



PALACES OF THE FANS

The Newsletter of the SABR Ballparks Committee

December 2020

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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 June of 2021.

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.

SMOKIE LINKS – NEW MLB BALLPARKS(I) -- GLOBE LIFE FIELD:



Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, Friday, July 3, 2020. (AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez)

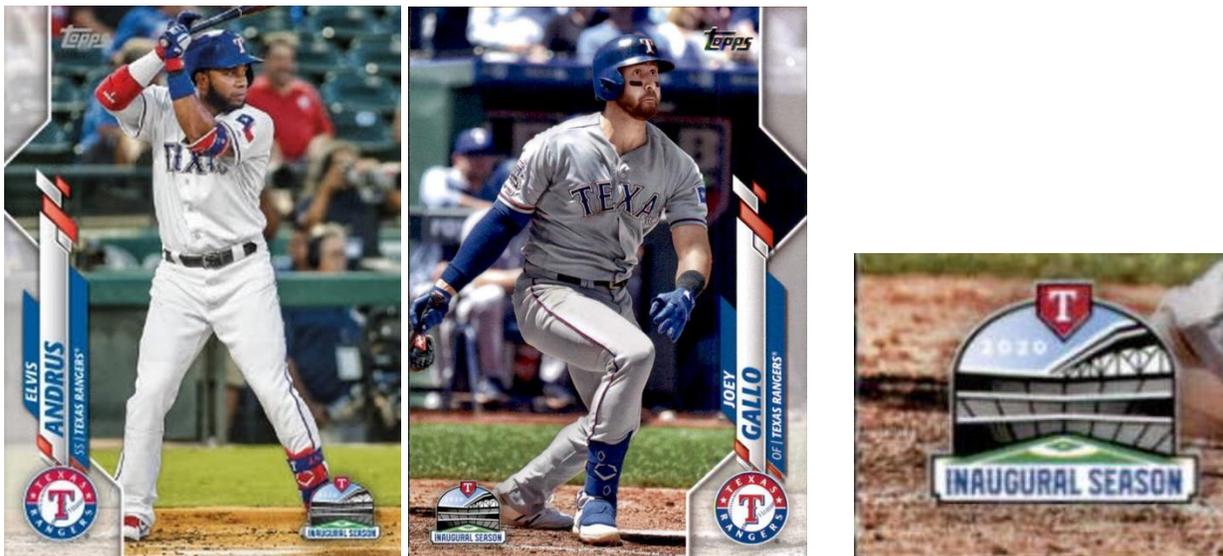
The 2020 season ushered in two new locations used as sites for major league baseball games. The unusual circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic led to the debut of Globe Life Field in Arlington, TX being delayed until late July and the use of the stadium as one of the “bubble” sites for the NLCS and the World Series. As such, Globe Life Field became the first ballpark to host a World Series game in its inaugural season since Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium did so in 1970.



(photo by Jerome Miron *USA Today*)

Globe Life Field features a retractable roof and field dimension that honor Rangers history and heroes (such as the 329 feet to left field honoring #29 Adrian Beltre). The stadium is situated amidst a shopping mall, hotel, and the previous Rangers ballpark. So far, the reviews of the park have been mostly positive.

In a first, Topps commemorated Globe Life Field’s inaugural season with the inclusion of a logo on the bottom of all Texas Rangers baseball cards in the Series Two release of their base set.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globe_Life_Field

https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/30173736/our-impressions-globe-life-field

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/mlbs-newest-ballpark-is-a-shift-away-from-retro-era-stadiums/>

FENWAY PARK FAÇADE PHOTO: Jim Chapman contributed this wonderful exploration into a photo of the Fenway Park façade.

GEORGE GRANTHAM BAIN 1912 PHOTOGRAPH OF FENWAY ENTRANCE FACADE

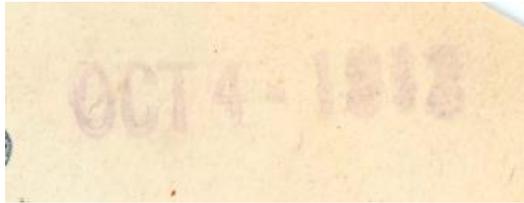
This photo was taken by George Grantham Bain of the front entry facade of Fenway Park. It has, in his distinctive printing, “Fenway Park Ball Grounds Exterior” etched into the negative at the front top.



It is also stamped on back “George Grantham Bain” with a “191?” date stamp.



Enlarging the date stamp, the “OCT 4” and the two “1”’s in the year are easy to read. The “9” is an almost solid blob, but the mere location of it as the second digit in the year dictates it must be a “9”. The final digit is also a blob, but is indented in the middle left side of the blob, making it very likely it is a “3” which would account for the missing ink in its middle left side as compared to the enclosed “9”.



We know Fenway was opened in 1912, so that is the earliest possible date, but what year was our photo actually taken? Key clues are the trees planted in front of the building, the lack of an adjoining building on the left, and the edge of a billboard (seen fully in a following photo) at the left edge of our photo.

This real photo postcard, taken from almost the exact same vantage point as our photo, yields critical information in determining the date of our photo.



First, it is postmarked January 18, 1913. Second notice the trees, they still have leaves on them. It is very doubtful a tree in Boston in January would have leaves still on it, so it is almost certain this postcard image was taken some time in 1912, likely in baseball season given the presence of fans.

Now, compare the postcard image with the Bain image and focus on the single tree at the left edge of the building. The postcard tree is on the left below, the Bain tree on the right.



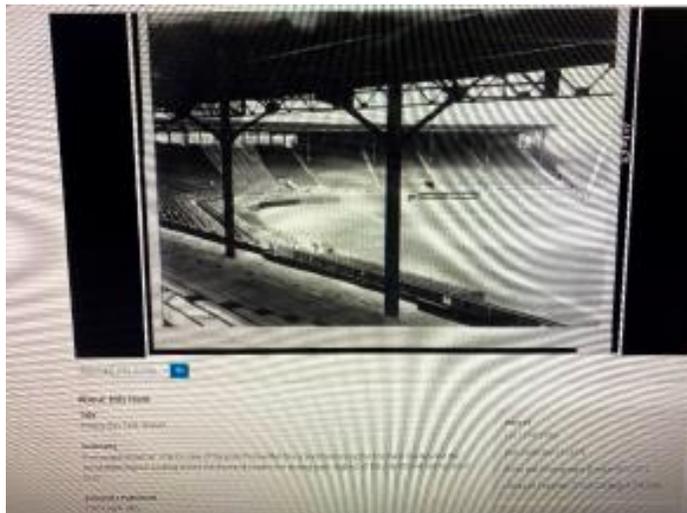
Notice the same peculiar kink of the tree branches in each image. The branches and even each individual leaf match up. Each photo also shows the tree in its planting support ring. The photos must have been taken at almost the same time prior to January 1913. If you examine each of the other trees in the two photos you get the same matching results.



Also note in the two photos that the window awnings are all in the same relative open/closed positions. Of particular importance, note that in each image the 2nd window from the left is cracked open and in the fourth window from the left there is a white object just inside the window sill. These two images were taken very near in time, perhaps even on the same day, and the best evidence indicates that time was 1912.

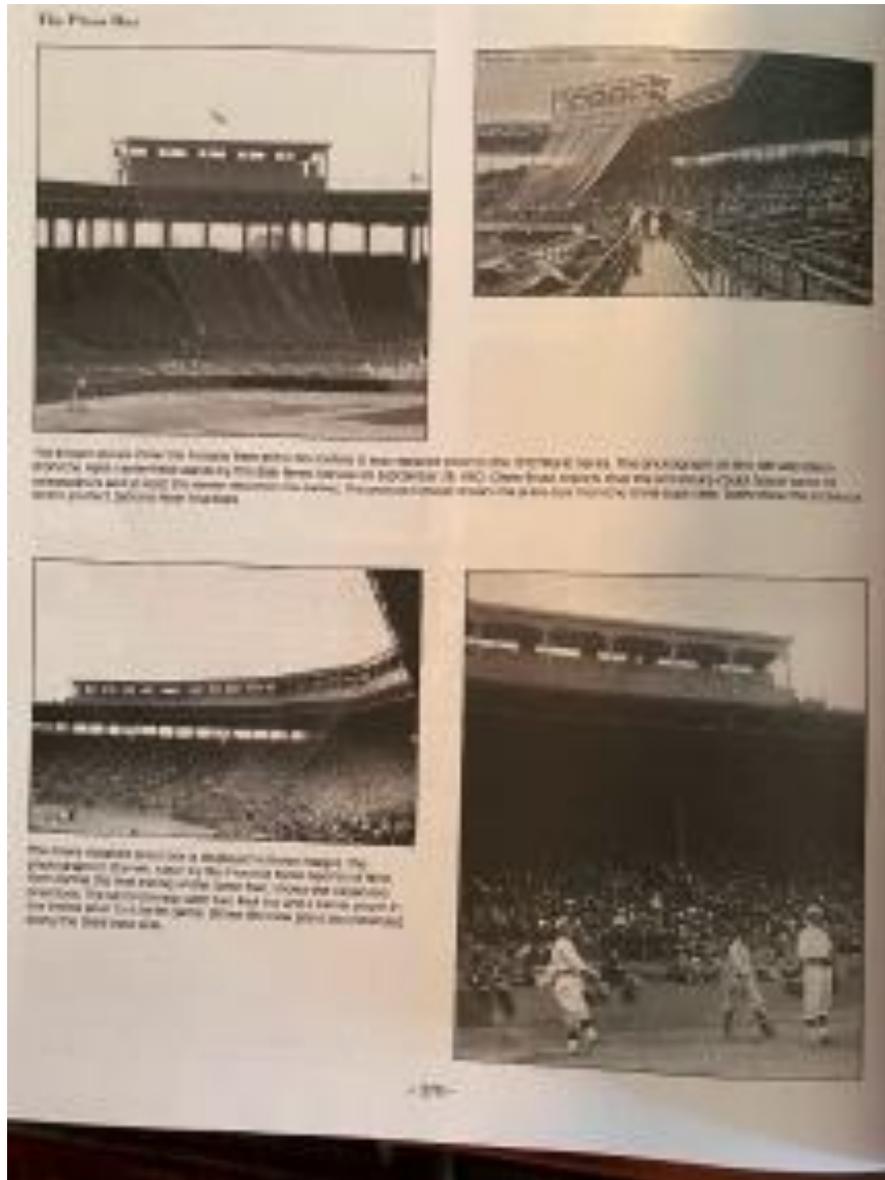


Our photo is also part of the Bain Collection of negatives at the Library of Congress. There it is listed to have been taken on September 28, 1914 (note vertical typed caption in the right margin for the pair of mounted photos below and the date listed for the photo on the screenshot of the lower interior ballpark image from the LOC website). I believe that the 1914 attribution is mistaken as I will explain below.



Our Bain image is frequently referenced in articles on early Fenway and is usually attributed as 1914, based primarily on the LOC information. I believe the actual date for both photos, exterior and interior, is 1912 for the following reasons.

First, the interior image of Fenway, the one shown at bottom of the dual image LOC card shown above, is absolutely from 1912. The rooftop pressbox visible just under the near roof eave is as it was prior to the 1912 World Series. As Bill Nowlin explains in *Opening Fenway Park in Style* p. 274, the pressbox was greatly expanded just prior to the World Series as shown below.



Second, the LOC has several more Bain images inside an empty Fenway listed as taken on **September 28**, 1912, showing the stadium in preparation for the large World Series crowds with the expanded bleachers along the baselines and just prior to the pressbox enlargement. All show an empty stadium as does our facade photo. I believe our image, and the interior shot on the dual LOC card, were likely taken on September 28, 1912 when the other Bain images were taken. The most likely, and simplest, explanation for the obvious year discrepancy is a scrivener's error when a "4" was inadvertently typed on the LOC card instead of a "2" after "September 28, 191_".

Also, another indication that our photo was not taken September 28, 1914 is a comparison of it with two known date Fenway photos, one taken in 1912 and one during the 1914 World Series.



Opening Day 1912 from the Baseball Hall of Fame collection.

The photo above shows the vacant lot to the left of Fenway with the Sterling Ale billboard. The far right edge of this billboard is just visible on the far left edge of our Bain photo.

The photos below show the construction of the Jeano building during the 1914 World Series.



The photo and closeup crop above show the construction of the Jeano building during the 1914 World Series. The game is actually in progress. The construction project has obviously been progressing for a while, the second floor is depicted in the photo. This building is not present in our Bain photo. Obviously, the lot was not vacant and the “Sterling Ale” billboard could not possibly have been there on September 28, 1914 when the LOC dates our photo to.

Considering all of the factors discussed herein, it is almost certain that our Bain photo was taken of Fenway Park in its inaugural 1912 season.

WESTERN ASSOCIATION BALLPARKS: Ron Selter contributed the following overview of the ballparks of the long gone Western Association.

Western Association Ballparks

The Western Association operated as a Class C minor league from 1905-10, 1922-32, 1934-42, and 1946-54. The league was the successor to the Missouri Valley League of 1902-04. In 1924, the Western Association had teams in eight cities located in the four adjacent states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The eight cities were Bartlesville, OK; Fort Smith, AK; Hutchinson, KS; Joplin, MO; Muskogee, OK; Okmulgee, OK; Springfield, MO; and Topeka, KS.

Before the start of the 1924 Western Association season, the league president, J. W. Seabaugh, gave a series of interviews to the local press ⁽¹⁾. In an interview reported in the Springfield, MO newspaper, a review of the league's eight ballparks was provided.

Bartlesville, OK

The team was called the Bearcats and their home park was Bartlesville Baseball Park. The Bartlesville Bearcats, with a 19-23 record, moved to Ardmore, OK on June 8, 1924 and became the Ardmore Boomers⁽²⁾. Shortly thereafter, the Joplin MO team (the Boosters) moved to Bartlesville June 16, 1924. Thus Bartlesville had two Western Association teams with partial seasons that used the Bartlesville Baseball Park. This ballpark was located three blocks from the Bartlesville business district. The ballpark's stands consisted of a wooden grandstand and bleachers with a combined capacity of 2,500. LF was 345 and RF was described as much greater than LF (estimated to have been 400). A local legend has it that Babe Ruth was the only player to ever hit a home run over the RF fence.

Fort Smith, AK

The Western Association team was the Twins. The ballpark was called Andrews Field and had been built in 1921. Andrews Field was located 4.5 blocks from the business district. In 1924 the stands were steel-and-concrete with a capacity of 3,200. Home plate was in the NW corner of the park site and the sun field was LF. A ballpark with generous dimensions-both LF and RF were 372. Because of the larger than typical outfield dimensions, only nine home runs were hit over the outfield fences during the 1923 season.

Hutchinson, KS

The team was called the Hutchinson Wheat Shockers and their home park was named Gano Park. This ballpark was located a five minute walk from the city's business district. The park site was bounded by South Adams St, South Jefferson St, West "E" Ave, and West "D" Ave. The infield was all dirt. Home plate was in the NW corner and the dimensions were LF 340 and RF 250. One suspects most of the home runs were hit over the short RF fence. Capacity was 2,500.

Joplin MO

The Western Association team was called the Joplin Boosters and their home park was called Miners Park. (The park was renamed Joe Becker Memorial Stadium in the 1950's). This ballpark was located a four minute trip by street car from the city's business district. In 1924, the front of the grandstand had been recently remodeled in concrete. The ballpark's dimensions were LF 327 and RF 316. Capacity of the ballpark was 3,500. The Joplin Boosters moved on June 16,

1924 and became the Bartlesville Boosters as the prior Western Association franchise in Bartlesville (the Bearcats) had moved to Ardmore, OK earlier in June.

Muskogee, OK

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Muskogee Athletics) was League Park. It was built in 1921 and in use 1921-26. The grandstand was steel-and-concrete and the park's capacity was 3,500. The location of the ballpark was two blocks from the Muskogee business district. Later in 1934, the ballpark was renamed Athletic Park. The park's dimensions were generous: LF 360, RF 380. Today the old ballpark site is site of the Muskogee Civic Center.

Okmulgee, OK

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Oilers) in Okmulgee was Athletic Park. It was built for the 1924 season. The park's capacity was 2,500. The location of the ballpark was six blocks from the cities' downtown. The field had home plate in the SW corner of the playing field and RF was the sun field. The park's dimensions were: LF 327, RF 327.

Springfield, MO

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Midgets) in Springfield was White City Park I. This ballpark was built in 1904, renovated in 1921, and was undergoing reconstruction in early March 1924. The playing field had home plate in the SW corner of the park site. The ballpark's dimensions were modest: LF 325 and RF 325.

Topeka, KS

The ballpark in Topeka used by the Western Association team (called the Topeka Senators in 1924-26 as Topeka was the state capitol) had the not very original name: Topeka Baseball Park. This ballpark was built in 1901. The park's seating capacity was 4,450. In addition in 1924, the ballpark provided free parking for several hundred cars. The ballpark was located at 15th St and Adams St and was 12 blocks from downtown. The infield was dirt with the outfield covered in blue grass and clover. Home plate was in the SW corner of the playing field. The ballpark's dimensions were quite modest: LF 316 and RF 327.

Sources:

- 1) "Seabaugh Discusses Association Parks", *Springfield News Leader*, March 9, 1924
 - 2) "Boomers Celebrate Opener at Home by Defeating Twins 5-2", *Ardmore Daily Press*, June 19, 1924
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RIDGEWOOD PARK II: Bill Lamb contributed the following article on Ridgewood Park II, located in Queens, NY.

**RIDGEWOOD PARK II, aka WALLACE'S RIDGEWOOD PARK
QUEENS, NEW YORK**

by Bill Lamb

For three consecutive seasons in the late 1880s, the Brooklyn Grays/Bridegrooms of the major league American Association (AA) relocated ball games from their home grounds at Washington Park to a newly-opened venue, Ridgewood Park II, originally known as Wallace's Ridgewood Park or Grounds. The reason was straightforward: Ridgewood was located in Queens where state blue laws prohibiting the playing of professional baseball and other amusements on Sunday were loosely enforced, if at all. In 1890, Ridgewood Park II served as the everyday home ballpark of a hastily-organized AA replacement club, the Brooklyn Gladiators. All the while and for almost three decades thereafter, Ridgewood also hosted amateur, semipro, and pre-Negro Leagues baseball contests, as well as soccer, hurling, and American and Gaelic football matches. Vestiges of the ballpark endured until obliterated by neighborhood industrialization in 1959. The story of this now-forgotten multi-sport facility follows.

New York Sunday Blue Laws and Major League Baseball's Initial Foray into Queens

In the eastern parts of this country, the Puritan tradition of restraint upon commerce and amusement on the Sabbath dates back to the mid-17th century. In New York, Sunday blue laws were adopted by the Dutch inhabitants of New Amsterdam in 1656, and maintained thereafter by British colonial authorities.¹ Among other things, the law prohibited traveling, working, shooting, fishing, sporting, playing, hunting, horse racing, or tavern visits on the Lord's Day. Despite their unpopularity with the Irish and German immigrants arriving in New York throughout the latter part of the 19th century, Sunday blue laws remained sacrosanct to a New York state legislature dominated by nativist upstate Protestants. But by the 1880s, enforcement of Sabbath restrictions was spotty, particularly in the greater New York City area.

In Gotham itself, then consisting of only Manhattan and parts of the West Bronx, pro-blue law forces were potent enough to prevent the playing of professional baseball on Sunday. The same held true in Brooklyn, then an independent municipality and the nation's third largest city.² With the Sabbath being the only day available for pursuit of leisure activity by the middle and working classes, New York and Brooklyn clubs in the National League and American Association were therefore precluded from opening their ballparks on the day most likely to attract a large number of fans. But the situation in Queens was different.

Less densely populated with considerable open space, Queens was a popular Sunday destination for city dwellers from New York and Brooklyn. Delivered by horse-drawn carriage and rail, visitors enjoyed hotels, picnic grounds, and parklands open to the public. The revenue generated by the tourist trade and the development which it spurred were welcomed by local officials who overlooked infringement of Sabbath blue laws. And soon, Sunday diversions expanded to include baseball.

In early 1885, local brewery owner George Grauer purchased ten acres of greensward adjoining his already-popular picnic grove in Ridgewood, an ethnically German enclave situated along the Queens border with Brooklyn. There, he laid out an enclosed baseball diamond in hopes of attracting paying customers to games staged by the Long Island Athletic Club and other area amateur teams.³ These grounds were known as Grauer's Ridgewood Park and distinguished from our subject by designation as Ridgewood Park I. During 1885, the Ridgewood Base Ball Club, the crême of amateur Queens nines, played a busy schedule of games and went 59-20, with only four of their losses being inflicted by other non-professional clubs.⁴

On April 11, 1886, the Brooklyn Grays of the American Association trounced the Ridgewoods, 22-1, in a Sunday exhibition game played at Ridgewood Park I. Among those impressed by the 3,000 spectators who paid their way into the ballpark to observe the non-contest was Brooklyn club owner-field manager Charlie Byrne. Equally noteworthy to Byrne was the fact that the game went unmolested by local police – a lack of enforcement of Sunday blue laws that sportswriter Ren Mulford, Jr. later attributed to generous amounts of “pin money” bestowed on “a small army” of Queens officials.⁵ Recognizing the situation’s income potential, the Brooklyn club boss promptly arranged the rescheduling of American Association games for the Grays on Sundays at Ridgewood Park.

On May 2, 1886, the Brooklyn Grays and the AA rival Philadelphia Athletics inaugurated Sunday major league baseball in New York with a poorly-played “muffin game” that ended in a 19-19 tie after eight innings.⁶ The sporting press was less than enthralled with the venue, deeming the playing grounds “too small,” and complaining that “ball after ball was knocked over the fence and lost.”⁷ But at the turnstiles, the game proved a resounding success, with about 7,500 fans in attendance. And Queens police were nowhere to be seen.

Thereafter, the Grays played 13 more Sunday afternoon games at Ridgewood Park I, winning eight.⁸ Those contests were almost invariably well-attended, a major factor in the 100,000-patron surge in Brooklyn home game attendance over the previous season.⁹ But as the summer wore on both Ridgewood Park proprietor Grauer and Brooklyn club owner Byrne grew dissatisfied with their arrangement. For his part, Grauer came to believe that he could simply make more money if he abandoned Sunday baseball and used the Ridgewood Park property for expansion his lucrative picnic grove operation. Byrne had various reasons for his attitude. The “much maligned playing grounds at Ridgewood”¹⁰ were poorly manicured and maintained. The space at Ridgewood Park was also confined, the principal problem being outfield fences that were insufficiently distant, resulting in catchable fly balls turning into grounds-rule doubles. More important, the per diem charged by Grauer for use of the ballpark, perhaps \$200 per Sunday, was deemed exorbitant by Byrne, seriously cutting into the profits generated by games at Ridgewood.¹¹ Happily for Charlie, an alternative to Grauer’s Ridgewood Park was located only two blocks away.

Ridgewood Park II

Ridgewood Park II was the brainchild of William Willock Wallace, the enterprising secretary of the Ridgewood Athletic Association. Born in Brooklyn in 1856 to Scotch-Irish immigrants, young Wallace worked as a compositor setting type for the *New York Press*. He was also an ardent baseball enthusiast. In September 1884, Wallace arranged for the association to rent property in Ridgewood about two blocks south of Grauer’s picnic grove. A section of the rental grounds measuring 750 by 400 feet was then transformed into an athletic field featuring a baseball diamond.

On April 5, 1885, the association’s amateur nine hosted the independent Atlantic Club of Brooklyn on their new field, dropping a 3-1 decision before 3,000 onlookers. A contingent of local police was also on hand but did not interfere with the action, finding “no disturbance of the Sabbath repose of the community.”¹² After a profitable summer – revenue from the first year of operation was later estimated at an extraordinary \$25,000¹³ – Wallace decided to expand the venture, forming the Ridgewood Exhibition Company (REC). Joining him in the new stock company were fellow cranks William A. Mayer, Harry Rueger, and J.F. O’Keefe. Thereafter, the REC purchased the rented athletic field property for some \$12,000 and set about enhancing the seating capacity of the grounds.¹⁴ In due course, Sunday baseball gained a second venue in conveniently-situated Ridgewood: Wallace’s Ridgewood Park aka Ridgewood Park II.

The schedule at the new ball field included a regular regimen of Sunday games. In addition to the amateur Ridgewoods, the Wallace grounds were utilized by the Jersey City Jerseys of the minor Eastern League.¹⁵ Given that Jersey City did not have blue laws prohibiting Sabbath baseball at their home field, the Jerseys willingness to trek to Queens instead represented a powerful testament to the drawing power of Sunday baseball in Ridgewood. The EL's Bridgeport (Connecticut) Giants also played occasional Sunday exhibition games at Ridgewood Park II during the 1886 season.¹⁶

In late March 1887, the *New York Herald* reported that "Wallace's park will hereafter be known as Ridgewood Park," and was designated this season's Sunday home grounds of the Brooklyn Grays.¹⁷ To accommodate the arrival of a major league club, William Wallace and company installed a roofed grandstand behind home plate capable of seating 2,000 spectators. In addition, open bleacher sections were extended along both third and first base lines.¹⁸ When completed, the ballpark's seating capacity "will be sufficient to comfortably accommodate from 12,000 to 15,000 spectators."¹⁹ Or so it was claimed. In the interim, the 1887 season began.

On April 10, Brooklyn assayed their new Sunday grounds, hammering the Boston Blues, the reserve nine of the National League Boston Beaneaters, 21-4, in a preseason exhibition contest played before a crowd estimated at 8,000.²⁰ Two weeks later, major league baseball at Ridgewood Park II began in earnest.

On April 24, 1887, the Brooklyn Grays and Baltimore Orioles inaugurated Sunday baseball at the Ridgewood ballpark. The grounds were overwhelmed by the "largest crowd of spectators ever to witness a match outside of Brooklyn," with nearly 10,000 reportedly in attendance.²¹ Every available seat was taken, with thousands more onlookers ringing the outfield fences. The throng, alas, went home unhappy as Baltimore rallied late to capture a 12-8 verdict. Following a six-week hiatus in the action, some 7,300 fans witnessed the Grays notch their first victory at their Sunday ballpark, edging Cleveland, 10-9, on June 5.²² From there on, Brooklyn alternated victories and defeats, finishing the season with a 7-8 (.467) record at Ridgewood Park II, slightly better than the club's 60-74 (.448) mark, overall.

Whatever the ballpark winning percentage, games in Ridgewood had been an unqualified success at the gate. Taking Sunday game attendance estimates published in Brooklyn newspapers at face value, the Grays drew some 107,300 fans to 15 games played in Ridgewood Park II,²³ yielding an average gate of 7,153. This was approximately two and one-half times the attendance of home games held at Washington Park (165,700 fans divided by 58 home dates equals a 2,857 per game attendance average).²⁴ Wallace and company then spent the off-season expanding the ballpark's seating capacity. The grandstand was enlarged and extended further down the third base line. Temporary seating that could be removed for fall events like soccer, hurling, and football was installed along the left and centerfield fence line. This brought the seating capacity of Ridgewood Park II for baseball to approximately 10,000.²⁵

For the 1888 season, the Brooklyn club, now called the Bridegrooms,²⁶ obtained no fewer than 20 Sunday home game dates. And when Brooklyn was on the road, either the Newark Trunkmakers or the Jersey City Skeeters of the minor Central League would be Ridgewood Park II's Sunday tenants.²⁷ But by now storm clouds were gathering on the political front. The Sunday Observance Association of Kings County and prominent Brooklyn clergymen began raising public objection to the disregard of Sunday blue laws in Queens. In late-June, club owner Byrne attempted to evade a possible blue laws citation by trying out admitting Sunday game patrons for free, requiring instead the purchase of a score card.²⁸ But this dodge did not reproduce the revenue of paid admissions, particularly that generated by the sale of pricier grandstand seats, and was promptly abandoned.²⁹ Happily for Byrne and the REC, Queens officials continued to ignore Sunday baseball – at least for

the time being.

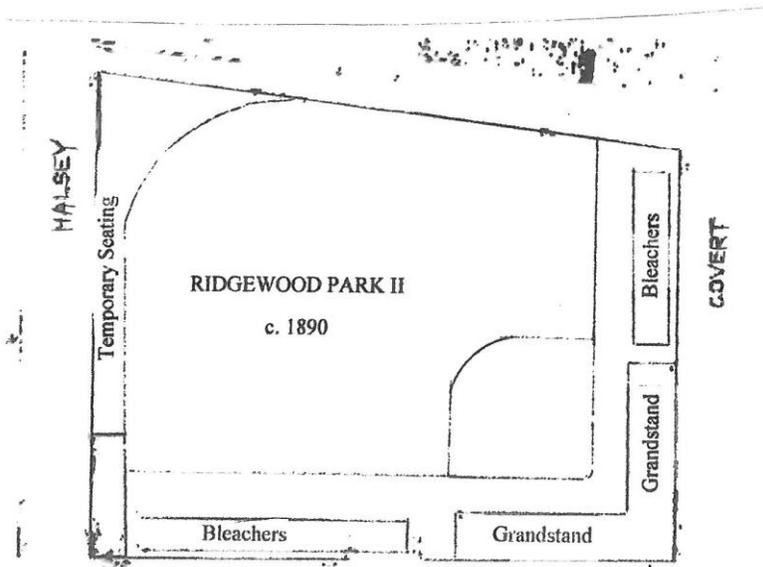
Under new manager Bill McGunnigle, Brooklyn (88-52, .529) rose dramatically in AA standings, finishing second to the St. Louis Browns. But the club slumped at the gate, drawing a combined 245,000 (or 28,000 fewer) patrons to its two ballparks in 1888. Nevertheless, Byrne renewed his arrangement for Sunday use of Ridgewood Park II for the oncoming season. Soon thereafter, however, problems surfaced between Byrne and REC honcho Wallace.

In February 1889, a dispute between the two men regarding the distribution of revenue from the previous season became public.³⁰ Unless resolved to his satisfaction, Wallace threatened to subdivide Ridgewood Park II into building lots and sell them off at five times (\$500 per lot) what they had cost the REC four years earlier (\$100). “By next July, the elevated railroad will be in running order to within a short distance of our grounds,” said Wallace. Given the increased tourist trade likely to be attracted to the area, “we really do not care whether the Brooklyn club plays here again or not.”³¹ In time, the problem (which may have involved a difference over no more than \$100) was worked out. But the incident contributed to club owner Byrne’s growing dissatisfaction with his club’s affiliation with the American Association. For now, however, the status quo prevailed, with the Newark Little Giants of the newly-formed Atlantic Association taking the Sunday playing dates not allotted to Brooklyn.³²

With Brooklyn headed for an American Association pennant, overflow Sunday crowds returned to Ridgewood Park II. On May 5, 1889, “the largest assemblage that ever witnessed a game at Ridgewood Park”³³ arrived to witness the Grooms play Philadelphia. In the sixth inning, spectators jammed behind the flimsy center field fence swarmed upon the grounds in such numbers that the game became unplayable and had to be called a 1-1 tie. On hostile editorial pages, the incident was blamed on official tolerance of Sunday baseball and generated renewed call for enforcement of blue laws by authorities in Queens.³⁴ The unruly crowd behavior also springboarded Brooklyn bluenoses into action, with the Kings County Sunday Observance Association taking the lead.³⁵ Thereafter adding his voice to the complaints was the Right Reverend Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, Episcopal Bishop of Long Island.³⁶ Still, the Sunday games continued with a crowd estimated at 16,000 in attendance for a September game against St. Louis. But a reckoning was on the near horizon.

In early October, a Queens County grand jury was empaneled to investigate alleged Sunday blue law violations at Ridgewood Park II. In time, misdemeanor charges were returned against William Wallace and the other principals of the Ridgewood Exhibition Company (but not against Brooklyn club boss Byrne or the ball club itself).³⁷ While the charges pended disposition, Queens officials, whether coincidentally or not, found the time propitious for completion of the Ridgewood traffic grid by running a previously paper portion of Halsey Street through the Ridgewood Park II outfield. Curiously, however, officials chose not to obliterate the grounds as a ballpark site entirely by completing a second paper street (a section of Eldert Street) through the infield.³⁸

Undaunted, Wallace and company responded by modifying the grounds so that baseball playing could continue there. To adjust for the Halsey Street truncation of left field, home plate was moved back 75 feet and a new grandstand seating 3,500 constructed behind it.³⁹ A picket fence was then installed to define the new outfield territory. Regrettably, the precise dimensions of Ridgewood Park II have not been discovered. But tellingly (and much unlike Grauer’s Ridgewood Park), no criticism of the ground’s playing space has been found in game reportage. The conclusion: the dimensions of Ridgewood Park II were unremarkable for a late 1880s ballpark.



rd: This diagram was fashioned from an 1888 Sanborn street map of Ridgewood, Queens that contained the outlines of Ridgewood Park II.

As the year 1889 drew to a close, Sunday baseball at Ridgewood Park II was only a sideshow to a far larger drama involving the very structure of major league baseball. A new, talent-rich organization had just been formed for the 1890 season: the Players League. While National League clubs and, to a lesser extent, American Association members tried to fend off PL raids on their player rosters, Brooklyn club boss Byrne took a drastic step. He removed his American Association pennant-winning team from the AA and affiliated it with the National League. Meanwhile, the Players League also installed a strong nine in the City of Churches, one led by erstwhile NY Giants star John Montgomery Ward, the founding genius of the PL. Neither the NL Brooklyn Bridegrooms nor the PL Brooklyn Ward's Wonders, however, intended to play any games in Queens.

Enter Jim Kennedy, a 27-year-old New York sportswriter and would-be baseball mogul, with a proposal to organize a third major league club for Brooklyn. Kennedy's club, soon dubbed the Brooklyn Gladiators, were to fill the void left in American Association ranks by the departure of the Byrne ball club.⁴⁰ An immediate problem confronting the fledgling operation was finding playing grounds. With the National League occupying Washington Park and the Players League ensconced in newly-erected Eastern Park, there were no suitable grounds left in Brooklyn for the Gladiators. Kennedy's club, therefore, scheduled its home games for the nearest available ballpark in neighboring Queens – Ridgewood Park II.

The collaboration of club and ballpark proved an unsatisfactory one. The structural modifications to Ridgewood Park II left critics unsatisfied, Brooklyn sportswriter J. F. Donnelly lamenting a "wild, backwoods air that pervades the grounds and everything is distressingly crude."⁴¹ Worse yet was the product in uniform, a hapless collection of has-beens and nonentities unlikely to attract much fan allegiance. With a modest home crowd of 2,000 in attendance, the Gladiators dropped their major league debut to the Syracuse Stars, 3-2. The following day, Brooklyn entered the win column with an unsightly 22-21 victory over Syracuse before only 700 spectators.

On June 8, 1890, Brooklyn bested Syracuse, 9-5. It was the final major league game played at Ridgewood Park II. The following day, Kennedy transferred Gladiators home games to the Polo Grounds in north Manhattan where they defeated Syracuse again, 13-7.⁴² With Brooklyn in last place

and teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, AA officials then put the Gladiators on the road for the 34 games. These events prompted a chagrined William Wallace to terminate Kennedy's lease of Ridgewood Park. But Wallace and company soon had more serious concerns than contract non-performance by their ballpark tenant. In July, a Queens jury convicted Wallace and REC cohorts Mayer and Rueger of maintaining a nuisance in allowing Sunday baseball at the Ridgewood grounds.⁴³ The penalty imposed was a \$500 fine, with jail time promised the defendants should there be a second offense. In the meantime, the American Association pulled the plug on the Brooklyn Gladiators, transferring the franchise to Baltimore in late August.

Ridgewood Park II: The Ensuing Decades

It would be 74 years before another major league game was played in Queens. But Ridgewood Park II did not sit idle during that time span. A full slate of fall sports – soccer, hurling, American and Gaelic football – placed spectators in the stands throughout the 1890s. As for baseball, local officials tolerated Sunday games between non-professional nines at Ridgewood Park. A blind eye was even turned toward a Sabbath exhibition game between the amateur Ridgewoods and Cincinnati's American Association club in July 1891. But ballpark proprietor Wallace was unwilling to jeopardize his liberty for a Sunday regular season game between AA clubs, turning down St. Louis Browns owner Chris Von der Ahe's proposal to match his club against the Philadelphia Athletics at Ridgewood Park II.⁴⁴

Beginning in the late 1890s, pre-Negro League clubs like the Genuine Cuban Giants began playing an occasional Sunday game at Ridgewood Park.⁴⁵ This and like activity spurred Wallace to renovate the grounds, a process that continued sporadically until the advent of American entry into World War I in April 1917. Prospects for major league baseball's return, however, were dashed in 1904 when the New York Highlanders were thwarted in an effort to play Sunday games at Ridgewood Park II.⁴⁶ Still semipro and amateur games continued, and the New York Royal Giants became ballpark tenants in 1912.⁴⁷

On September 19, 1917, the grandstand and a large portion of the bleachers at Ridgewood Park II were consumed by a fire of unknown origin. Thereafter, Wallace erected a smaller version of the ballpark on the northern part of the site. Ten years later, William Wallace died at age 71. In 1928, the grounds were reduced in size by industrial development, with the remainder, useful for soccer and the odd track and field meet (if not for baseball), taking the name Grand Stadium. This, too, eventually fell victim to urban sprawl. In 1959, the last remnants of Ridgewood Park II were swallowed by building construction. As with many other vanished ballparks, no memorial to the grounds can be found on the site today.

Notes

¹ See Sam Roberts, "Alcohol, Guns and Golf: The Long History of Blue Laws in New York," *New York Times*, June 16, 2016: A21. The term *blue law* is thought to be derived from the Puritan practice of binding their religious laws in blue-covered books.

² The modern five-borough (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island) New York City did not come into existence until January 1, 1898.

³ Per Andrew Ross and David Dyte, "The Parks of Ridgewood," viewable online at BrooklynBallParks.com.

⁴ See "Notes and Comments," *Sporting Life*, December 16, 1885: 3. The other 16 Ridgewood defeats came at the hands of major and minor league clubs.

⁵ Ren Mulford, Jr., "Cincinnati Chips," *Sporting Life*, December 4, 1889: 2. Whether Queens officials were paid off by ballpark proprietors or ball club owners or both, is uncertain.

⁶ The description applied to the contest in “Sunday Games,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1886: 3.

⁷ Per “Uninteresting Baseball,” *New York Tribune*, May 3, 1886: 2.

⁸ According to Retrosheet.

⁹ In 1885, Brooklyn had drawn 85,000 fans to games at Washington Park. In 1886, the Grays drew 185,000 patrons to games held between its everyday home field in Brooklyn and its Sunday grounds at Ridgewood Park, per Robert L. Tiemann, “Major League Attendance,” *Total Baseball* (Kingston, New York: Total Sports Publishing, 7th ed., 2001), 74.

¹⁰ The description of Brooklyn correspondent Fulton in *Sporting Life*, June 16, 1886: 1.

¹¹ Ross and Dyte, “Grauer’s Ridgewood Park,” in “The Parks of Ridgewood,” above, 1.

¹² Ross and Dyte, “Wallace’s Ridgewood Grounds,” in “The Parks of Ridgewood,” above, 2. See also, “News and Comments,” *Sporting Life*, April 15, 1885: 7.

¹³ See “New York News,” *Sporting Life*, May 29, 1889: 5.

¹⁴ “New York News,” above.

¹⁵ As reported in *Sporting Life*, July 3, 1886: 6, and elsewhere.

¹⁶ See “On the Diamond,” *New York Herald*, June 5, 1886: 7.

¹⁷ “Baseball Notes,” *New York Herald*, March 29, 1887: 8. Grauer’s Ridgewood Park, meanwhile, had been converted entirely to picnic use.

¹⁸ Ross and Dyte, above, 2-3.

¹⁹ Per Early Spring Sports,” *New York Herald*, March 14, 1887: 6. See also, “Base Ball Notes,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 22, 1887: 5.

²⁰ In “A Waterloo for Boston,” *Brooklyn Union*, April 11, 1887: 3. An out-of-town newspaper report put the crowd in the 6,000-7,000 range. See “Base Ball at Brooklyn on Sunday,” *Boston Journal*, April 11, 1887: 3.

²¹ “A Fatal Inning,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 25, 1887: 1. Retrosheet places the game’s attendance at 8,000.

²² “Weak Batting,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 6, 1887: 1. The *Brooklyn Times* placed the crowd at “about 7,000.”

²³ Sunday game attendance estimates were a regular feature of the reportage of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, *Brooklyn Times*, and *Brooklyn Citizen*.

²⁴ The lowest published attendance figure for an 1887 Brooklyn Sunday game was 4,000, a 4-3 loss to St. Louis incurred under threatening skies on July 24. A crowd of 10,000 (or 8,000 according to the *New York Times*) saw the best-played contest in Ridgewood that season, a 2-0 New York Mets win over the home side on August 14.

²⁵ Bass and Dyte, 4.

²⁶ For more on 19th century team nicknames, see Ed Coen, “Setting the Record Straight on Major League Team Nicknames,” *Baseball Research Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Fall 2019, 67-75.

²⁷ Per *Sporting Life*, April 4, 1888: 2.

²⁸ As noted in the *New York Tribune*, June 11, 1888: 8.

²⁹ Like other American Association clubs, Brooklyn charged the standard 25 cents for general admission. But grandstand seats went for double that. The April 29 game against Philadelphia, for example, drew a reported crowd of 5,481, “and

of these over twelve hundred paid 25 cents extra for seats in the grandstand.” “A Close Game,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 30, 1888: 1.

³⁰ As reported in “Brooklyn’s Sunday Games,” *New York Herald*, February 15, 1889: 8; “Demolition of the Polo Grounds,” *New York Tribune*, February 15, 1889: 2; “The Sporting World,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 17, 1889: 2; and elsewhere.

³¹ “They Are Not Afraid,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, February 15, 1889.

³² Per “World of Sports,” *Waterbury (Connecticut) Evening Democrat*, May 28, 1889: 5. The Sunday ballpark rental fee charged Newark was \$200 per game.

³³ “Exciting Base Ball Game,” *Helena (Montana) Weekly Herald*, May 9, 1889: 3. The *New York Tribune* placed the game attendance at 12,614. Under the rules, Brooklyn’s failure to maintain security on its grounds should have resulted in the game being forfeited to Philadelphia, 9-0. But it was not.

³⁴ See e.g., *New York Tribune*, May 6, 1889: 6: “This occurrence should give a decided setback to Sunday ball-playing, which is only popular with certain classes of men and tends inevitably to bring a fine and noble game into disrepute.” A next-day *Brooklyn Union* editorial, meanwhile, opined that “the only sure way to prevent repetition [of the disgraceful exhibition] is by stopping professional ball playing on Sunday.”

³⁵ See “Long Island News,” *Brooklyn Times*, June 10, 1889: 5.

³⁶ A letter to the editor critical of non-enforcement of blue law restrictions upon Sunday baseball from Bishop Littlejohn was published in “Our Sunday,” *Brooklyn Times*, August 3, 1889: 1.

³⁷ See “Sunday Ball Playing,” *Brooklyn Times*, October 22, 1889: 1.

³⁸ Eldert Street lies between Covert and Halsey Streets on the ballpark diagram. More than 130 years later, the paper section of Eldert Street remains unconstructed.

³⁹ Bass and Dyte, 4.

⁴⁰ For more on the formation of the Brooklyn Gladiators, see the BioProject profile of club founder Jim Kennedy.

⁴¹ “All Dwelt in Harmony,” *Sporting Life*, May 17, 1890: 12.

⁴² See “Manager Kennedy Changes Dates,” *New York Herald*, June 13, 1890: 8. See also, “Condensed Dispatches,” *Sporting Life*, June 14, 1890: 1.

⁴³ See “Condensed Dispatches,” *Sporting Life*, July 26, 1890: 1.

⁴⁴ As reported in “Von der Ahe Brooklyn Raid,” *Sporting Life*, May 23, 1891: 5.

⁴⁵ See “Baseball Notes,” *New York Sun*, October 16, 1897: 5.

⁴⁶ See Bass and Dyte, 6. The Highlanders, however, were able to play some Sunday exhibition games against the Ridgewoods at Ridgewood Park II.

⁴⁷ Bass and Dyte, 7-9.