

The Nine Mile River Nine

By

S. M. (Sid) Parker

A few facts regarding the story below are worthy of special note:

First, though it is 35 years since the Nine Mile River Ball Team was first organized, eight of those old-timers are still hale and hearty, and six live within a few miles of each other, and two are in USA.

Second, when the team was getting underway, back in those dim years, it was found that Charlie Fraser, outfielder, was the youngest player, being 21, and James Ira Fraser, shortstop, now deceased, the oldest, 45 years, and the pitcher, Thomas Simmonds, 38.

Third, none of these men had ever played baseball but later developed into a formidable array of players that were hard to beat. The hurler broke loose with tremendous speed. The catcher and third baseman shared the honor of being terrific sluggers, and several of the others got to be whirlwinds at running bases. Naturally, as years slipped by, many were replaced by younger men, but the poem below deals only with the boys who bore the original trademark. The position each played, and a short sketch of each individual player is contained in the following song, written to celebrate their past achievements.

(Source: Clipping from one of Nova Scotia's newspapers)

Oh, please sit down a moment and hear this stirring tale,
Though some may doubt its telling, like Jonah and the Whale;
This classic I'm unfolding extolls a baseball crew,
The squarest, hardest hitting gents, that fandom ever knew;
The strange slant of this story, not one had played before,
Could scarcely mark a Diamond, knew nothing of the score;
But spare me your attention, it is my proud design
To Chronicle the History of this Nine Mile River Nine.

First, hear of Nine Mile River; a rambling countryside,
A drowsy little settlement that lies in quiet pride
Along the Windsor highway, 'tween Elmsdale and Gore,
Where streamlined cars like demons go blazing by their door,
In days of this yarn's setting it has the dappled pair,
Teams, riband hung, drew fandom to watch the baseball fair,
These trailing fans were loyal, and colorful the show
Of a huge country picnic with ball games on the go.

Some five and thirty years ago, a little group of men
Sat chatting in the twilight, James, Harry, Tom and Glen.
The subject turned to baseball, and everyone agreed,
That in that quiet Township sports was a crying need—
"We go to Church on Sunday, then toil the long week through
Without one gleam of pleasure, this thing will never do."
One thought brought on another, they planned it then and there

To practice in the evening when they had time to spare.

Some books were sent for pronto, the tidings quickly spread,
The critics came to censor, but paused to praise instead,
As curious fascination gripped those who watched the game,
The sparks of sport were kindled that burst into a flame
To send its crimson banner athwart the sky of time,
And taught the rising youngsters the greatness of their prime,
To take life's knocks and banter, the bitter with the sweet,
Their goal seek with courage that knows not a retreat.

It happened that a village not many miles away
Had thrown a team together and challenged them to play,
The defy was accepted, their first real game in store,
But took an awful lacing from the youngsters of West Gore,
This youthful team was snappy and knew the rules by heart,
And were throughout the summer the victors every start.

But other teams were forming, ball picnics here the thing,
These river boys improving began to find their swing,
Time had unearthed some sluggers, a pitcher fast and true,
And runners, fleet as greyhounds, around the bases flew.
Their technique had developed, good teamwork fell in line,
A menace to opponents stood that Nine Mile River Nine.

There was Stewiacke and Milford, old Elmsdale and Gore.
Rawdon too and Oldham, brave Walton on the shore;
While blended with these others was Shubenacadie;
Though Oldham proved the toughest in all their History,
These mighty six-foot miners could blast that leather sphere
To Kingdom Come, or Hades, then back again to here.
Huge muscled men of valor, the shock was truly great
When these two teams collided, 'twas something to relate.

When passing through to Windsor, just pause at Simmonds Store,
And view that gleaming silver reclining near the door.
Supremacy's proud token for league games hotly won,
Tom will translate its story to every mother's son,
The struggle for its winning, the battle grim to hold
Against the stern contenders from everywhere, so bold.
Now please recline at leisure, each player I'll describe,
The famous old originals, and chiefs of all the tribe.

They had a hefty pitcher, Tom Simmonds was his name,

An artist on the diamond, the speedball built his fame,
Though when he had a notion, a twister he could fling,
And chuckled when the batter would lunge and miss his swing,
With speed of light that horsehide sped like a cannon ball;
His lofty catcher grimaced, then braced to take the shock,
The struck-out batsman stuttered he only heard the "sock."

Next came their lanky catcher who towered six foot two,
They called him Glen Dalrymple, and those who really knew,
Say he was just as husky as he was lean and tall,
And when he swung the hickory he skinned the blooming ball.
In-fielders grew uneasy, outfielders turned and ran,
They feared that scorching hitter, but seldom gauged his span;
He stood a silent bulwark behind the batter's box—
A crouched and granite figure, as crafty as a fox.

Though famed for accurate flinging, Tom did not worry much,
He sure could toss them anywhere and never get in "Dutch."
Glen gathered them in blithely, if low, or high, or wide,
No matter where they wandered, he snatched them to his side;
They seldom walked a batter, they feared no magic bat,
Though facing wicked sluggers, this battery stood pat,
With two men down, and runners, they burnt the sizzling plate,
They made, and unmade heroes, and gambled with their fate.

Next followed the first baseman, as fleet as woodland deer,
As supple as a shadow, he sprinted far and near;
That sandbag he was guarding was safe as dynamite
To those deluded runners who safety sought its flight.
Though Delbert Blois was ageing, his prowess did not wane,
A splendid type of sportsman, now hails from Beddeford, Maine,
Where with his wife and children, two daughters and a son,
The sands of life are ebbing, the great game nearly done.

Frank Lloyd, the second sacker, an Englishman by birth,
An acrobatic wonder who proved his timely worth;
He thrilled the crowd to laughter with nimble antics wild,
At times a bit erratic and hard to reconcile,
Old was his style of batting, he often hooked the ball.
The fans despaired, and marvelled he ever hit at all.

Now comes the hardest hitter, though seldom quite so far
As rangy Glen, the catcher who smashed them at a star,
This giant third sack minder, was brawny, tall and broad,

A smiling hearty fellow, who sure could tramp the sod,
The envy of all Rookies, he swung a smoking bat,
A headache to all hurlers, Welt made the fielders scat.

Their shortstop was the eldest, then forty years and five,
The only real old-timer that is not yet alive,
No one who saw him fielding could ever guess his age,
A loyal active member and somewhat of a sage,
Of medium height, and wiry, his lustre does not dim,
James Ira Fraser's passing still leaves them true to him.

The three fleet-footed fielders I mention in this rhyme,
Could outfield with the best of them, most any place or time,
Bill Bowman now, for instance, could fling a lengthy pill,
And Harry Dodds could catch them if chasing them uphill.
Then there was Charlie Fraser who sealed great players' fate
By pulling down the high one that roared out from the plate.

I'm also pleased to mention, Fred Caldwell kept the score,
Too young to don the colors, he did a splendid chore,
Son of a well-known farmer, a loyal bluenose still,
Though now a Boston Dentist and famous for his skill,
Each year this pilgrim harkens to Scotia's mystic call,
And sojourns to Lake Williams when Autumn Echoes fall.

Tom Simmonds still is living and runs a general store,
Saw nine and sixty winters but sprightly as before,
And Welton Edgett's farming beside the King's highway,
He's raising silver beauties and makes his ranching pay;
But Glen the lanky catcher, who lumbered all his days,
Still heeds the call of timber and tramps its devious ways;
While Harry Dodd is ageing, his playing days are o'er,
Though still is hale and hearty, and farms up in the "Gore."

Friend Charlie Fraser's greying, his fleeting winters speak,
But still is tall and handsome, and quite the dashing sheik;
A bang-up royal good fellow, this author knew him well,
Together stocked the wheat fields, and always found him swell,
Is still the perfect gentleman, distinguished in his mien,
So friendly, yet so dignified, a medium half between,
The Government has signed him, as road boss earns his kale,--
And has a lovely household quite near to Elmsdale.

Bill Bowman reared his children with music in their toes,

And when they chin a fiddle the rippling music flows;
Well, Bill himself could sing them, and many a lusty song
This author heard him warble, the lofty trees among.
But father time is ruthless and rolls relentless on,
Permitting none to linger, long to caress the dawn;
A reader and a scholar, a citizen of worth,
A vigorous debater of English blood and birth.

So ends my reminiscences on vanished scenes of yore,
If aught you find unpleasant, that paragraph ignore;
I mean no one unkindness, it pleased me much to write
To perpetuate the prowess and glory of their might.
When players met for pleasure, the hefty stick to wield,
Good fellowship ran rampant along the baseball field
Where everyone was happy, if win, lose, or a draw,
The game was all that mattered, and sportsmanship the law.