

Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime during the Civil War, by George B. Kirsch. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003. xv, 145 pp. Illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. \$19.95 cloth.

Reviewer Corey Seeman is assistant dean for resource and systems management at the University of Toledo Libraries, Toledo, Ohio. He has written several articles on baseball history.

Many sports historians rejoiced at the recent discovery of a 1791 Pittsfield (Massachusetts) ordinance banning baseball from being played near the meetinghouse almost 50 years before the legendary invention of baseball in 1839. That discovery might have caused a bigger stir had it not long been accepted that baseball was not invented in 1839, but evolved from the British game of rounders. When historians focus on the origins of the game, they can lose sight of the more significant issue: why baseball became our "National Pastime." Rather than looking at origins, most sport historians look at two key dates in the early years of baseball: the first "modern" game played at Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1845, and the first professional team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings in 1869. In the 24 years between those two events, baseball gained in popularity as it spread across the country. The catalyst for that expansion was the most dramatic event that took place between those two dates: the Civil War. *Baseball in Blue and Gray* is the first single-volume examination of baseball during the Civil War. It explores how the Civil War helped spread baseball across the country.

In this relatively short book, George Kirsch, the author of an excellent work on early baseball history, *The Creation of American Team Sports: Baseball and Cricket, 1838-1872* (1989), provides a narrative account of baseball before, during, and immediately after the Civil War. The book fills a niche in the literature on baseball, but it does not adequately explain the interconnection between the rise of baseball and the Civil War. Unfortunately for readers, especially those interested in the history of the Midwest, Kirsch approaches the topic with a regional bias that barely considers home-front activity outside New York, Philadelphia, and other East Coast cities. Except for discussions of baseball in Rockford, Illinois (primarily to introduce Albert Spalding, one of the game's great figures in its infancy), there are few, if any, mentions of life west of the Mississippi or south of the Mason-Dixon Line. For Kirsch, the world of mid-nineteenth-century baseball revolves around New York City. Although it would be negligent to write the history of baseball in the nineteenth century without mentioning New York City, Kirsch's view of the game during its infancy is too narrow to provide a compelling explanation for the spread of baseball during the Civil War.

Part of the problem is Kirsch's choice of sources. He relied too heavily on "national" sporting newspapers that focused on New York. He could have written a stronger book by examining more primary sources, such as diaries and letters written by soldiers. Such sources, both in print and manuscript format, are plentiful in libraries and archives across the country. Also, Kirsch did not adequately place baseball in the context of other recreational activities engaged in by Union and Rebel soldiers during the war. That is important in order to understand how the game spread rapidly through the country after the war. This is the first book on baseball in the Civil War; I hope that a more comprehensive book on the topic will follow.

The Beecher Sisters, by Barbara A. White. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003. xiii, 399 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, genealogy, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Alison M. Parker is associate professor of history at the State University of New York, Brockport. She is the author of *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (1997).

Barbara White conceives of her book as a "joint biography" of the three famous Beecher sisters: Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Isabella Beecher Hooker. White states that the "strongest emphasis" of her book will be on Isabella Beecher Hooker because there is "no existing biography" of her (ix).

Patriarch Lyman Beecher moved the family to Ohio in 1832 in order to "save" the West from Catholicism while he served as president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. *The Beecher Sisters* has a distinctly eastern focus, however, since the Beecher family came from and then ultimately returned to New England.

Isabella Beecher Hooker became active in public life later than her two more prominent sisters. Catharine had been working for endowed schools for females since the 1830s. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852 and became an international best-seller and antislavery icon. It was only after the Civil War that Isabella Hooker began writing articles in favor of women's rights, including woman suffrage.

White outlines a fascinating sixty-year relationship between Isabella and John Hooker. A lawyer and abolitionist, the newlywed John, in 1841, agreed to help Isabella make up for her lack of a strong formal education by reading the law with her. When she discovered the extent of women's subordination under English common law, which was the basis of state laws in the United States, Isabella was shocked.

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