

## Weston Park: The Origins

Weston Park actually got its start at McCord's Gas Station! That's where, in 1957, several local Dads got into a discussion of the need for an organized baseball league in Sandwich South, and went to work to make it a reality. The first executive consisted of President: Hub Washbrook, Vice- President Bob McCord and Secretary- Treasurer Bill Hill. Other interested locals included Wes Robinson, Everett O'Neil, Joe McCarthy and Wilfred Greaves.

They hoped to have four Peewee teams, for boys nine to twelve, and four Junior teams for boys fourteen to seventeen.

Optional diamonds to be used included: the Heinz tomato grading station site where Oldcastle Road and Walker Road meet South Talbot, Washbrook's field on the 10<sup>th</sup> Concession, Roseland Public School, Fairplay School, behind Jim Weston's barn and the Maidstone Shamrocks' diamond where Emmett McCarthy was interested in the undertaking.

Opening day of that first season, Sunday May 19, 1957, saw ten teams playing:

Eight Peewee and Four Juniors:

Braves managed by Orville Bellaire and Bob Kettles

Dodgers managed by Edward Cantin

Giants managed by Bob McCord

Indians managed by Ray Robinson

Maple Leafs managed by Wilfred Greaves

Rangers managed by Harvey 'Hub' Washbrook

Tigers managed by Wesley Robinson

Yankees managed by Bill O'Neil

Red Legs managed by Charlie Sim and Jack McAuliffe

Red Sox managed by Everett O'Neil

The Windsor Star on November 1, 1957 featured the presentation of awards to top players. Harvey Washbrook, President of the Peewee League, gave the Peewee cup to Bernard Brant, while Reeve Percy McKee was pictured with Larry Pestick, Captain of the Juniors

An October 3 1958 Essex Free Press column by Carson Jessop reported that the Maidstone Redlegs defeated Roseland for the Peewee title. The team consisted of Tom Halford on 1<sup>st</sup>, Roy Deehan 2<sup>nd</sup>, Dan Hebert on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Gary Deehan and Mike Sylvester pitching, Bob McCarthy catching, Denis Sylvester at short, Jim McAuliffe right field, Jerry McAuliffe and Wayne Robinson center field, Jack Sim left field. Jack McAuliffe and Charlie Sim managed the team.

In 1961 the Oldcastle Yankees Junior team under Bill O'Neil won the title for the fourth time in the five years since the league had been established. They defeated the Roseland Eagles under Everett Graham 5 to 2 in the final. Yankees included Brindley, Hayman and Tessier. Eagles had Dennison, O'Neil and McCoubrey

It's interesting that, though not officially recorded as such, the players identified the teams by community: Fairplay Rangers, Roseland Dodgers, Maidstone Redlegs, Maidstone Braves, Oldcastle Giants, Oldcastle Tigers, etc.

The Fairplay Rangers included Terry Washbrook, Rick Snider, Larry St. Louis, Wayne Robinson, Norm Jobin and later Bob Weston

Maidstone Redlegs initially fielded Tom Halford and Dan Hebert sharing duties at 1st, Jack Sims on 2nd, Jerry McAuliffe on 3rd or left field, Roy Deehan at short, Bob McCarthy on 2nd or pitching, Gary Deehan pitching and Dick McCarthy catching.

Maidstone Braves included Barry Bellaire, Butch Kettles, Victor Hebert, Charlie Hebert, Ed Farough, Jim Farough, Rick Farough, Rick Cloutier, and Denis Kosokowsky

By 1959 there were twelve teams, eight peewee and four junior, with two hundred boys playing.

By 1960, there were nearly two hundred and fifty signed up. The league President was Bert Bedford, who provided much of the umpiring services, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice- president Bob McCord, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice president Jack Robinson, Treasurer Bill Hill and Secretary

Del Williams. Team managers and assistants were Alex Brindley, Jack Merrifield, Harvey Stitt, Ed Cantin, Bill O'Neil, Harvey Washbrook, Bob Kettles, Harold Robinson, Jim Weston, Jack McAuliffe, Charlie Sims, Pete Halford, Andy Sokol and Orville Bellaire.

The growing success of the baseball league program made it obvious that it was time for Sandwich South to develop its own park. That was when Jim Weston offered the use of his property on North Talbot Road, across from his home where games had continued to be played for three years. By July of 1960 plans were in the works for the Weston Park that remains in use today and now has two diamonds, a soccer pitch, tennis and pickle ball courts, a walking trail, a play area, washrooms, a picnic shelter and barbeques. From a casual conversation over coffee and hundreds of volunteer hours, thousands of boys, girls, men and ladies have enjoyed playing ball at Weston Park.

Thanks to Barry Bellaire, Tom Halford, Jerry McAuliffe, Terry Washbrook and Bob Weston for sharing your memories.

Judy Jobin