

ATHLETES AND SPORTS IN MAYNARD TOWN

From the earliest times, man has engaged in various forms of more or less highly organized play activity. Athletic contests, whether for amusement and recreation, or as a means of training for the serious pursuits of life, have always been highly valued. Of recent vintage comparatively, is the need of sedentary man in a technologically advanced society to get exercise physically for purposes of health.

In our fair town, athletes and sports have always played a big part, much more so than in the farming communities adjacent to us, for the simple reason that we have been concentrated in a tiny geographical area centered around one industrial plant. Rubbing shoulders constantly with our neighbors, the natural desire for contests, games and feats of physical strength made Maynard a Mecca of sports and athletes that compared favorably with towns and cities manifold larger than itself. Another major reason for the diversity of sports was the diversity of our people - twenty-one different nationalities by 1905 were gathered within our confines with their multifarious sports from the old country.

Just to skim through a listing of sports and games played in Maynard Town since 1871 is fascinating reading for it traces back our anthropological background very neatly. Billiards, ancient, but brought here by the English - bowling, ancient, English & Scotch - Cards, ancient, English et al - checkers, ancient, English - Cricket, English - Golf, originated in Holland and Belgium, played by both English and Scotch - Hockey, ancestry is Irish game of 'Shinty', and Scottich game 'Hurley' - Polo, Persian, brought here by English (we had Roller-Polo) - Tennis, English - Baseball, American, Cooperstown, N.Y., 1839 - Basketball, American, 1892 - Track & Field, Ancient Greeks, brought here by the Finns - Gymnastics, Ancient Greeks, Finnish - Checkers, Ancient, called draughts in England and Les Dames (the women) in France, English - Football, ancient, our American form derived from the English

Football, Ancient, our American form derived from the English in two forms, Soccer and Rugby Football - Calisthenics, Ancient Greek, Middle European and brought here by the Finns - Skating, French, English.

This monograph will exclude mention of Billiards, Bowling, Cards, Cricket, Golf, Checkers and Soccer, for separate papers have been written on these sports. We must also mention that factual information of Nineteenth Century Maynard sports is not handily at our finger-tips. We use information gleaned from the Maynard News up to 1930 - recollections of old timers which could be derelict.

Our first news note is dated May 20, 1927 and is concerned with Baseball. The first town Baseball Team was called the Maynard Mutuals in 1873 using a diamond opposite the Maynard Tomb - Walker's Field. Some of the players were Onnie Reynolds, Jack Kennedy, Pat Freil, Mark Kelley, Chubby Holbrook, Cannonball Jack O'Brien, Umpire James F. Sweeney, - played Marlboro. The article continues stating Gardner and Gilligan formed a battery later and played on a team managed by "Bat" Coughlin for several seasons. William Connolly and T.J.O'Donnell two of the oldest pitchers are still residing here. This was in 1927.

March 19, 1920 - article tells us of Maynard Stars of the 80's - strictly local - Billy Connolly and Jerry Casey, battery, Bob Smith, Jack Campbell, Jack Lawton, Denny Mahoney, Jim Murray, Jim Morgan, Marshall. 1884-88, First club to play on the grounds now known as Rev. Crowe Park.

July 2, 1909 - a picture taken twenty years ago, in 1889, of the Red Stocking Baseball Team managed by James F. Sweeney is on display at Gately's Hardware.

March 13, 1920 - Old Timers All-Time Great Baseball Team - 1893 - Jim O'Donnell, Jack Connor, Jerry Casey, Pete Mitchell, Jim Mallinson, Harland Maynard, John Coulter.

March 5, 1920 - another old-timers great team - 1897 - Joe Larkin, Billy and Mike Fitzmaurice, Bert Bemis, Quinlan, Jack Connor, Stewart, Billy Smith, Soutter.

These teams were semi-pro town teams, playing clubs in other towns and among the players were out-of-townners. They played for money.

Music Hall, also known as the Rink, was built in the mid 80's and became popular as a roller skating center. It also housed a semi-pro roller-polo team for many years, which played in the Midland League. The only memento we have of that sport is a ball turned in to us by Roy Denniston whose father was a team member from the Mid 80's.

Skating, we believe, had participants of all ages and both genders from way back. Any body of water with ice on it was used. Mill Pond, being in the center of town naturally gravitated hundreds of skaters to it. Fancy Skating of all sorts was engaged in and duos, boy and girl arm-in-arm, was a common sight.

Starting with the early 1900's we have much more accurate data from newspapers in our possession about all sports. The area of land which now is known as Rev. Crowe Park (he was greatly responsible for the town acquiring it in 1901 and nurturing sports in general) came into use as a baseball diamond, tennis court, soccer and cricket grounds for the Cricket Club, girls field hockey field and football field before Alumni Field was acquired.

Baseball - sandlot teams of kids club teams, teams composed of businessmen, town teams organized to play in leagues for money, West End of town against East End, sporadic organization of High School teams by interested teachers and pupils, married men against single - was in reality the sport of the summer months for player and fan alike. Our newspaper records beginning in the summer of 1899 tells us of the Barbers and Merchants having a series of benefit games with astronomical scores like 28-24. The married men versus the single men carried on up to 1914, according to our records. According to Jim Ledgard, some members of these teams - Barbers, Merchants, Married Men, Single Men - made the games hilarious for not knowing that you run to first, not third base when the ball is hit. The West End and Est End teams had quite a good-natured rivalry for many years. High School

teams up to 1920 were few and far between - the school having no funds for athletics. Our first knowledge of High School baseball is May 20, 1904 - the Maynard High Juniors play Concord. Our records show 1906 with a high school team and according to Jim Ledgard again, this was the first baseball team. 1910 finds the advisory board of the Athletic Association discontinuing baseball for lack of funds. 1912 we do find a baseball schedule played by the High School. 1915-16-17 finds us with another schedule. 1919 and 1920 saw the start of an all-round sports program for the High School. Organizations and clubs sponsored baseball teams through the years and keen rivalry existed between them. Some of these were St. Bridget's, Temperance Society, Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity, Eagles and Craighton's shoe Store Walk-over Baseball team. Through the years town teams came and town teams went but these were the stimuli for creating interest in the sport. These teams were composed of generally excellent players, most of them local, organized to play in leagues or otherwise, hoping to make a few dollars for themselves and the managers. Our first newspaper records tell us in 1899 that B.J. Coughlin is Manager. In May 17, 1901 a Baseball Association is organized with shares at \$2.50 and by-laws, for the purpose of putting a town team on to the field. 1906 finds the town team with Dr. Salmon and Jack Collins as Battery, and Jack Connors as Manager. Special train to Marlboro was put on for one game because of the intense rivalry. 1909 finds Henry Gilroy taking his 'Middlesex Baseball Nine' to Marlboro. 1910 finds James Morgan, Manager and Jim Ryan as Captain. 1911 and 1912 finds Jim Ledgard as Manager of the town team. The 1912 team had a roster of the following men: Capt. Frank Murray, Wilder, Persons, Ryan, Flood, J. Sheridan, Joe Connors, Rainville and W. Murray. April 4, 1913 a Baseball Association is formed - James Morgan, President, J.J. Hilferty, Secretary, C.J. Lync, Treasurer, J.J. Ledgard, Manager - 150 attend meeting. It is decided that out-of-townners shall be hired to beef-up the team. In the same year Henry Gilroy organizes an independent town team and issues challenge to the so-called regular town team. "Gilroy's All Stars" as they were known, became well-known enough to play Marlboro that year, October 17, 1913. On the trip to Marlboro was Gilroy and

his goat (mascot), 700 people by steam train, 100 or so by cars. The team however lost, the mascot named "Assabet" was raffled off at 10¢ a chance and the article in the paper concludes ' it was a sad looking crew coming back into town'. 1914 & 15 finds Gilroy still at the helm of the town team. 1916 we do not know - 1917 and 1918 were war years. 1919 finds Ryan Captain of the town team. All in all, the various town teams created for a lot of excitement in town despite the fact they played semi-pro ball, had out-of-towners, disbanded in the middle of some seasons as players jumped from one team to another for more money.

Football we hear of first in September 15, 1899 with a short note that 'Lov' Johnson (his family started Johnson's Pharmacy) is manager. Our next news note is October 18, 1901 that football game was played against West Acton, with Loewe, Punch, and A. Smith in the line-up. 1903 finds the football team re-organized for the season. For the High School we have a date of November 21, 1902 indicating Maynard got defeated by Concord High. The next newsnote for High School football is October 15, 1920 indicating a possibility of a team. In conversation with Don Lent, he remembers that either in 1911 or 1912 Stow and Maynard combined forces and had a team but does not recall anything further. The Cricket Club, which is the subject of a separate paper, played both soccer and rugby football during these two decades.

Our first knowledge of tennis in town dates to June 10, 1904 which indicates that the Maynard Tennis Club has opened its grounds for play. Jim Ledgard informs me that these grounds were across the river at Ben Smith Bridge in the area of _____ Street. We skip then to August 6 & 20, 1920 where the article mentions only that the tennis club is to play for the first time at its own courts on Brooks Street extension.

Swimming as a pleasure has been engaged in by all people everywhere and Maynard is no exception. Wherever there was water there were swimmers. Numerous articles in the papers humorously admonish our Maynard residents from 1900 on that the mighty hand of the law would weigh heavy on them if found swimming in the nude.

It didn't do much good though, kids will be kids, even the grown-up kids. An article of August 13, 1920 tells us of boys' swimming in such an attire at the 'Rockies', (that's approximately in back of the present Municipal Building) used to swim at 'Dutchmans' and the Icehouse, and dive off Canal Bridge. Swimming and Diving Contests were held at Vose's Pond after the Finnish Socialist Society bought the land and set up a Park, somewhere around the 1910's. No doubt the Maynard Finnish Temperance Society grounds at Ford Pond, Littleton, also saw contests of the same sort; around the same time but we have no records of them.

Bowling, as we mentioned earlier in this paper, will be a separate monograph. We might mention, however, that according to a newsnote of October 29, 1909, Bowling Leagues are beginning to get organized, indicating a wider acceptance of bowling as a team contest. By April 4, 1913 a town bowling team is ready to take on all comers - the team is going to Concord for its first match.

The earliest information we have about Hockey is December 25, 1914 where-in Maynard Hockey Team engages South Acton in a game. Players for Maynard were George Stockwell, Fred Wilder, Frank Wilder, Oli Adams, Anthony Wasala, Eden Tobin and Lewis Cuttall. No doubt all through the years hockey was played by pick-up teams but we have no further records.

Gymnastics, being somewhat of a specialized form of physical prowess, has never really been popular as a mass form of personal endeavor. The only knowledge we have of this sport is a date line of May 2, 1913. Tarmo Gymnastic Club is putting on an exhibition at the Finnish Socialist Hall on Parker Street. Onni Jokisaari is mentioned as being especially good. We do know that among the Finns gymnastics was part of every Finn Hall set-up. The Finnish Temperance Hall on Main Street also had equipment for the practice of gymnastics.

Calisthenics could be considered as a form of setting-up exercises. All sorts of movements of the legs, arms and body are utilized. This has been and is

still popular in Eastern and Northern Europe as good physical therapy. The Finns in Maynard earlier in the Century were exponents of this exercise. The Festivals that were held by the various Finnish regional and national societies always had from half-dozen to a dozen clubs marching on the field Indian-file. This might be from one hundred to three hundred participants. Formations of various sorts would be executed in the same way as we see intermission band formations at Football games today. Then the whole group would form into rows and execute in unison maybe up to a dozen different exercises. It was an interesting sight to see. Both men and women were participants and a uniform attire was worn by all clubs.

Track and field events seem to have been popularized by the Finns in town. The larger societies had their own grounds and used them in the summer time for track and field contests that attracted large audiences. Both the Finnish Temperance Society with its Kanto A.C. and the Finnish Socialist Society with its Tarmo A.C. had their counterparts in other Finnish communities creating a keen rivalry between clubs in New England. Both Societies held meets in Maynard with participants from all clubs. Voses Pond and the Temperance Society Grounds at Fort Pond, Littleton were the locale of these meets with some exceptions at Crowe Park. Other organizations had track and field events at their outings also - The Cricket Club for one. We came across non-Finn names as early as 1911, September 8, participating in dashes - Tom King, 10-1/4 sec., 100 yd dash - August 9, 1912, Kelly, Tom King, Howard Jamieson, Miller, Caledonian Picnic in Roxbury. September 6, 1912, Howard Jamieson, second to Charles Drew - winner in Olympics in Sweden, two feet behind, 10 seconds flat, Clinton Labor Day. Among Finn boys considered exceptional all-round track and field stars were George Luosalo and the Lauria Brothers in the early 20's - Jacob Laurila broad-jumping 22 feet at the Brockton Fair, October 15, 1920.

Basketball, invented in 1892, Springfield, Mass., took on with a hold in Maynard very shortly. Music Hall, or the Rink as it was known, became the locale for some of the most tumultuous times that Maynard has seen. By 1899 Maynard Town Team was playing cities many times its size - Fitchburg for instance. Of course, out-of-towners were brought in many times but local boys generally were a majority. Leagues were

organized which many times fell apart when players jumped from one club to another for more money but the fans, according to the newspaper articles enjoyed themselves tremendously. May 10, 1901 picture of the town team shows Lynch, Allie Knox, James Haire, Jack Punch, W. Knox, Axford Smith. 1902 B.J. Coughlin is managing team. 1903 we find two of the Maynard Boys - Charles Smith playing for Natick and Jack Punch for Chicopee. The wildest game through the years according to the paper was March 22, 1907 at Music Hall against Marlboro. Hundreds of Marlboro fans fought Maynard fans, players fought players, damage was extensive. Jim Ledgard, Manager at that time of the town team, tells us that the account is true and Marlboro, and Hudson also, were never good sports. Managers of Town Teams through the years have been - 1902, B.J. Coughlin; 1904, James C. Mahoney and Colbert; 1907, Jim Ledgard; 1909, Dan Colbert; 1911, Jim Ledgard; 1919, C.C. Murray. The 1919 team had Kane, Lingley, Maley, Vodoklys, Ryan and Bowers. They played at Pastime Hall on Harriman Court. Local clubs also sponsored teams. 1903, Sept. 25th, we read about the Ice-House A.C. renting the Upper Room of the old Main Street School from James Mullin (who had bought the school from the town) for a gym. The boys had previously used the icehouse back of the car barn for practice. St. Bridgets Temperance Society fields a team in 1904 and keen rivalry results between ~~the~~ St. Bridgets and Ice-House. These games were played at Music Hall. The Midgets, sponsored by the Good Templars Temperance Society also came on in 1904. These teams played out-of-town also. Music Hall burned in 1912 creating a vacuum for a good basketball court. Murray's Pastime Hall in 1919 helped to fill this void and a league composed of the Samosets, Moose, Finn Club and Roy Lent team started playing in Feb. 13, 1920. The K of C joined in December 24, 1920 fielding W. Kelly, Tobin, Gallagher, Ledgard and Jack Kelly. The Samosets at this time had Peterson, Bower, Kane, Maley and Murray. High School basketball records in the papers up to 1921 are zero but in conversation with Don Lent, who graduated from High School in 1916 we find that both in 1915 and 1916 the school had a team and played in the Cooperative Hall on Nason Street. One interesting observation that might be made before we end this section on basketball is that Basketball then was played by short men, up to 5'7" tall at the most, but fast.

A partial listing of outstanding athletes in Maynard up to 1920 would include:
Baseball - Gus Gilroy, Pitcher; Tom Maley & Brick Wilder, Catcher(N.E.League & Red Sox)
Jink Murray, Coach of Marquette Basketball & Football; Jack Connors, 1898 N.E.League;
Don Lent, Mass. Agricultural College four-letter man. Papers debate in 1929 if Lent
or Aarne Frigard, Dartmouth four letter man were the greatest all around athlete
Maynard has produced; Doc. Flaherty, Univ. of Vermont. Track and field - Tom King,
Howard Jamieson, George Luosalo, Laurila Brothers. Gymnastics - Onni Jokisaari.
Basketball - Jack Punch, Tote Sebastian, Vodoklys.

It is with regret that we include the following news note into our paper on
sports up to 1920. We debated this in the dark of night and the inner recesses of
the heart but finally came to the decision that as proper historians we must out
with the facts - let the chips fall where they may. It will bring shame to our
fair town and its illustrious athletic past - we can go on no more - here it is:
With a straight face on March 4, 1921, the editor of the Maynard news wrote - to wit:
"Many years ago a high school basketball team from here went to Marlboro and got
beat 100 to 13. Maynard had Harold Dufur, Dr. Frank May, Chester Sawyer and James
Farrell!" 'Nuf said.

All dates in this paper are from the Maynard News. Further, I am indebted to
the following individuals for additional information: Ralph Sheridan, Frank Sheridan,
James Ledgard, Don Lent.

Mr. Albert Cowles who has lived with sports in Maynard since 1920 has kindly
consented to bring up from that year up to date on athletes and sports in Maynard.
His paper will be presented in the near future to us.

Read at the October, 1967 Meeting
Maynard Historical Society
by: B.R. ROSKI