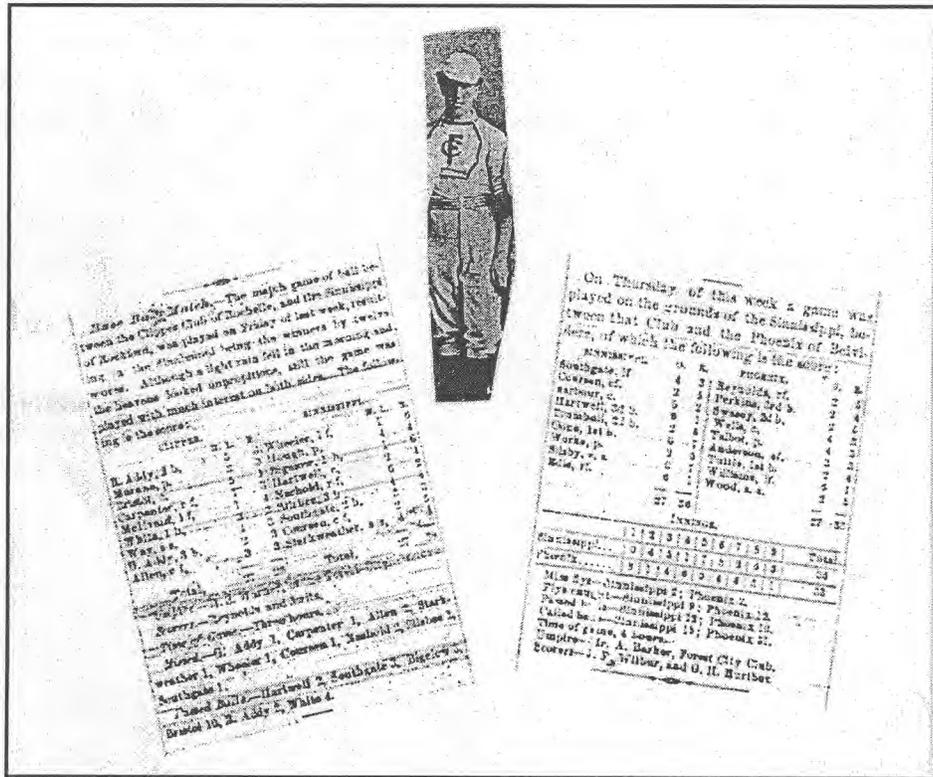

NUGGETS OF HISTORY

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THE SINNISSIPPI BASE BALL CLUB

By John Molyneaux



The two box scores above are from games between the Sinnissippi Base Ball Club and two of their rivals, the Rochelle Clippers and the Belvidere Phoenix. They appeared in the Rockford Register on August 11, 1866 and July 20, 1867. The player in the center is Fred Cone in a Forest City uniform. The photo was taken in 1869. Playing for the league champion Boston Red Stockings in 1871, he was the team's best fielding outfielder and stole 12 bases (2nd on the team and 8th in the league), but retired from baseball thereafter.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This issue presents an article about the Sinnissippi Base Ball Club by Dr. John Molyneaux. The Sinnissippis were early rivals of the more famous Rockford Forest Cities in the 1860s. Many of you know Dr. Molyneaux from his position as the Local History Librarian at the Rockford Public Library, a position he has held since 1986. Originally from New York State, he received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Virginia. Dr. Molyneaux taught at Rockford College before taking the position with the library. He is also a board member of the Rockford Historical Society.

Dr. Molyneaux is an expert in mid 19th century Rockford history and baseball is one of his favorite topics. He is currently working on a book about the Rockford Forest Cities. His previously published book, *African Americans in Early Rockford, 1834 - 1871* carefully documents a little known but important part of our local history.

This issue also shows some early examples of advertising postcards from the Rockford Watch Co., courtesy of Bruce Steder. Bruce is a collector of all things Rockford, and is particularly interested in the Rockford Watch Co.

If you have a subject that you have researched, or an idea for an article that you would like to pursue, give me a call. I would like to encourage original research into some aspects of local history that have not been adequately pursued. I can be reached at 885-1740.

Thomas Powers, Editor

UPCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

The Rochelle Historical Society is planning an Appraisal Fair on Sunday, April 24th from 2-5 p.m. at Holcomb State Bank (corner of Hwy 38 East and Caron Rd). Karen Holland, former WTTW Channel 11 *Antiques Road Show* appraiser will conduct appraisals and give information on the care and restoration of items. Admission to the Fair is \$2; cost of each item to be appraised is \$5 (limit 3 items per person). For more information, call Marguerite Thomas @ 815/562-4693.

The Sinnissippi Base Ball Club

By John L. Molyneaux

The great wave of baseball mania which rolled over Rockford in 1865 and 1866 produced at least eight different baseball clubs. The oldest of them, the Forest City Base Ball Club, grew to national prominence and became a member of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players in 1871. In its rise it drew to itself all the attention, all the baseball talent and all the financial resources Rockford had to offer such an enterprise—it consumed and overwhelmed all the other local clubs. Chandler Starr, who as a boy (he was born 1851) witnessed this phenomenon, said in 1905: "As rapidly as the players in the smaller clubs became proficient, they were drafted into the Forest Citys. The smaller clubs could not keep a player after he had shown any promise of becoming a star player." One of the smaller clubs, the Sinnissippi Base Ball Club, had a significant independent history before it disappeared, talent-drained by the Forest Citys.

The Sinnissippis were organized about August 1, 1865, immediately after the Forest City club had played its first game. The two clubs were similar in that they were interested in serious amateur baseball, but there were significant differences. The Forest Citys were ambitious, hoping to make their reputation in ever larger areas; the Sinnissippis were content to remain local. The Forest Citys drew players from all over the city, then all over the region, while the Sinnissippis were exclusively an east side Rockford club. Eventually these differences produced an unbridgeable talent gap the Sinnissippi Club could not overcome, even had they wanted to.

The principal organizers of the club were S. R. Godfrey, 42, a clothing merchant; T. F. Palmer, 35, a hardware merchant; and John Murray Southgate, 28, a grocer. Godfrey and Palmer were too old to play regularly, but Murray Southgate was a regular for the team.

The Sinnissippi Club was closely tied to another club, the Union Base Ball Club. The Unions, also east siders, were a junior club, organized in

August 1865. Junior clubs were primarily for mid-teenage boys, organized to give them the opportunity to improve their skills before trying out for a senior club. Players from the Union Club regularly entered the Sinnissippi Club over the next three years. In this close association with a junior club, the Sinnissippis were in advance of the Forest City Club, whose junior club, the Pioneer, was not organized until May 1866.

In 1865 the distinctions between the Sinnissippis and the Forest Citys were unclear. On August 26 the Winnebago County Agricultural Society announced they would hold a baseball tournament at the September County Fair, the final event of which would be a match for the championship of Winnebago County, to be held on Saturday, September 23. For unknown reasons the Sinnissippi Club did not participate in the tournament, but they would play the Forest Citys for the county championship.

Before this game, on paper it appeared the clubs were evenly matched. The Forest City had won 1 and lost 2, while the Sinnissippi had won 2 and lost 1. True, their single loss had been to the Forest City, 20-9 in a 5 inning game, but that was hardly decisive. They even had a former Forest City player in their lineup: Mart Wheeler, an east sider who left the Forest City as soon as the Sinnissippi Club was organized. But this game dispelled any illusions of grandeur or equity the Sinnissippis may have cherished—they lost 55-17. They had difficulty hitting S. J. Sawyer, the Forest City pitcher, while their hurler, Murray Southgate, was raked over the coals: George King, Al Barker, and Henry Warner each scored 8 runs, totaling seven more than the entire Sinnissippi lineup could manage. The leading hitters for Sinnissippi were Southgate, Wheeler (2nd base) and David Hough (shortstop). The Sinnissippis never did defeat the Forest Citys, though they played many games with them. They were strong enough to give the more powerful team good competition, but these games skewed the final won-lost record of the team considerably.

1865 Season

Aug 29	Sin 9, Forest City 20
[Sep 1]	Sin 20, Forest City Second Nine 15
Sep 11	Sin 25, Rockford Mercantile 19
Sep 23	Sin 17, Forest City 55

The 1866 season saw four games with the Forest City Club, the Sinnissippi losing all of them. Fifteen year old Al Spalding won the first two games for Forest City, the second and third wins of his illustrious career. The game of May 22 on the Sinnissippi Club grounds (exact location unknown) was difficult: "the ground was in very bad condition on account of wagon ruts" and lasted only 4 innings. On August 3 they played their first game against a non-Rockford club, defeating the Clippers of Rochelle 38-26, with David Hough pitching. This finished their season with a 1-4 record. Leading batters were Mart Wheeler, Abram Coursen and Edwin Bigelow.

1866 Season

May 22	Sin 11, Forest City 20
May 31	Sin 7, Forest City 27
Jul 25	Sin 11, Forest City 50
Aug 2	Sin 13, Forest City 39
Aug 3	Sin 38, Rochelle Clipper 26

In 1867 they began the season with the traditional loss to the Forest Citys, 28-5 on May 16. But a new pitcher, young Charles Works, led them to three straight victories in July. Two games were played with the Phoenix Club of Belvidere in August; the Sinnissippi losing both by close scores. Leading hitters this season were Works, Fred Cone, and Frank Trumbull, all of whom had played for the Union club; and George Silsby.

1867 Season

May 16	Sin 5, Forest City 28
Jul 4	Sin 30, Chicago National 26
Jul 12	Sin 18, Beloit Badger 16, in Beloit
Jul 18	Sin 36, Belvidere Phoenix 33
Aug 21	Sin 20, Belvidere Phoenix 25, in Belvidere
Aug 28	Sin 37, Belvidere Phoenix 38, in Cherry Valley

The Club was active as late as June 1868, when they lost a game to the Kishwaukee Stars 26-17, but they disappear from the records after this. Completely forgotten today, they played some good baseball right on the doorstep of one of the country's most powerful teams, whom they assisted to glory by being good sparring partners and developing some good players.

OVERALL RECORD

Against Forest City, Won 0, Lost 7.

Against other Clubs, Won 6, Lost 3

1865-1868, Won 6, Lost 10

Some Sinnissippi Stars

FRED CONE was the most successful baseball player from the team. He played for the Unions and the Sinnissippis in 1866-1867, then became a Forest City regular, first base and outfield, 1868-1870. He was hired by the Boston Red Stockings in 1871 (along with Ross Barnes and Al Spalding) and played for them in the National Association in 1871. He was a light hitter but an excellent fielder. He retired from professional baseball after 1871 and later worked as a hotel clerk in Chicago.

MART WHEELER was the team's leading batsman in 1865-1866, playing second base and outfield. An original member of the Forest Citys, he

switched clubs as soon as Sinnissippi was organized. He became a regular outfielder for Forest City in 1867-1868, but was injured (details unknown) in a game with the Chicago Excelsiors June 11, 1868, and the injury effectively ended his baseball days. He later became an attorney in Chicago.

FRANK TRUMBULL played for the Unions and Sinnissippi in 1866-1867, then played 1868-1869 as a substitute outfielder for the Forest City. He was vice president of the Union Club in 1865. After he quit baseball he clerked in different clothing stores in Rockford.

CHARLES WORKS was President of the Union Club 1865-1866, and then starred as the pitcher for Sinnissippi in 1867. He was an excellent player, but had other plans. Born in 1848, he graduated from the East Rockford High School in 1868, attended Beloit College, read law in the 1870s, and served as Winnebago County States Attorney 1880-1892.

MURRAY SOUTHGATE played 1865-1867 and served as a club director in 1865. He was the team's pitcher in 1865, and later played several positions. He was for many years a grocer on East State Street and served as Second Ward Alderman 1881-1885.

O. F. BARBOUR served as Treasurer of the Club in 1866 and played in 1867 (not very impressively, sorry to say). He was a teacher, principal of Kent School 1866 to 1912, and a Rockford Public Library trustee for 36 years. He originated the flag salute often used in schools nationwide and has been credited with being the creator of the Flag Day holiday. Barbour School was named after him.

EDWIN BIGELOW played 1865-1866, mostly at first base. Despite his age (he was born ca. 1830) he was one of the Club's most effective batsmen. He ran a boot and shoe store on East State Street.

GEORGE SILSBY played 1865-1867 as an infielder, finally establishing himself as the regular shortstop, one of the mainstays of the team. He was young (born 1847) and worked as a machinist.

ABRAM COURSEN played infield for the Unions 1865 and center field for the Sinnissippi 1866-1867, a reliable hitter and good fielder. His father was a

brick mason and he later worked as a printer for a newspaper. He was born in 1848.

DAVID HOUGH played infield and pitcher 1865-1866, and was a director of the Club in 1866. He stopped playing because he opened a grocery business on East State Street and married Annie Godfrey, daughter of club officer S. R. Godfrey.

S. R. GODFREY never played, but was a principal backer of the Club, serving as President in 1865 and Secretary in 1866. He was a long-time Rockford clothing merchant.

T. F. PALMER never played, but served as Club Vice President in 1865 and President in 1866. He was a hardware merchant.

LUCIUS TROWBRIDGE was Secretary of the Club in 1865 and played in the outfield 1865-1866. He later was a banker and bond merchant.

ELIAS NASHOLD played catcher and outfield 1865-1866, apparently a decent fielder, because available records indicate he was a weak hitter. He was a carpenter.

DAVID HARTWELL was the regular catcher 1866-1867. A weak hitter, he apparently fielded well at a difficult position. He was a machinist.

SOURCES: Box scores of many games appeared in the Rockford newspapers of 1865-1867, which have been used in getting a sense of individual player performances. Also consulted were obituaries for Fred Cone, Frank Trumbull, Charles Works, Murray Southgate, O. F. Barbour, David Hough, Lucius Trowbridge, and S. R. Godfrey. The Rockford City Directories have been helpful, as has the internet site Ancestry.com, for information from federal census returns. The author is preparing a book on the Forest City Base Ball Club and much research done for that has been useful.

THE ROCKFORD WATCH CO. LTD'S
POSTCARD ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN
OF 1909-1910

By Bruce Steder Jr.

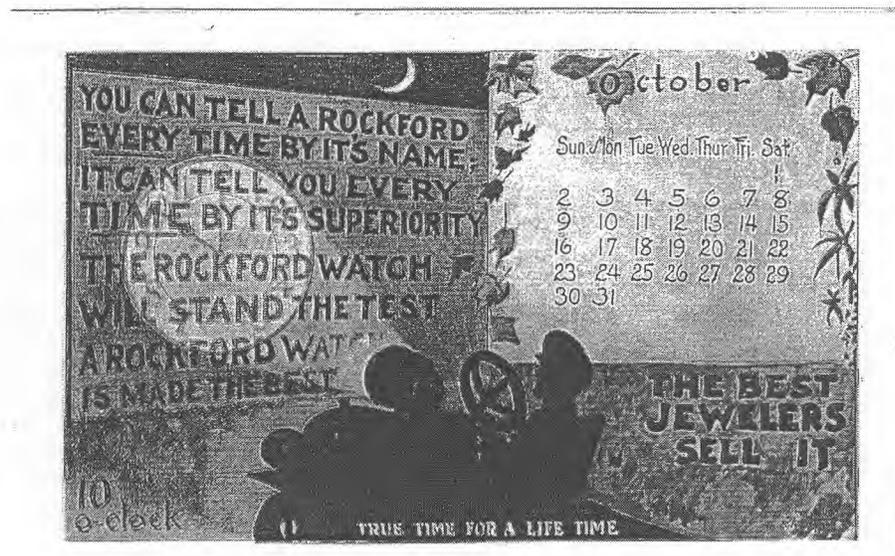
In 1909 the Rockford Watch Co. Ltd., of Rockford, Illinois commissioned Richard Fellton Outcalt to design a thirteen month series of advertising postcards as a promotion campaign to increase product sales. Mr. Outcalt was a cartoon illustrator who drew such classics as *Hogan's Alley*, *The Yellow Kid*, and his most famous achievement, *Buster Brown and his Dog Tige*.

Starting with November 1909 and continuing through November 1910, this idea was a direct-mailing to the company's watch dealers. All of the cards are a monthly calendar postcard with a theme for that particular month. Each card has a witty message on the obverse explaining why the Rockford watch is "True Time for a Lifetime." On the reverse left side is an appeal directed at their dealers on how to stimulate sales. Most of the cards have a watch or a watch dial which shows the time corresponding with the number of the month. For example, the January card's watch is set at one o'clock. Both Novembers are the same except for the calendar. They show a hunter, a deer and highlight a turkey as the backdrop for the days in the month. The front of December's card uses a marketing plea in asking Santa Claus to bring you a Rockford watch. The February card shows two lovers and a pair of hearts. March brings a sense of the weather warming up with talk of walks in the park and birds flying. April's card illustrates an "April Fool" missing his train because his watch is slow. May tells us that five o'clock is "T time" with a flowery spring-like display. June reminds us that, "The longest day in all the year (the 21st) is almost here". July's card is fraught with exploding firecrackers. Buster Brown's dog Tige makes a special appearance on August's card. September has a teacher at the blackboard

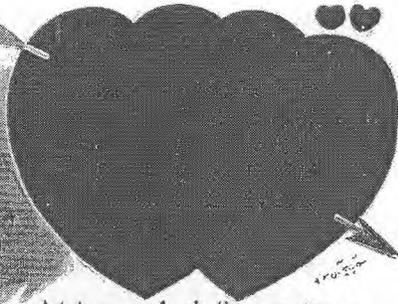
holding a Rockford watch and October depicts a billboard illuminated by a car's spotlight. This card is the most rare and expensive one in the series.

The Rockford Watch Co. began manufacturing watches in 1876. The company survived the depression of 1893 and the Panic of 1907, but ceased production just prior to the United States entering World War I. So one can say that this advertising campaign appears to have sustained the company from 1910-1915.

The Rockford Watch Co. is long gone, but the building still stands at 325 South Madison. It is now the home of Abrasive Machining and Rockford Linear Actuation Inc. The third floor is currently being renovated. By the way, the year 1910 just happens to line up perpetually with 2005. I guess the company's marketing phrase is relevant, "True Time for a Lifetime".

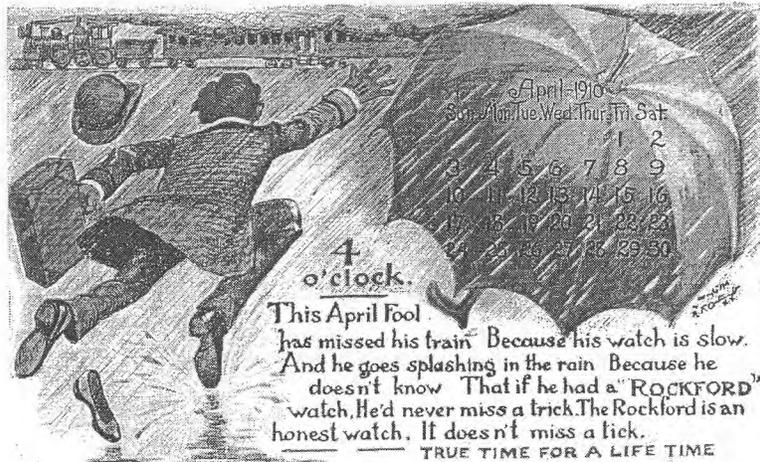


The October card is the rarest and hardest to find today.



THE ROCKFORD
IS TRUE FOR A
LIFE TIME

At two o'clock the matinee
 Begins most every Saturday
 Then love lorn lads and lassies too
 Go watch the hero prove so true.
 But truest thing on earth to-day
 Is the Rockford Watch. 'tis made that way.

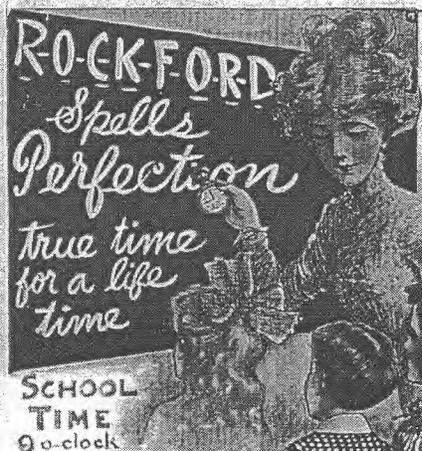


April-1910

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

4
o'clock.

This April Fool
 has missed his train Because his watch is slow.
 And he goes splashing in the rain Because he
 doesn't know That if he had a "ROCKFORD"
 watch, He'd never miss a trick. The Rockford is an
 honest watch. It does n't miss a tick.
TRUE TIME FOR A LIFE TIME



ROCK-FORD
Spells
Perfection
true time
for a life
time

SCHOOL
TIME
 9 o'clock

September-1910

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
					1	2 3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

DONT BE LATE TO
SCHOOL
GET A ROCKFORD
WATCH
ITS NEVER LATE

These are examples of some cards. The author has the complete set.

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Statement of Purpose: To enlighten and to educate people about their place of residence, to entertain with stories and fact, and to enrich lives regarding what is available to enjoy, to treasure and to honor.

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