

Places In Time

LAWRENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2011

America's Pastime in Lawrence

By Laura Nawrocik

Like most American towns, Lawrence has a rich baseball history, from the days of neighborhood teams to Willie Mays playing for the Trenton Giants at Dunn Field.

The earliest newspaper accounts regarding Lawrence baseball are short snippets related to the neighborhood teams that served as one of the main sources of summer entertainment and local pride at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. These teams were mostly made up of teens and college-age players. The 19th century teams were loosely formed recreation teams, as ads from the *Trenton Evening Times* show, with neighborhood groups asking for any challenge from cross-town rivals or teams from nearby towns. In Lawrence, Eldridge Park, Slackwood, Eggerts Crossing and Lawrenceville all had strong teams and would spend long afternoons playing for bragging rights on each other's fields. Other local teams from Hamilton and Trenton often took on the Lawrence nines and drew large crowds on neighborhood diamonds.

As the 20th century dawned, many of these same teams became organized,

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Baseball On Tap for Brearley 250th

The Lawrence Historical Society will be hosting a 19th century base ball game at the Brearley House as part of the house's 250th Anniversary celebration. The event will feature the Flemington Neshanock taking on the Atlantic BBC at noon on July 10. The game will follow 19th century rules. In addition to the game, there will be food for sale from Captain Paul's Firehouse Dogs, children's game and face painting provided by the Lawrenceville Artist's Network. Spectators are encouraged to bring blankets and chairs.



Vintage photo of the Slackwood neighborhood team

Washington Crossing Duathlon

Janet Hubbard

On April 16, 140 hardy racers competed in the Washington Crossing Duathlon in Titusville, NJ. The race was the brainchild of the late Christopher J. Lahoda, formerly of the Lawrenceville Historical Society board. The event was put on by DQ Events, a company run by Chuck Sellers. The duathlon consisted of running about 2 miles in the park, biking about 12 miles through nearby streets of Hopewell Township, and then running a 5K back in the park. The fastest contestant finished in about 1 hr., and the slowest in about 2 hrs.

Chris Lahoda had long felt that Boston marketed its Revolutionary War history better than New Jersey. He thought that the Trenton/Princeton area could appropriate Boston's idea of honoring Paul Revere's route with their marathon by having one here to honor Washington's route during his days of victories in NJ. The run would begin in PA (like General Washington's), cross the Delaware River, continue through Trenton, and possibly up to Princeton -- as much turf as needed to make the length of a marathon. Chris proposed his idea to the LHS board and to Congressional Representative Rush Holt, all of whom thought it was a great idea

Chris Lahoda died tragically at age 47 of ALS in 2006. The challenge of this race fell to his widow and LHS board member, Janet Hubbard. An informal committee consisting of Steve Groeger (Lawrence Twp. Superintendent of Recreation), Leslie Potter (District Director for Rush Holt), Chuck Sellers (head of DQ Events), and Janet Hubbard was formed.

Over time (and several frustrating years later), the idea of a marathon morphed into a triathlon and then into a duathlon. Having a triathlon would have been the most historically accurate, since the troops were in boats in the river, which a swimming component could have replicated. After some research, however, it was clear that no appropriate staging area for a swimming component existed. After eliminating swimming, the race became a duathlon. In the spring, at the beginning of the racing season, a duathlon would appeal to racers who wanted to get into shape before the marathon season began.

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Paul Gatterdam,
Don Barringer and
Janet Hubbard
watch the race after
volunteering at the
registration tent.

Duathlon Continued from page 2

Finally, on a cold and damp April morning, with volunteers shivering outside from 6:30 am, the race occurred. There were not one, but two, George Washingtons present (LHS board member Bill Agress, who addressed the troops/racers; and contestant #1, John Groeger, Steve's son). Except for some confusion about the bike route and general dissatisfaction with it, all went well. Many registrants commended the race to Sellers and encouraged him to hold it in future years.

Many thanks to the LHS for supporting the idea and execution of this race for so long, and special thanks to members who volunteered at the race: Paul Gatterdam and Ruth and Don Barringer. The LHS Board all received duathlon tee-shirts with *Lawrence Historical Society* and the Society logo on the back. Chris Lahoda's name is on the front.



Participants setting up their bikes for the middle portion of the race.

Baseball Continued from page 1

with the goal of keeping the players in shape for the high school and college season and perhaps attract a few pro scouts looking for Major League talent. The Lawrence neighborhood teams eventually disappeared and players from Lawrence often showed up on rosters for Princeton and Trenton teams.

As professional baseball grew, minor league teams dotted the country as a feeder system for Major League Baseball and Trenton was an ideal place for a team. Starting in 1936, the Trenton team actually played in Lawrence at Dunn Field, which was located where the NJ Lottery Commission building now stands on the Brunswick Circle. Early teams were affiliated with the Washington Senators and Philadelphia Phillies, but the Trenton Giants are perhaps the best remembered team because the last team to play at Dunn in 1950 featured a 19 year-old Willie Mays on his road to the New York Giants.

Items Sought—Library and School History

If you have items related to the history of public libraries and schools in Lawrence, we would love to hear from you. Photographs and other memorabilia are needed for our collection. We can scan and return photographs if you would prefer to keep the original. Contact us at webmaster@TheLHS.org, write to us at PO Box 6025 Lawrenceville NJ 08648, or call 609-895-1728.

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Catherine Gumpfert Wins Society's Winona Nash History Award

Each year, the Winona Nash History Award is awarded to the Lawrence High School senior demonstrating excellence in history, as determined by the faculty. This year's winner is Catherine Gumpfert, right, shown receiving the award on Senior Awards Night. Catherine begins her freshman year this Fall at York College of Pennsylvania where she plans to major in Elementary Education. She also plans to minor in Special Education. The Society congratulates Catherine on this significant achievement.

