

On Target

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PLAIN OLD-FASHIONED town rivalry built baseball into America's national pastime. Strangely, it takes a bit of sane reflection to realize just how far we have slipped since World War II.

But who was it who said, "The more things change, the more they remain the same?"

Because it appears increasingly obvious with each passing day that we have once again swung full cycle. Just take a look at Carteret County's other adult baseball circuit, the Eastern League, and you will realize that town ball reigns supreme.

WE CALL THE EASTERN League "the other adult baseball league," because the more prestige-minded Seashore League seems to outshine the Eastern when it comes to publicity.

But forget the publicity. You'll never find any more fierce baseball competition anywhere than when you watch two Eastern rivals scratch and claw and fight for their lives.

Some three hundred fans witnessed the Eastern opener Saturday in the spectacular Salter Path Ball Park. The Norwood Frost-managed Salter Path Reds "entertained" the defending champion Eastern Grays.

COME TO THINK of it, the Reds may have given their Salter Path loyalists a bit the better of it when it came to entertainment. They defeated the Grays, 9-6. The Grays showed distinct signs of moaning the "blues."

Jay Pittman opened the show for the Reds in the first. This talented young shortstop teed off on the first pitch by Grays' ace Jim Lewis and clouted a screeching home run high and far over the left-field fence.

Jay, who enjoyed a 4-for-5 day at the plate, comes from a distinguished baseball heritage. He's the son of perhaps the greatest pitcher ever developed in Salter Path, Jerry Pittman.

BRINK WILLIS unloaded another

long home run for the Reds in the third. Teen-aged Jamie Frost, son of another home-town hero, Henry Frost, stole 3 bases.

This sprightly new Salter Path entry in the Eastern League rubbed salt into the sting of the Grays' defeat by rallying to overcome a 5-1 Down-east advantage.

Then 40-ish pitcher, Jack Daughtrey, came in to break the hearts of the Grays. He hurled gilt-edged relief ball in the waning innings that counted the most.

IN MANY WAYS, the Eastern League defies belief.

Just, for example, imagine the town of Atlantic — with a total population of 850-900 men, women and children — supporting two (2!) ball clubs and two (2!) baseball parks.

David Mann manages the Atlantic A's and Johnny Willis skips the Atlantic Pirates. The A's play on the Elementary School diamond and the Pirates make their home in Roland Park. A total of 33 dedicated ball players man the two rosters.

This unique community of just 650 Salter Pathers boasts both a Seashore entry and an Eastern team in the finest ball park in the county.

And bursting at the seams communities like San Francisco and Oakland, Calif., protest they can't support two teams in that inundated bay area.

BUT WAIT! THAT'S just one-half the Eastern League, housed in Atlantic, Salter Path and Smyrna and environs.

What about the Cedar Island Seas, the Bettie Bears, the Marshallberg Eagles and the Beaufort Birds? Neil Daniels of the Seas, Donald Willis of the Bears, William Lewis of the Eagles and L. D. Springle Jr. of the Beaufort Birds manage these feisty contenders and they concede nothing to the venerable Grays.

No wonder it takes a school principal, Elmo Gaskill of Atlantic Elementary, to keep peace among such furiously friendly rivals.

WHAT MAKES THIS whole situation so much the more remarkable hinges on the still supreme interest in the Seashore League.

All the cracker-barrel sages agree that this should be the Seashore's finest season, when it comes to the calibre of baseball. More than one pro scout has already expressed his interest in following the league's schedule.

WHO KNOWS WHAT the scouts are looking for today? I was told last year that the league's home-run king, Don Zagorski, "was pretty old at age 22."

I do know that Lefty Dallas Wayne Arthur of the Eastern Blues looks like a sharper pitcher this season than when the New York Mets signed him at mid-season of 1975. The Coastal Greys' right-hand mound ace, Mike Dudley, also seems well worth a look.

So we shall see what we shall see.