

Tales From Along the Trail...

“Take Me Out to the Ball Game” Kent’s Historic Field of Dreams

with Naturalist
Cathy Ricks

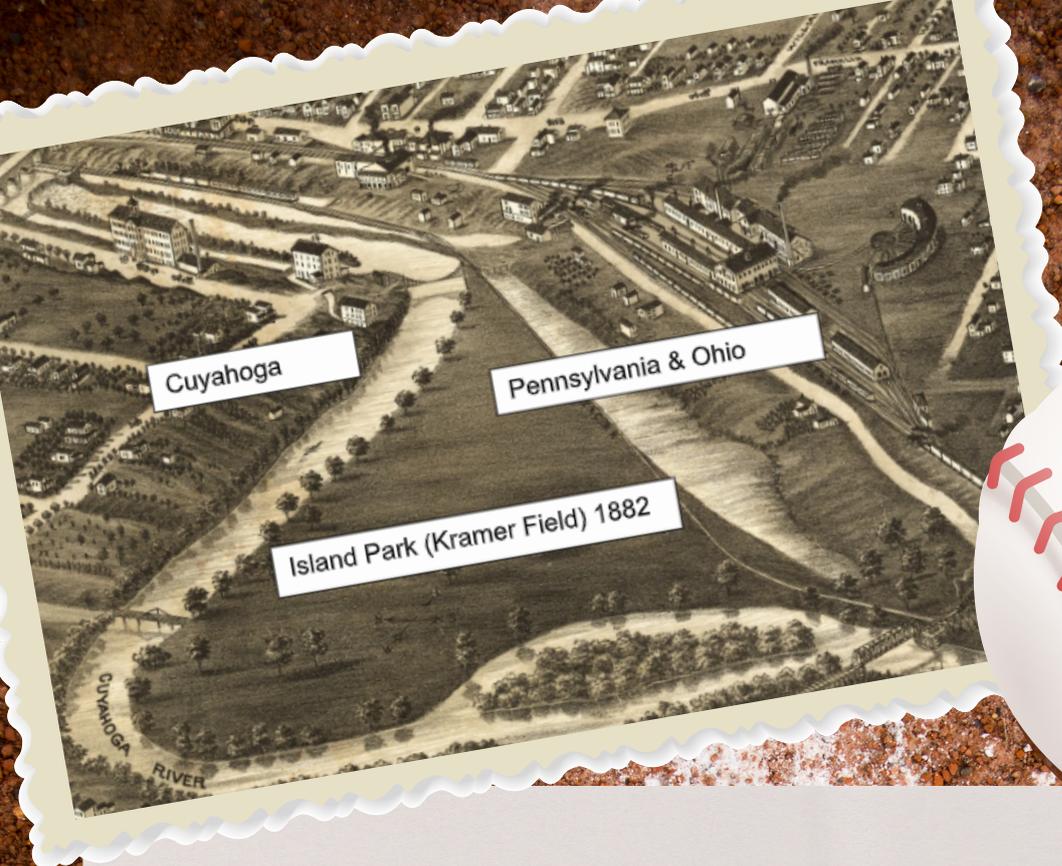
As you walk down the Hike and Bike Trail, take a turn into history across Redmond Bridge. Step on to Kramer Field, where Kent’s historic baseball legends started playing 154 years ago.

The Island of Kent baseball team played in the Portage County Fair tournament in 1867 for the prize of a silver ball and a rosewood bat. The newly formed village of Kent had its own home team to cheer for. The Star of Ravenna took home the prize that year, but the Islanders went on to defeat the Streetsboro Buckeyes for the 1868 Portage County championship.

Island Park (Kramer Field) was surrounded by the Cuyahoga River and once bustling Pennsylvania and Ohio canal. The canal was abandoned with the coming of the railroads. You can visit the lock and dam in Heritage Park and see remnants of the canal bed along the Hike and Bike path.



Top row: John Paxton, secretary; Paddy Livingston, C; Bill Ganss, C; Claude Davis, treasurer;
Jack Bracken, P; Dan Potts, P; Frank Maskrey, business manager Middle row: Bill Bailey, 2B; Elmer France, manager/1B;
Ern. Denning, captain/SS; Bob Spade, P/CF Bottom row: Joe Denning, LF; Harry Hunt, RF; Jim (Scrappy) Stevens, 3B



The powerhouse Nebraska Indians baseball team played here on July 2nd and 3rd in 1900, splitting with the Kent team and drawing enthusiastic crowds. Admission to the Indians/Kent game was 25 cents, with grandstand seating 5 cents for gents and free for the ladies. Read Roger Di Paolo's exciting story of the game "The Day the Indians played in Kent" from his book *Rooted in Kent*.

Kent Parks and Recreation's home for youth and adult softball and baseball is at Kramer Field complex, where the sound of "play ball" and the crack of the bat signals a new generation discovering its own field of dreams each spring. This year one of our youth traveling teams has been named the Kent Islanders in honor of our historic team. To learn more about the Kent Islanders visit the Kramer Fields interpretive sign and take in a ball game while you are there.

The Major and Minor leagues came calling for Kent's semi pro hometown players. Livingston played for the Cleveland Blues and Naps (Indians), Reds, Philadelphia A's (KAN, OAK) and St Louis Cardinals; Bracken, Cleveland Blues (Indians); Bailey, NY Highlanders (Yankees); Spade, Reds, St Louis Browns (Orioles). The professional 1905 Kent Kings of the Ohio-Pennsylvania League was managed by Denning.

Baseball aside, I would like to recognize Nancy Pizzino, my boss for the last nineteen years at Kent Parks and Recreation who will be leaving this month. She is a person of incredible energy, organization, humor and dedication who will soon be walking along the trails in Florida... finding new tales on her new trails. Bon Voyage!

Happy Tales, everyone! - Cathy Ricks