and in the other for printing services of an unnamed amount.<sup>26</sup>

The play for the silver ball, emblematic of the Minnesota championship, continued in the summer of 1868. The Northfield team was given only a month in which to enjoy its victory over its St. Paul rivals before it was challenged by the St. Croix club of Stillwater. The controversy over Miller, the pitcher of the latter nine, added interest to this contest. The first game was played on September 23 at Northfield. The Minnehaha batters had been able to get forty runs off the pitching of Olin, who was awarded the pitching prize at the state tournament, but were able to score only twenty-three times off the hurling of Miller. Possibly the absence of three regular players had something to do with the defeat of the Northfield team, for it won a second game at Stillwater by a score of 58 to 47. Miller, however, did not pitch for the St. Croix nine. The decisive game of the series was played at Hastings, where Captain

<sup>25</sup> *Northfield Recorder*, July 24, August 21, 1868; *Saint Paul Press*, May 10, July 18, August 16, 1868; *Pioneer*, July 18, 21, 1868.

<sup>26</sup> *Pioneer*, April 24, 1869; *Press*, April 24, May 11, 1869.

Olin of the North Stars and Hersey of the Lake City club were umpires. This game produced the best baseball played in Minnesota prior to 1869, with proof that pitching is essential to a successful team. If the score is acceptable evidence, both pitchers were good. Miller of the St. Croix did especially fine work, but the Minnehaha pitcher lost his effectiveness in the eighth inning. Up to that time each team had made only eight runs, but the St. Croix nine made seven runs in the eighth and two in the ninth innings, and the Minnehahas were able to score five times. In fact, all the playing was especially good for players of limited experience.<sup>27</sup>

The St. Croix club held the title and had possession of the silver ball until July, 1869, when the Lake City Union nine captured the trophy. Miller did not pitch for the St. Croix team. The final game of the match was played in St. Paul, where the Saxon club immediately challenged the victorious nine. The Saxons won the championship and were called upon to defend it by the Crescent club of Red Wing. For some unknown reason the Crescents failed to appear in St. Paul for the first game, and the Saxons won the second game by the close score of 25 to 21. Until the Gopher State club of Rochester met the Saxons, the championship play of 1869 had been peaceful. The champions and the Gopher State team agreed to play for the silver ball at the state fair in Rochester. At the end of the seventh inning, with the Rochester nine leading, the Saxons "placed a fielder behind their catcher." An argument followed, but the Saxons refused to remove their "illegal" fielder. Immediately upon resumption of play a foul fly was caught by the second catcher, and the umpire declared the batter out. After the subsequent wrangle, the Saxons refused to continue the game, and the umpire was forced to declare a victory for

<sup>27</sup> *Northfield Recorder*, September 11, 1868; *Northfield Enterprise*, September 25, October 16, 30, 1868; *Saint Paul Press*, September 23, 24, October 10, 1868; *Stillwater Republican*, October 27, 1868.

the Gopher State team. The next morning, when the teams met again, two referees were chosen to settle disputes which the umpire might not be able to adjust. With the score a tie, the Saxons announced that they had to leave immediately for the depot, and no amount of argument could change their decision. As a result the umpire declared the Gopher State club the winner and the rightful owner of the silver ball. The Saxon club refused to surrender the trophy and it must have been sustained in that act by the state association, for in the following summer the Union nine of Minneapolis won the championship from the St. Paul team, and retained the title during the remainder of the year.<sup>28</sup>

There were signs that the quality of the game was improving in Minnesota. By 1869 margins between the scores of the winning and losing teams were becoming smaller — an indication that playing ability was more evenly distributed than in 1867. This does not mean, however, that games were always played skillfully, though the total scores do show some improvement. In the championship game of 1867, fourteen “passed balls” were charged against Greiner of the Vermillion club, who was considered the best catcher of the tournament. Each catcher had only one passed ball in the final game of the championship match of the following year. The reduction of scoring shows that pitching skill was improving. The champion St. Croix nine limited the Minnehahas to thirteen runs in a nine-inning game. The Union club of Minneapolis permitted its opponents only twelve runs in a game in May, 1869. Two months later, the Saxon nine, with Lyon pitching, allowed only seventeen runs in a game, and he granted a “picked nine” from Minneapolis only ten runs in another game. Probably the best of the early Minnesota games was that

<sup>28</sup> *Saint Paul Pioneer*, July 25, August 8, 1869; *Lake City Leader*, July 2, 23, August 6, 13, 1869; *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 24, August 27, September 3, 6, October 2, 4, 1869; *Rochester Post*, October 2, 1869; *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 11, 12, 1870.

between the Union club of Chester and the Independent nine of Lake City in 1870. The score was tied at fourteen all at the end of nine innings, and the Unions finally won in the twelfth with the score 17 to 15. The game was played in "one hour and fifty minutes." The *Lake City Leader* reported a game at Red Wing in 1868 in which the Union team of Lake City made four double plays—good fielding in any baseball game, even today—and there are several other instances of double plays in games of 1869 and 1870.<sup>29</sup>

As sporting events became more popular on holidays, especially on July 4, baseball became a feature attraction. The Owatonna and Rochester nines played on July 4, 1867. "Between one and two hundred visitors from Owatonna" went to see the game at Rochester, where there had not been so "much excitement since the Fair." On July 4, 1868, two Minnesota teams played at Hudson, Wisconsin. Lake City promoted a baseball tournament on the same day, in which teams from Stillwater, Red Wing, and St. Paul participated with two nines from Lake City. In 1869 the Rochester team traveled to Winona on Independence Day. The Saxons of St. Paul played a championship game with the Union nine of Minneapolis on July 4, 1871.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually cash prizes were substituted for trophies. The St. Paul *Press* made much of the value of the awards given at the state baseball tournament of 1867. The silver ball, emblem of the championship, was reputed to be worth a hundred dollars. Even the individual awards were reported to be valued at fifteen dollars each. At Red Wing in October, 1867, a "citizens' purse" of twenty dollars was offered for "visiting clubs outside the county," and on July

<sup>29</sup> *Saint Paul Press*, September 28, 1867; *Northfield Enterprise*, October 30, 1868; *Lake City Leader*, July 24, 1868, July 1, 1870; *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 13, 18, 28, 1869, July 12, 1870.

<sup>30</sup> *Saint Paul Press*, July 7, 1867, July 7, 1868; *Goodhue County Republican*, July 3, 1868; *Northfield Recorder*, July 10, 1868; *Lake City Leader*, July 14, 1868; *Rochester Post*, July 10, 1869; *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 4, 1871.

4, 1867, at Lake City the winning team received twenty-five dollars. In October, 1868, Hudson, Wisconsin, invited the Saxons of St. Paul and the St. Croix club of Stillwater to compete for "a purse of fifty dollars."<sup>31</sup>

Although there was no professionalism in Minnesota baseball in the sixties, there were some signs pointing in that direction. The first was the effort of the North Star club to obtain the services of the pitcher of the St. Croix team. Miller was an unusually fast pitcher for the sixties. There is no evidence that he ever moved to St. Paul. He played with the Stillwater team in 1868, and his name was not on the membership list of the North Star in 1869. A Minneapolis paper of 1869 recommended procuring the services of an expert "and paying him wages . . . whether in instructing the club or in playing matches." It further reported that the young men of Minneapolis and St. Anthony were about to organize a baseball club and would obtain the services of a "competent 'baseballist' for at least a short time." Evidence that this proposal was carried out, at least in 1869, is lacking, but the thought was present.<sup>32</sup>

Intercity contests, a state association, and the first state tournament with its championship play marked the beginnings of a sport that has had a remarkable growth in Minnesota. As early as 1867 a Minnesota editor remarked that "The game of Base Ball has become so much the *style* that nearly every village and hamlet has its club, and to be a member of the first nine is now looked upon as being nearly as honorable a position as a seat in the Legislature."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Lake City Leader*, July 9, 1869; *Goodhue County Republican*, October 11, 1867; *Saint Paul Press*, October 16, 18, 1868.

<sup>32</sup> *Saint Paul Press*, July 18, 1868; *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 9, 1869.

<sup>33</sup> *Lake City Leader*, August 23, 1867.



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