

SABR BALLPARKS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

May-June, 1990

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I CITY BASEBALL MAGIC REPORT Our committee's publication received two positive notes in the media lately. First, the New Yorker of May 21 had a long article by Roger Angell that mentioned our publication along with other like efforts (Tiger Stadium Fan Club for instance). Also, Bill Littlefield of National Public Radio's Morning Edition was heard in Boston (possibly on WBUR) extolling CBM and having some harsh words for those who taken baseball back a step with sterile stadia.

We now have a handful of copies left. The last batch was sold to a firm assisting with the new ballpark proposals in Denver. We will have a full financial report on the project and its sales at the convention. The original investors can then determine what they wish to do with their share of the funds.

II BALLPARKS PUZZLE by John Pastier. Answers? We'll leave that for the July-August edition. Good luck! *SEE back of pages 5 and 6.*

III NEW MEMBERS to the committee:

Jim Gumm  
Rt. 9 Hiden Forest Drive  
Cleveland, TN 37312

Interests: modern era parks, majors, Riverfront, SkyDome, Olympic & Royals Stadia; architectural interest; would like to see a "baseball only" park for Atlanta; suggests a "four color" magazine on today's ballparks.

Steve Wisendale  
PO Box 85  
Storrs, CT 06268

Interests: majors/minors, 1920-on; Balt/Chi/Bost/NYC cities of interest; architecture/photos-cards/finances & construction/politics

Welcome to the committee!

IV CONSTRUCTION OF YANKEE STADIUM, a paper written by Matthew Kachur (as reported in item XXVIII in the March/April issue), has been sent to the committee. As soon I read it, I'll pass along a report for our next newsletter.

V OLD BALLPARKS AND AMERICAN CULTURE, a slide talk given by committee member Dick Miller at the "Baseball and The American Culture" conference in Cooperstown, NY, on June 7. Dick will be among the members giving presentations at the SABR meeting in Cleveland.

VI 36,961 IN FENWAY PARK? That is what the box score said for this Sunday, June 10 game. The last time the Sox tried to put that many folks in the place, the local safety inspectors got quite upset. This should be a post WWII record for the park which now lists its capacity as 34,182 (that's one figure; I have seen several). Any thoughts from you capacity and attendance fans?

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- VII HISTORY OF FENWAY PARK, an ambitious project suggested by David Donaldson, 41 Lynmoor St., Milford, CT 06460. If you would like a copy of his tentative outline and plans, send me a SASE and I'll pass it along. Please contact him if you have suggestions. This is one park that needs a decent history.
- VIII HISTORY OF SHIBE PARK by committee member Bruce Kuklick has neared completion and should be published, perhaps next year. For a copy of a newspaper article (Reading PA Morning Call), send a SASE of 25¢.
- IX BALLPARKS FAN IN ENGLAND Christopher Schmidt of Sorby Hall, Endcliffe Vale Road, Sheffield S10 3ES, ENGLAND, wrote SABR recently to say that he has followed the game via Armed Forces Radio, video tapes, and USA Today. He asked for lists of all major and minor league parks. I sent him material from the committee files. If someone wants a far flung SABR pen pal, write away!
- X 1990 ANNIVERSARIES In the last newsletter we noted the upcoming 75th of the Braves Field opening. Gordon Thomas reminds us of the sadder 20th anniversaries of the demise of Shibe, Forbes Field, and Crosley Field.
- XI PUBLIC FINANCING OF STADIA, a USA TODAY editorial page report, appeared in the June 15 issue. A SASE for a copy.
- XII CONGRATULATIONS TO MIKE FRANK of the committee who received a very impressive profile in the Sports Collectors Digest of April 13. Our thanks to Mike for his recent donation of several good clippings.
- XIII BICYCLING TS ALL 26 MAJOR LEAGUE PARKS, a personal project of NYC school teacher Peter Nelson, was profiled on the CBS "This Morning" show on Wed., June 6. Peter was interviewed in the dark of the early morning outside of Dodger Stadium.
- XIV REVIEW OF CITY BASEBALL MAGIC by committee member John Pyros for Tampa area newspapers. Thanks John.
- XV BASEBALL HEIRLOOMS, a documentary on the four classic parks, was done by Bob Hercules of the Media Process Group in Chicago. He donated a copy of this tape to the committee we hope to show it in Cleveland. Can anyone living nearby the city get the proper equipment (tv and VCR) to the hotel, or maybe we can get the needed gear there. Hercules reports that the tape has been syndicated to tv stations this spring (anyone see it?) with home video sales for the summer.
- XVI LOW AND INSIDE, "the national publication looking at baseball from a different angle," recently contacted the committee and we traded materials. The publication is located in Minneapolis and the May-1990 issue featured some basic profiles on the AL Ballparks. I suspect that their bullpen profiles were taken from the recent Sports Illustrated piece. They hope to cover the AL & NL parks in several issues next year. For info, contact them at PO Box 290228, Minneapolis, MN 55429.

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XVII SPORTSPLEX IN BROOKLYN, so says a May 2 article in the NY Post. Citing the lack of major sports facilities in that borough, the piece notes that this project could have a 14,000-seat indoor arena and a 7,000-seat outdoor facility. A Coney Island site had been discussed.

XVIII ALSO IN BROOKLYN, two bars named the Brooklyn Dodger are being sued by the Los Angeles Dodgers. One is located at 7509 3rd Ave; the other at 360 Coney Island Ave. "The name belongs to Brooklyn" says the owner in the NY Times article of May 17, 1990.

XIX COUNCIL OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS will be held at the SABR annual meeting on Thursday, July 26, 8-10 pm. I will be representing our committee at this gathering chaired by SABR VP Ron Gabriel. He sent me a letter on April 29, asking for some info to plan the meeting. Among his questions:

- \* a list of problems the committee presently has or shortly anticipates.
- \* a brief description of a major project we would like to initiate during the next year.
- \* Any funding requirements we have with the above named project or other needs.

I believe that this could be a beneficial meeting that will address some of the questions about the relationship of SABR & its committees. If you have any thoughts, get them to me before Thursday, July 19.

XX COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING takes place on Friday morning, July 27, from 9-10 am at the convention hotel. We'll see you there! Bring your ideas and suggestions.

XXI THANKS TO ROSS BARTOW of the committee for his kind words regarding the newsletter and for his assistance to Charles Wilson and his request for financing ideas for an Ashville park (item XIV in the March-April issue). A SASE for a copy of his thoughts.

XXII MINOR LEAGUE ROADTRIP: A GUIDE TO AMERICA'S 170 MINOR LEAGUE TEAMS, by Steve Greenberg (150 pp, \$9.95, Stephen Greene Press). Has anyone seen this book? If so, how about a review for our next newsletter.

XXIII KEEPING THE CHEAP SEATS, Sport, June 90, for your reading interest:

### **Losing Money Makes Sense**

A BASEBALL TICKET IS STILL GOOD VALUE FOR THE common man. The price of low-end seats—bleachers, grandstand, and upper deck—hasn't yet begun to reflect the explosion in player salaries, let alone owners' revenues. Like the stacks of lawn furniture outside the Wal-Mart, cheap seats act as a loss leader. Franchises are willing to lose ground in one area if they can lure customers into the store. Big crowds bring two major benefits: they help the club's image and fuel concession sales.

The greatest ticket bargain in any major league ballpark is at Olympic Stadium in Montreal. There a bleacher seat costs just \$1 Canadian (about 85 cents U.S.). Except for a brief hike a few years ago, this old-fashioned price has endured since the Expos started in tiny Jarry Park in 1969.

The dollar ducat returned to Montreal in 1987, and club president Claude Brochu says it will remain at least through this season; in this hockey-mad city the always sedate Expos fans might need an extra

subsidy to watch a team ravaged by free agency. Maintaining the dollar seat has been equivalent to *lowering* its real cost by 6.5% a year since 1969, and there has been an extra bonus for American fans at the Big O: the soft Canadian dollar.

Even in grossly expensive New York City, the Mets have shown a certain dubious restraint. Populists spluttered when the \$4.00 general admission ticket to Shea Stadium died last year—they then had to shell out \$6.00 for an "upper reserve" seat. However, that apparent jump of 50% was deceptive. The real annual increase has been just 1.2% since 1969 (from \$1.30 general admission to \$6.00). The drawback is that Mets game now can sell out completely in advance, mostly on holidays and giveaway days and for pennant race matchups. Concessions are the true fiscal evil at Shea Stadium. Do your best to avoid these purveyors of brackish fluids, offal on a bun, and other tawdry rubbish. By itself, sitting in Shea's upper reserves is a fair deal

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- XXIV VIEW FROM THE PEN, an interesting Sports Illustrated piece of April 23, offers a start to a fruitful research topic for ballparks. Has anyone explored a serious piece on ballpens?
- XXV COMISKEY PARK'S LAST SEASON will feature some unusual promos including a "Turn Back the Clock Day" on July 11, as the Sox will try to recreate 1917 inside the park. (Yes, that was the last year the team won the pennant and World Series). WWI prices, entertainment, and uniforms. If any Chicago area members attend, be sure to send us any available printed material.
- XXVI THANKS TO BARRY EVANS FOR A HISTORY BOOK ON COMISKEY PARK. It sells for \$5 and is titled "Through the Years." Available from Sherman Media Company, Chicago, IL (312) 704-0150.
- XXVII ORAL HISTORY OF TORONTO'S EXHIBITION STADIUM appears in the "Left Field 1990 Baseball Extravahza," \$12 with shipping from 301 Muriel St., Ithaca, NY 14850. It includes essays by committee members Tony Formo, Steve Nadel, and Christine Fry. Our thanks to Tony for a copy of certain segments.
- Question: Did any other ballpark go out of business with a home run as the final pitch? Exhibition Stadium did, what others did? Contact Tony at 16 Bonnyview Drive, #6, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M8Y 3G6.
- Tony points out that oral histories for Memorial Stadium and Comiskey Park would be good ideas.
- XXVIII GRIFFITH STADIUM PLAQUE story continues with Gordon Thomas as he interested the councilman for the Howard University district (the site of the park). Also, Mr. Smith is chairman of the D.C. Baseball Commission. Gordon has requested help/suggestions from the Negro Leagues Committee and has contacted that committee's chief, Dick Clark.
- XXIX BILL GOFF BALLPARK PRINTS... Do you receive his postcards announcing a new print for sale. If you got the Griffith Stadium card, do note that Gordon Thomas is the hot dog salesman. Gordon helped the artist with some research.
- XXX NEGRO LEAGUES BASEBALL MUSEUM is raising funds, collecting items, and making plans for its future Kansas City home. Former SABR executive director Lloyd Johnson is the director. The museum site is 2033 Vine Street, next door to the Black Archives of Mid-America. For a copy of the museum prospectus, write at the above address, Kansas City, MO 64108, or call (816) 822-1740 or 843-1300.
- XXXI BALLPARKS COMMITTEE 1991 BUDGET will be filed with the SABR office by month's end. Any ideas? We should receive about \$500 for our basic expenses for 1990. Part of our committee council discussion (item XIX) will cover the committees and their finances.
- XXXII KNOXVILLE AA SOUTHERN LG TEAM & PARK are in some danger of being lost/moved. Bill Troy is trying to convince the team to stay and the city to renovate the park it owns. The 1954 Bill Meyer Stadium has worthy economic advantages over a expensive new park and it has a local history and architectural heritage worth preserving according to Bill. How does he go about this? Any suggestions for his arguments? Call him at home at (615) 688-2384 or write him at

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XXXII (cont.) 4120 Fulton Drive, Knoxville, TN 37918.

XXXIII HOME RUN PARKS in the AL & NL were listed in a side-bar story in The Sporting News of April 23. Of course, other factors, such as the quality of the club (and its pitching) housed in the park does have an effect. For your interest:

1987-8-9  
 SEASONS

					
1. Detroit (2.21 hrs/game)	536	8. Toronto	449	1. Cincinnati (1.93 hrs/game)	467
2. Seattle	531	9. Cleveland	433	2. Chicago	458
3. Baltimore	508	10. Boston	424	3. San Diego	417
4. New York	490	11. Milwaukee	399	4. San Francisco	414
5. (tie) Minnesota	481	12. Oakland	393	5. Philadelphia	412
California	481	13. Chicago	375	6. Atlanta	398
7. Texas	467	14. Kansas City (1.18 hrs/game)	286	7. New York	391
				8. Pittsburgh	369
				9. Montreal	360
				10. Los Angeles	278
				11. Houston	272
				12. St. Louis (.96 hrs/game)	233

XXXIV REDEFINITIONS publishers of the series on baseball history are always looking for good color shots of the old parks. Contact them at PO Box 25336, Alexandria, VA 22313. The research contact is Janet Pooley; the photo research person is Catherine Chase.

XXXV Same as above for a calendar project. Contact Richard Puff at 1494 New Scotland Road, Slingerlands, NY 12159.

XXXVI JEFFERSON STREET GROUNDS IN PHILA & UNION GROUNDS IN BROOKLYN were two parks the Redefinitions people were interested in last May. If you have some material, contact them and assist.

XXXVII POSTAGE CONTRIBUTION by Keith Danish. Thank you.

XXXVIII ARTICLE REPRINTS: one for 25¢; two for 45¢; all for 65¢

a "Lack Challenges Pilot Field," Buffalo News, 5-26-90

b "Searching for Baseball's Past," Phila Inquirer, one man's hunt for 19th c. ballpark sites.

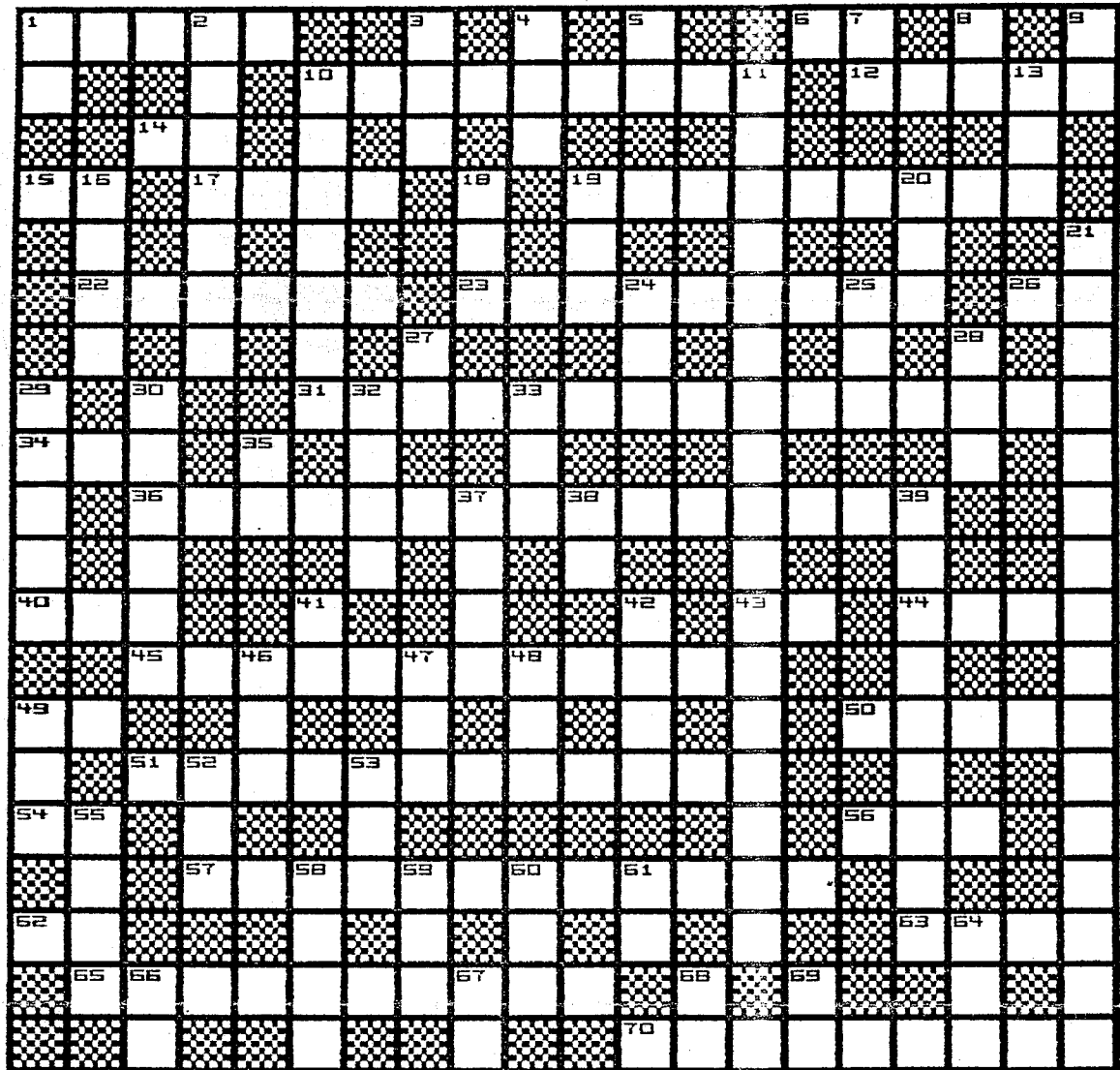
c Sportsman's Park-St. Louis, St. Louis Post Dispatch, 5-27-90 excellent history of this park

d. "Doomed Stadiums," The National, 5-29-90, excellent article on Memorial Stadium and the undue rush to abandon it.

Thanks to Mike Frank, John Holway, David Pietrusza, & Norman Macht for their contributions.

And my thanks to the many sharp eyed members who passed along copies of or information about the New Yorker piece by Roger Angell (item I).

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XXXIX MCCORMICK FIELD in Ashville, NC, another view from committee member Francis Kinlaw. His friend who happens to be the radio announcer for the Greensboro Hornets of the South Atlantic League (Bob Licht) gives this opinion:

Bob agreed that parking was a problem, and he offered these opinions of McCormick Field itself:

- (1) The park has the feel of a "minor league Fenway Park", in that no lead is safe since the right field fence is only about 280' from home plate;
- (2) The press box is in good condition, when compared to media facilities in other Class A parks;
- (3) The field has been in good condition when it has been properly maintained;
- (4) There are significant problems with the condition of the stands.

Bob's concluding comment was, "People who love old ballparks would jump on the preservation bandwagon if they had the opportunity to visit McCormick Field."

Francis also reports that War Memorial Stadium in Greensboro of 1927 vintage (fourth oldest according to the Sporting News list in item X in the last committee newsletter) To quote from sports editor of the Greensboro News and Record:

Greensboro's present stadium is over 60 years old. It seats 7,500 and the city's patchwork repairs have enabled it to remain a viable and not uncomfortable Class A stadium.

Structurally, though, War Memorial Stadium is inexorably crumbling. The city has determined that fullscale renovation would not be worth what it would cost. Nor is there any relief in sight for what is woefully inadequate

parking space for the Hornets' larger crowds. In a few more years, it seems likely that the stadium will not be safe or even adequate for a Class A team.

The minor leagues have become very active of late with impending major expansion fueling speculation about new teams, new or refurbished parks, and franchises moving up from A to AA to AAA levels. Several of the research requests and calls lately have dealt with the minor league teams. Keep an eye out for materials for the files.

I look forward to seeing many of you--some for the first time--in Cleveland. Valerie and I will be arriving in Cleveland on Thursday night; I'll be attending the council of committees meeting. We'll be staying outside the city on Thursday night with lodging at the convention hotel on Friday and Saturday evenings. A safe trip to all attendees! Next newsletter goes out in mid-late August. Send your material, projects, and any other items you want to share with the committee.

## ACROSS CLUES

1. Stadium at the corner of Michigan & Trumbull
6. Maple Leaf & Ruppert Stadiums' league.
10. Montrealers' nickname for their white elephant stadium.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Grounds, one of the first enclosed parks.
14. This town once had three active ML ballparks.
15. Indispensible ingredient in Crosley Fields first night game.
17. Noisiest outdoor park in the majors?
19. Second part of 45 across.
22. Cleveland's first fireproof park.
23. Chuck Klein loved its 280 foot right field tin fence.
26. He knows baseball, he knows football.
31. Site of the first concession stand?
34. Most modern subway line to the Polo Grounds.
36. Jackie Robinson's first home park in organized ball.
40. Chicago fans' group that fought to keep Comiskey Park (abbr.)
43. A Dave Kingman specialty.
44. Even more popular than a star.
45. With 19 across, a sportwriters' cliché for a stadium on 161st St.
49. Indication of pitcher's workload.
50. San Francisco's earliest major league stadium.
51. Vanished and once-immense house of Cards.
54. Slugging percentage numerator.
56. Formerly a close neighbor of the Green Monster.
57. A street that once had two active big league parks.
62. Catcher's stat.
63. Mr. Cuyler.
65. Site of six World Series games in one season.
70. A Lou Gehrig specialty.

## DOWN CLUES

1. All inclusive batting stat.
2. Field where it all started.
3. Ballpark for ailing Cubs, Tigers, Orioles, etc.?
4. A single is one.
5. Chicago's \_\_\_\_\_-Sox of the 1950's.
7. Mr Blue.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Corbett Field.
9. State of the Metrodome.
10. Philly's famous CF tunnel.
11. Skydome ancestor.
13. He loved the Polo Grounds' short RF.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Stadium stood where the Astrodome's parking lot is now.
18. Opposite of a bullet?
19. Former Padre sleeve initials.
20. A two-ballpark state.
21. Jackie Robinson played there as a Royal and as a Dodger.
24. Pop musician Brian.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Willie Keeler.
27. South End Grounds' league.
28. A five-ballpark state.
29. Home of the Pilots.
30. Superlative describing Polo Grounds layout (an opinion).
32. One isn't enough for a decent sized park.
33. Site of the majors' next new park, opening 1991.
35. A good way to get to Wrigley.
37. Just the right guy for the Polo Grounds' spacious center field.
38. Mr. Kranepool.
39. The first true fireproof park.
41. The prime beneficiary of Japan's short fences.
42. There's one of these for every foot in the outfield.
46. What ballpark waves would do in the best of all possible worlds.
47. The Astrodome could be mistaken for one, especially at night.
48. A leprechaun.
49. A good way to get to 45 across.
52. \_\_\_\_\_ Can Boyd.
53. Follows Herman, Jablon, & Drabow.
55. SABR Urban Ballpark creator.
58. Kansas City stadium engineers.
59. What Wrigley hath wrought.
60. Fixer of '19 WS, to his friends.
61. Pitchers hate to give one up.
64. A Wrigley field wind?
66. First baseman's specialty.
67. Metropolitan Stadium league.
68. LF pop fly in LA Coliseum?
69. State of Sulphur Dell Park.