

The Simsbury seniors mothers prior to the game.

Photo by Bill Payne

Vintage baseball team in the works for Simsbury

By Don Rully
Assistant Sports Editor

A group of about two dozen Simsbury residents held a meeting on Sunday night at the museum store at the Phelps Tavern Museum and Homestead in Simsbury to discuss the formation of vintage baseball league team in town.

According to organizers, the team would be called the Simsbury Taverneers Vintage Base Ball Club (STVBBC) and play their home games at town fields to be determined including perhaps the Iron Horse fields.

Greg Martin, director, Hartford Vintage Baseball Invitational, and a resident of Hartford, said vintage teams play a schedule that includes 10 games to a 30-50 game

schedule with 200-300 spectators, in contrast to smaller crowds for a softball or amateur baseball game.

The Taverneers' organizers, if all goes well, are planning another meeting before the year-end holidays, for what could possibly be the sixth vintage baseball team to organize within a 1 1/2 hour drive, according to Martin. The vintage baseball season lasts from April to the end of October, he said.

Vintage baseball teams play an underhand 1860's game, and/or an overhand 1880's game, Martin said. "Our club likes to focus on a couple of years, because you can learn the game a lot easier," Martin said.

He said his team, the Hartford Senators, has played games with scores ranging from 3-2 to 23-21. "It's just like the modern game, it's based on defense and pitching," he said.

"You're not going to play a game where there are 10 home runs, because there's overhand pitching, there's curveballs," he said. Martin said playing the game on an open grass field is preferred. "It's baseball living history, theater, and competitive play," Martin said.

"Make quick friends, that's for sure," he said.

The regional leader in vintage baseball appears to be the Providence Greys, with teams also in Long Island, Boston, and New York. "Providence has pretty much mastered the game," Martin said.

The Greys, who have been playing vintage baseball for about five years have experience, Martin said, using trick plays, catching the ball with a smaller, compared to today's standards, 19th century mitt or glove, and with the game's language. "It'll come to you," Martin told the group.



Chris "Grit" Moran of the Hartford Senators drives one to left at the Milford, Mass. town festival.

... a holding penalty stalled the drive but Hood finished the 86-yard drive by booting a 32-yard field goal for a 10-0 Trojan lead.

The Warriors came right

and down, Hood, playing free safety, made the biggest defensive play of the game; a circus, one-handed interception while toppling over backwards at the 3-yard

their state championship hockey title. Simsbury's season is chronicled in pictures at www.dotphoto.com; User name: Simsbury; Password: Trojans.

The Taverneers' founders, Duncan MacKay and John Lucker, said the team would charge a one-time uniform fee, and seek sponsorship to cover the cost of balls, bats, bases, and catcher's gear. Insurance, MacKay said, was also a concern. MacKay added that Simsbury town planner Bill Voelker was tentatively tabbed as the team's historian and "local connection."

"We certainly want to exploit everyone's contacts and see what we can do," MacKay said.

Hartford hosts a vintage baseball tournament in Bushnell Park over the July 4 weekend. Another tournament takes place in Bethpage, L.I., N.Y. in August, Martin said.

Simsbury organizers are thinking about holding a tournament during Septemberfest that would attract some visitors to town and provide fun for players and spectators.

Martin displayed baggy uniforms worn by vintage baseball players that had laces or buttons down the front.

Martin said the vintage baseball players regularly march in Hartford's St. Patrick's Day Parade.

A photo of the 1913 Simsbury Baseball Club was also displayed.

Most of the players assembled had experience in softball or baseball, and those interested were asked to write a check for \$200, or half of the team's fees of \$400.

An overall baseball and community experience appears to be in the works with vintage baseball in Southern New England and the Tri-State area. Whether the activities can seriously be tied to tourism and commerce has yet to be seen, but there are already some successes—the combination of recreation, competition, history, and a warm spring, summer, or autumn day are almost irresistible.

For more information about the Simsbury Taverneers Base Ball Club, call John Lucker at (860) 651-7979.