

# MCHS Offers Vintage Ball In Edwardsville

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EDWARDSVILLE - A “base ball” game in Edwardsville, on Saturday, October 15, will be played using rules established in 1860 when “swearing, spitting and sliding” were considered taboo. Hosted by the Madison County Historical Society (MCHS), the game will be played at the Winston Brown Recreation Complex (Hoppe Field) on Schiller Avenue in Edwardsville.

Adults and children over age 10 are invited to attend batting practice (12:30-1:30 p.m.) before the main attraction, a 1:30 p.m. game between the Belleville Stags and the St.

Louis Brown Stockings. Both teams regularly play ball using the old rules, uniforms, and equipment.

There are numerous differences between modern baseball and vintage base ball, including spelling the name of the game with two words. In 1860, there were bounce rules, that meant if a ball was caught after the first bounce the batter was out. The hurlers (pitchers) throw the ball underhand, but it's not slow-pitch, the ball comes in fast. The hurler stands only 45 feet from the plate.

The ball was slightly larger and a bit softer, usually made from wool twine held together with a piece of leather. The bats were all made of wood, often with the imperfections that can be expected with a handmade bat. And gloves, well, they weren't allowed until several years later. In 1882 the pitcher and catcher were allowed to have gloves, and by the next year all players could have a glove.

Games were originally played in an open field or pasture, not on a dirt diamond, which meant there could be obstacles like trees, dips in the ground or even "cow pies." The game on October 15 will be played on a dirt diamond so will be slightly less challenging.

There is an umpire, but he doesn't weigh in on every play, only when there is a dispute.

Today, vintage ball teams continue a tradition of using nicknames for the players. Nicknames are used exclusively during the games to the extent that if they see each other off the field, they may not even know their teammate's real name. The nicknames are based on character, career, an event, or other factors.

The St. Louis Brown Stockings, founded in 2011, are based on a real team by that name that was founded in 1875. Their uniforms reflect the same style as that early team. The original Brown Stockings eventually became the St. Louis Perfectos and in 1900, became the St. Louis Cardinals.

The Belleville Stags played their first vintage game in 2012. Although they play by 1860 rules, the original Belleville Stags was a minor league team for the St. Louis Browns (1947-48) and for the New York Yankees (1949). The team was sponsored by "Stag Beer," brewed in Belleville.

No admission will be charged to attend the game although donations are welcome. MCHS will have a concession stand at the game offering typical baseball fare of hotdogs, popcorn, and Cracker Jacks in addition to beer and non-alcoholic beverages.

For additional information, call 618-656-1294.