

SABR BALLPARKS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

June 2005

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Folks receiving this by e-mail who wish a hard copy should e-mail us and one will be sent. If you have been receiving a hard copy previously, you should have one by July 19, 2005.

I NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these people to our Committee; please contact if you see areas of common interests.

Bruce Fleming Majors, Pre-1900 to modern era; Fenway Park
3105 Parkwood Trail
Cleveland, TN 37312
BruceFleming1@aol.com

II “DOOMED OR DOMED STADIUMS?” Panel Highlights SABR/Toronto

On Friday, August 5, 9:00 – 10:00 am (Regency Room), a panel composed of Richard Griffin (Toronto Star baseball writer), Mike Buczkowski (GM/Buffalo Bisons), and George Alexander (Toronto architect) will discuss and field questions regarding SkyDome and the other trend of “retro” ballparks? Moderator Louis Cauz, a Toronto sportswriter for over forty years, will help the panel and audience focus on the question, “Are domed stadiums doomed?”

We thank John Matthew of our Committee and local convention chair Jane Dorward for getting this panel together.

Also, the annual Ballparks Committee Business Meeting will take place on Saturday, August 6, from 9:00 – 10:00 am, with Joe Favano chairing the session. In addition to the traditional “go round the room and introduce yourself, your interests, and research needs,” there will be a special presentation by Tom Shieber of the Hall of Fame, who will talk about the Hall’s project to create a virtual 3-D model of the South Ends Grounds of 1888. Also, there will be a 3-D recreation of Ebbets Field.

And, there are a number of terrific research sessions planned, including one on the efforts to stop the building of Wrigley Field (born as Weegham Park) in 1914, and another on the Green Monster at Fenway.

III BALLPARKS IN ANTHROPOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY?

Fenway and Wrigley seem to have reached another academic level! Bostonia (an alumni magazine for Boston University) notes in its Summer/2005 issue that Michael Borer, a sociologist, did a two-year study on Fenway Park, its fans, and the meaning of the park to the city. He notes how the park has been featured in some recent movies (Fever Pitch and Good Will Hunting). He also suggests that the park represents a location “where culture is empirically located.”

Meanwhile, Sports Illustrated in its June 27, 2005 issue reports that Holly Swyers, a University of Chicago anthropologist, spent four seasons in the Wrigley Field bleachers “observing the behavior, habits, and rituals of fellow die-hard Cubs fans.” Sounding like some study of an ancient tribe, she notes that the bleacher crowd “demonstrates the essential traits of a neighborhood....(they) commune together, rejoice and mourn together, and even marry among themselves.”

Neither academic study advanced any predictions on standings on October 1! (four pages for both)

IV MINOR LEAGUE NOTES

1. Your chairman caught games at two new Texas parks. The Corpus Christi Hooks play at Whataburger Stadium (named after a burger chain started fifty years ago in this city) built on an industrial site near downtown in the shadow of a major bridge. Not a classic “neighborhood” park, but a nice fit within a seaport theme. The home run horn will wake the dead! Meanwhile, the Frisco Roughriders (located 45 minutes north of downtown Dallas) play at Dr. Pepper/7-Up Ballpark and its signature features include a behind the grandstands garden area and buildings incorporated into the back of the grandstand.
2. Athletic Business of January/2005 profiles the successes of minor league ball, including Frisco, TX; Camden, NJ; Montgomery, AL; Staten Island, NY; Mobile, AL; and Manchester, NH. Good reading (7 pages). “Revenues are important to minor league ballparks, but aesthetically speaking, the ballparks are going in another direction.”
3. Eastlake, OH ballpark re-named “Classic Ballpark” for 15 years for \$4.26 million. (Cleve.Plain Dealer, 4-12-05 1 pg). Park seats 7200.
4. Rosenblatt Stadium, Omaha, NE will keep the College World Series for another five years, adding to the 55 years the games have been played in Omaha.
5. Review/story on opening night at Phillies Spring Training Park in Clearwaer, FL. Tampa Tribune, 3-1-04 (2 pgs). \$30 million Bright House Networks Field seats 7200, replacing Jack Russell Memorial Stadium in Clearwater, where the Phillies have trained since 1947.
6. Recognition for Buffalo! An article that notes the “retro” ballpark began with Buffalo four years before Camden Yards! North County Times (CA) 3-20-04. The piece recognizes the “best of the best” on the minor league level as parks in Sacramento, CA; Norfolk, VA; Des Moines, IA; Akron, OH; Round Rock, TX; Lake Elsinore, CA; Brooklyn, NY; Vero Beach, FL; Dayton, H; and Salem, WA. Gee, what about Oklahoma City, OK?

7. Goodbye Dudley Field! This 1920s ballpark in El Paso, nicknamed the Dudley Dome because rainstorms seems to move around it, was destined for the wrecker's ball this summer to make room for the zoo across the street. Soccer, rugby, and other sports kept it going off and on after baseball moved to a new facility north of town about ten years ago.
8. Goodbye McCarver Stadium in Memphis, torn down this past spring, several years after the Redbirds moved downtown to Autozone Park. Jay Gauthreaux is taking photos. Thanks!
9. Kevin Tulley reports in PA that Harrisburg's Commerce Bank Park (formerly RiverSide Stadium) plans renovations after this season. Lancaster's Clipper Magazine Park was schedule to open in May, and that York was jealous and wanted to get a park built for an Atlantic League team. Reading also has some minor improvements to FirstEnergy Stadium.
10. Salt Lake City ballpark histories for Bonneville Park, Franklin Quest Field, and Derks Field available thanks to Stephen Carroll. (18 pages with maps & photos).
11. Great photo of the OF wall at Jackie Robinson Ballpark in Daytona Beach, FL, in the July/2005 Smithsonian Magazine. Jackie broke the 20th century color barrier in MLB at this park in spring training/1946.
12. "For small cities, hope is a diamond," Boston Globe, 4-7-05. Notes how "small cities across the country are turning to minor league baseball stadiums to revive their aging downtowns." The article cites Manchester, NH (the main focus); Louisville, KY; and Gary, IN. As always, mixed economic reviews rule, depending on who is doing the number crunching. Excitement rules in Manchester, but one sports economist notes "you would be much better off subsidizing a retail mall." But can you say "Play Ball" near an Old Navy store? Minor league attendance has climbed from 17.6 million in 1984 to 39.9 million in 2004 (4 pages).

V PRESERVATION NOTES

1. The Boston Braves Historical Association reported that the 1988 Braves Field marker was damaged during snow clean-up after a large January storm, but the BBHA promised to see that the marker was returned safely!
2. "City ready to revive ballpark," Yes, another promise by civic officials to restore the remains of old League Park in Cleveland and create a cultural/sports center, with the promise of economic "spin-off." A \$100,000 study will assess the feasibility and fundraising potential for the \$18 million project. (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2-28-05 1 pg).
3. Wahconah Park in Pittsfield, MA has been completely studied and documented for a National Register nomination. The field has had baseball since 1982 and the current grandstand dates from 1950. An independent league team and collegiate league use the field. Thanks to Committee member Phil Bergen who keeps history matters straight at the Massachusetts Historical Society for sending this along. State review and approval was anticipated with hopes for federal review by the National Park Service and inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Trivia buffs may recall Wahconah as one of several "wrong-way" fields that has "sun breaks" for evening games, allowing

the sun to get lower and thus not blind the players. Bakersfield, Ca was another—anyone recall the third? Terrific research, maps, & photos. Fifty pages.

4. Not a baseball issue, but it could be... Soldiers Field in Chicago, a classic stadium that underwent a very controversial and some would say intrusive rehab recently, had its landmark status downgraded .

5. Preservation of old ballpark sites in St. Louis is a current passion of Barbara Sheinbein of the Bob Broeg Chapter in that community. Contact her if you have some experiences or advice in ballpark marker issues. Barbara had hit a few roadblocks with some local government officials. Suggestions and encouragement should go to her at homeplate9@charter.net (314) 965-8006.

6. We have a copy of the marker for Whittenton Field in Taunton, MA. Why should you care? That was the location for Christy Mathewson's first season of professional baseball in the New England League in 1899. Thanks to Bob Correia for sending this along. As of this past March, this marker was not in its old location on a rock by the old home plate location.

7. David Schramm was looking into more markers and recognition for the site of old Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh. He was going to write the team and suggest that they treat the old park with some painted lines as they did in Atlanta for the old stadium. If you have thoughts (or if you know of some action taken on this project) contact both our committee and David at dschramm@king.com. Henry Oliver Building, 535 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2312.

8. Committee Chris Jennison reported last summer that his son and grandson visited Centennial Field (site of baseball in Burlington, VT since 1906), and since Chris saw games there with his father and grandfather in the 1950s (Northern League), then we have five generations experiencing that park!

9. Interesting legal squabble last March involving private land in Bowie, MD, declared historic due to evidence that black teams played there in the pre-1960s. County historical survey says it is a Negro Leagues field while owners say that games were informal and not formerly tied to any league. Our committee was consulted by the owners and we lacked any information about the Mitchellville, MD site (now, I assume part of or called part of Bowie). Anyone see anything in the area media?

Our Committee is always interested in this topic. Saving everything isn't practical, but documenting that which has merit—even if it can not be preserved—provides information that answers questions years down the road. Have an old minor league ballpark in your area? These days anything from the 1950s and older is a classic, so take a few photos! We'll thank you for years to come!

VI MISCELLANEOUS NEWS NOTES

1. PBS broadcast a program on June 7, "Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story" that covered the 300 families evicted in the 1950s to provide the site for Dodger Stadium. The program combined interviews with former residents and the 1949 photos of photographer Don Normack, who documented the close-knit Mexican-American neighborhood that overlooked downtown Los Angeles. Did anyone see it?

2. The National Hot Dog and Sausage Council (how do you get elected to this?) reports that fans will consume 27.5 million hot dogs this MLB season. Dodger Stadium will lead the major with 1,674,000 sold.
3. SI reported on haunted sports facilities, noting the 1998 theory that ghosts inhabited Wrigley Field's bleachers and broadcast booth. It also reports that Frontier Field (AAA Red Wings) in Rochester, NY had documented "negative entities" that "paranormal investigators" discovered. Holy Cow!
4. Prologue (magazine of the National Archives) had a Summer/2004 piece on baseball at Leavenworth, KS prison that eventually sent four future players to the Negro Leagues. The stands at one point seated 1500 and the "massive stone walls formed one of the most formidable outfield fences in all of baseball" (insert punch line here). (10 pages)
5. "A Warm Spot for an Ugly Round Stadium," laments the passing of the 60s circular, multi, purpose stadia. Citing RFK as the "last of the 50,000-seat donuts," (and the oldest), the Washington Post piece of last April notes that the game changed at places like RFK. "I think they are worth remembering, but they aren't worth saving" said George Heery, CEO of a firm that manages the building of new stadiums. (3 pages)
6. With Montreal's Olympic Stadium out of the NL, the league is free from artificial turf for the first time since 1965. The last three phony grass surfaces in the AL call Toronto, Tampa Bay, and Minnesota home. (USA Today Sports Weekly).
7. Congrats to Committee member Joe Gusky whose memories of Buffalo baseball were printed in an article in the Buffalo News of 6-24-05 (1 page).
8. SABR reports that as of 2-9-05 the committee with the highest number of "Potential Members" was ballparks with 1424. No wonder my computer has a fit whenever we send out the newsletter.
9. Mike Dempsey has free AL pocket schedules (ten per legal size envelope) or one magnetic schedule. Random draw he says—while they last. Also some 80s-90s media guides for sale. Catch him at 18 Cove Street, Old Saybrook, CT 06475-2508.
10. Mike has sent me most of the Committee Photo Collection that I will attempt to inventory this summer. The goal is to get these on CDs for viewing at future SABR meetings. We have many photos! Thanks to Mike for caring for these for so many years. We remind members that we also have the Marty O'Connor slide collection. Contact me if you want a list of what cities/parks are covered.
11. Sporting News of 4-1-05 noted the average AL and NL park distances. Overall, AL parks "are only a bit smaller, mainly in the corners." By the numbers: LF: AL at 328 & NL at 334 LCF: AL at 379 & NL at 376 CF: AL at 402 & NL at 405 RFC: AL at 376 & NL at 380 RF: AL at 324 & NL at 334. Short porches at Fenway (302), Yankee Stadium (314) and Camden Yards (318) skew the AL's RF averages. The only short porch in the NL is SBC's 307 foot. On the long side, the "Triangle at Fenway (420), the Triangle at Dolphins Stadium (434) and Petco's deep OF (402 LCF and 411 RCF) are not reflected in the averages.

12. Maps.google.com has an internet map search engine that provides aerial photos of cities across the country. The USA Today Sports Weekly published a photo of Candlestick that was part of the San Francisco entry.

13. Surprise: since its opening in 1995, “no ballpark has been the source of more offensive per game” than Denver’s Coors Field. It leads MLB in walks, hits, runs, and home runs. The STATS, Inc. figures as noted in 6-24-05 issue of TSN includes parks “that have been open since 1995 or before.” (3 pages).

14. Our Committee made National Public Radio (NPR). In a series of articles on baseball published on the NPR website, writer Tal Barak admitted her lack of baseball knowledge, but she set out to learn and one of her essays “A Look at Why No Two Ballparks are the Same” involved our Committee. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4675798>.

VII RESEARCH NOTES & REQUESTS

We have a sampling of the recent and not-so-recent research requests and projects. Please contact someone if you see a project with which you can assist.

1. Photos of Bowman Field, Williamsport, PA and the old Honolulu Stadium. Dave Baldwin needs some leads for his book snakejazz_37@brainpip.com.
2. Photos, illustrations, and documentation of baseball’s first players’ dugouts. David Bauckham at 144 Longland Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 8JD db@bauckham.plus.com. He is writing a book on similar facilities for English sports. David sent us a research note from the Hall of Fame from an article “How the Rochester Nine Helped Create Baseball’s Dugout.” The Rochesterian, May/94). The New Haven team visiting Rochester was abused so badly by the home fans that the coach erected a long red & white striped awning along the first base line, “shielding the benches which were moved nearly 20 feet away from the grandstand.”
3. An old Brooklyn ballpark, the Long Island Grounds, ca. 1890. Info sought by David Dyte at daviddyte@gmail.com.
4. Info on Washington Park in Los Angeles, CA sought by Charles Kjelland at makpow@comcast.net.
5. People who have ballparks names after them. Kevin Saldana seeks info and a review of his current list. Contact him at sabrkev@excite.com.
6. Photos & info on 1973-75 Yankee Stadium renovation. Michael Wagner is writing a book. 265 South Sycamore Avenue, New Braunfels, TX 78130-5846 yankeeswinws@yahoo.com.
7. Greg Simon has a sign from Ebbets Field and he e-mailed us a photo recently for info on its original location, age, etc. Contact him at GDSIMON@aol.com.
8. Jim Burke was researching the colors of the interior features of the 1908 Polo Grounds for a children’s book he was writing. Contact him at JimBurkeArt@aol.com.

9. Once again for you Boston fans, check out www.bpl.org/sportstemples for a terrific selection of photos of all Boston sports ballparks, arenas, tracks, etc. Ron Selter used the site to research some Braves Field issues.
10. Anyone alive from the Shibe Park days of 1910-1914? Contact Tom Swift at 825 Headley Court, Northfield, MN 55057 tomswift@nickelcurves.com.
11. History of mascots and cheerleading in American baseball. Contact Dan Engber at dan.engbert@gmail.com.
12. Ground rules for historic stadiums no longer with us. Contact Phil Pilmar at p-pilmar@northwestern.edu.
13. Ron Selter sent us a short history with estimated dimensions for South Side Park (1901-1910) Chicago, home of the White Sox before Comiskey. Contact him at r.selter@att.net I will also send you a copy (2 pages). He estimates the foul lines at LF (300); CF (399) and RF (280-340)
14. Brooklyn's Capitoline Grounds and Providence's Messer Street Grounds. Info sought by Bruce Kish at bruce.kish@us.army.mil. We also have a few pages of his findings (3 pages) if you are interested.
15. For you New York fans, the New York Public Library has launched a Digital Gallery of 275,000 images from its collections. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/index.cfm>. If anyone checks it out, let us know what sports buildings it might have.
16. Ballpark names. Phil Lowry sent us a bunch of cities that have parks without names for certain years. Contact Phil at plowry1176@aol.com (2 pages)
17. Index to ballpark markers and ballpark statues. Any data bases out there? Contact Bob Dorrill at BDorrill@aol.com.
18. Bullpen carts and vehicles that used to haul relief hurlers from the bullpen to the mound. Are any of those vehicles still around? And why did they all disappear (or did they?) Contact David at Dpuner@aol.com.
19. Accurate and current dimensions of all MLB parks, including foul territory, and other minor details of home plate, batter's box, etc. Dan Formosa, 30 Orchard Terrace, Piermont, NY 10968 dformosa@optonline.net.
20. Postseason attendance: why does it fluctuate and seem to fall short sometimes of a park's capacity. Mark Halling at MHalling@Texasrangers.com seeks any info on interpretation of post season attendance figures, ballparks capacities , etc.

Should you refer these folks to something or find material, keep us posted and we'll add this info to the file for future inquiries.

VIII BOOKS

1. A book on the Montreal Expos (not sure if there is any stadium info) by Danny Gallagher at 715 Don Mills Road, Suite 305, Toronto, Canada M3C 1S4 \$25 US funds
2. Is the latest TSN book (Cubs) worth it? Does it have any good Wrigley coverage? It was \$24.95 and reduced to \$19.95.
3. Bob McGee's new book on Ebbets Field, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, will be released at a July 19 event. I like the cover! Rutgers University Press Contact Jessica Pellien at pellien@rci.rutgers.edu (732) 445-7762 ext. 625. Order at <http://rutgerspress.rutgers.edu>.
4. Boston's Ballparks and Arenas by Alan E. Foulds. Northeastern University Press/University of New England 244 pages;62 illus. \$24.95 1-800-421-1561
5. Veterans Stadium – Field of Memories by Rich Wescott, who also covered the Philly topic in Philadelphia's Old Ballparks. His new book will be published by Temple University Press. Contact him at rnwescott@juno.com.

VIII ARTICLES OF THE PAST

1. "Major League City," when Worcester, MA had big league baseball, Worcester (MA) Telegram & Gazette, 5-23-05 (4 pages) great photos. Story by Bill Ballou.
2. "Playing Baseball at Night," Popular Mechanics, August/1909, (3 pages) Night baseball in Cincinnati.

IX BALLPARKS COMMITTEE PHOTO INDEX PROJECT

Project chairman, Paul Healey reports a change of address to: 5 Braemore Road, #13, Brighton, MA 02134 cell (508) 498-8457 paulhealey@yahoo.com. This project seeks to document at least one photo of every professional league ballpark since the beginning (1871). For some parks, a photo, drawing, or woodcut may be all there is, and for others, we seek various viewpoints. Contact Paul for his current list of parks that lack some form of illustration. Paul is also compiling illustrations for Negro League, Minor Leagues, and Spring Training sites. If you lack e-mail access, write me and I will send along his current list or write Paul and make the same request.

X BUSINESS OF BASEBALL ARTICLES

1. "Public subsidies for sports stadiums," for & against statements, American Legion Magazine, March/2005 (1 page).
2. "Corpus Christi seeing revitalization," Dallas Morning News, 4-17-05 (2 pgs)
3. "A complex formula," Cleveland's Gateway Development, Plain Dealer, 2-20-05 (4 pgs)

XI ATTENDANCE NOTES

1. For the first three months of the season (April-June), there were 19 posted crowds under 10,000, with all but one attributed to Tampa Bay, and the lowest of the season anywhere was that one other sub-10,000 game in Pittsburgh (April 25) against Houston. With Montreal now in Washington, we see fewer of these smaller crowds.

Even the club's AAA farm club (Durham) outdrew them on two nights!

2. The Diamondbacks in April posted their smallest crowds in Bank One Ballpark history: 18,742 and 19,272 against Colorado in mid-April.

XII GREEN CATHEDRALS (3) COMING IN SPRING

Green Cathedrals, written & researched by Ballparks Committee founder, Phil Lowry, will be published by SABR this spring. This will mark the third version of this publication, first published in 1986 by SABR and again in the 1990s as a commercial publication by Addison-Wesley of Boston.

The 1986 work is a prized possession for any ballparks fan as it had details, trivia, statistical info, dimensions, locations, and other data that the re-printed version left out. And, even Phil would admit that the 1986 book wasn't perfect. Indeed, within hours of its publishing, Phil started to assemble changes/corrections/additions. Thanks to the great work done by many SABR researchers, including a number on this Committee, new and updated/corrected information is available.

One immediate task at hand is the location, selection, and acquisition of the proper photos to illustrate this book. Our Committee has been asked to start the search, so start thinking! Once I have had a chance to see the manuscript, I can suggest the types of photos necessary, but one ambitious suggestion is to cover every park noted in this third version! Certainly our Photo Index Project directed by Paul Healey can be a great help, as will assistance from other SABR committees in related themes like the Nineteenth Century, Business of Baseball, and Deadball Committees.

Also, some proofing and fact checking need to be done. Phil may have sent to Toronto a list of his most pressing questions and "holes" in the manuscript. This material will be available at the committee business meeting in Toronto. I have also suggested that some segments (say cities) be sent to experts, so if you know everything there is to know for ballparks in some major city, make yourself available.

Our congratulations to Phil on his achievement on getting a new edition ready for publishing. It was Phil's enthusiastic slide show and presentation at the 1982 SABR National Meeting in Towson, MD, that led to the creation of this committee.

SABR Ballparks Committee Newsletter

June 2005

XIII MAJOR LEGUE NOTES

We'll have to save this for the next issue, but in the meantime, Fenway is safe, the Yankees have suggested a new home near the current one, and lots of changes at Dodger Stadium

XIV SABR E-MAIL GROUP & WEB SITE

Our thanks to our Committee's Webmaster, Maury Brown, who has been working hard to develop a web site for our Ballparks Committee. In his words, it will "house data on past and present ballpark facilities." We will also post Committee registration information, past newsletters, and summaries of major research projects in progress.

Meanwhile, Maury has also created an e-mail group for the Ballparks Committee that can be used to discuss the coming web site and other committee related matters.

Our thanks to Maury for his diligence and enthusiasm in getting this started. To subscribe to the list, send an e-mail to the following address: subscribeSABRballparks@yahoogroups.com.

Comments and suggestions can go directly to Maury at maurybaseballcrazy@yahoo.com.

Enjoy the annual SABR meeting in Toronto. I regret that I can not attend this year, but the family is looking forward to SABR/2006.

I appreciate everyone's messages, mail, and sent materials. If you have a book review, a short park review, research request, new piece of ballparks info or data, or any such ballparks-related item, send it along.

Best wishes to all.