

Home of America's Pastime

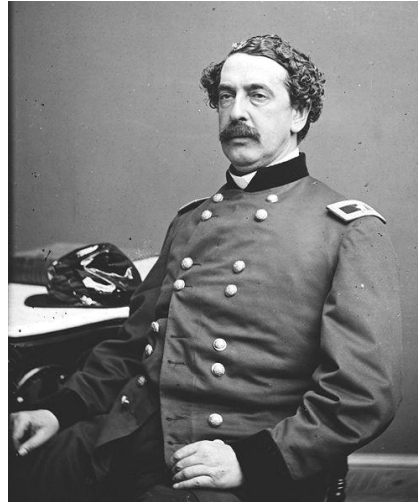
The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is one of the most popular museums in America. It is located in Cooperstown, New York, 70 miles west of Albany. The question asked most by baseball fans is, "Why Cooperstown?" The answer involves a commission, an old baseball and a centennial celebration.

The Mills Commission

The Mills Commission was formed in 1905 to find out the true history of baseball.

Henry Chadwick, a famous early baseball writer, claims that baseball was based on the English game of rounders. Chadwick was a sports writer for the Brooklyn newspaper *The Long Island Star* in the mid 1850s when he described the game between the Gotham and Eagle baseball clubs. Chadwick was a visionary, with a passion for promoting baseball.

- 3 Abner Graves, a mining engineer from Colorado, is known as the man who claimed Abner Doubleday invented baseball in 1837 in Cooperstown. Graves told the Mills Commission in a letter the story of the time when Abner Doubleday (shown) started playing the game. Graves said he was present when Doubleday made changes to a local game of "town ball." One player threw the ball in the air and another player hit the ball with a flat bat. Some 20 to 50 players in the field tried to catch the ball before the batter could run to a goal 50 feet away. According to Graves, Doubleday used a stick to mark out a diamond-shaped field in the dirt. His other improvements to the rudimentary game included limiting the number of players and adding four bases.



Based on Graves' letter, the committee officially recognized Doubleday as the creator of baseball. But controversy still rages over the origins of baseball. Tom Heitz of the National Baseball Library in Cooperstown claims that the New Jersey Knickerbockers played the first organized baseball game between two teams. Evidence has also been found of early baseball games in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont.