

widely, must also have migrated into the Catskills with little help from Native American peoples; it is not restricted to burned-over regions where the oaks, hickories, and chestnut predominate. Butternut seems most abundant along floodplains, such as along the East Branch Delaware between Kelly Corners and Roxbury. It is also quite common in abandoned bluestone quarries, and in shale and gravel pits. Like beech, it is suffering from a disease but, unlike beech, it does not sprout as readily from its roots and is thus slowly disappearing from the landscape.

BEAKED HAZELNUT AND BLACK WALNUT

There is another nut-bearing species native to the Catskills, but it is a shrub — beaked hazelnut. Like beech and butternut, this shrub is widely distributed in areas not burned by Native peoples. In fact, one can find it producing thickets with other shrubs in first-growth stands way up in the mountains well above 3,500 feet, as

well as lower down on the slopes.

Black walnut, a close cousin of butternut, never migrated into the Catskills, but people do occasionally plant it around buildings. It does occur as a native in southeastern New York and in western parts of the state.

AMERICAN CHESTNUT

This species is different from all the other nut trees because of a fungus blight that nearly eradicated it during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It had been restricted to regions burned by Native peoples and grew with oaks and hickories. But while oaks and hickories survived, chestnut today is found mainly as root sprouts around the bases of dead trees and rarely reaches reproductive maturity (about 20 or 25 years). The good news is that the folks at the American Chestnut Foundation are breeding blight-resistant chestnuts and commonly planting them throughout the region.

Michael Kudish's Ph. D. dissertation at SUNY

(Syracuse), "Vegetational History of the Catskill High Peaks," began a life-long study of the Catskill forests. He has taught in the Forestry Division at Paul Smith's College in the Adirondacks and is "retired" to the Catskills. His Addendum to Volume 4 of Mountain Railroads of New York State, Where Did the Tracks Go in the Catskills? was published by Purple Mountain Press (2017).

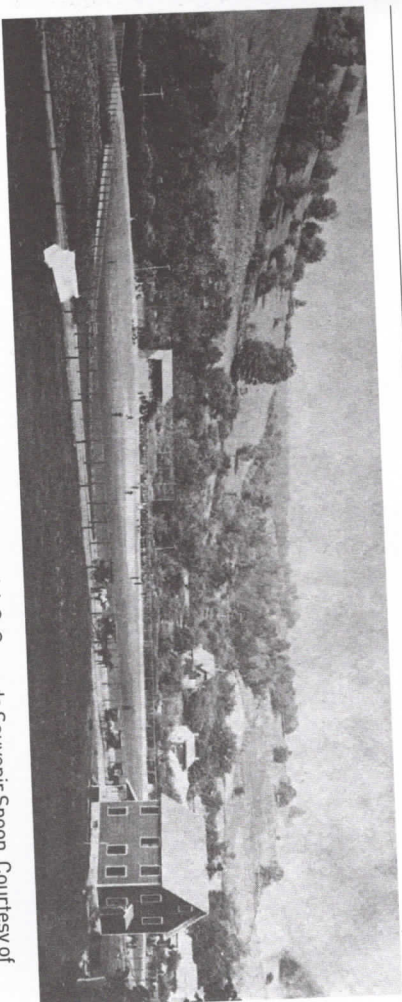
Black Walnut:
Photo, David Turan.



ROOSTER TAILS

FLEISCHMANN'S FIELD OF DREAMS & THE MOUNTAIN ATHLETIC CLUB

Collin Miller



TOP: M.A.C. Grounds Souvenir Spoon. Courtesy of Robert Mayer Collection. **BOTTOM:** Earliest known image of the M.A.C. Grounds. Source: Terry Pulz as printed in the Fleischmanns Flyer, 1976.

With the 125th anniversary of construction of the Mountain Athletic Club (M.A.C.) Grounds and its recent listing on the New York State Register of Historic Places, let's expand on John A. Duda's article "Pioneers of Summer: The Fleischmann Family" (Vol. 3, No. 1) and take a closer look at the

most famous semiprofessional baseball club of the Catskills region at the turn of the 20th century.

ROOSTER TAILS

RURAL SLANG FOR MISSED AREAS OF GRASS IN A FRESHLY MOWED FIELD.



"Crack Private Baseball Team, Maintained solely for the diversion of himself and his friends by millionaire Mayor Julius Fleischmann of Cincinnati." *Seattle Daily Times*, August 17, 1900.

The story of the M.A.C. begins with

the famous Austrian-born yeast maker Charles Fleischmann and his two sons, Julius and Max. The brothers came of age in Cincinnati during the formative years of professional baseball that began in 1869 with the Cincinnati Red Stockings — the first all-professional team. Julius and Max were avid sportsmen with interests in boxing, yachting, and horse racing, but most of all baseball. While the Fleischmanns were not the first to introduce baseball to the Catskills,² they became the game's staunchest boosters in the region — and purely for their own enjoyment and exercise.

By the end of the 1880s, Charles had built his own mansion on the mountain-side to join his siblings, who already had summer residences in Griffin's Corners (later Fleischmanns). Charles and his sons would play baseball with the villagers — perhaps introducing the game to some. However, playing ball on a makeshift

diamond was a far cry from what they had

played on in Cincinnati. A column titled "Millionaire Fans" in the *Delaware Gazette* on July 26, 1899, recalled that "games were played on the mountainside, where a half-way hit in any direction meant a home run everytime." The *Gazette's* story of the Fleischmanns' impact on the development of baseball in the region continues:

"Since his [Julius'] nine began playing a few years ago, baseball has become the rage in every town in Delaware county within twenty miles or more of Fleischmann's Church deacons, farmers, country sports and summer sports all became wild over it. So, Charles Fleischmann looked about and finally found a four-acre tract that did not have more than a dozen hills and valleys on it and purchased it for his sons. Many thousands of dollars were spent in leveling this ground and blasting out the boulders so that in the summer of 1895 the team had a real ball ground to play upon."

THE FIELD

The flat patch of ground was known as the Allen Lasher Plat and was nestled amid the hills on a floodplain between the Bush-kill and Wagner Avenue at the west end of present-day Fleischmanns. Although it was more suitable for a ball field than the mountainside, in the years since the "leveling" it has succumbed to the wrath of Mother Nature with several floods. The first one was in April 1901 and led to \$1,000 in ballpark renovations (\$30,000 in today's dollars), and the last was Hurricane Irene in September 2011, causing damage well into six figures and setting back efforts to restore the field to its former glory. Site appropriateness aside, the Fleis-

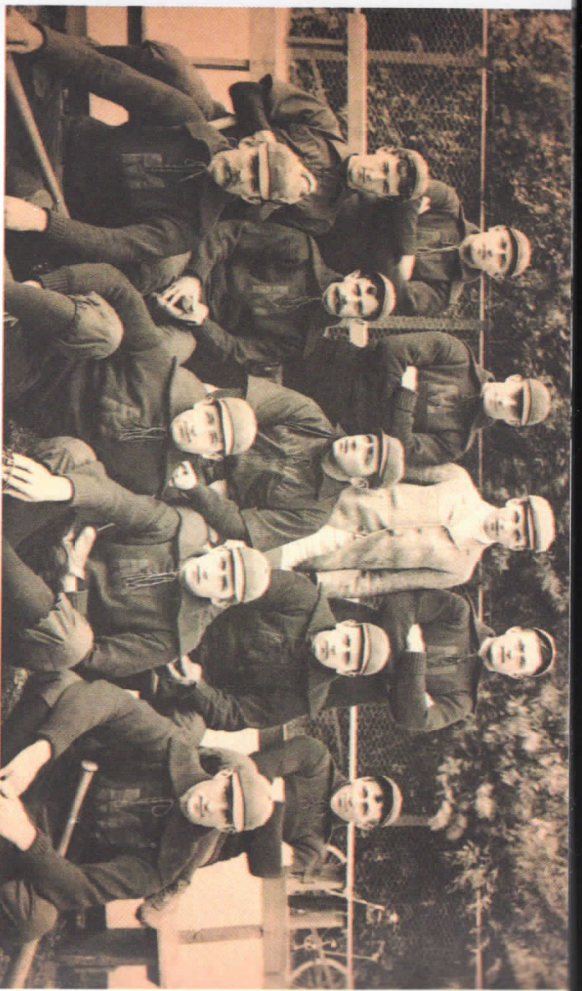
chmanns' "field of dreams" was unlike any other ball field in any other small town throughout the state. The M.A.C. Grounds included an enclosed wire fence surrounded by a bicycle track, a grandstand, three dressing rooms with an attendant, and a bandstand where a hired band serenaded the guests and players. Visiting clubs were paid as much as \$150 (over \$4,600 today) per game.



TOP: Postcard image of M.A.C. Grounds, circa 1906.

BOTTOM: At the Fleischmanns' ballpark, *The World* (NY, NY), August 20, 1899.





Mountain Athletic Club in 1896 or 1897. This is the only known team photo that shows both Julius and Max Fleischmann (middle row center and right) in uniform. Courtesy, Jane Ebberts.

These luxuries and amenities would be taken for granted in today's semiprofessional ballparks, but back then they drew national attention, due partly to the Fleischmann brand and its marketing prowess. This was the heyday of the grand hotels in the Catskills, when summer populations of small towns swelled by thousands and legions of "cranks" (19th-century term for "spectators") would flock to the M.A.C. Grounds [see Millen article in this issue].

THE PLAYERS

The M.A.C., or Mountain Tourists as they were also called, included amateurs, minor leaguers, and former professional ballplayers (many from the Cincinnati area). They were paid handsomely by the Fleischmanns and treated like royalty to play alongside the brothers.³ At least a dozen future and former major league

ballplayers spent time with the M.A.C., either for a few games or a season. The most famous players were Honus Wagner (Hall of Fame [HOF] '36) — though proof is shaky⁴ — and Miller Huggins (HOF '64), who sometimes played for the M.A.C. in 1900 under the pseudonym "Proctor."⁵ Other players on the formidable M.A.C. of 1900 were three men who would later help the Chicago White Sox beat the highly favored, crosstown rival Cubs to win the 1906 World Series: Nick Altrock, who was the oldest player to hit a triple in the majors, at age 48, and best known for his second career as a baseball clown; Guy Harris "Doc" White, who was the third-winnest left-handed pitcher in baseball from 1900–1910 and held a 64-year major

league record of five consecutive shutouts; and George "Whitley" Rohe, who, despite an otherwise mediocre professional career, played a key role in winning the 1906 pennant. Additional major leaguers on the M.A.C. included:

- catcher Charley "Red" Dooin (1900), who held a 91-year Phillies franchise record for number of games caught; two-time home run king James Wear "Bug" Halladay (1899); Tom Colcolough (1899) — pronounced and often spelled "Coakley" (and not to be confused with Andy Coakley, as it once was); Barney McFadden (1900); Black Jack Keenan (1900); Kingston-born "Peekskill" Pete Cregan (1896–1903); and Griffin Corners' own slugger, Jay Kirke (1904–05).⁶

While they did not play for the M.A.C., other important baseball figures who visited Fleischmanns were Harry M. Stevens and Bill "Hippo" Galloway. Stevens was a concessions magnate known as the "Rockefeller of Peanuts." He is credited with inventing the modern scorecard, the drinking straw, and perhaps the hot dog.⁷ Galloway played second base for the Cuban Giants⁸ in a series with the M.A.C. on Au-



1906 postcard featuring the M.A.C. Grounds showing a 5-4 win, August 5, 1906. Author's collection.

gust 10–12, 1903. In 1899, Galloway became the first black professional hockey player and, later that summer, the last black professional baseball player in the Canadian League (when a teammate objected to "playing with a Negro"). Galloway was the last attempt by any professional baseball league to racially integrate until Jackie Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers and debuted at Ebbets Field in 1947.

THE TOWN

According to local records, it appears that the M.A.C. disbanded around 1906 and formal talks of changing the village name from Griffin Corners to Fleischmanns began in 1907. However, the latter would

not come to pass until May 1914 when Julius Fleischmann, busy in other pursuits and not spending as much time at the family estate, donated the M.A.C. Grounds to the community. In accepting the generous gift with a resolution, the Village trustees formally incorporated as Fleischmanns and agreed that the grounds be "maintained as a park for all time."

On June 11, 2020, the M.A.C. Grounds was listed on the State Register of Historic Places with a similar federal designation recommended to the National Park Service, now

pending review. Nineteenth-century-style baseball is still played every summer in the park under the auspices of the third incarnation of the Mountain Athletic Club.

Collin Miller organizes and plays for the Mountain Athletic Club Vintage Base Ball project and runs a team history blog at www.maccvintagebaseball.org. He is currently researching and writing a book about 200 years of baseball history in Delaware County.

NOTES

- 1 The year 1895 was the last that baseball appeared more often in print media as two words, no hyphen, and therefore we continue the tradition in writing of the M.A.C.
- 2 Baseball in one form or another had been in Delaware County for at least 70 years before the M.A.C. The earliest local reference is July 12, 1825, in the *Delhi Gazette*, where nine men from Hamden challenged men from surrounding towns to a game of "BASS-BALL" for the sum of one dollar per game. Although the *Dickson Baseball Dictionary* defines "bass-ball" as a variant of the English game of rounders, baseball historians regard this as a significant finding and perhaps the earliest reference to money being offered for play in a bat-and-ball game.
- 3 Julius served two terms as the mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio (1900–1905), and, together with Max, became an owner of the Cincinnati Reds in 1902. They also had a stake in the Philadelphia Phillies — a form of syndicate ownership that has since been banned from professional baseball.

4 A M.A.C. team photo appearing in the March 14, 1963, *Catskill Mountain News* claimed to have Honus

- 5 Wagner pictured with the Club in 1895. The photo and related article have since proved to be highly speculative and in some respects, flat-out incorrect. However, it wouldn't be too far-fetched to think that Wagner and perhaps Ty Cobb might have played here at one time as off-season guests of the Fleischmanns.
- 6 Miller-Huggins' father was a strict Methodist and had an apparent disdain for Sunday baseball.
- 7 Judson Fabian "Jay" Kirke amassed a .315 career batting average and 3,511 hits over a 23-year run in the minor and major leagues. After retirement in 1927, he returned to Margaretville, where he coached and sometimes played on his son's town ball team. Kirke was in the lineup for Babe Ruth's first major-league win (1914) and Cy Young's last (1911).
- 8 Harry M. Stevens is purported to have umpired a game for the Fleischmanns. It is also suggested that he is in the same team photo mentioned in note 4.
- 9 The Cuban Giants were the first all-black professional baseball team that often barnstormed with semipro clubs in Upstate New York and elsewhere.

ROOSTER TAILS

THE RIGHT ROSCOE

Matt Avitable

In the Spring edition of Tri-County I wrote a piece about the life and legacy of Middleburgh's own Timothy Murphy. It was a great experience and one that I will cherish during my future work helping the publication.

In the article, I cited extensively from the *The History of Schoharie County New York 1773-1882* by American historian William E. Roscoe. Reading Roscoe was a staple in my Schoharie County history course in high school with current Middleburgh Supervisor Wes Laraway. There's only one issue with the painting we selected for the illus-

tration. It was of William Roscoe — but not the one who wrote about the area known as the Breadbasket of the Revolution.

The painting we used was of William Roscoe, a prominent British historian. The British Roscoe was a member of Parliament and an abolitionist — but not one who stepped foot in Schoharie County. Instead of writing about the history of our fair valley, the British Roscoe (1753–1831) wrote against slavery, about the Renaissance, and the Catholic Church. I apologize for the error and hope that it is a lesson to myself and our intrepid team to double check to provide the most fitting illustrations for our printed research.

My thanks to local historians Mark Sullivan, Pete Lindemann, and Anne Hendrix for bringing this to my attention and providing the attached picture and information about Schoharie County's esteemed resident historian. For more information about William E. Roscoe, contact the Old Stone Fort Museum, www.oldstonefort.org.

Matthew Avitable is the former Mayor and a current Councilman of his hometown of Middleburgh in Schoharie County, N.Y. and is a driving force behind *The Mountain Eagle newspaper out of Stamford and Schoharie*. He teaches at *SUNY Oneonta and Cobleskill*, his *alma maters*, mostly in history.



Left to right: Chamcey Rickard, Arthur Stevenson, William E. Roscoe (with camel), Fitch Roscoe, Roscoe grandson, and Roland Bouck. Photo, *Schoharie County Historical Review*, Fall 1956. Courtesy, Peter Lindemann.