

PALACES OF THE FANS

The Newsletter of the SABR Ballparks Committee
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WELCOME: After a long hiatus due to the illness and passing of newsletter editor Jim Gordon, a new issue of the Palaces of the Fans is presented. The new Ballparks Committee newsletter editor is Richard Smiley who can be reached via email at smileyr@georgetown.edu.

Ballpark Committee members please provide comments on what you have seen and want to see in the newsletter. Please forward on to Richard articles or links to articles on ballparks for inclusion in future newsletters as well as short research articles. Longer research articles can be accommodated via links on the SABR web site. We hope to get the newsletter published on a more frequent basis and are planning for the next issue to come out in February of 2015.

JIM GORDON: We were saddened this summer by news of the death of Ballparks Committee co-chair Jim Gordon, who passed on July 25 at age 72. Jim became co-chair of the Ballparks Committee in 2011 and revived the committee's dormant newsletter, producing two issues under the new banner Palaces of the Fans. Regrettably, illness prevented him from further publishing. James David Gordon is survived by his wife of almost 49 years Sheila, his son David, his daughter Judy Posner, and by four grandchildren.

Like the Dodgers, Jim was born in Brooklyn and moved to Southern California. He earned his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in engineering from UCLA before embarking on a 35-year career as an aerospace engineer and satellite designer.

A devoted fan of his alma mater's Bruins sports teams, Dr. Gordon would later chair the UCLA Athletics Hall of Fame selection committee. He was a passionate, lifelong fan of the Dodgers as well. Jim traveled extensively and visited almost all big-league ballparks that were in use during his lifetime. His early trips were made while accompanying his father. Then he made ballpark pilgrimages with his son. His ballpark visits during the later years of his life were made with his beloved Sheila.

After growing up in West LA and attending University High School, Jim and Sheila made their home in the Ladera Heights neighborhood in Los Angeles for 40 years. In addition to attending many MLB games, Jim often went to minor-league games and to spring training—always keeping score, of course.

An avid collector, Jim acquired an extensive collection of UCLA memorabilia along with his baseball, stamp, and coin collections. One of his special interests was collecting postcards, photos, and other images of ballparks.

Jim Gordon became a SABR member in 2002, attending his first SABR convention in Denver in 2003. He represented the best of SABR: friendly and knowledgeable and always ready to share his expertise. Jim fought a long and brave fight against metastatic colon cancer with the grace and spirit that he exhibited in the rest of his life. Even while gravely ill, he continued to volunteer his time as co-chair of the Ballparks Committee, which he served until his death.

Dr. Gordon's obituary was published in the Los Angeles Times on July 27 and 28, 2014. You can read it here: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/latimes/obituary.aspx?n=james-david-gordon-jim&pid=171873185>

NEW COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP: At SABR 44 in Houston, the new structure of the Ballparks Committee leadership was announced. Changes approved by the SABR board of directors shortly before the convention included adding noted ballpark experts Kevin Johnson as committee co-chair and Ron Selter as committee vice-chair. Stan Meradith, former committee co-chair, will continue to serve as a valuable committee asset by virtue of his unique status as a working ballpark architect.

COMMITTEE MEETING AT ANNUAL CONVENTION: Other items of interest from the Ballparks Committee Meeting at the SABR 44 included:

1. Green Cathedrals Update: The 4th edition of *Green Cathedrals* was published in 2006. The 5th edition will be only published electronically and is about two years away from completion. An effort will be made to include all ballparks where an *official* Negro League game was played. To date, information has been collected on 240 such parks. Data is still being gathered on about 80 more.
2. In addition to the Minor League Ballparks Database discussed below, Kevin Johnson and Paul Healy are working on a Negro Leagues Parks Database. To date, about 400 parks have been identified and further contributions are welcomed.
3. As part of his thesis, Brandon Grilic (bgrilic@uoregon.edu) has put together a database identifying information about historical markers/ plaques/relics ... associated with all major league non-Sunday ballparks from 1876 to the present day. Contact Brandon for more information.

BALLPARKS DATABASE PROJECT CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: The Ballparks Committee is looking for volunteers to help with an important and imposing project: compiling a comprehensive database on all Minor League Ballparks throughout baseball history.

Help is needed in three key areas in this initial stage:

1. Identifying and acquiring source material, especially older editions of the annual Baseball Blue Book;
2. Entering minor-league ballpark data (name, location, capacity, and dimensions) into Excel templates that we would provide with basic data like year, team, league; and
3. Coordinating the volunteers that are doing the ballpark data entry.

Once we have compiled data for as many ballparks as we can, we will need volunteers to assist in resolving the inevitable discrepancies in the source data. Then we will need volunteers to do further research in books (e.g., league and minor-league team histories) and in contemporary newspapers and other periodicals.

Because of the magnitude of the project, volunteers will need to work systematically with specific source data, year-by-year across all teams in this phase. We cannot handle requests to work only with a particular team, city, or league at this point.

This will be the Ballparks Committee's major project for the next several years, assuming there is enough interest to undertake it. Please contact committee co-chair Gary Gillette if you are interested in volunteering.

RESEARCH REQUEST: ANDREW LANG

Siena College student Andrew Lang has written to request help with his Senior Thesis project. If you can help him, please contact him directly.

Topic: Undergraduate Thesis on Ebbets Field, O'Malley's Proposed Brooklyn Replacement, and changing ideas of the Urban Ballpark in the 1950s

I am a student at Siena College in Albany, NY, working on my Senior Honors Thesis in History and American Studies, which will be completed in May 2015. My topic is a study of how the changing nature and ideas of ballparks from the late 1940s to the early 1960s reflected larger changes in how ballparks as institutions related to urban communities, and what changes this came to reflect in the city in general. Specifically, I am looking at the attempts by Walter O'Malley from the late 1940s to the late 1950s to replace Ebbets Field with a modern Brooklyn Stadium, and the various dynamics of the changing city this intersected with. Essentially, my premise is that though the model stadium proposed by O'Malley was never built, and the generation of modern structures really did not come into being until the 1960s, the developing context and ideological underpinnings that paved the way for such a stadium were occurring in the 1950s. O'Malley's stadium was one of the earliest to explore this new area, and I thus wish to explore it as embodying the shift away from the ballpark to the modern stadium.

If anyone has any information, scholarship, or sources pertaining to the proposed Brooklyn Stadium, this would be very helpful. Also, if anyone has any insight regarding, or can point me in the direction of scholarship and histories focusing on the connection of ballparks and stadiums to their urban surroundings, this would be very helpful.

Any information on access to these sources (in digital format or on microfilm) would also be helpful. I am on a budget and can only travel as far as New York City, but I can only go down there again probably two more times for the rest of my research, so if anyone knows of means of accessing the following in digital formats or microfilm, I would appreciate it.

1. Robert Wagner Papers
2. Robert Moses Papers
3. New York Daily News (from 1947 to 1959)
4. New York World Telegram and Sun (from 1947 to 1959)
5. Sport Magazine
6. Sports Illustrated (a number of articles I have searched for in the Sports Illustrated online vault I have been unable to locate)
7. Norman Bel Geddes Papers; Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas (pertaining to his 1952 design for a new Dodger Stadium—filed under “Job 577” in collections)

Thank you,

Andrew Lang

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ROSENBLATT MEMORIES: Have you ever attended an event at Rosenblatt Stadium? If so and you would like to share your memory of this experience, please fill out the form at rosenblattmemories.wordpress.com and describe your experience and thoughts about the “Stadium on the Hill.” Memories are being collected for an upcoming publication from McFarland Press titled *Rosenblatt Stadium: College Baseball’s Center Stage 1950-2010*, edited by Bill Lamberty, Kevin Warneke, Gary Rosenberg and Libby Krecek. This book will join McFarland’s staple of volumes that focus on stadiums that are no more. Please consider submitting a memory to be included in this publication. You must check the box to indicate that your memory may be used by the publishers of this volume. Thank you so much for your participation!

SMOKIE LINKS:

The Cleveland Indians have announced that a number of changes are in store for Progressive Field in 2015. A summary of the changes can be found here:

<http://www.letsgotribe.com/2014/8/7/5978977/progressive-field-changes-2015-larry-doby-statue>

The restoration of baseball to a former Cleveland ballpark site and be found here in the wonderful photos of the League Park reopening ceremony:

http://www.cleveland.com/tribe/index.ssf/2014/08/league_park_reopens_to_a_histo.html#incart_related_stories

HISTORICAL PARKS:

Historical marker installed at Detroit's Hamtramck Stadium as 2014 SABR Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference begins

A former home of baseball's Negro Leagues was recognized with a historical marker as SABR's 17th annual Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference kicked off Thursday, August 14, 2014, in Detroit, Michigan.



A ceremony took place Thursday afternoon in honor of the installation of the marker at Hamtramck Stadium, where the original Detroit Stars, charter members of the first Negro National League, played. The Stars moved to Hamtramck Stadium in 1930, playing home games there until the club and the league folded at the end of the 1931 season.

The Negro East-West League Detroit Wolves also played in Hamtramck Stadium in 1932, along with the Homestead Grays after the Wolves and Grays were merged by their common owner, Cum Posey.

In 1933 a new Detroit Stars club in the second Negro National League played in Hamtramck Stadium, but this team lasted only one year. In 1937, another Stars club debuted along with the Negro American League but it, too, survived for only one summer.

Many high-level African-American semi-pro clubs played at Hamtramck Stadium in the 1930s, along with white semi-pro clubs, Hamtramck public high school baseball and football teams, and Catholic high school baseball teams. After extensive renovations in 1941, the Stadium continued to be used for youth baseball for another half-century.

The nonprofit group Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium has been raising money to repair the grandstand and field, estimated to cost \$250,000 to \$600,000. (Ballparks Committee co-chair Gary Gillette is the founder and president of FHHS.)

The stadium in the Detroit enclave of Hamtramck was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012, and the Michigan Historical Commission approved a historical marker for the site earlier this year.

The grandstand and field date to 1930 and are located in Veterans Memorial Park on the south side of Hamtramck.





RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Ron Selter has published numerous articles on the changing configurations of ballparks across time and their impact on home run totals. His contributions can be found in the McFarland series on historical ballparks and in his book *Ballparks of the Deadball Era: A Comprehensive Study of Their Dimensions, Configurations and Effects on Batting, 1901–1919* which won the SABR Deadball Era Committee’s Larry Ritter Award. We are honored to present here his work on Polo Grounds IV.

Polo Grounds IV 1890-1911

By Ron Selter

There were five major league ballparks called the Polo Grounds in New York City starting in 1883 and ending in 1963. The New York NL team in the 19th Century was first called the Gothams and then the Giants starting with the 1884 season. In addition there was a New York entry in the 1890 Players League that was also called the New York Giants. That meant there were two ML teams called the New York Giants in New York that season. The NL used four New York City ballparks in the 19th Century: (1, 2) Polo Grounds I and II (same site with two different diamonds) 1883-88, (3) Polo Grounds III 1889-90, and (4) Polo Grounds IV 1891-1910. Polo Grounds I and II were located in mid-town Manhattan, while Polo Grounds III and IV were at the far north end of Manhattan very close to the Harlem River. Note that until 1898, Brooklyn was a separate city and was not part of New York City. When Brooklyn was absorbed into New York, Brooklyn became one of five boroughs of New York City.

Before the 1890 season, the short-lived Players League built a new ballpark (initially called Brotherhood Park for the New York Player's League franchise (also called the Giants) on the parcel of land immediately north of and adjacent to Manhattan Field. (Polo Grounds III). Later the ballpark's name was changed to the Polo Grounds when the NL Giants moved in. The Polo Grounds IV ballpark was located at Eighth Ave, West 159th St, Bridge Park, and West 157th St. This location was in the northern part of Coogan's Hollow below Coogan's Bluff and was adjacent to and just north of the Polo Grounds III ballpark. The field of Polo Grounds IV had severe drainage problems, perhaps related to the location having been shown on an 1874 map as underneath the Hudson River! The park site had been filled in with dirt in the late 1870s. Brotherhood Park, when it opened in April 1890 was, by the standards of the day, of an almost normal size and shape (the dimensions were: LF, 335, CF 400, RF 335).

The Players League New York team was also called the Giants and their ballpark was named Brotherhood Park, as the organizer of the Players League was the Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players. The Players League New York Giants that played at Brotherhood Park proved to be far more popular than the NL Giants that played next door at Polo Grounds III. While the Players League was a success in New York City (the Player's League outdrew the NL in New York by better than 3 to 1) the league as a whole agreed to a treaty of sorts with the NL after the 1890 season and ended its operation.

After the end of the 1890 season, the NL New York Giants moved from Manhattan Field to their new home park that was located some 400 feet north to what had been called during the 1890 season-Brotherhood Park. With not even a trace of originality, the Giants renamed the ballpark the New Polo Grounds. This park (Polo Grounds IV-the New was soon dropped from the name) and the subsequent ballpark (Polo Grounds V) on this same site were the two ballparks most usually associated with the name Polo Grounds. One should note that on this site, contrary to the ballpark's name, polo was never played. Midway through the 1890 season, the ballpark had been modified and the foul line distances were substantially reduced (335 to 277 for LF and 335 to 258 for RF). As a result the ballpark acquired its later-to-be famous horseshoe configuration before it ever became the home of the NL New York Giants.

The ballpark, when it opened in 1890, had stands that consisted of (1) a double-deck wooden grandstand that extended from about third base to about first base. And (2) four sets of bleachers: one down the LF line, one down the RF line, one in fair LF and another in fair RF. There was a clubhouse in straight away LF. The scoreboard was located in RF near right-center. Later in the early 1890s, the RF bleachers were removed and were returned for the 1893 season. The Polo Grounds IV ballpark (after July 1, 1890) was characterized by two distinctive configuration features (1) the LF and RF stands near the foul lines were parallel to each other and each formed a 135 degree angle with their respective foul lines, and (2) much of the outfield "fence" consisted of ropes on three foot posts. This portion of the outfield fence that consisted of ropes-on-posts extended from the right end of the LF bleachers (in roughly straight-away LF) near the clubhouse around all of CF to nearly the RF foul line. The clubhouse in LF and the scoreboard in RF were both located behind the ropes. Behind the roped off area in CF, carriages were allowed to park, where the occupants of the carriages could watch the game. This curious situation in CF amounted to a bring-your-own-seat arrangement.

At the Polo Grounds IV ballpark, the foul line dimensions for the 1890's (starting July 1, 1890) are well known-277 in LF and 258 in RF. The dimensions in the 1890's for left-center, CF and right-center are more uncertain. These dimensions in 1901 are known and are confirmed by numerous ballpark photos from 1901-08. These dimensions, that were in place at a minimum by 1901 and most likely earlier, were left center 445, CF 500, and right center 450.

The home run data in the park's early years throws some light on what the likely dimensions in the 1890s were. During the 1893 season there were seven Over-The-Fence (OTF) home runs to right/left center and CF. In the 1894 season, there were two OTF home runs hit to CF. Again in the 1895 season, there were two OTF home runs hit to CF. In the next five seasons (1896-1900) there were no OTF home runs to CF. From this home run evidence, the author concluded that the left center, CF, and right center dimensions were markedly increased after the 1895 season. This was a simple feat to accomplish. All the

Giants had to do was move the outfield ropes-on-posts in left center, right center, and CF further back. The new dimensions were estimated to have been the same as in 1901-left center 445, CF 500, and right center 450. It is the author's conclusion that the purpose of the moving back of the ropes-on-posts fence in left center, CF, and right center was to reduce the number of balls hit over or under the ropes that led to a number of in-game disputes.

The effects, of these funny fences consisting of ropes-on-posts in combination with the then existing Blocked Ball Rule, were substantial and invited controversy. First, an explanation of the Blocked Ball Rule. This rule (Rule 36 from the 1902 Reach Guide) reads as follows: ⁽¹⁾

A Block is a batted or thrown ball that is touched stopped, or handled by any person not engaged in the game. Whenever a Block occurs, the umpire shall declare it and the base runners may run the bases without being put out until the ball is returned to and held by the pitcher standing in his position.

A few examples of incidents that occurred at the Polo Grounds in the 1890s involving the Blocked Ball Rule and the ropes-on-posts fence:

Game of 5-9-1893, a home run by George Haddock where a ball was hit over the ropes in RF and Haddock was awarded a HR on the basis of the Blocked Ball Rule.

Game of 7-19-1894, Duke Farrell of NY hit a ball that rolled under the ropes in RF and then behind the scoreboard for a Bounce home run.

Game of 8-18-1894, Bill Lange of the Chicago Colts hit a ball into the overflow crowd in RF. The ball was quickly returned to the field (probably with the help of a Giants fan) and Lange was out a home while trying for an Inside-the-Park-Home-Run.

Game of 8-20-1894, the Giants Mike Tiernan hit a ball to CF that went into the overflow crowd. The ball kicked back to the Colts center fielder (Bill Lange) and was returned to the infield. Tiernan was held at third with a triple as a result of some poor coaching as the ball had not yet been returned to the pitcher (as required by the rules).

Game of 8-30-1894, Eddie Burke of the Giants hit beyond the ropes in RF, but was held to a triple as the ball was quickly returned to the field.

Game of 6-21-1895, another ball hit by Eddie Burke to LF hit an on-field policeman and was ruled a Bounce home run.

Game of 8-19-1896, the visiting Chicago Colt's manager Cap Anson refused to accept a ground rule for that day's game that made hits over the ropes home runs. During the game, Mike Tiernan of the Giants hit a ball over the RF ropes into the overflow crowd. The ball was handled by an out-of-uniform Colt player in the crowd, who fumbled the ball in attempting to return it to the field. A Giants fan in the overflow crowd picked up the ball. The Colt player tussled with the fan and retrieved the ball and threw it to the Colt's right fielder and the ball was returned to the infield and Mike Tiernan was held to a triple.

Because of these and other incidents involving the ropes-on-posts fence and the Blocked Ball Rule, the Giants late in the 1896 season established a park ground rule that made all balls hit over the ropes home runs, while balls hit under the ropes could continue to be returned to play (subject to the Blocked Ball Rule). For the 1897 season, the Polo Grounds ground rule was modified to make all balls hit over or under the ropes home runs.

At the time of the Temple Cup played after the 1894 season, the grandstand had been extended to points halfway between first base/third base and the foul poles. Before the 1904 season, the wooden bleachers in the fair area in LF were torn down and rebuilt with no increase in capacity. At the same time the RF bleachers were extended further towards right center that resulted to an increase in the capacity of these bleachers from 4,000 to 6,000. At this time, another improvement made to the ballpark was the two-story clubhouse from Manhattan Field being disassembled and moved to Polo Grounds IV. This new clubhouse was located behind the ropes in right-center. By the 1905 season, the grandstand had been extended down the LF and RF lines about two-thirds of the distance to the foul poles. This expansion increased the capacity of the ballpark to 22,000. During 1908 season, the grandstand was extended in LF and RF to the foul poles and additional bleachers built in left-center, CF and right center. Capacity reached 26,000 by July 1908 and 28,500 by October

of that year. Before the 1910 season, the final expansion of the ballpark occurred when the double-deck wooden grandstand was extended into fair RF replacing a portion of the RF bleachers.

Polo Grounds IV, like all of the prior Polo Grounds ballparks, was built of wood. As Boy Scouts already knew, and baseball owners of that era were slow to learn-wooden structures burn. After only two games into the 1911 season, disaster struck early in the morning of April 14, 1911. A fire broke out which destroyed the entire wooden grandstand and a small portion of the wooden RF bleachers near the RF end of the grandstand. In addition to nearly all of the RF bleachers, all of the LF bleachers, all of the CF bleachers, and the clubhouse/office building survived. These last structures were separated by gaps from the burning grandstand. The Giants moved, in a manner of speaking, in with their neighbors-the AL Yankees and played the next three month of their 1911 NL schedule at nearby Hilltop Park. The Polo Grounds grandstand and the RF bleachers were rebuilt during the 1911 season in steel-and concrete becoming the Classic ballpark Polo Grounds V.

POLO GROUNDS IV New York NL: 1890-1911



Capacity Crowd at the Polo Grounds 1910

Photo No. 1: A panoramic photo of Polo Grounds IV in 1910. The RF foul line was not really curved as shown in this photo. Note the third base side of the grandstand ends just before the LF corner, while the first base side extends into fair RF. This photo is erroneously dated October 13, 1910 in the Library of Congress collection. However, the New York Giants did not play in the 1910 World Series (the Chicago Cubs won the NL pennant that year) and the last regular season game at the Polo Grounds was on October 11 that year. Photo originally from the Pictorial News Co. and is from the Panoramic photo collection (PAN 6a 29227) of the Library of Congress.

The Basis of Polo Grounds IV's Configurations and Dimensions:

When the ballpark opened in April 1890, it had rather conventional (for the 1890s) dimensions as shown below. In the middle of the 1890 season, substantial changes were made in the park's dimensions when the LF distance was reduced to 277 feet and the RF distance to 258 feet. During the remaining life of the ballpark (1890-1910) the configuration of the stands and playing field changed a number of times. From photos of the ballpark, it was determined that the wooden double-deck grandstand was extended at least twice. Based on home run research it is known that the fair area RF bleachers were in place during the 1890 season and the LF bleachers by the 1892 season. In 1904, the grandstand extended only a short ways past the infield. The fair area RF bleachers were expanded for the 1907 season⁽²⁾. During the 1908 season, both the grandstand and the outfield bleachers were expanded. By October 1908, the double-deck wooden grandstand now extended to the foul poles. Before the 1910 season, the portion of the RF bleachers adjacent to the RF corner were dismantled and replaced by an extension of the double-deck wooden grandstand into fair RF.

The dimensions of the playing field were based on three principal sources *Green Cathedrals*,

an 1893 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, and a 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map of the park ^(3, 4, 5). The dimensions for Polo Grounds IV were LF 277, CF 400, and RF 258 as of July 1890. These dimensions remained unchanged until 1896 when the ropes-on-posts portion of the outfield fence was moved back in left center, right center, and CF, The dead CF dimension became an awesome 500 feet. Game accounts and park photos were used to determine the extent of the ropes-on-posts CF fence and when they were removed in 1908 to permit the construction of more outfield bleachers ⁽⁶⁾.

At about the mid-point of the 1908 season, the building of additional sets of outfield bleachers reduced the CF dimension from 500 to 433. Photos of the ballpark were used to modify the single-segment CF fence shown on the 1909 Sanborn map, as the photos showed the actual alignment of the CF fence to have consisted of three segments. The middle CF segment was a diagonal that was perpendicular to the home plate-CF axis that was the same alignment as shown on the 1909 Sanborn. On both sides of this middle CF segment were segments that angled towards left center and right center respectively. The dimensions derived from the scale used on the Sanborn map were consistent with the 1909 listed dimensions in *Green Cathedrals*. This meant the deepest points in the ballpark (left and right center) were not as great as shown on the 1909 Sanborn. The 1909 Sanborn map was modified to produce a ballpark diagram for mid-season 1908-10. All subsequent ballpark dimensions for mid-season 1908-10 were derived from this diagram. From research into home runs hit at the Polo Grounds, it was learned there were home runs hit over or under the ropes in the outfield in every season from 1896 to mid-season 1908 ⁽⁶⁾.

Dimensions

Years	LF	SLF	LC	CF	RC	SRF	RF
April-June 1890	335	362	375	400	365	338	335
July 1890-95 277	362	375	400	365	338	258	
1896-June 1908	277	381	445	500	450	359	258
July 1908-10* 277	377	445	433	404	348	258	

* In addition the ballpark was used for two regular season games in 1911 before a fire destroyed the majority of the park on April 14, 1911.

Fence Heights

Years	LF	CF	RF
April-June 1890 0-35*	0-3**	0-6***	
July 1890-95	0-4	0-3**	0-6
1896-June 1908 0-25	0-3	0-15	
July 1908-10	10	8	8

* 35 foot high portion was the section nearest the foul pole; the rest of LF was 0-3

** The 0-3 Foot Heights were the outfield sections with the Ropes-on-Posts

*** The six foot high section was canvas on posts from the foul area RF bleachers into fair RF.

Average Outfield Distances

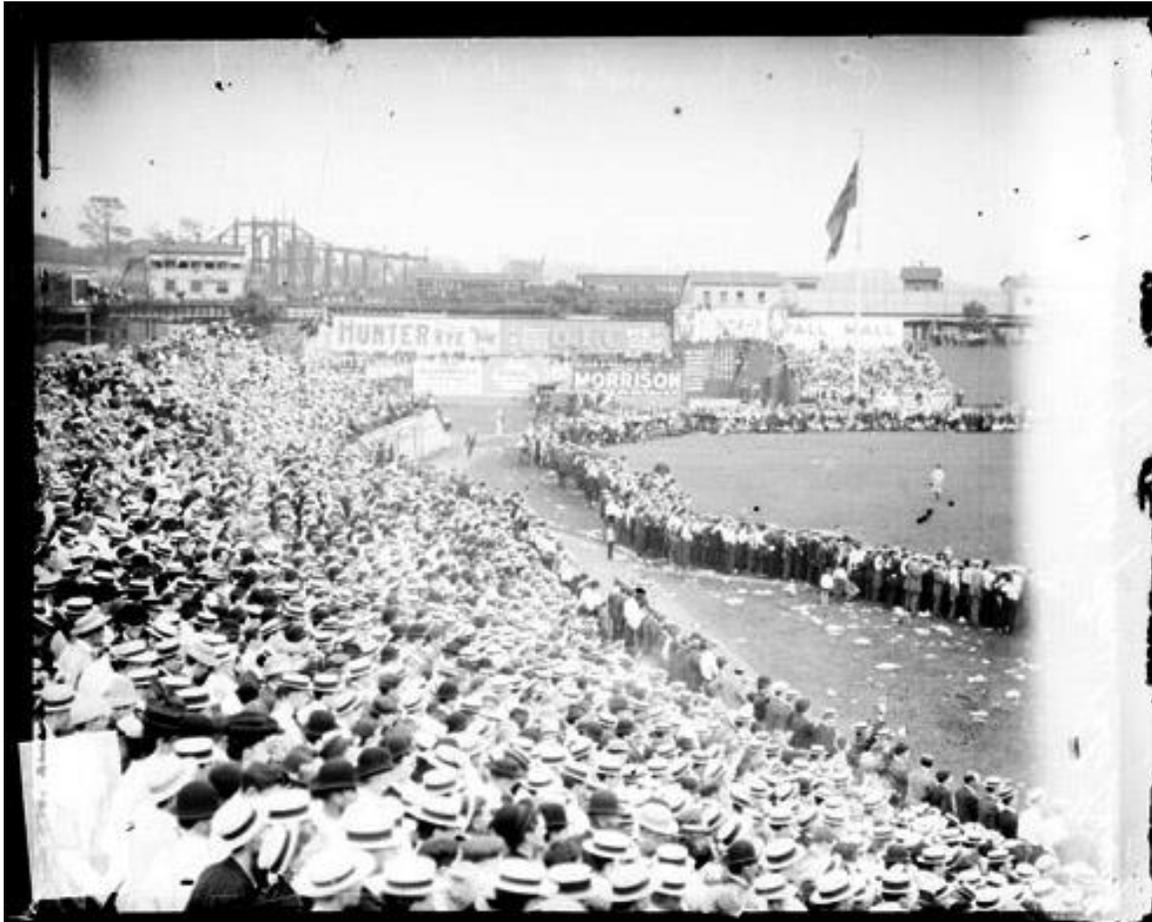
Years	LF	CF	RF	Composite
April-June 1890	360	385	344	363
July 1890-95	349	385	325	353
1896-June 1908	370	474	359	401
July 1908-10	370	434	356	387

CAPACITY

16,000 (1890), 18,000 (1894), 20,000 (1904), 22,000 (1905), 26,000 (July 1908), 28,500 (October 1908), 30,000 (1910)

Park Site Area: 7.4 acres

Deadball Era Run Factor (1901-10): 100 (Rank: NL 8)



Chicago Cubs vs. New York Giants at the Polo Grounds 1908

Photo No. 2: A photo of Polo Grounds IV in 1908 taken from about the LF end of the grandstand. The LF bleachers and the flagpole in CF are visible. Note (1) all the straw hats, and (2) the small section of CF bleachers. During the second half of the 1908 season, bleachers were added to fill the entirety of CF. Photo (SDN-054667) was originally from the Chicago Daily News, is now in the negatives collection of the Chicago Historical Society. The photo was taken from the Library of Congress.

The Impact of the Park's Configurations and Dimensions on Batting

In the park's early years (1890-95) Polo IV was a slightly below average park for runs scored (runs batting park factor was 98) but noticeably above average for home runs (park factor 126). Another surprising finding: despite the huge distances in left and right center (both more than 440 feet in 1895-1908), the Polo Grounds IV was a below-average park for triples as shown by the triples park factor (82-for 1901-08 and 89 for 1908-10). This can be explained because of the ballpark's unique configuration. Because the park had such short dimensions in both the LF and RF corners, teams played their corner outfielders more towards CF which

cut down on triples and IPHR. The scarcity of IPHR to LF and left-center at the Polo Grounds after 1900 (only 3.2 per season in 1901-10), is difficult to understand. The average LF distance was greater than the average RF distance at the park, yet IPHR were far more numerous to RF/right-center than to LF/left center. The data on home runs and batting park factors for Polo Grounds IV are shown below in five tables:

Home Runs by Type at Polo Grounds IV

Years	Total	OTF	Bounce	IP	Estimated
1890-92	137	46	6	91	20
1893-95	138	67	12	73	5
1896-1900	122	99	12	23	1
1901-E 1908	213	130	50	88	3
L 1908-10	97	37	3	60	0

E 1908: April-June

L 1908: July-October

Bounce: Bounce Home Runs

IP: Inside-the Park

OTF: Over-The-Fence (Includes Bounce)

OTF Home Runs by Field at Polo Grounds IV (Excluding Bounce)

Years	Total	LF	CF	RF	Unknown
1890-92	40	7	0	12	21
1893-95	55	12	7	30	6
1896-1900	87	29	0	55	3
1901-E 1908	80	12	0	65	3
L 1908-10	34	16	0	17	1

Inside-the-Park Home Runs by Field at Polo Grounds IV

Years	Total	LF	LC	CF	RC	RF	Unknown
1890-92	91	28	12	27	6	14	5
1893-95	70	16	10	24	5	13	2
1896-1900	23	5	1	8	0	9	0
1901-E 1908	88	10	5	41	5	26	1
L 1908-10	60	5	12	24	11	7	1

Batting Park Factors at Polo Grounds IV 1890-1900

	Runs	HRs
1890-1895	98	126
1896-1900	94	85

Batting Park Factors at Polo Grounds IV 1901-1910

Years	BA	OBP	SLUG	2B*	3B*	HR*	BB**
1901-08	101	101	102	102	82	172	96
1909-10	100	99	99	87	89	135	95

* Per AB

** Per total plate appearance (AB+BB+HP)

1 Bevis, op. cit., p. 194

2 Lowry, op. cit., p. 188-189

3 Lowry, op. cit., p. 191

4 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Map, New York City 1909, Map No. 68

5 *New York Times*, May 19, 1911

6 *New York Times*, May 31, 1917