

WASHINGTON D.C. - Congressman John W. Olver announced that the U.S. House of Representatives passed House Resolution 1050, recognizing Pittsfield, Massachusetts as being home to the earliest known reference to the word "baseball" in the United States as well as being the birthplace of college baseball.

"Towns and communities have competed over the years to establish claims to various milestones in the early days of the game. This resolution cements Pittsfield's place in baseball's timeline," Congressman John Olver said. "Baseball has been a part of Pittsfield's history since the very beginning. Less than 40 years after Pittsfield was settled, the town passed the baseball bylaw. This resolution recognizes that the city and the sport have grown together over time, and that Pittsfield plays a very important role in American history as an early home of our Nation's past time."

"Today is a great day for the City of Pittsfield. Through the hard work of Congressman Olver, the City of Pittsfield has been recognized for its rich baseball heritage, proud to be known as 'Baseball's Garden of Eden', and proud to be acknowledged as the birthplace of collegiate baseball," said Mayor James M. Ruberto.

The city of Pittsfield was settled in 1752, and incorporated in 1761. In 1791, the Town of Pittsfield passed a bylaw during a town meeting that prohibits playing baseball within 80 yards of the town's new Meeting House "for the preservation of the windows." The meeting house building, located at 27 East Street, was designed by the renowned architect Charles Bulfinch in 1789 and completed in 1793. It currently serves as the Congregational Church. In 2004, noted historian John Thorn discovered these documents in Pittsfield's archives.

Congressman John Olver joked, "Even back in 1791, children were already breaking windows playing America's favorite pastime."

On July 1, 1859, the city hosted one of the nation's oldest collegiate rivalries, Williams College vs. Amherst College in the first inter-collegiate baseball game to be played in the nation. The game was played under the old "Massachusetts" rules, no gloves were used, the ball was pitched underhand, only one out was necessary, and a foul ball, if uncaught, was considered a hit. Amherst won the game over Williams College in 26 innings, 73-32.

The resolution was introduced with 26 original co-sponsors, including the other nine members of the Massachusetts delegation and graduates of Amherst and Williams Colleges. At some point in the future, Congressman John Olver will present the resolution to the City of Pittsfield.

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