



Frontier Folklore & Pioneer Prose from Harvey County

by Darren McMannis

Baseball In The Old West:

Burrton vs Newton - Again

A strong and consistent rivalry existed for many years between the various communities of Harvey County, and in 1886 the biggest race between Burrton and Newton was to win the new North-South spur of the railroad. In the midst of these spirited discussions, the communities took time to engage in a friendly pastime - baseball.

One warm Friday in August, the Newton Reds came to Burrton and engaged the Howard Baseball Club. The home town won easily, 21 to 3. Unable to accept the win as anything more than a fluke of nature, the Newtonians immediately challenged the Howard club to a rematch to be held in Newton on the following Wednesday.

The Newton Reds were again defeated by the "irresistible prowess of the Howard club" 7 to 6. Talk among those from Burrton who played and attended the game was that "a great number of Newton's citizens officiated as umpires of the game and persisted in over-ruling and 'kicking' against the decisions of M. S. Betch, the legally appointed umpire, notwithstanding the established rules of base ball."

In light of the heightened tensions and adverse conditions, the Burrton boys were especially pleased with themselves over their victory. They were glad to quickly return home, however, due to what they reported as a very cold reception "in return for their splendid treatment to the Newtons while here. We think from their conversation that the Newtons made it "hot" for them."

This account was told in Burrton, and Newton's side of the story has yet to be found. Spurred on by these events, however, it was soon reported that "The Newton and Burrton 2nd Nines are measuring bats to day."

†DMc