



NEWS

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Pennypacker Mills Hosts the Athletics Base Ball Club of the 1860s
Saturday, June 25, 2016 at 1:00pm

Schwenksville, PA (June 21, 2016) – Be part of the excitement at historic Pennypacker Mills on Saturday, June 25, 2016 at 1:00pm when the site hosts a free vintage base ball game with the Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia versus the Brandywine Base Ball Club. From a distance, it looks and sounds like a regular baseball game: the crack of the bat, the cheering from the bench, the sliding into home plate. But a closer look at the field shows something is very different. They're pitching underhand. They're playing on a rough grass field. Score is being kept on a blackboard. No one is using a batting helmet, fielding glove, or catcher's mask. Men are wearing floppy hats and have groomed mustaches! It's vintage base ball!

This is not dad's baseball, nor granddad's baseball, but it is great-granddad's baseball game! It's the game that was played in the mid-1800s. With rules and cheers from another time, everyone can feel the thrill of base ball as it was originally played. "Striker to the line!" Translation: "Batter up!" Guests are encouraged to stop by the information table and pick up a brochure with "appropriate" cheers so they can be part of the historic fun.

How is the game played? The Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia plays America's favorite pastime the old-fashioned way. It's one of a growing number of teams nationwide that recreates the 19th century game through historically accurate uniforms, period rules, and cheeky nicknames, and by spelling "baseball" as two words. "It brings people back to a simpler time, before million-dollar contracts, TVs, cars, steroids, and gloves," said Mid-Atlantic Vintage Base Ball League commissioner Bruce "Early" Leith.

Today's vintage teams play by a variety of old rulebooks. The Mid-Atlantic League, which includes the Athletics and about 20 other teams from Rhode Island to Virginia, plays by what are called the 1864 rules. One of the biggest differences between then and now is that fielders could catch a batted

ball on one bounce to make an out, which is an understandable accommodation for players trying to handle a hard ball without gloves – such equipment didn't become common until later.

The Athletics Club, named after the Philadelphia team founded in 1859, formed about five years ago after co-founder Scott "Big Deal" Alberts started researching the sport's deep roots in the city. His teammates, called "ballists," range in ages, athletic abilities, and occupations. Guests are encouraged to stop by the team bench and meet the "ballists" as they warm up.

After the game, kids can play "Town Ball" with the team members. Town Ball was an early version of base ball and is especially fun for kids. No need for a glove or bat; the team provides all the instructions and equipment. Just show up for the fun!

Please note that the Route 73 Bridge over the Perkiomen Creek near the site entrance is closed. There is a short detour onto Plank Road to Route 73 to reach the site; follow the signs.

Refreshments will be available on-site, but visitors are also encouraged to bring a picnic, as well as lawn chairs or a blanket on which to sit. The mansion will also be open for tours.

Pennypacker Mills is open year-round for guided tours, seasonal events, educational programs, and changing exhibits. The site is operated by the Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails, and Historic Sites, and is located at 5 Haldeman Road in Schwenksville, PA. For more information, please call 610-287-9349, or visit Pennypacker Mills online at www.montcopa.org/pennypackermills. Like Pennypacker Mills on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pennypackermills.