

PALACES OF THE FANS

The Newsletter of the SABR Ballparks Committee
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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: 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 August of 2015.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP UPDATE: Gary Gillette has stepped down from his position as co-chair of the Ballparks Committee. We thank Gary for his years of service to this committee.

COMMITTEE MEETING AT ANNUAL CONVENTION: This year's SABR Convention (SABR 45) will be held in Chicago at the Palmer House Hilton. The Ballparks Committee Meeting is scheduled for 6:00-7:00 pm on Wednesday June 24 in the State Ballroom on the 4th Floor. The meeting will include a presentation by Stan Meradith on Ballpark Architecture.

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 Kevin Johnson if you are interested in volunteering.

RESEARCH REQUEST: THOMAS WOODMAN

Thomas Woodman has passed along the following request:

I am an architect and artist here in Northeast Ohio, and over the past 5 years I have been recreating the the Old Classic Major League Ballparks that were built between 1896 and 1923 in my computer in 3D and then posting the images of them on a web site specifically for selling limited edition prints. The web site is <http://legendaryballparks.com/>

Architectural Drawings and/ or blueprints of these ballparks is the best and most accurate way of recreating them. Photographs are the next best thing. I have exhausted ways of trying to track down both drawings and photographs by searching the internet. I have also visited The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum as well as libraries and Historical Museums in various cities in which these ballparks were erected.

I am contacting you to see if anyone on the Ballpark Committee would have any leads for accessing drawings and photographs of the following remaining ballparks so I can complete this project.

Polo Grounds in New York
Navin Field (Briggs Stadium/ Tiger Stadium) in Detroit
Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C.
Sportsman's Park in St. Louis
Weeghman Park (Wrigley Field) in Chicago

You can contact me via e-mail at tjwoodman@me.com or via phone at: 440 376-1224.

SMOKIE LINKS – MLB PARKS:

The new season has brought along significant changes to a number of MLB parks. The following links discuss some of those changes.

No park is undergoing more renovation than Chicago's Wrigley Field. Through a multi-year construction project that began late last season, the Cubs will be redoing every part of the historic structure. The "Wrigley Field 1060 Project" Homepage contains overviews of what is planned and renderings of what the park will look like when all of the work is complete:

<http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/chc/restore-wrigley/our-vision/overview/>
<http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/chc/restore-wrigley/our-vision/ballpark-renderings/>

Sketches of when changes will be made can be found on page 10 of the Sunday April 5, 2015 *Chicago Tribune* Sports Section (Section 3).

The New York Mets have tweaked the dimensions of Citi Field:

http://espn.go.com/new-york/mlb/story/_/id/11898412/new-york-mets-announce-tweaks-citi-field-dimensions

In San Diego, Petco Park is seeing some upgrades:

<http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Padres-Home-Stadium-Getting-Some-Upgrades-281840251.html>

Finally, Tampa Bay may be allowed to begin the search for a replacement to Tropicana Field:

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/st-petersburg-and-tampa-bay-rays-could-be-near-agreement-to-allow/2206014>

SMOKIE LINKS – HISTORICAL PARKS:

On the historical front, a number of items have been brought to my attention. Please pass along to me anything that is worth noting.

First off, here is a fine article on the comeback of Hamtramck Stadium, a historic Negro League park in Detroit, which features an extensive interview with Gary Gillette:

<http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/historic-hamtramck-stadium-home-of-the-negro-leagues-is-poised-for-comeback/Content?oid=2264705>

An editorial in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* discusses the fate of Cashman Field, home of the Las Vegas 51s:

<http://m.reviewjournal.com/opinion/editorial-rebuilding-cashman>

Can the Astrodome be repurposed?

<http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/houston-astrodome-indoor-park-plans-photos>
<http://news.yahoo.com/texas-looks-german-experience-astrodome-plans-173012989.html>

Brooklyn's Washington Park served as the backdrop for an 1880's board game:

<http://baseballresearcher.blogspot.com/2015/03/there-used-to-be-ballpark-right-here.html>

SMOKIE LINKS – THE FUTURE:

The Chicago Tribune recently offered this think piece on the “Ballpark of Tomorrow”:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/chi-ballpark-of-tomorrow-20150422-story.html>

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 Griffith Stadium.

GRIFFITH STADIUM Washington AL: 1911-1930 (Revised November 2014)

The third ballpark used by the AL in Washington was Griffith Stadium. The park was known as National Park IV until 1922 when the name Griffith Stadium was adopted. Prior to the building of Griffith Stadium in 1911, the park site had been occupied by two prior major league ballparks. The first ballpark on the site was Boundary Field used by the National League’s Washington franchise in the 1890s. The site was again used for a major league ballpark starting in 1904 when American League Park II was built. This site was in downtown Washington D.C. near the corner of Seventh St and Florida Ave Northwest ⁽¹⁾. In 1911, the ballpark site was bounded on the north by Howard University and on the west by another property (Maryland House) that fronted on Seventh St. On the southern boundary there was another property, then an alley, then U St (previously Spruce St). On the east, located behind the LF fence, Fifth St made up the final boundary of the park site.

The prior wooden ballpark on the site, American League Park II, came to an unfortunate end. The ballpark burned down on March 17, 1911. The fire destroyed most of the stands ⁽¹⁾. Surviving the fire were the first base bleachers and the outfield fences. The club rushed to build new and more fire-proof stands in time to open the 1911 season. The construction was directed by Osborn Engineering of Cleveland (the architect for several other Classic Deadball Era ballparks) and the work was performed by the George Fuller Construction Co. The steel-and-concrete double-deck grandstand had an estimated cost of \$125,000. By Opening Day (April 12, 1911), Griffith Stadium was only partially complete. At that time, the upper deck of the new grandstand and the grandstand roof were not finished, and the permanent seats in the concrete first base and third base pavilions were not yet installed. Instead, temporary wooden seats were used in the pavilions to start the season ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾. For the first 32 games of the 1911 season, the ballpark was a hybrid of some of the prior ballpark’s stands and some of the new newly constructed Griffith Stadium stands. Because by Opening Day a substantial portion of the new stands were not ready for use, the field was oddly oriented to permit use of the old surviving wooden first base bleachers left over from American League Park II. This orientation involved placing home plate between the planned permanent location of first base and the planned permanent location of home plate. As a result, home plate in its temporary location was rather close (about 40 feet away) from the center of the first base wing of the new grandstand. A result of this field alignment was that the LF line hit the new third base pavilion near the grandstand end of that pavilion and the RF line just cleared the end of the old first base bleachers that were thus, with this temporary configuration, just in foul territory. There was an in-play clubhouse in right-centerfield and a plan for a modest sized scoreboard (not installed until May) in RF. The total capacity of the ballpark on Opening day 1911 was about 11,000. The outfield fences of AL Park II that had survived the fire were retained and together with the temporary location of home plate made CF relatively shallow.

On July 25, 1911 Griffith Stadium, was officially opened with substantial fanfare. Home plate was moved to the northwest corner of the park site and centered in front of the new grandstand. In addition, the field was reoriented about 15 degrees towards RF. The outfield fences, left over from the prior ballpark, were removed in LF and CF and the new LF-CF boundary was the perimeter fence along Fifth St. As this realignment would have placed the RF bleachers, left over from American League Park II, in fair territory, they along with the on-field clubhouse in RF were removed. By July 25, when the official inauguration of the ballpark occurred, the upper deck of the new steel-and-concrete grandstand was still not ready for use. It would not be used until September 7, 1911. With the opening of the second deck of the grandstand in September, the ballpark's capacity reached about 16,500.

Before the 1912 season, a shallow set of wooden bleachers was built in LF in front of the 5th St fence. These bleachers were the last stands called for in the original plans of the ballpark, and brought the total capacity of the ballpark to about 18,000. The LF bleachers, with a seating capacity of about 1,500, extended from the LF line to beyond left-center field. In the alcove, situated to the right of the end of the LF bleachers, were the in-play bullpens. At the start of the 1912 season, when the planned construction of Griffith Stadium was finally complete, the park's stands consisted of: (1) a double-deck steel-and-concrete grandstand which ran from beyond first base to beyond third base, (2) two roofed concrete pavilions that ran from near the ends of the grandstand down the LF and RF lines, and (3) a shallow set of wooden bleachers in LF. Home plate and the grandstand were located in the northwest corner of the ballpark site with the LF line being canted a few degrees to the north of an east-west orientation.

The park site, the playing field, and the seating capacity of the ballpark were all expanded after the 1913 season. The Nationals (as the ball club was usually called in the Deadball Era) acquired properties (including a storage plant that was visible in photos) located behind the 1912-13 RF fence. These acquired properties were situated on the north side of the alley behind U St. The purchase of these parcels permitted the construction of a new but not higher wooden RF fence set further back from home plate. These changes resulted in a noticeable increase in the size of RF,

The next expansion of the ballpark occurred when a second deck was added to the third base pavilion after the 1921 season. An unusual feature of this second deck, added to the third base pavilion, was the greater slope of these stands and therefore higher roof than the adjacent double-deck grandstand. The second deck did not cover all of the first deck of the third base pavilion. The now double-decked pavilion was priced in the same manner as the original grandstand. About 50 feet of the length of the pavilion nearest to the LF corner was left as a single deck structure. The seats in this area remained priced at the lower pavilion prices. At the same time, to increase overall capacity and maintain about the same quantity of cheap seats, the single-deck first base pavilion was extended to the RF perimeter fence-adding about 1,000 seats. The area where the expansion of the first base pavilion occurred was available because the RF fence had been moved back after the 1913 season. At the same time (after the 1921 season) the Nationals removed the old shallow wooden LF bleacher because of limited demand for what were called "Sun Seats".

Another expansion of the ballpark occurred starting in September 1923. New deep (37 rows of seats) concrete bleachers that would run from the LF line to the CF fence were begun. The odd timing of this construction (construction was begun late in the 1923 regular season) was explained by the desire of the Nationals to increase capacity for the Army-Navy football game to be played later that fall. After the construction of the LF bleachers a new wooden RF fence was built extending from the CF end of the bleachers to the RF corner. This new fence was 26 feet high along its entire length and contained a noticeable kink in right center (see photo of Griffith Stadium in *Lost Ballparks* p. 83). The final expansion of the ballpark was after the 1924 season when the first base pavilion was double-decked. Again as was the case in the double-decking of the third base pavilion, the greater slope of the upper deck led to an odd looking higher roof line. At the same time as the second deck was added to the first base pavilion, CF was being reconfigured. Two building protection walls, 31 feet high, were built in CF after the 1924 season. One located at the CF end of the LF bleachers ran parallel to the LF foul line. The other building protection wall ran parallel to the RF line from the junction with the first

building protection wall at the CF end until intersecting the new concrete RF fence at about a 90 degree angle. The new RF wall did not have a kink in it and did not angle towards the CF end of the bleachers as did the 1924 wooden RF fence. Instead the new higher (31 feet) concrete RF wall ran on a new and straight alignment from the RF corner to the intersection with the RF end of the second building protection wall.

A minor adjustment in the playing field was made before the 1929 season when home plate was moved 3.5 feet towards CF. The purpose of this move of home plate was to allow the RF line to clear an existing intrusion into fair RF by the far corner of the field boxes located at the front of the first base pavilion.

The Basis of the Park's Configuration and Dimensions

Dimensional data for Griffith Stadium in its Early 1911 configuration were estimated from the 1911 Basit map, articles, photos about the ballpark, and game accounts in the *Washington Post* ⁽⁴⁾. With the temporary alignment of the field used -in the early part of the 1911 season, the LF line intersected the third base pavilion at more than 90 degrees. The first foul ball was not hit into this pavilion until a game in early May. For this to have been true, the large majority of the pavilion must have been in fair territory. From the photos of the ballpark and the Basit map, it was clear that the RF foul line must have also intersected the RF fence at more than 90 degrees. Because of the limited time (about three weeks) between the fire that destroyed the prior ballpark, American League II, and the 1911 Opening Day, it was necessary to retain the old LF-CF fence from the prior ballpark. This fence was located 90 feet in front of and was parallel to the perimeter fence on the west side of 5th St. This temporary configuration (referred to as the Early 1911 Configuration) made CF relatively shallow.

The basis for the Late 1911 configuration of Griffith Stadium was a 1911 Basit map (published by the G. W. Basit Map Co.) of the park and the various articles about the ballpark in the *Washington Post* ⁽⁴⁾. This map showed the park's boundaries, and the location of the stands and perimeter fences. The realignment of the playing field in July 1911 resulted in a new alignment for the RF fence. The RF fence now ran in a straight line to the building protection wall in CF. This fence was situated about 10 feet in front of the park's property line in RF

The shallow set of wooden LF bleachers, built before the 1912 season ran from the LF foul line to a point in CF (at 39 degrees off the LF foul line). The perimeter CF fence along 5th St ran from the back right corner of the LF bleachers past dead CF to the sort of CF corner (located at 39 degrees off the RF foul line). At that point, there was a 95 degree angle as there were properties along the alley behind U St (on the southwest corner of the intersection of 5th St and the alley behind U St.) that were not then and were never later part of the ballpark site. The far distant portion of CF between the CF end of the LF bleachers and the CF corner was used for the bullpens.

The 1911 dimensional data from the 2006 edition of *Green Cathedrals* (LF 407, left-center 393, and CF 421) turned out to be incorrect values for either the Early 1911 Configuration or the Late 1911 Configuration ⁽⁵⁾. A clue to the park's actual RF dimension was found in the game account of a home run hit at Cleveland (July 27, 1912). This home run was hit by the National's Danny Moeller and was hit over the RF wall and screen at Cleveland's League Park IV. Describing the home run, the game account in the *Washington Post* noted that the RF distance at the Cleveland ballpark (290) was about the same distance at the foul line as at the Washington ballpark (Griffith Stadium) ⁽⁶⁾. Additional research established the actual RF dimension (282) was quite close to the estimated value of 280. The Griffith Stadium LF dimension was far more than RF-an incredible distance of 480 feet in late 1911 after the playing field was re-aligned and the interior fence from the prior ballpark removed.

The new 1912 RF fence ran at more than 90 degrees to the foul line from the RF corner for about 100 feet to about straight-away RF. At that point, the fence made a 90 degree turn to the left (towards the infield) and ran about 35 feet before making another 90 degree turn (this time to the right). The next section of the RF-CF fence was parallel to the alignment of the first section of the RF fence and ran all the way to the CF corner (this CF corner actually formed an angle of more than 90 degrees). A new, and modern for 1912, scoreboard was added above a portion of the RF fence. The

planned dimensions of this scoreboard were reported as 150 feet in width and 20 feet in height to be mounted on top of the 10 foot RF fence. However, photos of RF from the 1912 season show the scoreboard located in right center to have had a total height of about 20-24 feet.

The short fence in RF had been an item of discussion during the 1911 and 1912 seasons. In January 1912, an article in the *Washington Post* noted that a high screen had been promised on top of the RF fence ⁽⁷⁾. The January article in the *Post* stated that there were visiting batsmen to whom the short, low fence was a cinch. The screen, put in place sometime during the 1912 season, turned out to be a modest six feet in height and was mounted on top of the 10 foot RF fence. A game account early in the 1912 season noted a visitor's home run over the RF fence that would have been prevented if the screen had been in place ⁽⁸⁾. This meant that in May the screen in RF had not yet been added. In seeking to remedy the problem of the short RF fence, the ball club purchased two plots of land behind the RF fence. In January 1912, a small plot, located behind the existing RF corner, and that ran along Boehrer St, was purchased ⁽⁷⁾. In May 1913, the Washington club closed a deal to acquire an additional parcel-the storage plant behind the existing RF fence ⁽⁹⁾. In that same newspaper article, it was stated that one of the chief objections against the local grounds has been the fact that the RF fence had been so short. The new RF fence was not built until late in the 1913 season and was not used until the 1914 season ⁽¹⁰⁾. At the same time, a building permit was obtained to build a CF concrete wall at 5th St and the properties along the alley behind U St. This wall later became known as one of the building protection walls.

However, home run research in later seasons showed that the portion of the RF fence nearest the RF corner was actually not as high as the 1912-13 RF fence had been. During the 1917 season, and again late in the 1919 season there were accounts of home runs over the "low section of the RF wall" ⁽¹¹⁾ ⁽¹²⁾. Based on photos, the height of the lower section of the RF fence in 1914-23 was estimated to have been 11 feet.

Griffith Stadium at the start of the 1920 season had a capacity of some 19,000. The ballpark at this time was a far smaller than average major league ballpark-only Cubs Park/Wrigley Field in Chicago and Baker Bowl in Philadelphia had lower seating capacities ⁽¹³⁾. Before the 1921 season the RF-CF fence was revised. A new and higher section of the RF fence now ran from the junction on the right with the lower height section of the RF fence nearest the foul line. This new section of the RF fence included the scoreboard and was an estimated 26 feet in height. To provide additional seating capacity, the Nationals added a second deck to the third base pavilion after the 1921 season ⁽¹⁴⁾. The upper and lower decks of the double-decked portion of the pavilion now were classified as grandstand seating. This second deck did not cover the entirety of the third base pavilion. About 50 feet of the pavilion (the area near the LF corner) was left uncovered to provide lower cost seats for the more frugal fans. Also before the start of the 1922 season the old wooden bleachers in LF were removed ⁽¹⁵⁾. The next expansion of Griffith Stadium in late 1923 had more to do with increasing capacity for football than for baseball ⁽¹⁶⁾. The new concrete and very deep LF-CF bleachers, first used for baseball in 1924, provided good seating for football games (not-so-good for baseball. Also, before the 1924 season a new and higher RF fence (26 feet high) was built ⁽¹⁷⁾. This expansion increased in the ballpark's capacity from 19,000 to 28,500. Opening Day 1925 provided the fans their first view of the new higher RF wall and the new second deck on the first base pavilion ⁽¹⁸⁾. The new RF wall proved not to be an impossible barrier to home runs as it was only a few weeks before the first home run was hit over the 31 foot high wall (May 6, 1925) ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The following tables show the dimensions, fence heights and average outfield distances in the 1911-30 time periods for each configuration of Griffith Stadium:

Dimensions (Estimated from Park Diagrams)

Years	LF	SLF	LC	CF	RC	SRF	RF
Early 1911*	250**	329**	399	356	347	358	335
Late 1911*	480	438	430	459	385	318	282
1912-13	464	421	413	459	383	343	282
1914-20	464	421	413	459	388	374	329
1921	448	413	413	465	385	370	322
1922-23	465	429	429	465	385	370	322
1924	407	385	386	412	385	370	322
1925	407	385	386	412	420	375	322
1929-30	405	383	383	409	418	372	320

Backstop: 42 (Early 1911 Est.), 78 (Late 1911-1928), 81 (1929-30)

LF: Left Field at the foul pole

SLF: Straightaway Left Field (15 degrees off the foul line)

LC: Left Center (30 degrees off the foul line)

CF: Center Field (dead center field)

RC: Right Center (30 degrees off the foul line)

SRF: Straightaway Right Field (15 degrees off the foul line)

RF: Right Field at the foul pole

* Early 1911: Through 7-1-1911; Late 1911: 7-25-1911 to the end of the 1911 season

** Balls hit into the third base pavilion (the portion in fair LF) were ground rule doubles

*** Thru August 1923

Fences Heights (1911-19 Estimated From Photos; 1920-30 Newspaper Articles & Photos)

Years	LF	CF	RF
Early 1911	10	10-15	10
Late 1911	11	11-16	10
Early 1912	6	6-20	10-20
Late 1912-13	6	6-20	16-20
1914-20	6	6-20	11-20*
1921	6	6-20	11-20**
1922-23	11	11-20	11-20
1924	11	11-26	26
1925-30	11	11-31***	31

* The 20 foot height section ran from almost the CF corner to right-center; 11 foot section right-center to RF line

** The 20 foot height section ran from CF to within 60 feet of RF line; 11 foot section ran from there to the RF line

*** The 11 foot height was the CF portion of the front of the LF-CF bleachers; the rest of CF was 31 feet high

Average Outfield Distances

Years	LF	CF	RF
Early 1911	331**	364	354
Late 1911	445	442	325
1912-13	428	436	326
1914-20	428	436	367
1921	421	434	364
1922-23***	438	428	364

1924	389	404	364
1925-28	389	408	382
1929-30	386	406	380

** Balls hit into the third base pavilion (in fair LF) were ground rule doubles and not Bounce home runs
 *** Thru August 1923

Architect: Osborn Engineering

Capacity: 12,000 (April 1911 Est.), 10,500 (July 25, 1911), 16,500 (September 7, 1911-Est.), 18,000 (1912 Est.), 21,800 (1922), 28,500 (1924), 32,000 (1925)

Park Size-Composite Average Outfield Distance: 350 (Early 1911 Configuration), 404 (Late 1911 Configuration), 397 (1912-13), 410 (1914-20), 406 (1921), 410 (1922-23), 386 (1924), 393 (1925-28), 391 (1929-30)

Park Site Area: 6.1 acres (1911-13), 6.5 acres (1914-30)

Deadball Era Run Factor: 98 (Rank: AL 12 of 20)

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

The temporary configuration of Griffith Stadium was in use for the first part of the 1911 season during which the Nationals played 32 home games. In this configuration, the large majority of the third base pavilion was actually in fair territory and the distance down the LF line was only about 250 feet. Fair batted balls hit into the pavilion were ground-rule doubles and not home runs. To hit an Over-the-Fence (OTF) home run to LF a batter had to hit a ball completely over the pavilion-in 32 games there was only one such home run.

Overall Griffith Stadium in its first configurations (Early 1911) was an above average offensive park, but not in later configurations. For the rest of the 1911 season and for the 1912 and 1913 seasons the ballpark was a noticeably below average offensive park. The impact of the shift from the Early 1911 configuration, (average outfield distance 350) to the much larger Late 1911 configuration (average outfield distance 404) was substantial. The batting park factor for runs in the Early 1911 configuration was 121. In the Late 1911 configuration the batting park factor for runs dropped to 77. The batting average park factor dropped from 106 to 94, while the doubles park factor dropped 25 percent from 123 to 92 (See Batting Park Factor table below). The reason for the decline in the doubles park factor was most likely due to the third base pavilion now being in foul territory and thus there were no more ground-rule doubles for fair batted ball hit into the previously very close pavilion. The run park factor for the Late 1911 configuration appears to be an anomaly as the run factor for 1912-13 was a very average 101. As for home runs, in the 1912-13 seasons with only a small change in the park's average size vs. Late 1911 (the only configuration change was the addition of the shallow bleachers in LF) there were 63 home runs, of which 63% were Inside-the-Park-Home-Runs (IPHR).

The only three OTF home runs to LF or CF in the Deadball Era occurred in early 1911 with the temporary LF-CF fence. The only one to LF was a 1911 home run over the third base pavilion that then extended far into fair LF. The only two OTF home runs to CF occurred in the Early 1911 temporary configuration of the playing field that with a CF dimension of only 356. This close to average home run park factor was enhanced by the 18.3 per season IPHR in the park's first three years of usage. After the expansion of RF before the 1914 season, the park became spacious in all fields with average outfield distances greater than the typical AL ballpark. The 1914 expansion of RF had a major impact on home runs at the ballpark. Total home runs dropped from 31.7 per year to 7.5 per season. For the

1914-19 seasons, OTF home runs at the park became rare-about two per season, and all of these were over the RF fence. From 1914, Griffith Stadium became known as the least hitter-friendly AL ballpark for home runs. Unlike at many other ballparks in the second decade of the Deadball Era, the proportion of IPHR remained high-amounting to 62% of the total home runs hit in the ballpark's nine Deadball seasons. Consistent with the park's run factor for 1914-19 of 98, the batting average and on-base park factors were 98-99, and the slugging park factors were 93-95. With the larger area in RF starting in 1914, the ballpark had an increase in the triples park factor from 85 to 101.

When the Lively Ball Era began in 1920, Griffith Stadium was by far the biggest ballpark in the AL. The change from the Deadball to the Lively Ball Era had little effect on most of the batting park factors for Griffith Stadium. A comparison between 1914-19 and 1920-23 showed no change in the park factors for batting average or on-base-percentage (both remained constant at 99). Recall that there was virtually no change in the ballpark's dimensions between 1919 and 1920. The only significant change was in the baseball and the rules. The baseball of the Lively Era carried better and went further than the Deadball Era baseballs. A result in spacious Griffith Stadium was an increase in triples and a decrease in doubles-the triples park factor increased from 101 to 145. The likely explanation for the decrease in the doubles park factor (82 to 75) is that hits that in the Deadball Era used to be run down by the outfielders and held to two bases now went further and often ended up as triples.

The impact of the livelier baseball on home runs at Griffith Stadium was a mixed bag. The number of home runs per season increased by a goodly percentage (167%) but still remained for the 1920-23 seasons at the modest level of 20 home runs per year. The actual home run park factor for Griffith Stadium actually declined (40 to 32) as home runs increased even more at the other AL ballparks.

The construction of the very large LF bleachers late in the 1923 season led to a much smaller LF and CF. (the average LF distance went from 438 to 389 and CF from 434 to 404). This made Griffith a much more typical sized AL ballpark. The first player to hit a home run into the new LF bleachers was Al Simmons (game 1 on 6-28-1924). This was also the first time in the park's history since early 1911 of any OTF home run to LF. Batting park factors 1924-30 vs. 1920-23 changed only for extra base hits and walks. The park factors for the more generalized measures-of batting-batting average, on-base-percentage, and slugging-changed not at all. While home runs per season increased 24% (1924-30 vs. 1920-23), the park factor for home runs only reached a far-below-average value of 41. The impact on doubles and triples was as expected: a smaller ballpark increased the doubles park factor while reducing the triples park factor. One clear impact of the smaller LF and CF was to reduce the proportion of IPHRs which dropped from 63% to 28 %. While this was a large drop in the proportion of IPHR, Griffith Stadium from 1924 to 1930 had the highest proportion of IPHR of any major league ballpark.

Home run data for the park and batting park factors are shown below in four tables:

Home Runs by Type at Griffith Stadium

Years	Total	OTF	Bounce	IP
Early 1911	13	8	0	5
Late 1911	19	9	1	10
1912-13	63	23	1	40
1914-19	45	14	1	31
1920-23	80	30	3	50
1924-30	169	122	1	47

Bounce: Bounce Home Runs

IP: Inside-the-Park

OTF: Over-The-Fence (Includes Bounce)

OTF Home Runs by Field at Griffith Stadium (Excluding Bounce)

Years	Total	LF	CF	RF	Unknown
Early 1911	8	1	2	5	0
Late 1911	8	0	0	8	0
1912-13	22	0	0	22	0
1914-19	13	0	0	13	0
1920-23	27	0	4	23	0
1924-30	121	37	17	67	0

Inside-the-Park Home Runs by Field at Griffith Stadium

Years	Total	LF	LC	CF	RC	RF	Unknown
Early 1911	5	1	1	0	2	1	0
Late 1911	10	3	2	4	0	1	0
1912-13	40	12	3	21	4	0	0
1914-19	31	8	2	15	3	3	0
1920-23	50	23	6	20	0	1	0
1924-30	47	5	0	30	9	3	0

Batting Park Factors at Griffith Stadium

Years	BA	OBP	SLUG	2B*	3B*	HR*	BB**
Early 1911	106	104	109	126	114	126	102
Late 1911	94	95	96	92	106	118	93
1912-13	98	98	95	99	85	93	96
1914-19	99	99	95	82	101	40	97
1920-23	99	99	93	75	145	32	98
1924-30	99	98	96	95	130	41	93

* Per AB

** Per Total Plate Appearance (AB+BB+HP)

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- 1 *Washington Post*, March 18, 1911
 - 2 *Washington Post*, April 9, 1911
 - 3 *Washington Post*, April 13, 1911
 - 4 G. W. Baist Map Co., Washington 1911, Volume 3 Sheet 17
 - 5 Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals*, (Revised Edition) Reading MA, Addison Wesley 1992, p. 244
 - 6 *Washington Post*, July 28, 1912
 - 7 *Washington Post*, January 5, 1912
 - 8 *Washington Post*, "Noted of the Nationals", May 9, 1912
 - 9 *Washington Post*, May 31, 1913
 - 10 *Washington Post*, August 28, 1913

- 11 *Washington Post*, June 17, 1917
- 12 *Washington Post*, September 28, 1919
- 13 Ronald M Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era*, Jefferson NC, McFarland & Company
- 14 *Washington Star*, "Griffith to Enlarge Stands at Ball Park", November 20, 1921
- 15 *Washington Evening Star*, March 5, 1922
- 16 *Washington Post*, "Griffith Builds Stands For Football Games", August 22, 1923
- 17 *New York Times*, April 20, 1924
- 18 *Washington Post*, April 23, 1925
- 19 *Washington Post*, May 7, 1925



Griffith Stadium – 1920



Griffith Stadium – Memorial Day 1923

RESEARCH ARTICLE UPDATE:

In the last issue of *Palaces of The Fans* (November 2014) Ron Selter contributed an article entitled “Polo Grounds IV 1890-1911”. After publication Ron sent along the following update to the description of Photo Number 1:



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 double-deck grandstand ends just before the LF corner, while the first base side extends into fair RF. This photo is dated October 13, 1910 in the Library of Congress collection. This photo is not from a World Series game. The New York Giants did not play in the 1910 World Series (the Chicago Cubs won the NL pennant that year). The game on this date was one of the games in the post-season NY City Series between the Giants and Yankees. Photo originally from the Pictorial News Co. and is from the Panoramic photo collection (PAN 6a 29227) of the Library of Congress.