

Kite & Key

Franklin Historical Society Newsletter

MAY 2025

THE BIG EVENT!

It was another beautiful day on Sammy Green's farm. The roosters were telling everyone that it was time to get up and start their day. After all, there were big doings going on in the afternoon! George Congleton was already stoking the fire at his buggy shop. There were tools to be made and buggy wheels to repair. He knew this would be a shorter work day because he wanted to attend the event. Peter Van Every Jr. was grinding corn into flour. The lady of house would sift through the flour ground by the mill stone to make sure there weren't bits of stone. Many a folk chipped a tooth or lost one taking a bite. There would be warm corn-bread for a family to enjoy at the doings. The open sign on Mr. Rust's general store welcomed shoppers to pick up items to prepare for the big day. Dr. Cox was checking his medical bag to make sure he had everything required to clean up scrapes, wrap a sprained ankle and prepare for the unthinkable... a broken bone! Womenfolk were in the kitchen waiting for the pot to boil so the chicken would cook, gathering potatoes from the cellar and cleaning "veggies." Sorry for the abbreviation, but there was no time to waste. The highlight of the day was not going to wait for those who had not prepared for it!

I was observing the flurry of activities where my roots were planted, just a bit north and west of Sammy Green's house. Sammy's house isn't here anymore. It was relocated some years back. In fact, the library now sits on the foundation of Green's house. I just wanted to give you the reference point of where I existed at the time of this story.

What was all of the to do about? It was all happening near Sammy's barn. The Franklin church occupied this spot when the farm became our green. South of the barn, villagers were carrying their picnic baskets loaded with delicious morsels. A blanket would be spread on the grass and all the young'ins would wrangle for a spot, preferably close to the food.

The Franklin coronet band, dressed in military type uniforms, was assembling nearby. The music, the setting, the hustle of families and the laughter of children created a festive atmosphere.

And, then it happened! It was time to play ball! The players did not walk onto a baseball field. This was the 1870's, they didn't play on a field. They played on a flat, grassy area on William Barnum's property at Inkster and Wellington, but today, they were playing on Sammy Green's farm near his barn. They didn't walk on the field with mitts. They didn't use a mitt! They caught the ball with their bare hands. Catchers were substituted often because their hands would swell up. Good thing Ol Doc Cox was on hand to take care of things!

The rules of the day were different. Games were never played on Sunday. This was a Saturday occasion only. The pitcher had to throw the ball where the batter requested it. A batter was called out if a fly ball was caught or if it was caught on the first bounce. It was a gentleman's game.

There was no profanity or arguing over a call. During the innings, a band would play. In this case, it was the Franklin Band. It was organized around Civil War times. Many of the musicians that played were relatives of Franklin Civil War veterans. Frank Adams, one of the ball players also played in the band! This was definitely a family happening!

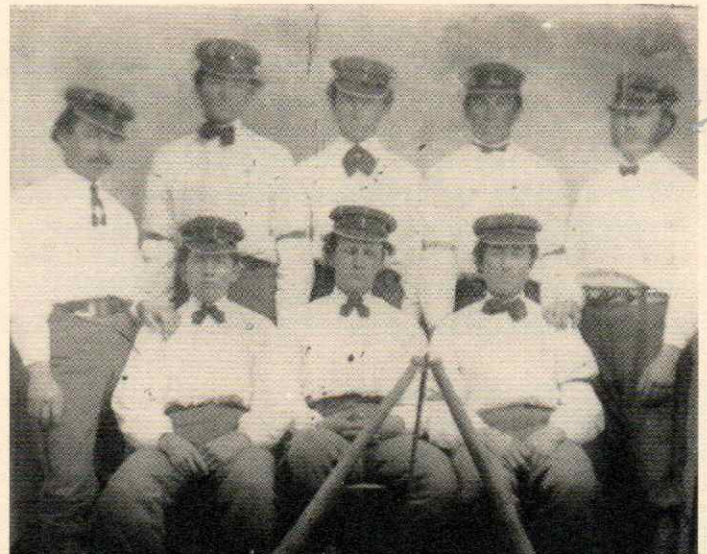
The boys loved the game! We had two ball clubs, the Franklins and the Franklin Unions. We played local teams. One rival was the Birmingham Sooners.

Will Leet lived on Romany Way in a red house that is still visible. Jason Reed, a friend of Leets, was a pitcher that needed to master a curve ball. Villagers collected money to pay for a pitching coach. Well, when Reed came back from his lessons, he demonstrated the art of throwing a curve ball on Franklin Road.

Brothers, William and Milton Wood, were horse traders by day and ball players on Saturday. They all played together.

Baseball was more than a pastime for these pioneers, it was a breath of fresh air from the daily grind of work. No wonder they shortened their work day to gather with friends and family on the green to eat, chat and listen to music in anticipation of hearing the words: Play Ball!

On Saturday, June 14th at 1 P.M. on the grassy area of the green, you can experience an old time baseball game by the Franklins and the Royal Oak Wahoos. The game will take you back to a different era. The Peace Jubilee Civil War band from Farmington will play between innings. The event is sponsored by the Franklin Baseball/Softball League, the Franklin Church and the Franklin Historical Society. Hot dogs, chips and popcorn will be available for purchase. The bases will be loaded with history and you will be part of it. Now, let's play ball!



TAKE ME OUT TO THE...

In 1908, Jack Norworth and Albert Tyler wrote a song that would become the unofficial anthem of North American baseball. Neither of the authors had attended a game before writing the song! Take me out to the ball game. Take me out to the crowd. Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack, I don't care. . . Now that the jingle is running the bases in your head, let's journey through the sport rooted in history.

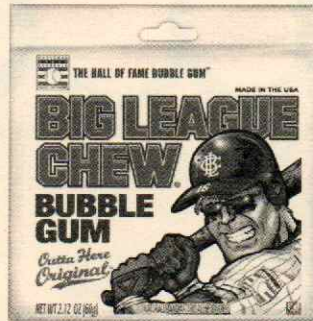
Peanuts were popular at the old ball game because they were affordable, convenient and a way to keep your hands occupied during a slow-paced game. Cracking the shells helped to relieve nervous energy.

Cracker Jacks was a snack food consisting of molasses flavored, caramel coated popcorn and peanuts. One of the best parts of this treat was hidden in the box. In 1914-1915, baseball cards appeared inside! Fred Blanding, a local boy, played for the Cleveland Indians. The Franklin Historical Museum has a replica of his card.

Blanding was born in California and passed away in Virginia. He is buried in the Franklin cemetery. What is his story? His mother was Emma Sly. When she married Fred's father, they moved to California. Before Fred was born, his father passed away. Emma Sly brought her daughter and son back to Michigan and lived on the farm in Bloomfield with her parents. Fred grew up here, attended the University of Michigan where he played ball and ended up in the major league and on a baseball card in a Cracker Jack box. Now, that's some story! After his baseball career he resided in Virginia. He was brought home to rest in the place he had grown up.

Another treat at the old ball game not mentioned in the song was Big League Chew. It didn't appear until about 1970. It has become the official bubble gum of U.S.A. baseball. It was designed to mimic the look and feel of chewing tobacco. Although it didn't completely replace chewing tobacco, it did offer a fun and healthier alternative.

... if I ever get back for its root, root, root for the home team, if they don't win it's a shame. For it's one, two, three strikes you're out at the old ball game!!!



FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY FINAL INCOME/EXPENSE REPORT 2024 CALENDAR YEAR

REVENUE

MEMBERSHIP	\$2,893
DONATIONS	\$2,352
FUND RAISING	\$7,705
TRANSFERRED FROM INVESTMENT ACCOUNT	\$56,232
TOTAL REVENUE	\$69,182

EXPENSES

MUSEUM FACILITY	\$16,545
STORAGE SHED	\$6,846
ARCHIVIST	\$1,760
MAILINGS	\$5,320
WEB SITE	\$5,250
BICENTENNIAL	\$27,618
LIBRARY TREE LIGHTS	\$1,141
MISCELLANEOUS	\$947
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$65,427

1/7/2025

A WHILE AGO

Will Leet had the misfortune to break bones of his leg just above the ankle while playing a ball game. This is the second game that has occurred at the ball ground in less than three weeks.



Kite & Key is a publication of the Franklin Historical Society. The Franklin Historical Society seeks to preserve such material, structures and artifacts that help to establish the history of the Village of Franklin and to make it accessible to those who wish to study it. The Society maintains a museum and archival area at the Derwich House, 26165 13 Mile Road (at Kirk). Volunteers and donations are most welcome. **Kite & Key** and the society welcome mail at:



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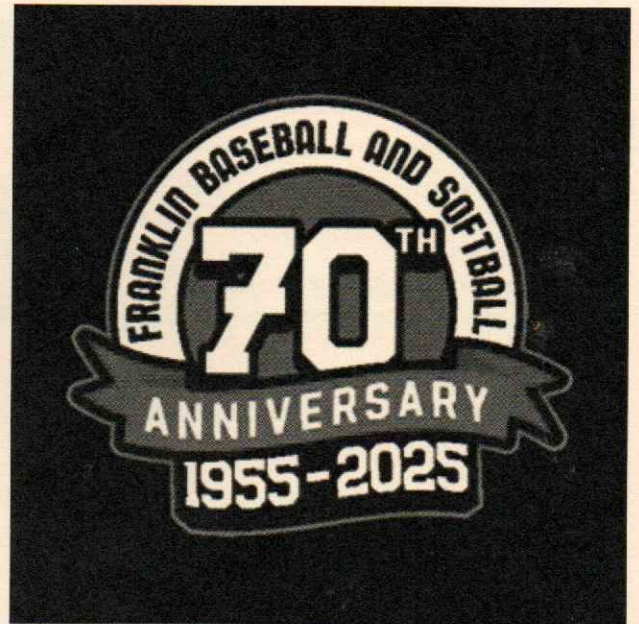
BIRTH OF THE BASEBALL LEAGUE – In 1955, the league started with 48 boys on 4 teams.

GOUDIE FIELD - This was the original field built and owned by the Franklin Community Church. The original owner of the land was Sammy Green who built his home in 1894 on the village green. He had a dairy farm here. Ironically, this area was used by old timers baseball players as their field.

CORNILLE FIELD - In April 1959, Bob Cornille, the father of four sons, built this field. It accommodated the growing league. Babe Ruth and the Colt teams played on this field.

GIRL'S LEAGUE FORMED – In 1959, Meg Gallagher was the first league president of girls softball.

AL KALINE FIELD – In the late 60's, the Al Kaline field was built. Kaline was a Detroit Tiger. He lived in the village and attended the Franklin Church. When the Tigers won the World Series in 1968, the church bells rang in celebration!



On August 2, 1979, it was Al Kaline Day!

BILL FREEHAN - Freehan was a former catcher for the Detroit Tigers and a guest speaker on opening day. In 1983, it was the 33rd anniversary of the Franklin Baseball/Softball League.

ALAN TRAMMEL – On Opening Day in 1988, Alan Trammell, a Detroit Tiger shortstop, was the guest speaker. Trammell often got a haircut at Herbert Slonaker's barbershop located in an 1830's structure (32731 Franklin Road) in the village of Franklin.

50TH ANNIVERSARY – To celebrate America's favorite pastime, commemorative bricks were sold with family names of participants in the league. They form the walkway to the gazebo and the Franklin fields.

MARK JAHNKE – Jahnke coached baseball and softball for seventeen years. He especially loved Kaline Field. The League Board erected a scoreboard in his honor for his dedication to coaching. April 30, 2011 was opening day and the debut of the Mark Jahnke scoreboard in Kaline field.

JESSE POLAN – On Opening Day 2025, will be the first annual Jesse Polan Memorial Tournament. This one is for you Jesse!

FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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www.franklin-history.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Old Time Baseball Game on the green, June 14, 2025 - 1 PM- 3 PM

Franklins vs. Royal Oak Wahoos

Peace Jubilee Civil War band from Farmington

Music on the Green Concerts

July 30, 2025 – 6 PM-8 PM

Band: Mainstream Drive, Food truck: Delectabowl

August 6, 2025 – 6 PM-8 PM

Band: Amp Fuse, Food truck: The Grilled Wrap

August 13, 2025 – 6 PM- 8 PM

Band: Lost West, Food truck: Touch of Honey

September 27, 2025

Pancake Breakfast at the Fire Department

And

Build a Scarecrow at the Kreger Barn

FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2024-2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DOCUMENTING HISTORY:

Published two Kite and Key newsletters

Create street banners for the light posts :Picturing the Past and Baseball with QR codes

Developed QR codes for historic buildings

Continuing research on early Franklin families

Archivist continues to log and identify donated artifacts related to Franklin history

Provided historic information to the Franklin restaurant on their historic structures

RECEIVING DONATIONS:

Garrett Keais – Bert Wood workbench

Anonymous – porch swing

MUSEUM:

Maintenance on the property (power washing, lawn care, landscape clean up, snow removal)

Purchased a storage shed

Created a carriage shop exhibit

EVENTS:

Pancake Breakfast, Build a Scarecrow and Crow to Go

Horseshoe Caper

FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 MEMBERSHIP

We need you!

The Franklin Historic Society is a non-profit organization with a purpose of enhancing the understanding of Franklin history, including its character and sense of community. The society's activities include, but are not limited to:

- Operating the Franklin Historical Museum
- Collecting and archiving historical materials
- Disseminating historical information
- Encouraging historical preservation in Franklin

The museum has recently been totally renovated and is open for you to come see our new twist on Franklin history. We've developed new exhibits about Franklin's past cooper shop, shoe maker and taverns. You'll also be able to visit the general store and school as well as the Pickering exhibit and more.

Please support our efforts and join in 2025 by completing this membership form and sending in your contribution. You can also join online at www.franklin-history.org.

I want to become a 2025 member of the Franklin Historical Society.

☐ Family/Individual Membership \$50 ☐ Business Membership \$75

☐ Life Membership \$500

☐ I have photos or artifacts to contribute. Please contact me.

☐ I would like to contribute my time to work on Society projects. Please contact me.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Please mail this form and your tax-deductible contribution to the Franklin Historical Society, P.O. Box 250007, Franklin, MI 48025.

Headquarters and Museum: 26165 Thirteen Mile Road at Kirk Lane.