

SABR Ballparks Committee

Committee Newsletter

August-1989

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I The 1989 Annual Meeting was quite lively from all reports. I'll leave the major aspects to the Bulletin. A good group (20) came out for the committee meeting. My thanks to Dick Johnson for chairing the gathering and to Morris Eckhouse for keeping tabs on what was said and suggested. You will find the minutes enclosed. If you have any thoughts on some of the suggested projects or activities, let me know.

II Toronto's SkyDome opened to a great media blitz and many of the major magazines had something to say. Newsweek cited the Skydome as the philosophy of the ballpark-future with a contrast to the new park for Baltimore as that of ballpark-past. Sports Illustrated was somewhat unsettling to us traditionalists as SI was a bit excessive in its praise and basic acceptance of the SkyDome as the undisputed wave of the future. For a local review of the place, I have enclosed Tony Formo's opinion in his usual zesty and blunt style.

Bob Littlejohn suggested writing several sources for SkyDome info. Unfortunately, the Toronto Star (1 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5E 1E6) is sold out of its special May 23 issue. Scorebook, the official magazine for the club, has eight pages on the new dome and old parks, and it can be ordered from Controlled Media, 300 The Esplanade West, Suite 3100, Toronto, Ontario M5V 3B2. Ask for the June 5 edition. Phone: (416) 341-2800. Tony sent me the pages on the Toronto parks and I'll reproduce them for a 45¢ SASE.

III New Members to the committee:

Jeff Lindberg, 160 No. California Ave, Palo Alto, CA 94301
(415) 322-9498

Jeff has a great interest in the minor league parks and is compiling a listing/info on all such parks ever used.

Frank Helminski, 46 Edgemere Road, Grosse Point, MI 48236-3709
(313) 745-9054

Frank has led an effort for a plaque at Recreation Park, Detroit. See * item XXY. He is interested in all aspects of parks including architecture, stats, parks in urban history, and stadia construction finances and politics.

Bradley Merila, PO Box 993, Shelter Island, NY 11964
(516) 749-1216

Bradley is a superb model maker and has just completed one of Yankee Stadium, ca. 1970. His interests extend to all cities and parks, and he has started work on two other NY parks, Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field. He would be delighted to hear from any members with suggestions, assistance, etc.

- IV: Parks, a May 28 Washington Post piece by William Gildea, extols the old parks and some not so old. Thanks to John Lobingier for passing it along. A copy for a 25¢ SASE.
- V: At the Ballpark, by Ken Robbins, published by Penguin Books, 32 pages and retails for \$13.95. Has anyone seen this book? If so, let me know about it and we will report on it in the October newsletter.
- VI Oral History Committee has requested assistance with its work. With the various Old-Timers games across the land, willing interviewers are needed. Contact Norman Macht, committee chairman. Norman has moved to 8 Squirrel Run, Greenville, DE 19807.
- VII Tiger Stadium Fan Club is keeping up the good fight to save this baseball landmark. Their next major event will be a demonstration of support for the park on Saturday, September 23, as part of the Tigers' Fan Appreciation Weekend promotion. The club plans to fill the park with people, banners, and signs to show support for the ballpark. On several side notes, team owner Tom Monaghan has had his troubles of late. Various groups are looking into the deaths suffered by delivery people with his pizza chain. Recently, he stepped down as president of the pizza chain, keeping the titles of chairman and CEO. By the way, the Tiger Stadium Fan Club can be contacted at PO Box 441426, Detroit, MI 48244-1426.
- VIII Grand Old Parks was a series run by CNN last week. My wife and I caught the segment of July 25 on Fenway Park. It was nice to see the parks getting the attention, but the Fenway piece was somewhat superficial with grainy photos. And of all people to interview about the place, they picked Sen. Edward Kennedy. Did anyone see any of the other installments? I am presuming that they covered Tiger Stadium, Comiskey, and Wrigley at the minimum.
- IX Ballpark Postcard News, a new effort by Doug Alford, Jim Schneider, and Mike Walsh, "about stadium postcards and those who collect them." Subscription rate is \$10/year for six issues. Information about the publication can be received by writing Ballpark Postcard News, PO Box 968, Brea, CA 92622-0968.
- X The Ballpark, Old Orchard Beach, ME, home of the AAA Maine Guides, was in the news several years ago as the successful minor league team with one of the more stunning homes in the minor league circuit. A June 23, 1989 Boston Globe article, "Maine Diamond Shines No More," covers the decline and fall of the franchise and the park that now hosts concerts. A copy for a 25¢ SASE. Some members may recall a Sports Illustrated piece on this park several years ago.
- XI New Reference Book, Ballparks of North America, A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Grounds, Yards, and Stadiums, 1845-Present. The author is Michael Benson; he had asked this committee for assistance with this project two years ago. This 496-page work has photographs/illustrations, index, and biblio., and costs \$35. To order, contact McFarland & Co, Inc., Box 611 (Hwy 88), Jefferson, NC 28640 (919) 246-4460. Does someone have it? How about a review for the newsletter?

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- XII Field of Dreams movie had the park in the midst of the cornfield. Sports Illustrated recently reported that the field was in Dyersville, Iowa. Much of the park is back to corn, but the "official" distances were LF at 290, CF at 320 and RF at 270.
- XIII Black Sox, an article summarizing the exhibit on the 1919 World Series by the Chicago Historical Society, was published in the Chicago History Magazine, Fall/Winter, 1989 issue.
- Another article on the Chicago Whales and the Federal League was carried by Chicago History in its Spring-81 issue.
- Both articles had some good ballpark photos. Contact the Chicago Historical Society at Clark Street at North Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614.
- XIV Address Changes
- Gordon Thomas: now at 3000 N. Edison, Arlington, VA 22207
Ethan Casey: now at 2533 Grant St., #27, Berkley, CA 94703
- XV Computer Game for Visually Impaired involving baseball is a project of Alan Clive. He called recently and asked for a variety of park locations for teams in certain years. Alan is at 143 Fleetwood Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Research assistance to my wife, Valerie, who used Green Cathedrals to track down the parks in question.
- XVI Information Please-Sports Almanac, a project of Mike Meserole of Wolcott, CT. He was planning a chapter on parks, their locations, capacities, and basic information. He was rushed for time and seemed to have most of the current reference books at hand, but he did not know of the Benson work (see #XI), so I put him in touch with him. Let's keep our eyes out for this work if/when it comes to print.
- XVII Another Reference Book for Baseball, Everything in Baseball, Every baseball song, poem, play, movie, tv/radio show, painting, sculpture, cartoon, comic strip, etc... published by Prentice Hall, NY, 1989, author, James Mote, \$15 Library # GV 863. A1. M67
- XVIII Was Vander Meer's Second No-Hitter aided by the novelty of lights at Ebbets Field. The 1938 accomplishment also coincided with the first night game at Ebbets. If you have any material, fact, or opinion on the relationship of the night game to the no-hitter, contact John Pastier, 1548 Silverwood Ter., Los Angeles, CA 90026.
- XIX Dick Miller, one of our committee members and an accomplished fellow in the ballparks research world, reports that he spoke at the "Baseball and American Culture Symposium" at Cooperstown in June. He also lectured in Philadelphia on "The Life and Times of the Old Ballparks." Dick still maintains an enviable schedule of travel and research on baseball and its parks.
- XX Baseball Stadium in Hartford, CT of 1876 Bob Bailey seeks information for his research. Contact him at 12129 Briargate Lane, Prospect, KY 40059

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XXI Misc. Articles available

1. "Domed Stadium Would Benefit Louisville Baseball-indirectly" The Courier-Journal, June 18, 1989. Sent by Bob Bailey
2. Woodstock Watch column on Dietz Stadium, a Kingston, NY minor league park that had quite a history. Sent by Dick Clark
3. "Baseball Battle: Who was on, first" Cooperstown, NY vs. Hoboken, NJ for the honor of baseball's first game. Sent by Vin Russo.
4. "A boy Among the Bears," reminisces by Bears bat boy on Newark Bears and Ruppert Stadium. Sent by several members.
5. "Eating at the Ballpark," Boston Globe, June 14, 1989, a review of ballpark food at Anaheim, Seattle, and Oakland.
6. "Fenway Under Glass," Boston Globe, May 30, 1989, a review of the new press box and "600 Club" section above home plate.
7. Hot Action in Sports Construction," McGraw-Hill Construction Weekly, July 14, 1988, from Phil Bess. a review of several park, arena, stadium construction projects and current trends in the business.

#1 - #6 are 25¢ SASE for any one, 65¢ for the bunch
#7 is 85¢ SASE

ALL OF THE ABOVE is \$1.45 SASE

XXII Death at the Ballpark.... no, this isn't a new play, but several wire-service pieces I have seen this season make me wonder: A 40-year-old woman died after a leap from a Shea Stadium foul pole at 9:00 a.m..... a man man died from a fall off a concrete walkway ^{at the stadium} as he was attempting to do handstands. Just how many fan deaths and tragedies have taken place in baseball parks?

XXIII Crosley Field Lives Again in the city of Blue Ash OH. Sunday, August 13, will see the 2nd Annual Old Timers Game played there with such ex-big leaguers as Gaylord Perry, Tug McGraw, Jim O'Toole, Fred Norman, Johnny Temple, and many more. For more info, contact Marvin Thompson, Blue Ash City Manager, at (513) 745-8510, or write the city at 4343 Cooper Road, Blue Ash, OH 45242. I have a copy of the 3-page press release. Send a 25¢ SASE for a copy.

XXIV Building/Fire Insurance Maps for all the classic parks for two or three periods are available. Here is what I have courtesy of Phil Bess:

Sportsmen's Park	St. Louis	1909,	1951
Comiskey Park,	Chicago,	1912,	1950
Wrigley Field,	Chicago,	1923,	1949
Griffith Stadium,	Wash., DC	1928,	1941
Navin Field/Briggs Std.	Det.	1921,	1949
Fenway Park,	Boston	1914,	1951
Braves Field,	Boston	1925,	1949
Shibe Park,	Phila.	1921,	1948
Baker Bowl,	Phila	1921,	1948

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XXIV (cont.)

Forbes Field, Pitts.	1925, 1947
League Park, Cleveland	19??, 1951
Crosley Field, Cin.	1922, 1950
Ebbets Field, Brooklyn	1932, 1951
Yankee Stadium, NY	1948
Polo Grounds, NY	1893, 1909, 1939, 1951

These detailed maps of these parks are on 8 by 11 paper and the copies I make will lose some of the detail, but they are a good resource.

\$1.05 for all; 25¢ for any one; you estimate for any combination.

XXV Shades of Shibe Park and Connie Mack... has anyone noticed the increased annoyance of the Cubs at their rooftop fans outside the park. It seems that some of the property owners are developing their roof areas into mini-sky boxes and the Cubs have promised action. Shall we see another "Green Monster" in Wrigley? Connie Mack had his problems with rooftop fans at Shibe, so he raised his RF wall in 1935 and shut them out.

XXVI From the other committees

"They Could Hit Them Out of Any Park"

The record committee looks at HRs for some famous players, home vs. away. They have a list of sluggers with at least 175 HRs on the road. a two-page item with the formulas and explanations.

"Attendance Figures Found"

The 19th Century committee has attendance figures for the NL Chicago club from 1876 to 1903 and Philadelphia NL club for 1883 to 1902. One-page with explanation.

SASE of 25¢ for one or both.

XXVII Ballpark OF Dimensions of 1938 from the Boston Herald (12-5-88)

AMERICAN LEAGUE			
	Left	Center	Right
Fenway Park	315 ft.	388 ft.	322 ft.
Comiskey Park	352 ft.	440 ft.	352 ft.
Cleveland Municipal	320 ft.	467 ft.	320 ft.
Briggs Stadium (Det.)	340 ft.	440 ft.	325 ft.
Yankee Stadium	301 ft.	461 ft.	295 ft.
Shibe Park (Phil.)	334 ft.	468 ft.	329 ft.
Griffith Stadium (Wash.)	402 ft.	421 ft.	320 ft.
Sportsman's Park (St.L.)	351 ft.	420 ft.	332 ft.

NATIONAL LEAGUE			
	Left	Center	Right
Braves Field	368 ft.	407 ft.	378 ft.
Wrigley Field	355 ft.	400 ft.	353 ft.
Crosley Field (Cinc.)	328 ft.	387 ft.	366 ft.
Polo Grounds	279 ft.	430 ft.	257 ft.
Baker Bowl (Phil.)	341 ft.	408 ft.	280 ft.
Forbes Field (Pitt.)	365 ft.	435 ft.	300 ft.
Ebbets Field	365 ft.	402 ft.	297 ft.
Sportsman's Park (St.L.)	351 ft.	420 ft.	332 ft.

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XXVIII Hope in Texas? A voice of reason was raised by D Magazine writer Chris Tucker whose July-89 piece, "An Open Letter to George W. Bush: How to Save the Texas Rangers," outlines some suggestions for better baseball and a better ballpark. A copy for a SASE of 25¢. Valerie and I recently saw the Red Sox get pounded 12-6 at Arlington Stadium. It isn't a bad place to see a game, though the 95 degree game time temps (at 7:30 pm!) are a bit much. The place has green grass, good, close seats, and a definite local character.

XXIX Recreation Park (Detroit) Plaque wording courtesy of Frank Helminski:

TEXT OF HISTORICAL MARKER FOR RECREATION PARK:

In 1879 Recreation Park was established on the land surrounding this site. The park extended from Brady Street to Willis Avenue. It included the baseball field that was the home park of the Detroit Wolverines of the National League from 1881 to 1888. Here on May 2, 1881, the first major league baseball game in Detroit was played before 1,286 spectators. After that first game against Buffalo, more than four hundred major league games were played here over eight seasons. This marker stands in what was the left field. Home plate and a wooden grandstand were near Brady Street to the south. Fans strolled in a nearby grove of trees owned by Harper Hospital. Two Wolverines, Dan Brothers and Sam Thompson, have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

At Mayor William G. Thompson's suggestion, the Detroit Wolverines were organized as a major league team to play at Recreation Park. In its first years the team finished from the middle to the bottom of the League. It began to improve after it was purchased by pharmaceutical manufacturer Frederick K. Stearns in 1885. In 1887 it won the National League Pennant and the national championship, defeating St. Louis of the American Association in a fifteen-game series. Poor attendance caused the Wolverines to break up after the 1888 season. The franchise moved to Cleveland, where it finally disbanded in 1899. From 1889 to 1894 other baseball teams played at Recreation Park. In 1894 the park was closed, the grandstand was torn down, and the land was subdivided.

XXX Minor League Park Fans should consider the 1989 "Great Minor League Baseball Parks Calendar" featuring ~~many~~ ^{many} parks. Calendar is available from Baseball America, Dept. C, POB 2089, Durham, NC 27702

XXXI SuncoastDome clippings from Joe Favano donated to our files. Thank you.

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- XXXII Minor Lg. Park in NJ Thanks to Vin Russo for a clipping that outlines the possibility of a park in NJ in either Somerset or Middlesex Counties. The Cathedra Investment Comporation is behind the proposed ballpark which would, says a company of- ficial, be like the park used in "Bull Durham" with a "homey type of environment."
- XXXIII HOK of Kansas City, the architectural firm that has designed so many parks that have been bad for baseball, has "seen the light," and seems to be promoting itself as the company that is taking the "back to the past" theme to heart. HOK is behind the future parks for Chicago (AL) and Baltimore (AL), and they have jumped on the bardwagon of classic ballpark style. This will be very amusing to the various committee members (John Pastier and Phil Bess to name two) who have dealt with HOK and one of its chief ballpark people, Rick DeFlon. A recent Boston Globe piece makes HOK a savior of the past as it marches toward a better ballpark future. Pastier isn't all that convinced. If you see other ar- ticles in any paper in your area, please let me know and I will pass them along to John. HOK's sudden conversion to the basic tenets of a clasic ballpark is encouraging but not totally con- vincing.
- ~~XXXIV~~ Ballparks NY-CT-NJ meeting There is a possibility of a committee meeting and general get-together for ballparks people in very late September or early October. Vin Russo and I are trying to set a pre-liminary date and plan from there. All area ballparks people will be sent a notice when we get a program set. Valerie and I are planning to go back east at that time, so maybe I can join you for a meeting to discuss ballpark "stuff."
- XXXV Yankee Stadium model making of new committee member Brad Merila. If you would like some info on how he did this project, send me a SASE of 25¢.
- XXXVI Tiger Stadium history for the register/landmark status was sent to me by Jim Sumner. It is an excellent piece of work. For a copy, send me a SASE of 65¢. The history as well as the entire application for historic status for the ballpark was done by Tiger Stadium Fan Club volunteers.
- XXXVII Postal Budget is in very good shape. As of July 31, 1989 (before this mailing of the August newsletter) we had \$21.60 in stamps and \$148.00 in funds. That should keep the committee's mailings, newsletters, and general expenses set for the rest of the year. The extra resources come through your donations and, of course, the money provided by the SABR budget. Thank you.
- XXXIX 1988-89 Correspondence was 236 letters received; 239 sent. Thank you for all your notes and clippings. the 1989-90 season is off to a fast start with July showing 24 letters received and 25 sent.

Keep in touch and keep those clippings, ideas, info, materials, and suggestions coming! This committee and its newsletter depends on what you contribute!

Bob Bluthardt