

SABR BALLPARKS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

October & December issue, 1989

Robert F. Bluthardt      Committee Chairman  
244 No. Oxford Drive      Home: (915) 942-0635  
San Angelo, TX 76901      Work: (915) 657-4441

My apologies for <sup>the</sup> long absence of our committee newsletter. The fund-raising efforts for City Baseball Magic took up a considerable amount of time in the early fall, so we are combining our last two 1989 issues and will get back on schedule for 1990.

I CITY BASEBALL MAGIC REPORT It has been two months since our successful publication of this work that outlines the case for a properly designed baseball park, and the response thus far has been very good.

Publicity We need to thank a number of people and organizations for spreading the word about this publication and its availability. The SABR Bulletin (Jan. 1990 edition) gave us a free notice. Our thanks to SABR executive director Norman Kraich. Several SABR committees have been helpful in giving us a "plug." Thanks to Bill Carle of the Biography Committee, Larry Gerlach of Umpires/Rules Committee, Dick Clark of the Negro Leagues Committee, and Frank Phelps of the Bibliography Committee for their assistance and kind words. Also, Lloyd Johnson has offered to give us a notice in his new publication, "Here's The Pitch," that goes to thousands of baseball researchers and book collectors. And the ever helpful and supportive staff of the Minneapolis Review of Baseball, our publishers, have been very good about referring people to our committee.

Sales of the publication are off to a good start. We have about 300 extra copies to sell, and thus far we have sold nearly 70! Spread the word among your friends who like ballparks. Copies are \$7.00, postage paid, with checks made out to Bob Bluthardt as the committee, not the SABR office, is handling the finances.

Response to City Baseball Magic has been good. Miles Wolff of Baseball America (also owner of the Durham Bulls) ordered 30 copies; the Greater Cleveland Growth Association asked for several copies; we also received an order from the Michigan Dept. of Commerce. Also, a number of minor league teams have contacted Phil Bess or myself. And Phil has had several meetings with the mayor of Milwaukee about their future park plans.

What's Next? We need to continue our watch over cities and franchises that are considering new facilities. Our original 1500-person mailing list may have missed key people in key cities, so if you have names of people who may have been left off our target mailing, contact Phil Bess at 4438 No. Artesian, Chicago, IL 60625 (312) 463-2395. We also have been somewhat disappointed by the lack of a response from sports-writers who received the publication. If you have any ideas on that level, contact Phil or myself.

Another report will come in our first 1990 newsletter.

- II GRIFFITH STADIUM PLAQUE Gordon Thomas reports another chance at having someone at Howard University listen to the requests to have a plaque put up to mark the site of Griffith Stadium. A mutual friend knows one of the officials at the university, so maybe something will happen.
- III PHOTO PROJECT of Joe Favano recently picked up a few more contributions. If you have some good shots of parks that you would like to contribute to the collection, contact Joe at 21 Roosevelt Ave., Old Greenwich, CT 06870.
- IV MEMBER ON ESPN Congratulations to recently joined committee member Brad Merilla who appeared on ESPN on the evening sports show of September 12, 1989. Brad was one of the several artists and model makers interviewed who work with ballparks as a theme.
- V NYC BALLPARKS MEETING took place on October 3 in Manhattan. Our thanks to Vin Russo for arranging the meeting place at a mid-town deli.
- VI BUFFALO has unveiled plans of taking Pilot Field from 19,500 seats to 41,000 in anticipation of a major league team, reports Joe Overfield. Any clippings or info for the files?
- VII SHIBE PARK'S SPITE FENCE, erected in the 1930s to stop the rooftop bleachers from operating across the rightfield fence, was the project of Jack Shibe, says Bruce Kuklik. I mentioned the fence in a previous newsletter and erroneously attributed it to Connie Mack. Bruce is working on a history of Shibe Park, so he should know!
- VIII ADDRESS CHANGES: Tom Karnes  
6 Hillway  
Round Rock, TX 78664  
David Hornish  
2230 Seamans Neck Rd.  
Seaford, NY 11783  
Andrew Klein  
777 Dedham Street  
Malloy Yall  
Newton Cnt, MA 02159
- IX NEW BALTIMORE PARK is progressing and thanks to Gordon Thomas, we have recent issues of the Maryland Stadium Authority newsletter. Also, Gordon sent a story from the Washington Times that has discovered that the new park's center field will cover the location where Babe Ruth's dad had his saloon. How about that!
- X BALLPARKS OF NORTH AMERICA, by Michael Bensen, has been out for a few months and I hope to have my copy in a few weeks. Several people have offered to write a review for this newsletter. Let's issue an open invitation: get me your comments, review, opinion, whatever..... deadline: February 1, 1990. I'll print a selection in the first 1990 Committee Newsletter.

- XI SHIBE PARK had an unusual cut taken out of the infield grass by second base. The Gene Mack cartoon of the park shows this. Does anyone know why this was so?
- XII A NEW BOSTON PARK? Several news stories in September reported of a \$35,000 study by HOK of Kansas City at the request of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to explore the possibility, feasibility, location, etc. of a new sports facility, either for the Patriots or a new baseball franchise.
- XIII AT THE BALLPARK by Ken Robbins.... we had asked about this book in the August newsletter and Kyle Johnson reports that this is a children's book with his daughter having a copy. "It consists of hand-tinted photos of baseball scenes, with one line of text per photo-per page. Shots taken at Shea Stadium (Mets vs. Cards) and McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket (Paw Sox vs. Mud Hens.) Thanks Kyle!
- XIV NEW MEMBERS We welcome the following people to the committee:
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Charles P. Wilson, III<br>30 Turnberry Dr.<br>Arden, NC 28704 | Parks of the 1920-50 era; architectural interest; interest in local park that he claims is the 6th oldest in organized baseball.                            |
| Ken Hodges<br>26 Barholm Ave,<br>Stamford, CT 06907           | Parks of the 1920-50 and modern era; parks as part of urban hist.; D.C. parks; interest in demographics and how they relate to parks.                       |
| Jerry Hermele<br>1204 Portner Rd.<br>Alexandria, VA 22314     | Parks of the early 20th c. and 1920-50; Griffith Stadium & West Side Park/Chicago; architectural interest; wants to see plaques put up for forgotten parks. |
| Jim Sumner<br>3215 Warwick Drive<br>Raleigh, NC 27606         | Early 20th c and 1920-50; parks of N.C.; preservation of older parks; parks as part of urban history.   |
- XV TOM MONAHAN was profiled in a GQ piece in the past few months. Anyone read this profile of the Tiger owner? If you have a copy, consider sending it to our reference file.
- XVI MISSING PEOPLE Mail has been returned recently for Marty O'Connor in Woodbury, CT and Christine Fry in Brighton, MA. Anyone know where these people now live?
- XVII UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR STUDIES TIGER STADIUM Brian Rakoczy of that university called and asked for information about the plans to save, replace, or preserve Tiger Stadium. He had been in touch with the Tiger Stadium Fan Club. His class in sports management was using the Tiger Stadium situation as a case study. I copied a file of info and sent it to him at 442 Askin Avenue, Windsor, Ont., N9B 2X4.

XVIII HALL OF FAME in Cooperstown is alive and well and I had the chance to see the place during a recent business trip. Thanks to librarian Tom Heintz who showed me about the new wing, including the new theatre. I have a limited number of HOF and Cooperstown brochures if anyone is interested. Send along a 45¢ SASE for both.

XIX 100 YEARS OF THE DODGERS (Brooklyn and LA) Another research request from Art Black with Black Canyon Productions, 645 Madison Avenue, NYC, NY 10022, asking for info on the Brooklyn team and its various parks. They are putting together either a movie or video. They were especially interested in color home movies of Ebbets Field. Contact them at (212) 753-7730 if you can help.

XX SMITHSONIAN SPONSORS BALLPARKS TOUR The NY Times of August 7 reported on a special tour/program of "the nation's more history-laced monuments, the baseball stadiums in Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland." The week's tour with all the costs is \$1450. Lowell Reidenbauh, retired editor of The Sporting News and a ballparks historian, provided the commentary.

XXI TIGER STADIUM and the efforts by the Tiger Stadium Fan Club continue to be in the news. Their November-89 newsletter summarizes an impressive two years of activity to bring a balanced perspective to the aspects of the park and the case for its preservation. Their recent newsletter also has some interesting materials for sale to help support the organization. If you are not on their mailing list and would like to get on it for a modest contribution, contact the Fan Club at PO Box 441426, Detroit, MI 48244-1426. (313) 964-5991.

XXII "MICHIGAN & TRUMBULL BEFORE BASEBALL," an article in the July-August issue of Michigan History, covers the history of the Tiger Stadium site from 1707 to the early 1900s. Authored by Tiger Stadium Fan Club member Don Voelker, it sounds like a fine piece of research. Has anyone seen this article? If so, could you forward a copy for our committee reference files?

XXIII SABR ANNUAL MEETING 1990 Friday-Saturday-Sunday, July 27-28-29

Committee Business Meeting: Tentatively set for Saturday, July 28, 8:30 - 9:30 am. All committee meetings for 1990 are set for mornings.

Cleveland Parks Talk: The opening session of papers/presentations will be devoted to Cleveland baseball, and I have been asked to give one on the ballparks of Cleveland. I am happy to do this as a representative of the committee and I need your assistance in the way of slides. If you have any slides of any Cleveland parks (League, Municipal, etc), I will gladly pay for a copy, make the copy myself, or trade with some of my slides. If anyone was planning a similar talk, please contact me and let's see if we can coordinate our talks.

Other ideas There is a possibility that we as a committee might sponsor a panel discussion on ballparks. Cleveland, home of Osborne Engineering that built/rebuilt so many of the classics, would be an appropriate setting for such a talk. As noted in the Bulletin, we have a March 1, 1990 deadline for any presentation proposals. Contact me if you have any suggestions.

XXIV CLIPPINGS DONATED TO THE FILES

- a) Scranton-Wilkes-Barre farm team and new park, Phila. Daily News, March 22, 1989
- b) Reading, PA, farm team and park, Reading Eagle, February 19, 1989
- c) " " " Reading Times, July 26, 1989
- d) TV Cameras and Fenway Park's new luxury boxes Boston Globe, August 11, 1989
- e) Brooklyn Ballparks, Seaport Magazine, Summer-89
- f) Toronto Skydome, Maclean's, June 12, 1989
- g) "Baseball Fans Visit 4 Field of Dreams on a Nostalgia Trip" Wall Street Journal, September 11, 1989
- h) "Stadiums Enter Era of Luxury" NY Times, September 25, 1989
- i) "A Radical Idea: Baseball as it used to be" NY Times, Sept. 19, 1989
- j) Misc. articles on the proposed ballpark for San Francisco, San Francisco Chronicle, October 11, 1989

Our thanks to the many committee members who contributed these to the files. Single requests for a SASE of 25¢ (except items #f & j that will require 45¢ each or 65¢ together). Three or more of the rest require 45¢. All surplus or unused stamps or money go into our general postage fund.

- k) Interview with Dale Swearingen of Osborn Engineering of Cleveland, The New Yorker
- l) "Bright Lights, Big City," Night baseball at Wrigley Field one year later, LA Times, August 8, 1989
- m) "Sticking It To The Stick" Sports Illustrated, August 21, 1989

- XXV RESEARCH REQUEST Don Coffin of the Statistical Analysis Committee has asked for data, especially annual attendance for major league teams, for the 1950-88 period. Also, he is interested in ticket prices for that era. Contact him at Indiana University Northwest, 3400 Broadway, Gary, IN 46408 (219) 980-6646.
- XXVI Biblio on Cleveland Sports by the Cleveland Sports Legends Foundation. A list of books on Cleveland athletes and sports with many references to baseball. For a copy, send a SASE to CSLF Book List, PO Box 21163, Cleveland, OH 44121. Thanks to Morris Eckhouse and the Bibliography Committee newsletter for this information.
- XXVII EDIFICE COMPLEX, an interesting editorial from the Wall Street Journal of November 2, 1989, is included for your information. Thanks to Keith Danish for passing it along.

## Edifice Complex

Although his team lost the World Series, San Francisco Giants owner Bob Lurie hopes to have a new home for them. He is an avid fan of a proposition on next week's ballot to help build a replacement for Candlestick Park. Small wonder, since he's asking San Francisco taxpayers to sink up to \$100 million into the new stadium. As San Francisco digs out from The Pretty Big One, opponents say the last thing the city can afford is an expensive new stadium.

A stadium craze is sweeping the country. It's fueled by the increasing profitability of major-league teams. Something like one-third of the nation's 60 largest cities are thinking about new stadiums, ranging from Cleveland to San Antonio and St. Petersburg.

Most boosters claim the new sports complexes will be moneymakers for their city. Pepperdine University economist Dean Baim scoffs at that. He has looked at 14 baseball and football stadiums and found that only one—private Dodger Stadium—brought more money into a city than it took out. Stadiums tend to redistribute existing wealth within a community, not create more of it.

Voters generally agree when they are given a chance to decide if they want to sink their own tax dollars into a new mega-stadium. San Francisco voters rejected a new ballpark two years ago. Last month, Phoenix voters turned thumbs down on a \$100 million stadium bond and tax proposition. Its backers fielded every important interest on their team—a popular mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, the major media—and spent \$100,000 on promotion. But voters decided that if the stadium was such a good idea someone would build it himself, and rejected it 59% to 41%.

In San Francisco, its backers concede the ballpark is at best running even in the polls. George Christopher, the former San Francisco mayor who built Candlestick Park for the Giants in the 1960s, won't endorse the new ballpark. He says he had Candlestick built because the Giants claimed they needed 10,000 parking spaces. Since the new park will have only 1,500 spaces, Mr. Christopher thinks backers are playing some fiscal "games" of their own with the voters.

Stadium boosters claim that without public money they would never be built. Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie disagrees, and he can prove it. Several years ago he gave up trying to persuade Miami to improve its city-owned Orange Bowl, and instead built his own \$100 million coliseum with private funds. He didn't see why the taxpayers should help build something he would then use to turn a healthy profit. "This stadium shows that anything government can do, we can do better," Mr. Robbie says.

But to Moon Landrieu, the former New Orleans mayor who helped build that city's cavernous, money-losing Superdome, questions of who benefits or the bottom line are of little relevance. "The Superdome is an exercise in optimism, a statement of faith," he has said. "It is the very building of it that is important, not how much of it is used or its economics."

An Egyptian Pharaoh couldn't have justified his pyramids any better. But civilization has moved forward since then. Today taxpayers get to vote, most of the time, on whether they want to finance the building schemes of our modern political pharaohs, or let private money erect these playgrounds for public passions.

I hope that you had a happy and safe holiday season. We'll get back on schedule with 1990 as we have newsletters for February, April, June, August, October, & December. Be sure to send in your ideas, contributions, news notes, research needs, and any ballpark-related items.