

SABR Ballparks Committee Newsletter

July/August 1991

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I NEW MEMBERS

We welcome a record number of new members to the committee with this newsletter issue:

1. Kenneth D. Kolb, 3 Bote Ct., Greenwich, CT 06830
All major lg. parks, esp. spring training sites; interest in plaque program; suggests a video tape be made on sites of old stadia.
2. Bill Cahill, c/o Larson, 28 Marine Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11209
All parks before 1950; esp. Brooklyn, NYC, NJ, PA areas; plans some markers for Brooklyn early park sites.
3. Stephen Leach, 625 Gramatan Avenue, #2H, Mt. Vernon, NY 10552
All parks/all eras; esp. NYC area parks; Roosevelt Stadium; special interest in Yonkers, NY sites; suggests video be made of soon-to-be abandoned parks (Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, & minor leagues).
4. Joel Spivak, 616 Carpenter St., Philadelphia, PA 19147
All parks/areas before 1950; Jefferson Grounds in Phila.; suggests an archaeological dig to find remains of early Phila. parks.
5. Rocco Del Sesto, 341 So. Center Street, Lagrange, OH 44050
All 20th c. parks; suggests a series of layouts that superimpose playing fields/dimensions of various parks for study/contrast with possible publication of results.
6. James Bennett, 719 Register, Baltimore, MD 21212
All parks 1900-50; Wrigley/Sportsman's/Crosley/Ebbets; photo & postcard interest; suggests photographic history of old parks; interest in layouts and dimensions of early classic parks (1909-23).
7. Mark Mahler, 1539 Woodruff Avenue #202, Los Angeles, CA 90024
All parks 1920-; Forbes/Shibe-Baker/Griffith/Crosley; a collector of stadia materials (photos, books, cards, programs); interested in all park aspects.
8. Paul R. Savary, 3429 86th Street #637, Des Moines, IA 50322
Post 1950 era; Baltimore; Sec Taylor in Des Moines; "Field of Dreams" field in Dyersville, IA; interest in preserving the Dyersville field.
9. Dominic Denaro, 10 Ambrose St., Revere, MA 02151
All parks after 1900; esp. Japanese parks; creates photographic and recreated panoramas of ballparks and great baseball park moments; suggests a book on ballpark photography and art.

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10. Steve Csik, 4618 Adkins Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63166

All parks & eras; great interest in park postcards & photos; interested in working with people with collections of same.

11. Galen Wisner, 920 Sherman, Wayne, NE 68787

All major lg. parks after 1900; Tiger Stadium.

All of our eleven new members have listed projects and requests for contacts by other committee people. Please drop any of these new folks a note if you have a common interest.

II POLO GROUNDS MARKERS What happened to the various markers in that NYC park when it was demolished in the mid-1960s? One marker was dedicated to John McGraw; another to Eddie Grant. If you know, contact Joseph D. Tekulsky, 13570 Bayliss Road, Los Angeles, CA 90049. Please send a copy of your note to me!

III CHANGE OF ADDRESS for Howard Wasserman, 1530 Caminito Solidago, La Jolla, CA 92037. Also, F. David Gill, 2908 Coleridge Road, Cleveland Heights, OH. And Chris Jennison, 76 Further Lane, Chappaqua, NY 10514.

IV BALLPARKS ODYSSEY by committee member Jim Brown. He spent 30 days and 5000 miles to see 22 ballgames in 17 different cities. He saw a few relatives too! We thank him for a generous donation of clippings and materials on parks including Louisville, KY.

V MCCORMICK FIELD in Asheville, NC, is the subject of a booklet, McCormick Field, Home of Reality. It is a history of "the oldest minor league park in America." Our thanks to Charles Wilson for a copy for the committee library. He says that the publication is "somewhat long on personalities and short on physical plant info, but it is the best review of the park we're going to get." To order the 62-page booklet, contact Bob Terrell Publisher (and author), 55 Dillingham Road Asheville, NC 28805. No price info available.

VI RECREATION PARK in San Francisco & other PCL parks of the mid-1920s. Info needed by Scott Mackey, 1320 Normandy Lane, Sacramento, CA 95822, (916) 732-5148. He is writing a piece on the 1925 San Francisco Seals. Please contact him if you can assist.

VII RECREATED CROSLIEY FIELD came alive again in Blue Ash, OH, for the 4th Annual Major League Old Timers Game on August 11. For a copy of the press release and related materials, send a 52¢ SASE.

VIII CONGRATULATIONS to loyal committee member Francis Kinlaw whose smiling countenance appeared in the June 30 Greensboro News & Record. Francis has his Tiger batting helmet and Tiger Stadium Fan Club shirt on! The article, " 'Progress strikes out some fine old ballparks'" discusses Tiger Stadium and the minor league park building plans for the NC area.

IX BROOKLYN, BASEBALL & EBBETS FIELD graduate school paper of Matthew Kachur is now available. Cost is \$5.00 and includes postage for this 54-page study of baseball in the famous borough. Last semester Mat covered Yankee Stadium. What's left but the Polo Grounds!

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- X SPORTING NEWS recent piece, a cover story on Tiger Stadium, was far from sporting. The August 5 story was poorly written, full of errors (Nevin Field built in 1913?) and quite biased in its viewpoint. Committee member John Pastier has been attempting to set the record straight and has been contacting a variety of Sporting News people. John has offered to write a piece, but TSN editors have not accepted anything as yet.
- XI BALLPARKS IN PRINT Three good articles have appeared this summer: Sports Illustrated of August 5 had an excellent piece on Osborn Engineering, builders of most of the 1909-1932 parks; Architectural Record in its June/91 issue had "Design for Leisure," covering Camden Yards in Baltimore, John O'Donnell Stadium in Davenport, IA; and new Comiskey Park; committee member Phil Bess published a short piece in the Memo, newsletter of the American Institute of Architects. The July/91 issue also had an article on new Comiskey, Camden Yards, Pilot Field, and a second piece on The Diamond of Richmond, VA. Phil also has a piece on Comiskey Park coming out in Inland Architect in the near future.
- XII ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT is enclosed with this newsletter.
- XIII MASTER'S THESIS assistance. Matthew Bronski, 20 Warren Street, Randolph, MA 02368. He has been awarded a RTKL Work/Travel Fellowship. RTKL is an architectural firm with offices in several US cities. In his own words, "My master's thesis looks at the search for a 'middle landscape' in America as a cultural context from which urban baseball parks of 1900-1923 arose, and examines how these ballparks embody meaning as physical evidence of this search for a 'middle landscape,' and as a paradigm of 'American Pastoral Design.'" Wow! His work is due in 2½ years, so he has some time to travel and visit cities and ballparks. In short, he is studying the relationship of baseball as a pastoral, rural-style game in its twentieth century urban parks----the green grass field in the midst of the big city. If you have thoughts or suggestions, please contact Matthew. The thesis program is being directed by the University of PA.
- XIV BALLPARKS ON CEREAL BOXES Recently a friend sent me a Kellogg's "Raisin Bran" box and on the back side was the Yankee Stadium drawing by Amadee from the Take Me Out to the Ballpark book published by The Sporting News. As that Yankee broadcaster would say, "How about that!"
- XV SEC TAYLOR STADIUM in Des Moines, according to new member Paul Savary, has "a date with a bulldozer" following the 1991 season. A new park is to be built on the site for the 1992 season. He is researching a major piece on the park. If you have any suggestions for resources, contact him at the address on page one of this newsletter. And if you need a photo of the place, get going!
- XVI HBO BASEBALL SPECIAL How many saw the excellent one-hour program, "When it was a game," broadcasted on several evenings in July. The color home movie film was a revelation as classic park after park came to life in distinct color. Questions we have been receiving on the color of seats, ads, etc., all came clear. If they re-run the show, be sure to see it!
- XVII HBO is now working on a "landmark documentary" on sports broadcasting. They want "to cover the most interesting, exciting, and entertaining moments that have taken place since the inception of 'Sports TV.'" They seek early tv footage, kinescopes, etc, including the '47 World Series. If you can help, contact Gregg Backer, HBO, (212) 512-5462. The show should air in November. For a copy of his letter to us, send a 29¢ SASE.

XVIII ASTRODOME TOUR brochures, full of color pictures and info, available for a 29¢ SASE.

XIX CAMDEN YARDS ballpark in Baltimore continues to near completion. Thanks again to Bruce Genter for his latest donation of photos for our files. I'll put together a booklet of his photos for the 1992 SABR meeting in St. Louis. The latest issue of Opening Day, the newsletter of the Maryland Stadium Authority, notes that the nearby Camden Station (and thus the name, some hope, that will be given the park) will be restored. Also, the seats for the park will feature the 1895 Baltimore club logo. The Stadium Authority is located at Suite 2450, The World Trade Center, Baltimore, MD 21202. A friendly letter might get you on the mailing list. The newsletter comes out every two months.

XX CONGRATULATIONS to committee member Bruce Kuklick! As you read in the SABR Bulletin or heard at the NYC convention, Bruce won a research award for his Shibe Park book. I highly recommend the book for its writing and footnotes/resources. It is not a general history of either the team or the park, but a well-focused study of the ballpark and a neighborhood and the ways they grew and changed together.

XXI SAN ANTONIO If you ever get to a minor league game in San Antonio (VJ Keefe Stadium on the campus of St. Mary's University), be sure to say hello to Tom Dunton, a die-hard Missions fan. You'll know Tom; he and his hard-core fellow fans sit in a block on the first base side and ring bells and chant for the home club and against the opposition. The ballpark is the smallest in AA level (about 3500 seats) and is quite cozy, although obviously second-rate by today's standards of comfort and facilities.

XXII CLEVELAND'S LEAGUE PARK The Cleveland Plain Dealer made a very clear pitch to save what is left of the old park. "Better late than never" it said in a May 2 editorial, "If it's worth spending \$144 million to build a new home for the Indians in Gateway, it's worth spending \$500,000 or so to preserve the Indians' old home in Hough. It would not only save a slice of city history, it might help revive a neighborhood." SABR members attending the 1990 convention should recall the trolley trip to League Park. More than enough is left to save. A recent SABR Bulletin noted local efforts to help League Pk.

XXIII MARKER ADVICE If you or some group you are working with is planning to mark some historic baseball site or building, you should order the pamphlet, "Establishing a Plaque Program: Bringing Local History to the Community." This eight-page technical information publication can be ordered from the American Association for State and Local History, 172 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201.

XXIV TIGER STADIUM HISTORY is close to publication. Committee member Ethan Casey is a co-author of this fall-91 published book and has asked for committee assistance in promoting and funding the publication. The book's purpose "is to present the case for preservation and for a rational, inexpensive renovation." If you care to donate to the cause, that is most welcome. If you make a \$25 donation, you will receive a copy (signed by authors), a bumper sticker, "and a warm feeling of helping save the oldest address in professional sports." For more info, contact Michael Betzold, 20025 Renfrew, Detroit, MI 48221 (313) 864-1496

It is a 250-page book with 16 pages of photos. Ideas for fundraising and promotion of the book are welcome too!

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XXV CLEVELAND GATEWAY PROJECT, a new park for the Indians, generates many news stories and our thanks to F. David Gill and Evan Meyer for their faithful sending of the clippings. For a summer selection, send a 52¢ SASE and we'll pass along some light reading.

XXVI HAPPY 100th Birthday to Cleveland's League Park (also see item XXII). For two news stories of the activity on the centennial, send a 29¢ SASE.

XXVII HISTORY OF BASEBALL BLEACHERS requested by Zoe Mikol, c/o IMG, 1725 Indian Wood Circle, Maumee, OH 43537 (419) 893-2500. She is writing a piece for an ad agency. The agency's client makes a new type of fiberglass covered bleacher and her article is fitting in this new development in a review of bleachers. If you have info/suggestions on bleacher arrangement, construction style, etc., please contact her. Whatever info that is provided will be used without any implication that an individual or SABR (or this committee!) approves of or recommends this product.

XXVIII NIGHT BASEBALL David Pietrusza's work on night baseball games continues and he has two games he would like to track down: June 30, 1897 Houston at San Antonio; March 22, 1931, NY Giants and White Sox at Buff Stadium, Houston. If you have anything to offer, please write David at 611 Sanders Avenue, Scotia, NY 12302.

XXIX NEW POSTCARD SET on ballparks may be coming in 1993 says committee member Vic Pallos. Parks in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. Vic noted that a few errors slipped through the checkers in his last batch, but he hopes that the next one will be thoroughly fact-tested! We also thank Vic for his generous contribution to our committee's postage fund.

XXX MORE MARKERS! New committee member Bill Cahill has sent along several packets of information and materials on parks and marker projects in the NYC area. Among the projects:

- 1, Dexter Park, a nineteenth century recreational area and ballpark in the twentieth century. Home of the Bushwicks. Located in the Woodhaven neighborhood of Queens. Bill reports that a slide lecture will be given on the park on 9-24-91, 3:30 pm, at the Woodhaven Library. Efforts to have a marker put on the park site are going well and have included the support of area societies, historians, and the Native New Yorkers Historical Association.
2. Washington Park, Brooklyn, home of the Dodgers, a Federal League team, and other activity. Bill states that there were several versions of the park. Today, Con. Edison occupies the site. Bill will be meeting with Con. Edison to seek support for a marker.
3. Capitoline Grounds, Brooklyn: now the site of Boys High School in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant area. No marker here. This was the site of the Athletics-Red Stockings June-1870 game that broke the Cincinnati 70-game winning streak.
4. Union Grounds, Brooklyn, near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. no marker at site
5. Broadway Central Hotel, location now part of a university. Place where National League was founded in 1876. Broadway and 3rd Street. The Native New Yorker Association has asked about a plaque for this site.

Bill reports that he is working hard for Dexter Park. Union and Capitoline may have to wait for a later time (rough neighborhoods, he notes). Washington Park is a possibility as is the hotel. If you can assist, please contact Bill at the address on page one of the newsletter.

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- XXXI ODDS & ENDS Shoppers in Arlington, the Dallas-Fort Worth suburb that claims the Rangers, started to pay the increase of $\frac{1}{2}\%$ in local sales tax to pay for the future ballpark that will replace Arlington Stadium; Local voters had approved the tax increase on January 19..... People still come to Dyersville, IA to see the "Field of Dreams" park in the corn fields. An 6-21-91 story from Scripps-Howard News Service noted that 7,000 people came the first year, 14,000 last year, and 20,000 this year. "On a recent day, 200 had signed the guest book by noon." The July 14 Toronto Star reported that a man fell seventy feet from a ramp at the Skydome. He was leaving the park after a Jays-Rangers game "When he fell down a one-metre (3 feet) gap between two pedestrian ramps." an AP story of 6-22-91 noted that bleacher fans at Fenway Park have been tossing about anatomically correct dolls. Red Sox officials have been taking steps to confiscate the dolls..... Yoichi Nagata, A Japanese ballparks fan, recently sent our committee several high-quality postcards of the Tokyo Dome, noting that the locals call it the "Big Egg."
- XXXII BOOK NOTES "Current Baseball Publications," a publication of the SABR Bibliography Committee, notes several ballparks-related books in its April-June review. Has anyone bought Major League Stadiums: A Vacation Planning Reference to the 26 Baseball Parks (Jefferson, NC, McFarland, 380 p with photos, \$24.95) by Dan Dickinson and Kiernan Dickinson? If so, write a short review for the newsletter. Also, serious ballparks researchers should look at chapters 7-8 of City Games: Evolution of American Society and the Rise of Sports by Steven A. Riess, University of Illinois Press (1989). Dr. Riess also wrote Touching Base, a history of baseball in the 1900-1930 era, that included a good chapter of ballparks development. And, Don Honig's recent illustrated history of the Cardinals and Cubs have a number of good shots of ballparks.
- XXXIII GREEN CATHEDRAIS II There will be a second, updated edition of this book and it should be published by the spring of 1992, maybe by March. More details as they become available. I am reviewing the manuscript and it will be a better organized and illustrated book than the first edition. The second edition is being published by Addison-Wesley. For more information, contact me.
- XXXIV TROY, NY Markers David Pietrusza reports that local SABR people are working on plaques for several baseball history sites, including two ballparks. A meeting was held on Monday, August 19. Contact Dave Walsh of the NorthEast New York SABR chapter at 60 Swaggertown Road, Scotia, NY 12302.
- XXXV BALLPARKS QUILT? Recently a fellow called and left a message that his wife, a quilt artist, was making a quilt to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Williams' .406 season and the DiMaggio 56-game streak. Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium would be prominent on the quilt. No phone number was given and we never heard from these folks, so keep your eyes open for a ballparks quilt.
- XXXVI BALLPARKS COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING Thanks to Mike Dempsey, we have a summary of the annual gathering. A copy is enclosed.

Late Addition

We have another new member: Jim Bard, 695 Cumberland Ave. Chambersburg, PA 17201. interested in new Balt. park; scoreboards; Griffith/Fenway/ Comiskey/ Memorial Stadium, also RFK/DC Std.; **models** and model making

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REPRINTS Thanks to many committee members, we have a varied selection of articles and materials to offer this issue:

1. "The Cleveland Indians: Why So Bad for So Long," NY Times, 7-2-91 2 pgs.
2. "New Park Honors tradition, fans (Balt.)," Detroit Free Press, 7-3-91, 2 pgs.
3. "Sportsman's Site Brings Back Memories of Ruth," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 5-2-91 1 pg.
4. "Time to Give up Ghost of Old Busch Std." Post-Dispatch, 5-18-91 2 pgs.
5. "Cloudy Future for Antique Parks," no date/origin, 2 pgs.
6. "House That Ruth Built," Athlon's Baseball, 1991, 7 pgs.
7. "Today's Stadiums have nothing on yesterday's ballparks," Free-Press, 7-8-91, 1 pg.
8. "Historic city's pitch for revitalization," IA Times, 6-24-91, 1 pg. (re Baltimore)
9. "Baseball Mall," Free-Press, 6-30-91, 4 pgs. (new Comiskey and Tiger Stadium)
10. "Rangers Scouting for dream team," Dallas Business Journal, 6/28-7/4, 1 pg.
11. "Designing a Field of Dreams," Dallas Morning News, 7-28-91, 4 pgs.
12. Ballparks of San Antonio, San Antonio Light, 4-8-91, 3 pgs.
13. "Minor Miracle in Pawtucket," Boston Globe, 1-27-91, 1 pg.
14. Two cross-country ballparks trips, 3 pgs.
15. Several articles on the SkyDome debt, 4 pgs.
16. "Orioles new stadium...." Sports Collectors Digest, 6-21-91 1 pg.
17. "Dome or Home," (Fenway vs. SkyDome), Boston Herald, 4-10-91, 1 pg.
18. "Insider's Guide to Fenway Park," Boston Herald, 4-7-91, 4 pgs.
19. "Developers cool to new stadium bid," Det. News, 7-12-91 3 pgs.
20. "If you build it," US News, 6-24-91. 2 pgs.
21. "Sluggers hold special place in baseball memories," AP, July-91 1 pg.
22. Fan Buys Tiger Stadium for \$2 (really!), Boston Herald, 5-24-91 1 pg.
23. "Raising the Roof at the SkyDome," Boston Globe, 4-8-91, 2 pgs.
24. Eugene V. Debs night at Tiger Stadium (if you know who Debs is then you should read this article!), Detroit News, 2 pgs. 7-10-91

Copies are 6cents/page; Add 29 cents postage for the first four pages and 23 cents for additional sets of four pages after that.

Please make checks out to Bob Bluthardt. The local bank does not know what a SABR or Ballparks Committee is!

Extra postage or stamps are added to the postage fund.

XXXVII SOMISKEY PARK reviews:

"The new Comiskey Park is now reality. It's a fairly decent park, but it could have been much better. And I'm not just talking about the Armour Square Park alternative. Even using the basic Royals Stadium design concept, with some modifications, it could have been improved. The upper deck is too steep, more suitable for mountain goats than pot bellied fans. And the lower deck is probably not steep enough, at least not if there is someone over six feet sitting in front of you. I think that if they had modified these grades and then subtracted about ten rows from the upper deck (which appear to be the last seats to sell even though they are reserved) and added those ten rows to the lower deck (and not moved the upper deck any farther back in doing so), they would have improved the park dramatically."

Barry Evans, Chicago

"It is a unique experience to enter a new ballpark. It is also unique to obtain a bird's eye view of the destruction of an old ballpark as one walks the staircase to get to the new park. One of the primary entrances to the new Comiskey Park is at street level on the north side of 35th Street, where old Comiskey is fast falling down. As one walks up a staircase to enter a short skywalk across 35th Street, there is an excellent view of the destruction of the old ballpark. Fans cluster at several of the staircase landings to view the remains, take pictures, and reminisce.

Inside the new park one finds a state-of-the-art facility. The sea of Blue-blue seats, blue padding on walls, and blue paint reminded me of Yankee Stadium. My friend's first impression as we walked the wide aisle of the lower deck main concourse was that 'I feel like I'm in a damned shopping mall.'"

The best buy in the house is probably a bleacher seat. The \$6 ticket there certainly compares favorably to the higher priced seats down the lines in the upper deck. If one is willing to turn around, the bleachers even afford an excellent view of the Sony screen in left-center field. This is one of the better screens of those now commonplace at major league parks. ---clear pictures and a variety of baseball video and statistical entertainment. About the only drawback to the outfield seating is the all too prevalent gap of 40 feet or so that separates the fans from the playing field. Where all home runs at old Comiskey were into the seats (except the now extinct roof shots), many homers at the new park will not reach the seats.

The variety of available food at the new park compares favorably with the old menu. I even saw a few items (frozen yogurt and new bakery additions) that were not available at the old park. Be forewarned, however, that some of the food is only available on the upper deck concourse.

The White Sox Hall of Fame, located behind home plate on the lower concourse, is well worth the \$1 admission charge. Included are items from the few World Series appearances of the ChiSox. Souvenirs from the 1906 and 1919 fall classic are highlights. There are also items from the old ballpark. The Sox have done a good job of displaying some precious memorabilia, and any complaint here would be confined to wishing there were more room to show more of it.

The new park isn't the old Comiskey, of course. I miss seeing fans sitting behind home plate on tv games. Sox organist Nancy Faust, instead of being one of the spectators, is now confined to an "isolation booth" at the top of the lower deck. But in its favor the new park is modern and while incorporating many of the less desirable features of modern ballpark construction, it also preserves a few of the older memories."

Fred Taylor, Creston, IA