

# This Week in Saratoga County History

## Mechanicville's "Field of Dreams"

Submitted by Sandy McBride August 27, 2025

*Sandy McBride is a native of Mechanicville. Writing has always been her passion, and she has won numerous awards for her poetry. For the past 17 years, she has written feature stories for The Express weekly newspaper. She has published four books of feature stories and two poetry collections, and a children's historical novel on the Battles of Saratoga entitled "Finding Goliath and Fred".*



*The bat at the Field of Dreams*

I love the movie *Field of Dreams*. I especially love the part where the spirits walk out of the cornfield to join in the baseball game. To me, it showed spirits in a whole new light. So, when Mike Sullivan tipped me off that in our own Hudson View Cemetery we might have had some spirited baseball going on some years back, I thought I'd check it out.

Mike is an avid historian, particularly interested in military history as well as local history. When, on one of his visits to Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth's grave, Mike spotted a baseball bat and helmet hanging from a massive maple tree, he was, of course, intrigued.

The message on the black bat reads "This bat is for all the great baseball games played here . . . 1982, 1983, 1984 . . . and the kids that played it". Baseball games played here? In a cemetery?

Hudson View is a lovely old cemetery, with graves dating back at least to 1830. It sits on rolling ground at the crest of a hill overlooking the city, 76 acres of knolls and woods and wide expanses

of green grass. There are old family plots, some with soaring monuments marking the resting places of once-prominent figures in the city's history. There are neat rows of more recent gravesites. There are soldiers' graves, babies' graves, clustered graves of whole families, and often single and seemingly lonely graves. More than 6,000 folks have been buried here in Hudson View.

If you walk along the eastern side of the cemetery, along the top of the hill, you'll come to the Old Section. A tall granite spire topped by a brass eagle and surrounded by a wrought iron fence marks the grave of Colonel Ellsworth, who was a dear friend of President Abraham Lincoln. The colonel was the first Union officer to die in the War Between the States.

Reared here in Mechanicville, Elmer was a boy who played at being a soldier, who wanted desperately to be a soldier. He dreamed, played, learned and worked on the streets of our town and probably in the fields that surrounded this little village at the time. One might wonder, as baseball was invented around the time he was born, reportedly by a man from our neighboring community of Ballston Spa, if Elmer ever gathered his buddies, a bat and a ball, and went to the top of the hill overlooking the canal and the railroad to play a game of pickup baseball.

The Ellsworth monument sits back in the quiet far reaches of Hudson View, and overlooks a small open field, a yet-to-be-used part of the cemetery. The field is a natural bowl amid the rolling knolls and is ringed with rows of granite and marble headstones. It was to this field, a "field of dreams", so to speak, that these very-much-alive boys of summer came to play back in the early 1980s.

Caretaker Jim Doty, who was the caretaker back then, too, saw no harm in it, he says. They weren't tipping tombstones; they weren't desecrating graves. He says they were always respectful and considerate and picked up after themselves. They weren't bothering a living soul. They were just indulging in the great American pastime, down there in a quiet, lonely field in the back part of the cemetery.

It was an era when Steve Carlton was baseball's finest, when the St. Louis Cardinals, Baltimore Orioles and Detroit Tigers were World Series champs, when George Brett used too much pine tar on his bat. Michael Jackson's "Thriller" was the album of choice, but there was no such thing as an iPod. Donkey Kong and PacMan were lighting up the screens at the video arcades. Few homes had computers, Game Boys didn't exist, and not one kid owned a cell phone. But there was baseball.

Inscribed on the Louisville Slugger, which hangs to this day on the tree, in neatly painted silver letters are the names of 13 neighborhood boys from down the hill . . . boys now grown to men. These boys dreamed, played, learned and worked here in the streets of our town. Most of them graduated from well-known colleges and universities. Some have remained here and have become respected and productive members of the community. Some have careers and families in other places. One became a professional athlete, and one is himself now buried here in the cemetery where he used to thrill to the crack of the bat.

Today, as always in the early days of autumn, the baseball playoffs are the talk of the sports world, and fans everywhere are eagerly anticipating the upcoming World Series. Some things never change.

But I like to think that back then, in the carefree summer and early autumn days of the mid-1980s, the spirit of young Colonel Ellsworth enjoyed watching those boys play baseball. I like to think that he and all the other spirits who rest here in the peace and quiet of Hudson View became baseball fans for just a few brief years, treated to the greatest game there is -- kids playing ball just for the love of the game.

If you would like to see the Field of Dreams, and learn more about Mechanicville's history, the Saratoga County History Center is sponsoring a tour of Hudson View Cemetery on Wednesday, September 17. For more information and to register, please visit their website [brooksidemuseum.org](http://brooksidemuseum.org)

