

In the fall of 2007 I got my first taste of vintage base ball at an annual tournament called the President's Cup. This laid-back affair took place at the historic George Ranch near Houston.

Several teams from around the state showed up in replica uniforms to play America's national past-time as it was played in the mid-19th century. At that time, base ball was an amateur game played by farmers, merchants, and soldiers for recreation and community pride.

The whole scene was very retro...like 1860s retro...with different rules and archaic jargon.

For starters--players don't wear gloves, pitching is under-handed and where the batter calls for the pitch. You can even make an out by catching a hit on the first bounce.

The bat is called the willow. The ball is the apple. Home plate is just that...a metal plate or disk. And the bags are tow sacks filled with a little stuffing.

The goal of vintage base ball is to keep the ball in play, allowing a lively game.

The umpire for vintage base ball is sometimes called the Blind Tom...hmmm...I guess for obvious reasons.

The Blind Tom for the President's Cup was a dapper fellow from Cedar Park named Wendell Dickason.

He doubled as tournament photographer...taking team photos with his antique camera.

He had a pretty good handle on the old-fashioned sport.

The Victorian setting at George Ranch made a very nostalgic backdrop.

Michael "Molasses" Hickey Montgomery College Saw Dogs But everybody seemed easy going about playing by 1860s rules

The host team from George Ranch was the Richmond Giants. Then there was the Montgomery College Saw Dogs from Conroe, the Farmers Branch Mustangs, and the Boerne White Sox. A fifth club, called the Houston Revolvers, was a pick-up group of players, or ballists, as they would've been called in the 1860s.