

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 25, 2013

**Local Baseball:** For well over 100 years, baseball has been a favorite pastime and competitive sport at all levels. The local area of Hockessin, Yorklyn, Mount Cuba, Centerville, Hamorton, and Kennett Square was no exception. Starting about 1900, leagues of one kind or another came and went. Sometimes the leagues were among teams that consisted of young men from these communities themselves; at other times, a local team might compete against or be in a league with teams some distance away.

In late summer of 1913, my father brought his Mountain Wagon home from a very successful season carrying tourists over the battlefield at Gettysburg. Yorklyn, with its new storekeeper, Grover C. Gregg, had a ball team that played teams as far away as Middletown. On more than one occasion, my dad carried the Yorklyn team, or most of it, in his 12-passenger Stanley "wagon" to its "away" games. My father had alluded to this, but it was confirmed by Margaret Brennan Jordan of Yorklyn in the late 1980s, as her late husband "Buck" was on the Yorklyn team (he was a great uncle of James E. Jordan Jr., executive director of the Red Clay Valley Association and the Brandywine Valley Association, who was instrumental in arranging the sale of former the NVF property to the State of Delaware for Auburn Heights Preserve).

When I was about 10 years old, Yorklyn was in a league with about five other teams, some of which were Hockessin, Centerville, and Mount Cuba. Yorklyn's home field was in the meadow next to the new Yorklyn School (now the Center for the Creative Arts), Hockessin played next to the Hockessin School (now Hockessin's Baptist Church), and Centerville played in a small field opposite where Snuff Mill Road dead ends at Kennett Pike. The players were young men, some single and some married, and most all had paying jobs. Most of the Yorklyn boys worked in one of the mills in their village. Their games were on summer evenings, usually during the week.

The Gregg family, especially Grover Sr. and Grover Jr., the latter called "June," were leaders in the Yorklyn ball teams for two generations. In 1939, Senior established a much better team that joined a league that extended southward to Newark and Glasgow. Most of these league games were on Saturday or Sunday. This improved Yorklyn team recruited players from Kennett Square and other communities. Merritt Bernard of Kennett was one of the pitchers, and the catcher was a clerk in the new Acme market in that borough. The home field was on top of Snuff Mill Hill (opposite the entrance to Oversee Farm), which was a good place to play except that left field was in a depression. The schedule was set up with a break halfway through the season, and the team that won the first half would play the team that won the second half to decide the final league champion. Yorklyn won the first half, and Glasgow won the second. The playoff game was held at Yorklyn. With Merritt Bernard on the mound, it was a tight game, but Glasgow prevailed. June Gregg, then 20 years of age and coming into his prime, played for many years after World War II, but I don't think the Yorklyn team was involved again in such a fancy league as in 1939. After the war, the home field was again on the school grounds. I was often an observer.