



PALACES OF THE FANS

The Newsletter of the SABR Ballparks Committee

May 2023

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Ballpark Committee members are welcome to 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. The next issue is scheduled to come out in December of 2023.

FUTURE SABR BALLPARKS COMMITTEE PROJECTS: If you have ideas for group research or projects, please send them to the co-chairmen, Ron Selter (rselter@att.net) and Kevin Johnson (kjokbaseball@yahoo.com). Members are always encouraged to do a ballpark 'bio' for the SABR BioProject. Some other ideas would be a committee produced ballparks book of some kind, a joint research effort with other committees (Pictorial Committee for example), etc.



SABR 51
July 5-9, 2023
Palmer House Hilton
Chicago, Illinois

SABR 51 IN CHICAGO – BALLPARKS COMMITTEE MEETING: The Ballparks Committee Meeting at SABR 51 will be held on Friday July 7 in the State Ballroom at 4:00p.m. Ballpark Artist Andy Brown (andybrownstadiums.com) will be the guest speaker.

SABR 51 IN CHICAGO – RESEARCH PRESENTATION: The following scheduled research presentation may be of interest to Ballparks Committee Members:

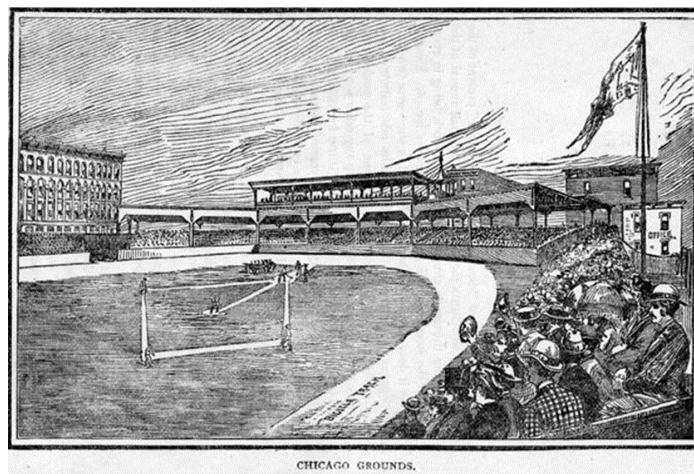
Friday, July 7 - 3:30 - 4:00 p.m.: RP25: John Bauer, *From Comiskey Park to Comiskey Park*

SABR 51 IN CHICAGO – FEATURED SPEAKERS: The following special presentations may be of interest to Ballparks Committee Members:

Thursday, July 6 - 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.: Longtime MLB executive and SABR Director Dan Evans and filmmaker Matt Flesch will host a Q&A and film screening of *Last Comiskey*, a new documentary on the Chicago White Sox' final season at Comiskey Park in 1990.

Saturday, July 8- 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.: Panel discussion on Reimagining Wrigley with Chicago Cubs team historian Ed Hartig, Populous Brand Activation Manager Kelly Holton, and award-winning sportswriter Fred Mitchell.

SABR 51 IN CHICAGO – HISTORIC BALLPARKS BUS TOUR: On Saturday July 8, from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m., I will be leading a bus tour of historic Chicago Ballpark sites. Information on registering for the tour can be found here: <https://sabr.org/latest/sabr-51-chicago-historical-ballpark-sites-bus-tour/>

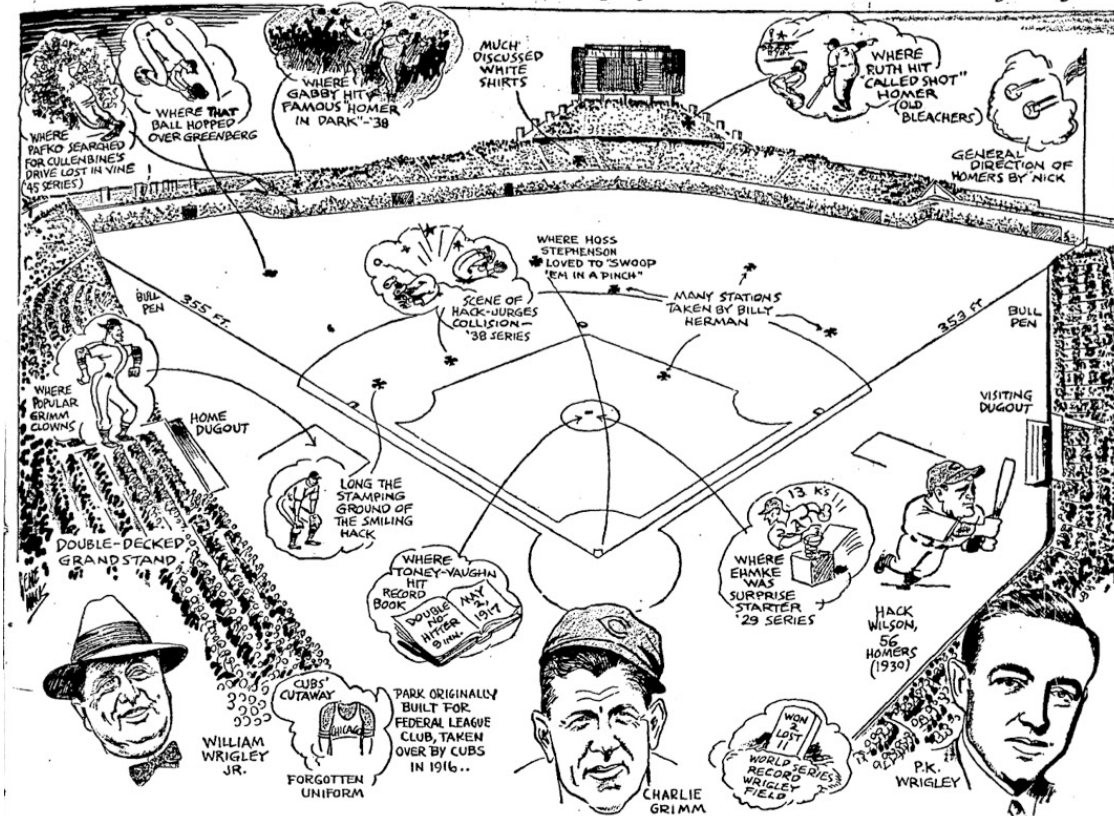


SABR 51 IN CHICAGO – OLD COMISKEY PARK MARKER: Those who attend the Friday Night ballgame between the White Sox and Cardinals at Guaranteed Rate Field can check out a revised marker the White Sox have put up for Old Comiskey Park. The marker is situated to the north of the stadium outside of the Gate 5 parking lot and is on where the old park's home plate was located.

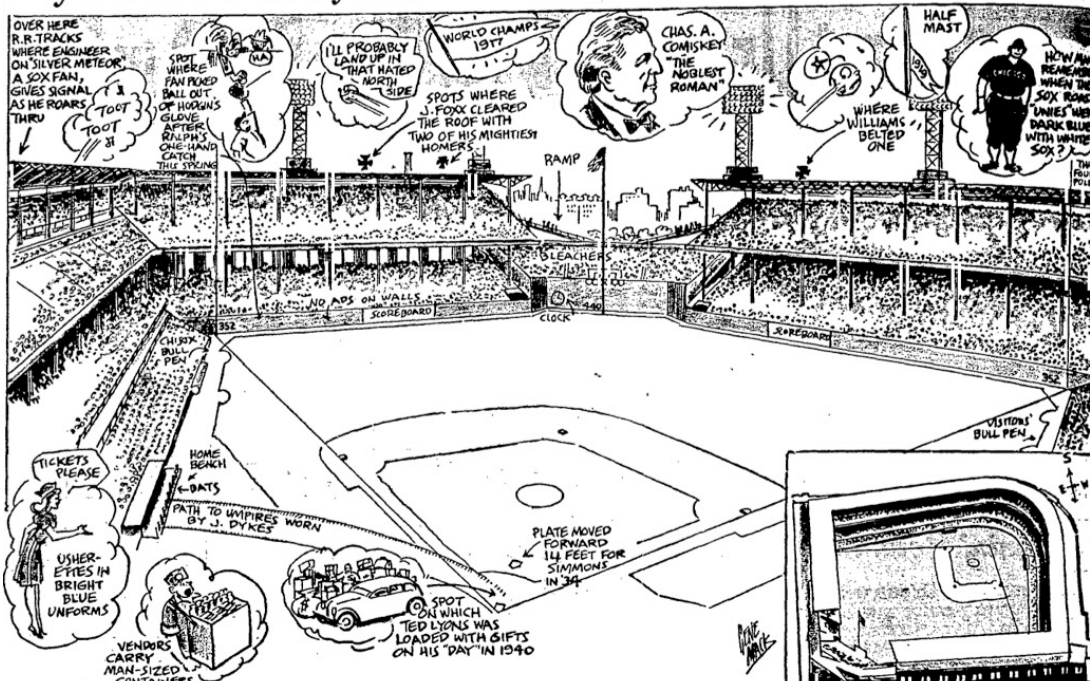


GENE MACK SKETCHES: In 1946, *Boston Globe* cartoonist Gene Mack conducted a tour of the major league ballparks and created a series of sketches which highlighted each park's history and unusual features. These were later reprinted in *The Sporting News*. Here are the sketches he did of the Chicago ballparks -- Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park:

Artistry and Comfort Stressed ∴ at Wrigley Field ∴ Parlor Park of Majors



Symmetrical Comiskey Park ∴ Where the Foul Lines ∴ Come Out Even



SMOKIE LINKS – PHILADELPHIA’S VETERANS STADIUM

Note that the following link is behind a firewall. An investigative report from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* determined that the old AstroTurf from Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia contained perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl, which are known to cause cancer and other serious ailments. The report involved reporters purchasing souvenir samples of Veterans Stadium turf online and testing it in an environmental testing laboratory.

The report was published amidst a background of years-long suspicions on the part of many former players that high-heated AstroTurf was dangerous and, potentially, deadly. The article mentions that six former Phillies who played at Veterans Stadium — Darren Daulton, David West, John Vukovich, Johnny Oates, Ken Brett, and Tug McGraw — died from brain cancer. The rate of brain cancer among Phillies who played at the Vet between 1971 and 2003 is about three times the average rate among adult men.

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/inq2/astroturf-vet-artificial-turf-pfas-forever-chemicals-glioblastoma-cancer-phillies-1980-20230307.html>

SMOKIE LINKS – HINCHCLIFFE STADIUM IN PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

Note that the following link is behind a firewall. The New York Times published an extensive article with photos highlighting the \$100 million renovation that Hinchliffe Stadium in New Jersey underwent the transform into a minor league ballpark and a Negro leagues museum.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/17/sports/baseball/hinchliffe-stadium-new-jersey.html>

UNION PARK III: Ron Selter contributed the following analysis of Union Park III in Baltimore. *(Editor’s Note: My thanks to Ron who originally contributed this in 2020 in anticipation of its use in a Baltimore-themed issue tied to that year’s planned SABR 50 Convention. The cancellation of the convention that year due to the pandemic and my inability to get out a convention-related issue last year delayed its release until now).*

Union Park III -Baltimore By Ron Selter (Revised July 2015)

Union Park (listed as Oriole Park III in the 2006 edition of *Green Cathedrals*) was a wooden ballpark that was built before the 1891 season. The ballpark was located in the city of Baltimore at the southwest corner of Barclay and 25th Streets, across the street from the site of Oriole Park I. The park was used by the American Association Baltimore Orioles for the 1891 season. After the 1891 season and the end of the major league American Association, Union Park became the home park of the NL Baltimore Orioles. After the 1899 season, the Baltimore NL franchise was one of four NL franchise that were terminated.

Recent research by ballpark researcher Bruce Orser has turned up two new sources of information about this not-well known 19th Century ballpark: (1) a Sanborn fire insurance map (Baltimore

1901-1902, Volume 3, Sheet 341), and

(2) an article in the Anaconda Standard-a little known newspaper published in Anaconda Montana. In addition, recent research by the author into 19th Century home runs, has provided new home run data for this ballpark for the 1891-92 seasons.

The 1901-02 Sanborn map provided the location of the ballpark and showed the stands, ticket office, and outfield fences. An interesting feature of the ballpark was that on the Sanborn map, the CF fence intruded into the alignment of the street on the south side of the ballpark (24th St). From the Sanborn map, a scale was derived and that was used to estimate the park's dimensions. As is typical with Sanborn maps neither the foul lines nor the location of home plate were shown. The key factor in placing home plate and the foul lines on the Sanborn was the 1897 photo in Green Cathedrals (2006 edition p. 14).

The article in the Anaconda Standard of August 9, 1891 listed some of the dimensions of what was then a less than one-year-old ballpark: RF 368 and CF

425. The RF dimension was referred to as from home plate to the fence at the RF foul line, whereas the CF dimension was to the CF fence. It is unclear from the article if the CF dimension referred to dead CF or just some point in

CF. According to the Sanborn map, a dead CF distance of 425 with home plate 70 feet from the backstop could not have been correct. If home plate was moved back 35 additional feet (to make CF increase from 390 to the reported 425), the LF foul line would not have hit the fence at the kink in the bleachers as shown in the 1897 photo. If the CF fence had been moved 35 feet further south, it would have blocked the entire width of the perimeter street on the south (24th St). It is the author's conclusion that CF was 390 not 425.

The Sanborn map provided the location of the ballpark and showed the stands, ticket office, and outfield fences. An interesting feature of the ballpark was that on the Sanborn map, the CF fence intruded into the alignment of the street (24th St) located on the south side of the ballpark. From the Sanborn map, a scale was derived and was used to estimate the park's dimensions. The key factor in placing home plate and the foul lines on the Sanborn map was the 1897 photo in Green Cathedrals (2006 edition p. 14). In this photo, the LF foul pole can be seen (in the upper right portion of the photo) at the kink in the third base-LF bleachers. Home plate was placed in an estimated position 70 feet from the backstop and roughly centered in the foul area behind home plate. The grandstand was centered east-west in the northern part of the park site and home plate was also in the middle (east to west) of the northern portion of the park site. An unusual feature of the park was the extent of the grandstand-the first base wing of the grandstand extended past first base while (as is clear in the 1897 photo) the third base wing of the grandstand went less than halfway between home plate and third base. Using the estimated location of home plate, the ballpark's dimensions were developed:

LOCATION

Left Field (E) York Rd (later Greenmount Ave), Third Base (N) 10th (later East 29th) St, First Base (W) Barclay St, Right Field (S) Ninth (later East 28th) St; on the southwest corner of Greenmount Ave and 29th St

DIMENSIONS

Left Field: 318 Straightaway Left Field: 381 Left Center: 405

Center Field: 390

Right Center: 367 Straightaway Right Field: 356 Right Field: 368

Backstop: 70

FENCES

All: 16 (wood)

Average Outfield Distances 1891-99:

LF: 371

CF: 388

RF: 363

CAPACITY 11,000 (1897)

Impact of the Ballpark On Batting

Union Park was an almost exactly average offensive park with a Runs park factor of 101 (one percent above average) for 1891-99. For home runs, Union Park was a very poor park for would-be home run hitters with the home run park factor of 44 for the life of the ballpark (1891-99). For home runs at Union Park, the mix of home run types was 59 % OTF and 41 % IP. This home run mix was very close to the total major league (AA and NL) mix of 57 % OTF and 43 % IP for 1891-99.

Note that the majority of OTF home runs were hit to LF where the LF dimension was 318. In nine seasons of use, there were 16 Bounce home runs the large majority of which were hit to LF. These 16 Bounce home runs occurred despite the outfield fences being 16 feet high. Part of the reason for the Bounce home runs were balls rolling under the LF bleachers.

Home Run Data for Union Park: 1891-99 Home Runs by Type

Year	Total	OTF	Bounce	IP
1891 (AA)	12	4	1	8
1892 (NL)	27	10	5	17
1893-99 (NL)	99	68	10	31
1891-99	138	82	16	56

OTF Home Runs by Field (Excludes Bounce)

Year	Total	LF	CF	RF	UNK
1891 (AA)	4	0	0	1	2
1892 (NL)	5	2	0	0	3
1893-99 (NL)	58	34	3	12	9
1891-99	67	36	3	13	14

Inside-the-Park-Home Runs by Field

Year	Total	LF	LC	CF	RC	RF	UNK
1891 (AA)	8	2	0	3	1	1	1
1892 (NL)	17	3	1	8	2	0	3
1893-99 (NL)	31	6	3	9	2	10	1
1891-99	56	11	4	20	5	11	5

OTF: Over-The-Fence (Includes Bounce) Home Runs Bounce: Bounce Home Runs

IP: Inside-the-Park-Home Runs

Batting Park Factors-Union Park 1891-99

Years	Runs	Home Runs
1891	86	37
1892	107	51
1893	116	87
1894	94	51
1895	108	45
1896	100	37
1897	85	43
1898	102	23
1899	113	26
1891-99	101	44

PHENOMENA

The park was damaged by fire in 1894. Fly balls to right field in the park's first six seasons were quite an adventure because the field sloped steeply down to the right field fence, and because the water from a nearby stream (Brady's Run) created a perpetual swamp in right field by oozing underneath the outfield fence. After the 1897 season, the right side of the in field was raised 1.5 feet and RF, that had been previously the site of a small hollow, was raised five feet.

Bleachers built during the 1891 season were located in a portion of fair LF. Dimensions based on 1901-02 Sanborn map.

VISUAL DATING GUIDE FOR HILLTOP PARK IN NEW YORK CITY: Photo analyst Deron Dixon has put together a guide for dating photographs taken of scenes in which Hilltop Park appears. The guide highlights the construction details, buildings and advertisements at Hilltop Park and can be found here: <https://gumshoebaseball.com/hilltop-park-dating-guide/>