

Panel Discussion: Beachville in 1838: Separating Fact from Fiction

Moderator: David Langford [DL]

Panel: Bob Barney [BB], Bill Humber [BH], Chip Martin [CM]

[Andrew North]: We're ready for what should be one of the highlights of the entire conference, that being a discussion on the Beachville episode of 1838. We are pretty lucky today because I would imagine there are not three people in the world who know more about this than the three panelists that we have. I'll introduce the moderator, and then David can introduce the panelists himself.

Our moderator is David Langford. He is a long-time member of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Selection Committee. He is also a former *Globe and Mail*, *Sun Media* and *London Free Press* Sports Editor. He was born in Owen Sound and now lives in London, Ontario. David Langford.

DL: It's tough to follow these last two sessions. Blacks in baseball has always been something I was very interested in. I know a Bostonian here with a Boston Red Sox shirt on. It's interesting that the last team in Major League Baseball to have a black baseball player was the Boston Red Sox, but in the NHL Boston was the first team to have a black player, so I don't quite know how Boston figures all that out.

Anyway, thank you Andrew. It's a pleasure to be here to help steer us through 90 minutes of one of North America's best sports debates. Where exactly was the first baseball game played, and what role does nearby Beachville, Ontario play in that debate? Somehow this debate rages on, even after just this year alone we tried to sort out the Blue Jays' 6-man rotation, the role of small ball with the Blue Jays, and whether Jose Bautista and Edwin Encarnacion should stay or go. Baseball debates provide some of the best fodder for Saturday morning gatherings at Tim Horton's, any time of day meetings at the company

water cooler, or just for a cleansing ale at your favourite pub (in this case I guess it's The Creamery; I'm not quite sure).

Here are a few more ongoing debates. The designated hitter: best baseball news in the past 40 years, or an instrument to dummy down the game we all love? Is instant replay taking way too much of the on-field ground, and should the Rogers Centre in Toronto be replaced by a 35,000 seat outdoor facility? We did recently update one major piece of baseball history, when the Chicago Cubs finally won the World Series for the first time in 108 years. And, by the way, Leonard Cohen did play a season of pro ball in 1957 in the Arizona-Mexico League. However, it was not our Leonard. Hallelujah! *[laughter]*

Now that we have your attention we will turn to the topic at hand: **Baseball in 1838: Separating Fact From Fiction**. To help sort this out and solve this issue once and for all, we have gathered three of the finest baseball historians, I would say, in North America. Before I bring them up formally I'll tell you they are Bob Barney, Professor Emeritus at Western, Bill Humber, long time baseball historian and teacher in Toronto, and Chip Martin, long time reporter at the *London Free Press* and now author of several baseball books. Before I bring each of them up, though, we're going to show a video provided by the University of Western Ontario, now known as Western for some strange reason.

[video playing]

DL: I don't know if it's a good sign or not, but I know two of the people in that. *[laughter]* Thank you Bob for bringing that. And our first guest will be Dr. Bob Barney. Bob is a Professor Emeritus at Western and his relationship with the school has now reached 45 years. He is also the founding Director of the International Centre for Olympic Studies at Western. In 2010, he was awarded the Pierre de Coubertin award, conferred by the International Society of Olympic Historians. He is and was a researcher of 19th-Century Baseball, is a huge fan of the Boston Red Sox but he asked me not to discuss the plight of his team this season. Some things hurt too much to recount. He has recovered now, with the triumphant return of Tom Brady to the Patriots lineup, and

finally, he can be counted on being a short-term Blue Jay fan when required.
Dr. Bob Barney. *[applause]* I'll just give you a couple of quick questions.
Obviously the first question I'm going to ask is what happened to your Boston Red Sox?

BB: Failed. I was in Boston. That weekend of the failure, I thought everyone would be like I was: disgusted, disappointed. But it wasn't like that in Boston. It coincided with the time that Dave alluded to, the time of Tom Brady and the Patriots and Deflategate. Nobody missed a beat down there. It was the demise of the Red Sox or the decline of the Patriots.

DL: One more quick question. You are the founding Director of Olympic Studies at Western. Give us some quick thoughts on the return of men's baseball and women's softball to the Olympics.

BB: That's a triumphant return in itself. I've seen gold medal baseball games at the Olympics, I've seen women's softball at the Olympics, they draw well, and both those sports deserve to be in the Olympics, and boy, I'm grateful that they returned and I think the future of those two sports will bode well and help to expand it more in a global perspective, there's no doubt about that.

DL: Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bob Barney. *[applause]*

BB: Well you saw the film; I always like to watch it even though I've watched it many times. By the way, that film was motivated by a visit by Nancy Bouchier and me in the late 1980s to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame that then rested in Ontario Place, where we met with the Director, Bruce Prentice, who was responsible for founding that institution. He suggested at that time after listening to what we were researching, the whole Beachville thing, that hopefully that we might gain something from the archives and the records there at the Hall. Well there weren't any records, and limited archives, but one thing that Bruce mentioned to us was, "Gee, do you think you guys could...", his first thought was, "Do you think you could get the right play, a drama to perform on stage about this Beachville incident? And we can have the drama, present it at the big Hall of Fame fundraising dinner at the big Convention

Centre down by where the Dome is today.” And we said “No, no, that’s way beyond us.” And he said “Well how about a film?” and we sort of stored it. I was speaking to a professor over lunch in the faculty club one day from the Journalism Department about what Bruce Prentice had said about a film and he said “Gee, we’ve got students in our Journalism school who might be interested in doing that.” So the outcome of that was, all the players you saw there were graduate students and undergraduate students that I’d had over the years, and the game was actually played on a pasture near the Labatt’s estate on North Richmond Street, just outside of London going north towards Arva. And indeed, that film won a National CBC award for films produced by Graduate Schools of Journalism across Canada. So it was good for them and it was good for us, and it was played at that fundraising dinner in Toronto at the very end of the 1980s.

I have in my hand Volume 1 Number 1 of ***Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Social Policy Perspectives***. The second name has changed but it’s twenty-five years later, it is still published out of the University of Nebraska. It started at the University of Calgary. I know many of you would be familiar with it. In this first edition I wrote an article called “In Search of a Canadian Cooperstown: The Future of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame”. That was 1992, September of 1992, just before the Blue Jays were to win their first World Series. The following week, or the following month rather, after the journal had been presented, I gave a copy of the article to a friend of mine who lives in St. Marys who passed it on to the editor of the Journal-Argus, Lorne Eedy, who then got excited about the prospects of St. Marys becoming the home of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame because of the historic closeness of St. Marys to Beachville. They got together a sitting committee who pursued that initiative, and later on in the 1990s won the right to establish the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Marys from its former home in Toronto after it had gone into storage. So that’s the background for some of the events which will take place here today.

My final thought here has to do with the film. It has to do with Beachville as the center of baseball history in Canada. Now there’s no doubt about it that Canadians get excited about that as an original episode in baseball history, but

those people who were playing in that game as described by Adam Ford, when he was 7 years old, those folks were American immigrants who came here just following the War of 1812, and they brought with them in their cultural baggage that knowledge of baseball. Striking the ball, scoring tallies and so on. Not in the sophisticated state, but in the beginnings of the game. So it really isn't a Canadian thing, it's an American thing transported to Canada in that second immigration of loyalists from the Northeastern United States. Now one would think that if baseball in Canada was transported with cultural baggage of Loyalists, that first wave of Loyalist immigration to Canada into New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island for instance, there is where you would find the earliest incidence of baseball play, play that came to rest in Beachville as we know in 1838. But I have had graduate students investigate that situation, at least in New Brunswick, and there is not a semblance of that, of any baseball play, like in Beachville, that took place at least in New Brunswick before it happened in Beachville in 1838. So it's the second wave of Loyalist immigration from the Northeastern part of the United States, and these people are pressing westward trying to get to what is today, after that war, what is today Michigan and Wisconsin and Minnesota and Indiana, and they end up taking a shortcut over the top of Lake Erie rather than underneath it, and got stalled here in this area of Southwestern Ontario for one reason or another, bought land, put down the roots and there began to pursue this ethic, this cultural ethic that they pursued for generations back in their homeland of the United States. So, that's all I want to say for now.

DL: Okay, our next guest is Bill Humber. Bill writes, talks and even teaches about Canadian baseball history. A Director of Academic Environmental Initiatives at Seneca College in Toronto, and active in his hometown of Bowmanville, he is always on the lookout for the unexplored (Canadian Baseball's patron saint George III), the unexplained (why isn't baseball Canada's national game) and sometimes the unknown (how a Trudeau saved baseball in Canada). Author of five books on baseball and the occasional commentator on CBC, most recently a televised piece on Toronto's baseball history, he enjoys reminding Americans at the annual 19th Century Baseball History Conference in Cooperstown of baseball's deep and abiding place in our history. Oh, he is a big soccer fan as well, but that's another conversation. Bill

Humber. *[applause]* I'll do the same thing: a couple of quick questions. I mentioned the relationship between a Trudeau and baseball. That was a bit of a tease. What role did, and I assume we're talking about Pierre Elliott, have in saving baseball?

BH: Actually, it was Pierre Elliott's father, Charles-Emile Trudeau, who invested in the Montreal Royals baseball team in the mid-'30s when it seemed very likely that the team would move from Montreal out of the International League and, by extension, one could argue, that his investment in the team saved baseball in Montreal, allowing it to be a place where Jackie Robinson would integrate baseball, allowing it to be a place where the Expos would eventually come in 1969, and indeed finally leading to the Toronto Blue Jays coming in 1977. Tragically, for Mr. Trudeau, he was such a baseball fan, he went to Spring Training in 1935, caught a cold, which led to further complications and his death by heart attack at Spring Training in Orlando, Florida in 1935, so his role has been kind of forgotten.

DL: I know you've been long-time member of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Selection Committee. How important is that role to you each year?

BH: Well what can I say? It's one of the deepest and most meaningful activities of my entire life. But that's...I'm BSing you. Of course it's important. You know, it's our way of celebrating baseball in Canada. It's a way of bringing forth people that sometimes people have never heard of. My cause celebre of course was William Shuttleworth out of Hamilton, who, in an attempt to bring forth contemporary Shuttleworths who may have some understanding... There is a magic talisman of baseball out there somewhere. William Shuttleworth and his Hamilton team were part of the Detroit tournament in 1867 when they were awarded a Golden Ball for finishing third. In 1946, his son Harry was pictured in the Hamilton paper holding the Golden Ball. So somehow that ball survived for 70 or 80 years; now we're about 70-80 years since then. My desire has been to use, I shouldn't say this with Scott here, but really it's to bring forth where is that magic talisman of baseball today? So I managed to get Bill Shuttleworth into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, Canada's Baseball Hall of Fame, and even Hamilton's Sports Hall of Fame, and yet the Golden Ball has

yet to emerge from somebody's basement or attic. It's out there, I'm positive of that, and when it is found that will be the prized possession of Canada's Baseball Hall of Fame.

DL: I did the same work for Tony Kubek but it wasn't quite that interesting. Bill Humber.

BH: Thanks. I know we're supposed to be a panel, but let me just say, take Bob's position on this being a game that passed through into Canada by those folks moving West really out of the United States, but let's even go back further. This is a game that basically started in some form or other in England. We know that the *Little Pretty Pocket Book*, written in 1744, is the first place the word baseball appears; we know in 1748 that Lady Hervey, not Harvey, Mary Lepell (and this was later documented) wrote a letter referencing the then Prince of Wales, Frederick of Hanover, playing base ball, two words, in his winter house with his family. His family included his 10-year-old son, and he'll be significant for this story. None of these two original accounts exist other than as remembrances or accounts after the fact. But an account does exist from 1749, arguing or showing that that same Frederick of Hanover, the Prince of Wales, actually played bass ball, spelled with two s's in that case. That Prince of Wales, Frederick of Hanover, may or may not have been killed by a blow, of all things, from a cricket ball in 1751, never made it to the Throne of England. Instead, the 10-year-old child who had played in his father's house in 1748, did make it to the Throne of England in 1760. He became the noted, to Americans, the despot tyrant and the most evil man in history, George III. George III, on the other hand, is celebrated in Canada for the baseball game of 1838 in Beachville. Part of the celebration was around that date. Well, the intriguing thing about that George III is that he was born on the 4th of June, 1738. This was the 100th anniversary of his birth. So not only was he in the first recorded baseball game that we have as a 10-year-old child, but his birthday is being celebrated. One final piece and then I'll sit down.

Was the Beachville game a one-off on the 4th of June? No it wasn't. I recently found in an account from the Hamilton Military Academy, an old-timer talking about playing "old style baseball" and that's in fact what the Beachville game

was. It has what was called the “plugging rule” where you threw the ball at somebody and that retired them, playing in Hamilton in 1819 on the 4th of June. So, this was not a one-off, this is a second account of it. The final piece, of course, on the 4th of June, was that was also the day that the Ojibway wiped out the British Garrison at Fort Michilimackinac in 1763, who were also drinking and celebrating and marching around and doing silly things when they should have been a little more attentive to their own welfare. So perhaps on that note I’ll leave it and we’ll go on to some more of these accounts as we continue the discussion. Thank you. [applause]

DL: OK, our third member Chip Martin. Chip was a news reporter at the **London Free Press** for 41 years before retiring. As a matter of fact, Chip and I were both summer interns at the **Free Press** and oddly enough, both of us were hired as full-time reporters at the end of that summer. I don’t know how that happened. He’s recently returned to the **Free Press** for a weekly City Hall column. He is also the author of two crime books, a biography and four baseball titles. We’ll review the baseball books in case you happen to want to buy them: **Baseball’s Creation Myth: Adam Ford, Abner Graves and the Cooperstown Story; The Tecumsehs of the International Association: Canada’s First Major League Baseball Champions; Pud Galvin: Baseball’s First 300-Game Winner and The Detroit Wolverines: The Rise and Wreck of a National League Champion, 1881-1888**, the last to be released early next year. Obviously, his first book deals at length with the first recorded game, again baseball in Beachville, Ontario, and contrary to some beliefs, Chip was not on hand that day. Chip Martin. [applause] Chip, at some point in your writing career (I mean in this case as a book author), you changed gears to writing about baseball. How did that happen?

CM: That’s a good question. Aside from the fact that I played ball (fastball; we didn’t have a baseball diamond in my home town, as far as I can recall), I played a lot of competitive fastball and enjoyed it, representing my town of Richmond Hill on a couple of competitive teams. Always liked baseball. I love history, and I don’t know, I became aware of the good work of Bill and Bob over here, with whom I’m honoured to be on the panel; I came across an idea, found something that might make a connection, and I made a connection. I

just took some of the fine work they did and just ran with it, went off in a direction that hasn't been gone off in before.

DL: Chip, tell us briefly about your newest book, and when can we expect to see it on the shelves?

CM: Well, **The Detroit Wolverines** is a very interesting story. The Wolverines book comes out early next year. All my books have been connected, one thing to another. **Baseball's Creation Myth** led to the **Tecumsehs**, because the Tecumsehs were one of the first truly prominent teams in Canada, and through that I learned about Pud Galvin, who played against the Tecumsehs and lost the pivotal game of the International Association championship. Pud Galvin was the first 300 game winner at a time when no-one knew that that was important, the 5th winningest pitcher of all time, the first user of PEDs that we've been able to find. During the course of my research on Pud Galvin I learned about the fascinating story of Detroit trying to become a contender in the National League and buying the Big Four from Buffalo. At that same time Galvin left for Pittsburgh, where he finished his career. And that led to the Wolverines book, so everything was sort of connected. How it all started, I don't know, and I don't know what's next.

Bear with me. I'm going to read this a little bit simply to keep it as tight as possible, but I want to cover several bases here. Americans, it seems, need to be reminded that the game of baseball was not invented in Cooperstown, New York in 1839 by one Abner Doubleday. The story, as it was, was taught in American schools for years, and among the believers of the fable was former Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig. It is the most durable of lies, baseball's creation myth. Baseball was not invented anywhere. It appears, rather, it likely evolved from a game called rounders played in England by children and even noblemen in the 1700s and perhaps before, as Bill alluded to. Early settlers of the American colonies from the British Isles brought with them their religion, customs and games from across the Atlantic. Many of these same settlers or their descendants also migrated to the neighbouring British colony of Upper Canada, today's Ontario. They may have been anxious to retain a link to the British crown, and concerned about the developments of

the new American republic, or more likely, they were lured to Upper Canada by the prospect of inexpensive farmland, or as Bob said, they maybe just got waylaid on their way through Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana and parts to the west.

Many of the inhabitants of southwestern Ontario were known as Loyalists, or late Loyalists, depending on when they moved. The Beachville area attracted settlers from New York, Pennsylvania and New England. Adam Ford, who wrote the famous letter about the 1838 game played in Beachville when he was nearly seventy years of age, was the last of 11 children of a couple who married in Pennsylvania, but were originally from Northern Ireland. When the tract of land in St. Marys here, a few miles to the northwest, was tilled for settlement in the 1840s, many residents of the Beachville area moved there (here). Adam Ford was training as a medical doctor, and decided to set up his practice in St. Marys, where so many other Beachville residents had gone. In St. Marys he married the daughter of one of the early developers of the community who became the municipal clerk. Ford was active in sports and politics, and in 1877 was elected mayor of St. Marys. But he was a drinker, and he ran afoul of the growing Temperance movement; he was accused of killing a member of that movement by, of all things, poisoning his alcoholic drink. Ford was found not culpable by a Grand Jury, but his reputation and practice were ruined. So he and his two sons moved to Denver, Colorado, leaving behind his wife and daughter in St. Marys. It was in Denver that he rekindled his interest in baseball, and where I believe he must have crossed paths one way or another with a mining engineer named Abner Graves, the man who penned the story about baseball being invented in Cooperstown. Graves did so when Dr. Ford was deathly ill, and the story only became public a year after Ford died. Graves' story could never be corroborated, but it was good enough for a Commission established to "prove" the game's American parentage. Although 20 years earlier, Ford's account of the Beachville game, complete with a diagram of the field of play, had appeared in *Sporting Life* magazine. Ford cast it only as an early game, not as "the first", and to this day it is correctly considered "the first recorded" game of baseball. I argue that Ford's story about the Beachville game inspired Graves to spin the famous lie that endures to this day. In Denver, Ford and Graves shared interest in the Masonic Order, in

drink, in mining, in storytelling, and most importantly, in baseball. Their offices were located very near each other in downtown Denver, a western city famous for its saloon culture. My thesis is that the story that “proved” baseball was purely an American invention had its roots in the fertile soil of southwestern Ontario, not far from here. It’s a fine irony, given the concerted efforts of people like Albert Goodwill Spalding, that this game that made him rich and famous had any connection to Britain. He promoted the Cooperstown story heavily. Civil War hero Doubleday, despite a lengthy career of writing and delivering speeches, never mentioned it once. But Doubleday died before Graves committed his storytelling mission. Interestingly enough, despite terrific reviews for my 2013 book **Baseball’s Creation Myth**, that for the first time sources America’s most durable myth in southwestern Ontario, my work has been virtually ignored south of the border, although the publisher himself is a well-respected American. Another interesting American connection is the fact that an American, Bob Barney, alerted us to the existence of the Beachville game in the first instance. When it comes to baseball and its history, we Canadians continue to be treated as poor cousins by our American friends. Sigh. ‘Twas ever thus. [*applause*]

DL: I’d like to ask each of the panelists the same question. Where are we now? Chip’s book is the latest. Is there any chance of our winning this debate? Bob?

BB: I think so. The Beachville incident has been given recognition by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown in their antiquities room which focuses on the antecedents of baseball. They have “Beachville 1838” on the wall in there, for which I’ve very gratefully received a lifetime pass. I think for this thing to be recognized, to be recognized and more greatly respected in the United States, it has to be presented more in forums like this. More continuously, and sometimes to the baseball history establishment. Some of the people in the baseball establishment do honour it, and some don’t honour it. I’m not going to mention any names... And if they could come up here, and walk through the evidence: through Beachville, the cemetery, the tax records, the land ownership records, the family histories, then they would come face to face with the credibility of the evidence supporting the Beachville episode as having actually occurred.

DL: Ironically, Bob, the last panel I did with you, I moderated a panel at Western several years ago. It was a battle to keep wrestling in the Olympics, and you were on the panel. Wrestling did stay put.

BB: Can I say one thing about that? In the film, you saw the person in the role of Adam Ford. A good actor; also a good singer. That's Glynn Leyshon, former wrestling coach at Western, who was the Canadian Olympic coach in 1980. Of course, Canada boycotted those games, with the United States and 53 other nations.

DL: Bill, your thoughts on the same subject?

BH: Well, I don't think we should be aggrieved by that ignorance of the fact because it gives us wide open territory. My favorite encounter with American historians on baseball was at the 19th Century Baseball History Conference of SABR, where they could not figure out where what is generally acknowledged to be the first international baseball game, between representatives of two different countries, was played. In this case it was the Queen Cities of Buffalo versus the Burlingtons of Hamilton. (And the Burlingtons of Hamilton were not in Burlington, they were downtown; but that's another story.) Because the game was shown as being played in Clifton, Ontario, and they desperately searched throughout the records around Buffalo, and then even went down to Lake Erie, found something that appeared to be comparable to Clifton, but even it didn't really match. Because they were incapable of crossing the Niagara River to find out that Clifton, Ontario, was Niagara Falls, Canada until about the 1880s. That's one thing. The second thing, and I did present at the Conference (and I was roundly not well received), I actually made a plea for the merit of considering George III's role in this, and I gave you some of that background. And I soon discovered that trying to put a positive spin on George III was like going to a B'nai B'rith dinner and trying to find a positive thing to say about Adolf Hitler; it just wasn't going to wash with this crowd. And the final piece, I'll say, is that we have the same problem in Canada with ice hockey. If you read Jean-Patrice Martel and two Swedish reporters', historians', book on the invent of early ice hockey, fantastic book: same

debate. Basically they argue hockey really started in England during the period of what was called the Little Ice Age, that even the first rules of hockey that come along in the 1870s, were basically stolen from the hockey rules that were already in place in England. So we have this difficult a time wrestling with the subject, on something as common to us as hockey, as Americans do on baseball. It's not unusual.

DL: Before I continue with Chip, Bob I want to bring you back in here. What about basketball? Where are we with basketball?

BB: Well, a Canadian did develop that game, invent that game. He invented it in Springfield, Massachusetts, in the YMCA system there. But, having said that, that concept of basketball in December of 1891 made its way into Canada through the Maritimes very, very soon after that date. It spread rapidly to the urban centres, Montreal and even Toronto. And this is celebrated in the Naismith Museum and Homestead up there near Ottawa. So the idea came from a Canadian, tried and true, McGill graduate, but it is an American concept.

DL: OK, Chip.

CM: I don't think we're ever going to get respect from south of the border about our involvement in baseball in its earliest days. I think what we should do is try to ensure that we as Canadians understand what our role was, how much baseball goes back into our national psyche. In my book I point out (and I spent a lot of time criss-crossing southwestern Ontario, with my daughter's fastball team and for all sorts of other reasons as a reporter) that you can go through these towns in this part of the world, and they may have only 500 population, or 1,000 population, and these are farm communities; this is a breadbasket of Canada. You can drive through these small towns, and in just about every single one you're going to find a baseball diamond. And on hot summer evenings baseball diamonds were a centre of community, and community competition. They brought people together. And these small towns can't afford arenas; they don't have arenas. Besides, hockey didn't get going until the 1880s, 1890s. Yes, we think our game is hockey, and we think winter

is Canada. But in fact we have to understand, and hopefully we can all appreciate better, our own history, and our connection to baseball is part of our national fabric, and the Americans can never take that away from us. We must be accurate, though. Unfortunately, a few people have read my book, **Baseball's Creation Myth**, and have said "OK, he writes about the first game of baseball in Beachville". And that wasn't the first game. We didn't invent baseball. The Americans didn't invent baseball. Nobody invented baseball. It evolved. So I think if we're going to understand our history of the game, our attachment to the game, we should celebrate it, but also understand accurately what our involvement is.

Audience (John Cairney): I think what runs through all of your descriptions is what may be the more aptly put Canadian contribution to this debate, which is exactly summarized by what you said, that it's folly to try to link this to a particular sort of historical event or context, but what might be unique here (which is not to say that American scholars of baseball have not attempted to do the same) is that we recognize that the fluidity of movement, the exchange of cultures, between all the groups that form our demography today, is where we see the origins of the game. But the bigger question is, the drive to make it so connected to American identity, and the insistence on perpetuating that, is in and of itself an interesting cultural question that's probably best addressed academically by those who are not directly influenced by the same forces that feel the need to make it so much an identity question. So we'd be wrong to try to make it our identity question too much, in the same way; we're better to actually have this kind of conversation, and drive it from the margins in the way that all three of you have done.

BH: There are two books that were done in the 1940s about that American/Canadian connection: Fred Landon's **Western Ontario and the American Frontier**, and Marcus Lee Hansen's **The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples**. And not one place in either of those two books do they mention baseball, which is a tremendous frustration. It seemed like the obvious context for having that cross-border conversation, but it just ain't there.

Audience: I'd be curious to know when the first baseball games, the first contemporary baseball games, were reported in the Canadian press in the 19th century as compared to the United States.

BH: Surprisingly, better accounts appear in American papers than they do in Canadian ones. So we have a documented box score, names of players, etc. from London in 1856 in the *New York Clipper*, which is also where the accounts of "the Canadian game", which is really a variation of the old plugging game of baseball (throwing the ball at the player), they also only appear in the *New York Clipper* in 1860, even though the New York game has already come into Ontario at that point, they're still playing this remnant game which comes from the old-fashioned game. And I can only assume the logic of people at the time was "Oh my God, they're never going to write about our game in our local papers, so we're going to send off to the major American sports magazine, or newspaper, at that time, the *New York Clipper*, and they'll publish it for sure". And sure enough they did. Fortunately for us they did publish it, because it gives us a wealth of material. They even document the first, what purports to be the first, time that the New York game is played. That's the game of today. It's the harder ball; it just makes for a different game. You don't throw it at somebody to retire them. They even document that game in May of 1859 between teams from Toronto and Hamilton. For the longest time, I wondered about the legitimacy of that game, but went into the directories, and indeed it was a game essentially of cigar makers who were playing this new interpretation of baseball in Canada. All the local paper, the *Hamilton Times*, says is that Toronto played Hamilton the other day, and the Toronto guys came out ahead, or something to that effect. You have to go to the New York papers to find the truth, and any kind of detailed story.

CM: But you found, not a detailed recitation of the game, but did you not find some reference in Hamilton to a baseball game in 1819?

BH: Yeah, that was the one I referenced when I was up here. The 4th of June. Now, again it's an old-timer looking back many, many years. Even longer than Ford looking back. So all he says is we played the old-fashioned game of baseball on the 4th of June, it was King George III's birthday, as if it was a taken-

for-granted thing that on that day, militia Muster Day, it was an excuse to get people together to prepare for war. But really it was an excuse to march around for about half an hour, get roaring drunk, and play games and gamble and have fist fights; have all kinds of fun on that particular day. Which actually I think explains in some ways: when an American historian looks at it, they can't make sense of this 4th of June, and the whole King George celebration. And when I found out that in fact the Beachville game was the 100th anniversary of his birth, to me it kind of said, well I don't know if they celebrated 100th anniversaries in those days, but it really seems significant. And I actually have four paintings I've found, one by Turner, about the 4th of June. Because the 4th of June was not only militia Muster Day in Canada, but it was also the main celebration at Eton College in England. Eton, of course, is where the fictional James Bond went, but also where the very real Princes Harry and William went as well. Well, it turns out George III was a primary benefactor of Eton College, so he was quite a hero at Eton College for many, many years. So there are paintings from England of things that were happening on the 4th of June, 1838. Sadly, nobody's playing baseball; that would have been the clinching thing, I suspect, for some of us.

CM: And George III, of course, inspired Bob Barney's ancestors to toss all that tea in the harbour.

BB: Back into Adam Ford: He writes his letter to the paper in April of 1886. It was published a month later, in May. A month after that, in June 1886, there was discovered in the *Ingersoll Chronicle* a small paragraph of Ford's letter. Somebody in Ingersoll had read the *Sporting Life*, lifted that paragraph out, gave it to the editor of the *Ingersoll Chronicle*, and he placed it. But it was only a fragment. The trick was, going back into *Sporting Life*, tracing backwards: when was that thing published? And was it only that fragment or was it something more? So when we got to the primary letter, two months before the fragment appeared in the *Ingersoll Chronicle*, there was a whole description, a huge version of the game he described. So kudos to you [Bill] for giving me the starting point.

DL: Scott Crawford, I have a question for you. We know that from the Cooperstown point of view, St. Marys and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame represent Beachville in many respects. How is the relationship currently between the Hall of Fame in Canada and the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, or Beachville/Cooperstown? How does that work?

Scott Crawford, CBHFM: It's a great relationship. They are big supporters of us. Beachville are big supporters of us as well, as we are of them. They don't say anything about the Beachville game in the negative in any way. It's one that works very well, a good partnership. They help us when we need help, and we're going to be able to help them a lot.

CM: And the President of the Hall down there was up here for our Induction Day.

SC: Yes, Jeff Idelson came here as a guest. We were able to show him around St. Marys as well as the Museum and the Induction festivities.

DL: One more relationship: how's the relationship between St. Marys and Beachville? Are they on your Board? How does it tie together?

SC: We're in communication with them. I mean, the game was in Beachville; it wasn't in St. Marys. So they have more of a claim to the 1838 game than we do. We've done events there before; they've been up here before. We're only half an hour away, so it's easy to get back and forth.

CM: You'll never find where the game was played because there's no plaque.

Audience: No, there isn't. There is a public sign outside, on the edge of Beachville, and across the road is their Museum. I tried to go there and it wasn't open. Is there anything in that Museum that would make it worthwhile making a trip to Beachville?

CM: They've now got a room dedicated to the first game. They have a little diagram, a model, of the field of play. For the longest time they didn't do much

about it, and now they've featured it, the last time I was there at least. But your issue with respect to their hours: I've been there several times and they're just not open. The hours aren't very good. One thing that offends me, not offends me, but I'm so discouraged with the fact that I've taken a number of people to Beachville and shown them where the game was played, according to Bob's research, behind Enoch Burdick's shop, which is no longer there. There's nothing. It's across from the Legion; it's on that block. People have seen me pointing at their houses and stuff. "There's some sort of pervert out there!" But a plaque or something would be nice to have. Beachville the community is a very, very small place. There's really no place that you could have a Hall of Fame, and diamonds and that sort of stuff. It's very cut up. It's right along the river, and the rail line. It's a strung-out community; it's hilly. It's just not conducive to having the Hall of Fame there. As well as being a very small community that's quite frankly dying right now.

Audience: But if you can get into the Museum itself, it's worth a visit.

CM: Yes, but don't have huge expectations. It's nice.

Audience: What about some of the players you identified in the game?

BB: A very good question. We traced a number of them through the tax records of Beachville at that time, land ownership records, mortuary evidence, church records, and in effect, there's no doubt about...And one of the big finds, I found the ancestral offshoots of Old Ned Dolson. I found the Dolson family in London, Ontario. And that family had elaborate genealogical records, and in there was Ned Dolson. That family came from northern New Jersey. Silas Williams, another one in there, was really a big wheel in Beachville at the time; he was one of the leading landowners, and one of the more enlightened public citizens of the town. So if there is a genealogical record there, be sure...

CM: I'd love to find that I'm related to Reuben Martin, but I haven't found that yet.

BB: You know Reuben Martin, we found his gravestone. Not his father or anything; just his gravestone.

BH: Could I just throw a spanner in the works on this? How many of you have seen the Sportsnet piece that was done on Beachville in the last couple of years? The three of us were in it, as well as John Thorn. Of course, the conversation goes back to David Block's book **Baseball Before We Knew It**. He doesn't completely dismiss the Beachville account, but he puts an unfair bar on it. In other words, his argument is that there should be a second source that confirms the events. Well, to me that's an absurd requirement for a game that hadn't really gone beyond the level of being kind of a popular recreation, but still didn't have the kind of celebrity culture that it has today. It was far below the surface. I mean, we have Eli Plater in Toronto and York; there's an account in 1803 in his diary of playing ball. We don't know what the ball was. It may or may not have been baseball. There are accounts of baseball-type games in Quebec in 1837. There's an account of bat and ball in Nova Scotia in 1840. There are numerous accounts; each one is problematic because it doesn't really define it. But cumulatively they suggest that the game was, at least at a recreational level, being played significantly on both sides of the border. The problematic feature for me for Ford's letter, and I'll throw this out there: it was written in 1886, 46 years after the fact had occurred, of an older man recalling his memories as a not-quite-yet 7-year-old. And so to me, I find elements of the story problematic, and I'll use that term. He also talks about playing the New York game, and how it was like a trip to the moon, it was so different. Well, I argue, and this is my point of view, that what in fact Ford was doing in 1886 was imposing his knowledge of what the game had become in 1886 on his memory of playing as a young man coming home from medical school in the early 1850s, and his memory of a game that he saw in 1838. And that the really crucial period is that period in the 1850s before the New York game had come into Ontario. And in fact it was really almost not even a big deal in the United States as well; even in New York City it wasn't that big a deal. It doesn't even get reported for 7 or 8 years after those mid-1840s accounts. I argue that what he was actually describing in the Beachville game was at least in some ways his memories of playing what we have come to know (because of the 1860 accounts) as the "Canadian game", which was really one of those

multiple variations of the Massachusetts game and the Philadelphia game, the plugging game, where you threw the ball at somebody, and if you hit them between the bases they were out. That's my sense of what he's describing to some extent, the 1838 game based on his memory of that. Why is the New York game so significant? Because you're not throwing the ball at someone between bases and if you threw a hard ball like a baseball at somebody between bases you'd have bodies all over the place. So they were playing with a much lighter, it was about a third of the weight of the New York ball. So you could throw that at somebody, hit them with the ball and it didn't really cause any lasting damage. You bring in a harder ball such as the New York game allows, suddenly the outfield opens to you, it's a faster game, it's just a different game that evolves.

CM: And the interesting thing about that early game, the kids really like the early game because of the plugging and the soaking. If you look at a diagram of the diamond it's a very short distance from where you bat to first base. The idea is to get on base, because a lot of the fun of the game is trying to nail somebody with the ball or dodge if you're a runner the ball that's being thrown at you and that added an element of the game that was really sort of exciting. Interestingly enough, the New York Knickerbockers 1845-'46, that's considered, where you now have to tag people, that's considered the modern game. And quite frankly, I'd like to play the one where you have the softer ball; I'd like to play that earlier game.

BH: Well, to John Thorn's credit, he actually says it may have been more fun. He acknowledges in his book **Baseball in the Garden of Eden** that it may have been more fun to play that game, it was just a different game. And to his credit as well, David Block, who Nancy Bouchier, your colleague [Bob] on your research, still regards with rank disdain for the way he seemingly put down all of the detailed research you did. To his credit, he's done a lot of research and found those early, mid-18th century, 1750, accounts of baseball-type games played in England. So he's even helped to contribute to that broader theory.

BB: Memory: Ford's memory. Now there you are out there, and here I am here. And we confronted this topic of memory. How much memory does a 70-

year-old have, in terms of watching events from 70 years ago? So, I don't know about you, about when your memory first passes on baseball events. For me, I was in the first grade in a two room schoolhouse in Vermont in 1937.

CM: What was your teacher's name?

BB: I don't know that, but I know my third grade teacher's name. *[laughter]* There were four grades in one room and four grades in another room. And a big room upstairs for Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, that went to pot for the rest of the year, like Olympic stadiums today, they're never used except for the games. But I remember the first grade and the second grade, the boys in the seventh and eighth grade using one side of the schoolhouse for the backstop for playing baseball. I remember a chest protector, I remember the ball being thrown, that's the first and second grade. Then the third grade, now we're in Southern Massachusetts, Westport, a little coastal town, and now I am engaging in baseball play with a softball with girls and boys in the playground at recess. And the school, Elementary school, the sixth grade was going to have a game with another school. I remember that the school that they played was Booth Corner School, and us standing there during the game singing "BCS: Booth Corner stinks". And I started clipping pictures, 1939 is when I started clipping pictures out of the ***Boston Traveller*** and putting them in a scrapbook of baseball pictures. And so for me, it was Lefty Grove and Jimmie Foxx. If it wasn't Foxx it was Ted Williams. That's where my memory starts. And I was 6 or 7. So I'm asking you folks, tell us, just go back in your memory and see, at five, six and seven, what you might have, in terms of memories of baseball.

Audience: The Doubleday presence or name has been discredited as myth by Cooperstown. You perhaps know Ken Burns, maybe all of you know Ken Burns; what does Ken Burns have to say about Beachville versus that whole Doubleday era, because many Americans still think that Doubleday invented baseball.

CM: Well that's true and I used a quote from Ken Burns and his documentary ***Baseball*** in my Tecumsehs book, I think, basically saying "And now baseball has

finally become truly international when the Toronto Blue Jays won the World Series of 1992.” Which I mean, that’s complete ignorance of the fact that baseball has been played on this side of the border for a long time and the Tecumsehs, I argue, were our first major league champions. So I don't know Ken. I like his work, and not just baseball, all his work; I think he’s terrific. But I don’t think he’s addressed the issue of Beachville at all (these gentlemen might contradict me; I don’t know). Basically he simply perpetuates that whole thing about...yes, he pooh-poohs the Doubleday thing...

Audience: I will just add to that, that I visited Fort Sumter, outside the harbour of Charleston, South Carolina, some years ago and that of course is really where Abner Doubleday gained his historical fame. I read in some of the documentation that was there about Abner Doubleday, the inventor of baseball. This is in a U.S. National historical site; I was there in the 1990s or 2000s.

CM: I have photographs in my **Baseball’s Creation Myth** book that are in Cooperstown, New York. Baseball has been very, very, very good to Cooperstown, New York. This is a town half the size of St. Marys, 20-30 million dollars a year in tourist revenue, and on their plaques outside of Doubleday Field ‘This is the spot that Abner Doubleday invented the game of baseball in 1839’. The Hall of Fame doesn’t claim any more that baseball was invented in Cooperstown, but because it’s very, very good to Cooperstown and baseball, they perpetuate the myth.

BH: But let’s see how fast research is moving. Alexander Cartwright is now pooh-poohed. That was the next theory, but the general notion is that just about everything on Alexander Cartwright’s plaque at Cooperstown is wrong. So that’s one, and a second one, even you mentioned it today Chip, is rounders. There’s this theory that baseball came from rounders. David Block’s research, that I think is pretty sound, finds in fact the term baseball appears long before rounders. Rounders is a kind of a regional variation. By the time baseball has moved from maybe something that adults might play to something that kids might play, cricket when it comes along becomes the manly, adult bat and ball game. All of those other bat and ball games descend,

they eventually descend into something called rounders, so baseball actually predates rounders. So that disputes that kind of tale as well.

BB: Your [to audience] comment is tremendous, and it gets to the fact that the message about Doubleday is given to a wide exposure of Americans, the widest public sphere. His following message, the erosion message, is given to a much narrower audience. But you cited events in Charleston, and Doubleday at Fort Sumter, and you're absolutely right; I've been there myself. But how about Arlington Cemetery? There are thousands upon thousands that go through there. They get on the tour thing being dragged along the terrain and everything. Then the moderator, the paid employee, says 'There, buried right there is Abner Doubleday, the famous Civil War General, the person who invented baseball!' And I come out of my seat, step towards him to correct him and my wife grabs me and she says "Sit down!". [*Laughter*]

BH: Can I add a piece to that? At our daughter's graduation from Ryerson, a noted Canadian historian, academic historian from a noted University, made the comment that Jackie Robinson integrated organized baseball in 1947. I was prepared to come out of my seat at that point and point out the Canadian connection to him, but you know, you have to restrain yourself at times.

Audience (Laurier Shank): Thank you very much. This is appreciated and very educational. One question that always sort of comes back to me is, and I like the theory of evolution, and I firmly believe that that's what it is. Are there any linkages in the research that you have found associated with cricket?

BH: The point I make to people, but this is a three hour talk so I shouldn't, is probably a baseball-type game with its connecting the dots around bases is older than cricket because cricket is really just, it's kind of like two old cat, it's two bases. The thing is though, cricket developed as the commercial, successful, manly, adult bat and ball game in the 18th century, and baseball developed (and there's a wonderful essay by John Fowles on this), baseball developed in the 19th century in this era of the industrial revolution, cities, technology is changing, so we make the false assumption that one must have led to the other, when it's just as reasonable to assume the fact it was the

other way around. It's just that cricket got to the modern stage, the commercial stage, before baseball did.

CM: And baseball sort of took over in the late 1800s because the pace of life was faster in the States, and they had no patience for a game that would go a day or two. It was British, and it was slow moving, and because you are now in industrial centres and cities, and life is sped up, baseball could be accomplished in two hours rather than perhaps two days.

BH: Yeah, this is my talk tomorrow.

CM: Oh, sorry. [*Laughter*]

Audience (Stephen Dame): We hear a lot about Loyalists, we hear a lot about immigration from England. I'm just wondering if there is any evidence at all, oral history or otherwise, of aboriginals playing bat and ball games before Europeans.

BB: I don't know about before, but in the American West, the game of baseball penetrated with the rebels. I've done some research in Carson City, Nevada, which was pretty close to Virginia City. Baseball in those centers, as I read about them in the 1860s, people started to play; in fact also, they made references to Wasatch Indians playing amongst themselves in another corner of the common. And that's all I've really ever encountered.

Audience (Stephen Dame): If we're talking about evolution, you'd think that would be the next place to go. That is part of our culture we often ignore.

BH: Part of the problem is that there's an account of First Peoples playing football in 1703 and it's by a French Count who's come over. Well, are they playing football or is the French Count seeing something that looks a heck of a lot to him like what he may know from Europe but really isn't, it's something else. All we really know is that lacrosse is definitely a creation of First Nations People; there's no question about that. I mean the first missionaries see them;

it's really one of the oldest games. We really have pretty good documentary of it evolving over a long period of time.

DL: Just before we wrap up (we've got about five minutes left), since we've got three historians sitting up front here: is there any chance, let's go with current history, to now; we've gone a long way from 1830 to now. The NFL TV numbers are down right now, particularly prime time games, with a World Series that was one for the ages with Cleveland and the Chicago Cubs. Let's start with Bob on this one and I'd like to see each of your responses. Any chance baseball can recapture the number one spot in North American sports? Bob?

BB: Well, that's a good question. It had a 100-year head start in professional sports. I don't know.

BH: I would say that anything is possible. I played soccer growing up in the '60s when it was like a foreign country game, you either played it or you ignored it. There's a book on American exceptionalism in sports that argued "Sorry, soccer will never catch on in North America". There was an era in which baseball, hockey and basketball (and even hockey they only give half a point to), baseball, football and basketball are the three big games, and there's this half game in North America, really the United States called hockey, and forget about soccer. Well I would argue that has profoundly changed in the last 10 or 15 years and it's changed because we've been inundated with televised and easy access to it.

November 12, 2016