BALLPARKS AS AMERICA: THE FAN EXPERIENCE AT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PARKS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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by
Seth S. Tannenbaum
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Excluding Committee Members:

Bryant Simon, Advisory Chair, Department of History
Petra Goedde, Department of History
Rebecca Alpert, Department of Religion
Steven A. Riess, External Member, Department of History, Northeastern Illinois University
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a history of the change in form and location of ballparks that explains why that change happened, when it did, and what this tells us about broader society, about hopes and fears, and about tastes and prejudices. It uses case studies of five important and trend-setting ballparks to understand what it meant to go to a major league game in the twentieth century. I examine the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium in the first half of the twentieth century, what I call the classic ballpark era, Dodger Stadium and the Astrodome from the 1950s through the 1980s, what I call the multi-use ballpark era, and Camden Yards in the retro-chic ballpark era—the 1990s and beyond. I treat baseball as a reflection of larger American culture that sometimes also shaped that culture.

I argue that baseball games were a purportedly inclusive space that was actually exclusive and divided, but that the exclusion and division was masked by rhetoric about the game and the relative lack of explicit policies barring anyone. Instead, owners built a system that was economically and socially stratified and increasingly physically removed from lower-class and non-white city residents. Ballparks’ tiers allowed owners to give wealthier fans the option of sitting in the seats closest to home plate where they would not have to interact with poorer fans who owners pushed to the cheaper seats further from the action. That masked exclusion gave middle- and upper-class fans a space that was comfortable and safe because it was anything but truly accessible to all Americans. I also argue that owners had to change the image of the ballpark and tinker with the exclusion there as fans’ tastes and their visions of what a city should look and feel like changed.
For my parents, my sister, and for Phoebe.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
For as long as I can remember, I have been a baseball fan. I have fond childhood memories of my father taking me to Philadelphia Phillies games at Veterans Stadium. Yet in all my time in the ballpark as a child, I never really thought about the larger meaning of going to the game. I did not consider the context and history of what I saw when I looked around the park and at the other fans. Somehow though, I had so deeply internalized the idea that going to a baseball game was an American thing to do that I was befuddled by people who did not share my undying dedication to the sport or chose not to come to the park. As a child, I did not think about the barriers that kept people from the ballpark. Instead, I saw lots of fans who seemed to agree that the ballpark was the right place to be even though nearly all of them were strangers to each other. In my late teens, I read Bruce Kuklick’s history of Shibe Park, the Phillies previous home ballpark, and began to understand that the Phillies had left a poor black neighborhood without easy access to highways for suburban-accessible park a middle-class white neighborhood nestled between two major highways and surrounded by parking lots. Still, I did not ask the complicated questions about how the ballpark experience mirrored and influenced

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1 Veterans Stadium, the Vet as it was commonly called, opened in 1971 and was built as the home of the Phillies and the National Football League’s Eagles. Its design, location, and amenities were influenced by both Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles and the Astrodome in Houston. It was an octorad-shaped facility, not round and not square, and from inside the park, it was impossible to see the city itself.
American society, how it produced a vision of America, or how it felt inclusive, when in reality it was built on division and exclusion and why that was the case.2

What I could not fully articulate about the ballpark experience growing up was that I was surrounded by Americans performing everyday acts that produced sentiments of community and equality. At Veterans Stadium, fans passed hot dogs to strangers in the middle of a row of seats, they stood up so someone could dash to the restroom between innings, they rooted for the Phillies together with people they did not know, and they booed Chipper Jones for having the audacity to be very good when the Phillies were very bad.3 Although these actions had nothing to do with voting or governance, because they made people feel like equal members of a community built around the National Pastime that was not explicitly restricted by race, class or gender, many fans saw them as democratic acts. Moreover, aside from which team they cheered for and which players they booed, fans in other cities participated in the same actions.4

Examining the location


3 Chipper Jones is a retired Hall of Fame third baseman who spent his entire career with the Atlanta Braves, a rival of the Phillies. Fans in Philadelphia often razzed him by loudly drawing out the vowel sound in his given name, Larry, when he was at bat. It rarely seemed to bother him.

4 Although there have always been regional and site-specific variations in the fan experience, the experience of being surrounded by strangers doing the same thing together at the ballpark was broadly similar across the country.
and atmosphere where these acts took place reveals not just how fans thought about the ballpark experience and urban spaces, but also how they felt about the nation as a whole.

This dissertation answers the questions I was not asking about the fan experience when I was growing up. It is a history of the change in form and location of ballparks that explains why and when that change happened, what it tells us about broader society, and about people’s hopes, fears, tastes, and prejudices. It uses case studies of five important and trend-setting ballparks to understand what it meant to go to a major league game in the twentieth century. These ballparks shaped and reflected the experience at other parks throughout the country. I examine the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium in the first half of the twentieth century, what I call the classic ballpark era, Dodger Stadium and the Astrodome from the 1950s through the 1980s, what I call the multi-use ballpark era, and Camden Yards in the retro-chic ballpark era—the 1990s and beyond. Thinking along the lines of the sport historian Steven A. Riess who argued that in the Progressive Era baseball “influenced and at the same time mirrored the broader society,” I treat baseball as a reflection of larger American culture and that sometimes shaped that culture.5

Even as both changed, ballparks and the baseball played in them often seemed timeless to fans and observers. For more than 100 years, three strikes meant an out, four balls a walk, and nine innings a complete game, yet new pitches, new players, and new strategies abounded. Crowd descriptions also offered an element of timelessness, though teams remodeled and rebuilt their ballparks frequently. Across the twentieth century observers often framed the crowd as a diverse representation of America who, in cheering

for the home team, came together as equal members of a larger community. Although that was never quite the case for women, racial minorities, and poorer fans, there was an element of truth to it for the middle- and upper-class white male fans who had full access to the space and often intermingled regardless of their ethnic identity.

In 1909, the legendary Progressive reformer Jane Addams saw fans at the park as “lifted out of their individual affairs and so fused together that a man cannot tell whether it is his own shout or another’s that fills his ears.” She argued each fan was unable to tell “whether it is his own coat or another’s that he is wildly waving to celebrate a victory.” Addams concluded the fan “does not call the stranger who sits next to him his ‘brother’ but he unconsciously embraces him in an overwhelming outburst of kindly feeling when the favorite player makes a home run.” She asked, “does not this contain a suggestion of the undoubted power of public recreation to bring together all classes of a community in the modern city […]?”

Three years later, a writer for *Baseball Magazine* argued that the fan “is the representative American institution. His ranks are filled from every class of society, by every one of the many nationalities which combine to make the American nation.”

In 1935, Meyer Berger wrote in the *New York Times* that “at the height of his frenzy, the rooter knows no class distinction. The taxi driver or the garbage handler will sock the banker or broker in fraternal enthusiasm when the home team slugger belts one

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over the wall. The meek, inhibited bookkeeper rises to rare altitudes of scorn and vituperation in arguing the fine points of the game with the stiffish tycoon in the adjoining seat, and the unemployed dishwasher from the Bronx sounds his native note of derision when the Park Avenue penthouse dweller on his left doesn’t happen to share his views in matters pertaining to baseball. In the ball park every man’s a king.”\(^8\) In 1988, author Peter Golenbock wrote, “black, white, Christian, Jew, Hindu, Moslem, gay or straight, pro-abortion, pro-life, the disparate interest groups agree on little except for their love of the National Pastime. Go to a ball game. In Fenway Park Harvard Professors sit and talk the same language with the fans with blue collars.”\(^9\) Four years later, nationally syndicated columnist George Will called a ballpark “an active ingredient in transforming a crowd—a mere aggregation—into a community.”\(^10\)

Despite observers’ assertions that baseball created a sense of community and inclusion that many found to be democratic, by design, the ballpark was never meant as a space where all fans were equals. In 1908 Rollin Lynde Hartt wrote in *The Atlantic* that “arriving at the gates […] fans] undergo a self-imposed classification. The frivolous, the detached, the shallow—fabricators of ‘society verse,’ let us say—purchase tickets for the grandstand; those a shade or two less artificial prefer the fifty-cent bleachers; but the true runic singers, they of the flaming heart and awesome howl, humble themselves to be

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\(^8\) Meyer Berger, “In the Ball Park Every Man’s a King,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1935.


bleached for a quarter.” Moreover, when Sunday baseball was illegal and all games were day games—as was the case in many northeastern cities into the 1920s and beyond—not many working-class fans could go to the park. In the 1960s, owners like Walter O’Malley of the Dodgers and Roy Hofheinz of the Astros introduced even more ways to separate fans, adding physical tiers and ticket price levels to their ballparks. They also pioneered exclusive clubs that gave wealthy fans the option to separate themselves from everyone else. By the 1990s, fans like Elizabeth Thorpe of Baltimore felt that the “common man” was left out of the ballpark because “we can’t get tickets or won’t go because we don’t feel welcome.”

The contrast between a space that was reputedly open to all and where all were treated as equals and its reality as one that team owners carefully set up to give fans the option of distinction and separation was a fundamental aspect of the ballpark experience. Riess argued that the “baseball creed […] asserted that crowds included people from all walks of life.” He noted, however, that “key aspects of the baseball creed were myths.” Despite the lack of truth in that creed, he concluded, “fans accepted its veracity, and that perception helped shape their attitudes and behavior.” The gap between baseball’s reputation for democracy and its reality of division and exclusion mirrored


other spaces where Americans gathered to practice everyday democratic rituals. Historian Bryant Simon has written that “Americans talked glowingly about vibrant urban spaces filled with diverse crowds. At the same time, middle-class white city dwellers practiced and endorsed exclusion in these same public spaces.”¹⁶ He argued that this contrast, what he called a “cognitive dissonance” in American life, is necessary because “the public will gather only when there is exclusion, but the exclusion needs to be masked.”¹⁷

I argue that at baseball games, the exclusion was masked by the rhetoric about the game and the relative lack of explicit policies barring anyone. Instead, owners built a system that was economically and socially stratified and increasingly physically removed from lower-class and non-white city residents. Ballparks’ tiers allowed wealthier fans to choose to sit in the seats closest to home plate where they would not have to interact with poorer fans who were likely only able to afford the cheaper seats further from the action. That masked exclusion gave middle- and upper-class fans a space that was comfortable and safe, because it was anything but truly accessible to all Americans.¹⁸ Whether you


¹⁷ Simon, “United States of Cognitive Dissonance.”

¹⁸ Throughout this dissertation, I use class terminology as a reflection of a combination of factors including employment type, ability to afford certain tickets, physical descriptions of fans, and adherence to behavioral patterns that matched the normative or stereotypical understandings of the comportment of different socioeconomic classes. For example, middle- and upper-class fans refers to people with white-collar occupations, people who sat in the grandstand or other places that were on the upper-end of the ticket cost spectrum, or people who behaved in the more restrained manner commonly associated with middle- and upper-class individuals. Other factors that suggested middle- or upper-class status included fans’ ability to take time off from their jobs to go to the park, the income necessary to buy tickets regularly, and where they lived—especially with the development of the suburbs in post-World War II America. That does not mean, however, that everyone who sat in the expensive seats had a white-
call the contradiction between baseball’s presentation and its reality a false myth or cognitive dissonance, it is inherently American to want to go to a “public” entertainment space built on exclusion.

Places like ballparks that were supposedly accessible to everyone, but due to cost, location, and other factors were not actually open to all, allowed the patrons who could access them to conceive of a nation composed entirely of people like themselves. If fans internalized the rhetoric that cast the ballpark as a site representing the totality of America, but saw mostly middle- and upper-class whites when they looked around the park, they would be likely to center middle- and upper-class whites in their understanding of the nation. Moreover, because almost everyone in the park ate hot dogs, all fans seemed to be equals no matter if they sat behind home plate or in the cheap seats. Ballparks reified the privileged position of middle- and upper-class whites as the normative American citizen, even as cities and the country changed dramatically in the twentieth century.

I also argue that owners had to change the image of the ballpark and tinker with the exclusion there as fans’ tastes and their visions of what a city should look and feel like changed. My dissertation, therefore, is also an urban history of the areas around ballparks. As fans’ impressions of cities changed, owners modified ballparks’ designs to maintain the feeling of inclusion built on structural exclusion that was fundamental to the collar job or that no fans with white-collar jobs sat in the bleachers and behaved in ways that did not match their job or wealth status. Some fans, in contrast to their actual wealth status, behaved as though they belonged to the upper class or the working class, so these class distinctions were never rigid. My research indicates, however, that the majority of fans who sat in the most expensive seats were wealthier than the majority of fans who sat in the cheaper seats.
fan experience. Although owners always employed different ticket prices for different seats and used physical divides at the ballpark, as barriers that kept working-class fans from attending fell and cities felt out of control to many middle- and upper-class whites, owners added more physical tiers and amplified price discrimination at the park. From the two main tiers at the Polo Grounds to the three at Yankee Stadium to the five at Dodger Stadium and the seven at the Astrodome, the more fans could afford to pay, the more distance from the masses they could choose to purchase.

These tiers helped owners achieve their main goals as capitalists—attracting larger and larger crowds to bolster their profits. The physical divisions allowed fans who, for example, wanted to take in a game as a family to be in the same ballpark as a group of friends celebrating a twenty-first birthday without the two groups coming in conflict. They gave fans the option to sit in sections of the ballpark where the majority of people would act in accordance with or be accepting of behaviors stereotypically associated with specific socioeconomic classes. Tiers allowed owners to create a mass audience of people who had contrasting views of what a day at the ballpark entailed. They could diffuse tensions between groups by protecting one from another. Although these tiers protected fans inside the ballpark, in order to provide them the sense of safety they demanded outside the ballpark, owners had to shift the location of their facilities.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, owners built ballparks on the edges of urban areas where they could afford land, but also where mass transit lines ran so that car-less fans—the vast majority of fans in this era—could easily reach them. As the decades progressed, the areas around many of these ballparks developed into middle-class neighborhoods often populated by the very fans who frequented games. Owners did
not need to protect fans from the city in the first half of the twentieth century because many of those fans were the same people who lived there and structural barriers limited the number of working-class people who could attend. In those decades, the atmosphere was not that different outside the park than it was inside.

As white flight and suburbanization changed the demographics of cities after World War II, the neighborhoods around many of these ballparks become poorer and less white. Many of the middle- and upper-class whites who frequented baseball games no longer lived near ballparks; instead, they lived in the suburbs where they were able to drive pretty much everywhere they wanted to go. Historian John D. Fairfield argued this was an era when Americans “lost faith in their cities.”19 Fans in the 1950s wanted to feel protected from the kinds of people who populated the neighborhoods around ballparks. Owners aimed to give them that feeling by letting them drive on highways and park in safe, secure, and well-lit parking lots instead of on dark and seemingly dangerous city streets. To offer these fans the feeling of protection they wanted, to recreate the image of an inclusive space that was closely associated with baseball, but to make it a space built on the masked structural exclusion that made fans feel safe, many owners moved to new ballparks in new cities. The updated structural exclusion at these new postwar ballparks was similar to the elements that made that era’s suburbs feel representative of the nation while maintaining their exclusivity.

That suburban feel, however, lost its luster in the eyes of many fans by the 1990s. The comfort and safety that had drawn fans to these suburban-like ballparks in the 1960s

was uninspiring to a new generation of fans. Driving along highways and parking in well-lit parking lots did not seem to provide the sensation of inclusivity that fans wanted. To many, baseball had lost its timelessness and needed to return to its urban past and its architectural roots. Much as they had when classic-era parks were en vogue, fans did not actually want to patronize a space that was open to everyone—they only wanted to go to a ballpark that felt open to everyone. Similar to the festival marketplaces that remade urban commercial districts beginning in the 1980s, starting in the 1990s, owners built new ballparks in carefully-controlled, highly-regulated urban spaces. Those ballparks facilitated owners’ ability to present a facsimile of the past in a tiered atmosphere that was effectively walled off from the parts of the city that middle- and upper-class white fans wanted to avoid.

Owners’ ability to move to new ballparks in new areas both in the decades after World War II and again in the 1990s showed their increasing power to remake the city into the kind of space middle- and upper-class whites wanted to enjoy. In those eras, teams demanded that municipalities help them to create the perfectly-controlled, seemingly-inclusive, yet actually exclusive spaces that appealed to their fans. If municipalities pushed back against owners’ demands, owners often moved to new cities where officials who wanted their cities to obtain “big league” status were more than happy to move heaven and earth to allow team owners to create the baseball paradise they envisioned.

My work is in conversation with scholarship about consumer culture, urban history, and sport history. As Lizabeth Cohen discusses in *A Consumer’s Republic*, in the middle decades of the twentieth century full citizenship included the ability to consume
goods. Historians of consumer culture like Cohen, Richard Wightman Fox, T. J. Jackson Lears, and Gary Cross have discussed how Americans constructed their identities through consumption and consumer goods. Those consumerist mentalities applied to baseball as well. Going to the ballpark was a way fans demonstrated membership in the national community and was a part of their identity.

This dissertation also intersects with studies of urban leisure spaces and environments, though ballparks were, in the early twentieth century, a more middle- and upper-class space than many of the more working-class spaces historians like John Kasson, Roy Rosenzweig, and Kathy Peiss discuss and less class-inclusive than many of the spaces David Nasaw discusses. In the middle of the twentieth century, many baseball fans moved to the suburbs. As Kenneth Jackson, Thomas Sugrue, Kevin Kruse, and others have analyzed, these Americans largely viewed increasingly poor and black


cities as dangerous, deteriorating, and not as a place to raise a family.\textsuperscript{23} As scholars of the late-twentieth-century city like John Hannigan have written, beginning in the 1980s, carefully-controlled cities regained much of the appeal they had lost in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{24} Responding to this trend, many owners moved their ballparks back into urban areas.

A host of scholars—and not just historians—have studied ballparks’ place in American society. Most of these works, however, do not focus on the entire twentieth century and therefore attribute changes and new developments exclusively to the era they study, missing the continuities in the ballpark experience and roots of those developments in earlier eras.\textsuperscript{25} Historian John D. Fairfield argued that the changes in ballparks in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} David John Kammer’s doctoral dissertation in American Studies argued that changes in American culture between the 1920s and the 1970s were represented in changes in ballpark design. He examined Yankee Stadium, Dodger Stadium, and the Houston Astrodome. See David John Kammer, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame: American Cultural Values as Reflected in the Architectural Evolution and Criticism of the Modern Baseball Stadium” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 1982). Daniel Rosensweig’s \textit{Retro Ball Parks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City} offers some excellent insights into the role of retro-chic ballparks in the modern American city as well.
\end{itemize}
late-twentieth century reflect the decline of public places in America.\textsuperscript{26} By constraining himself to one era, Fairfield missed the ways owners prevented the entire public from accessing earlier ballparks. Benjamin Lisle’s 2017 \textit{Modern Coliseum} examines changes in ballparks’ locations and designs in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The developments he discusses were, without a doubt, magnified in the multi-use era, but they were not invented in that era; they had roots in long-standing tactics owners used to draw women and children to the park and separate fans by class and race there as well.\textsuperscript{27} Lisle casts ballparks as “disingenuous simulations of democracy” beginning in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{28} This dissertation shows that ballparks have never been accessible to all Americans, even if they felt that way to the middle- and upper-class fans who made up the majority of baseball fans. By examining the entire twentieth century, my dissertation offers a more complete picture of the fan experience than many other works on ballparks do.

Much as I did not ask important questions about the fan experience when I was a child, rarely, if ever, did fans come home from the ballpark and write about how the experience made them feel, what parts of it made them uncomfortable, or what parts

\textsuperscript{26} Fairfield, “The Park and the City,” 21-39.

\textsuperscript{27} Benjamin D. Lisle, \textit{Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

\textsuperscript{28} Lisle, \textit{Modern Coliseum}, 12.
made them feel like they were participating in a form of American democracy. Therefore, to understand how fans perceived going to a game, I utilize journalists’ and writers’ descriptions of the atmosphere at ballparks, who they said came to games, and how they suggested fans understood the experience. I examine when ballparks were popular, when they drew fans, and what was going on around them when that was happening. I take it as a given that the combination of owners’ goals of increasing revenue and positive feedback from fans—both verbal and in the form of high attendance—meant that the ballpark delivered what fans wanted in a “public” entertainment space.

Although journalists’ accounts of the ballpark experience are instrumental to understanding it, I do not stick solely to the mainstream white daily newspapers to do so. Weekly black newspapers are an invaluable window onto how black baseball fans thought about ballparks that had been designed to appeal to whites. They shine a light on how ballparks were constructed and tiered to shunt black fans to the periphery.

I also make use of the relatively few team records and personal papers of owners, executives, architects, designers, and urban planners that have been donated to publicly-accessible archives. I was, however, able to gain access to some parts of the personal papers of Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley that are not public and are curated by employees of O’Malley’s son. Frustratingly, there is little in the way of survey data from fans regarding how they felt about the experience either because teams did not collect that data or it has not found its way into publicly-accessible archives.

Following this introduction, my second chapter examines the Polo Grounds, which in its four iterations was home to the National League’s New York Giants from 1883 until 1957. Together with the third chapter on Yankee Stadium, this one focuses on
what I call classic-era ballparks, those built between 1909 and 1923. Owners paid for the construction of classic-era ballparks out of their own pockets or through loans and could only afford to locate them in areas of the city that had not yet been developed. At the Polo Grounds, the Giants owners, notably John T. Brush and Charles Stoneham, along with concessionaire Harry M. Stevens, helped to establish the framework of the ballpark experience that remained relatively constant throughout the twentieth century. That experience was one in which fans were surrounded by strangers who joined together to eat hot dogs and root for the home team. It had the image of an inclusive and egalitarian space, but working-class fans were not present in large numbers and the Giants treated women and minorities as inferior to white men. As barriers to working-class attendance fell, owners created more divisions between fans in the park to continue providing the exclusion necessary for them to gather in large numbers.

My third chapter analyzes Yankee Stadium, which opened not far from the Polo Grounds in 1923. It was the first major league ballpark to be called a stadium and until the 1990s all subsequent new parks were also called stadiums. By the time Yankee Stadium opened, Sunday baseball was legal in New York City, making it easier for working-class fans to attend. In response, Jacob Ruppert, the team’s owner, built Yankee Stadium with three tiers instead of the two at the Polo Grounds, which gave middle- and upper-class fans more protection from lower-class ones. Ed Barrow, the team’s general manager, made use of the park’s tiers to largely confine fans who gambled on the game to the cheap seats. By pushing gamblers away from fans sitting in expensive seats, Barrow created the appearance of inclusion built on the framework of exclusion and division that was necessary to draw fans. When new Yankees owner Larry MacPhail installed lights at
Yankee Stadium in 1946, he updated one of the last parks where night games could not be played. At the same time, MacPhail was one of the first owners to add even more exclusive spaces to the ballpark by creating a members-only Stadium Club hidden beneath the stands. As MacPhail made it easier for working-class fans to attend more often, he gave the team’s wealthiest fans the option of more distance from its poorest ones. Later Yankees owners, however, could not provide those fans similar protection outside the ballpark.

The Yankees were not alone in being unable to make fans safe in the changing postwar city outside the ballpark. If attendance declines were any indication, those changes kept millions of middle- and upper-class white fans from coming to parks in the 1950s. In Brooklyn, the Dodgers struggled to draw fans to Ebbets Field, a beautiful, but aging ballpark originally built in 1912 that was largely inaccessible by car. Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley pushed powerful urban planner Robert Moses to help him acquire land in a more car-accessible and whiter part of Brooklyn where O’Malley could build a new stadium to draw the middle- and upper-class fans who were reluctant to come to Ebbets Field. Moses refused to help, but the city of Los Angeles offered O’Malley a plot of land that promised to be very attractive to those kinds of fans, so he moved his team there. In Los Angeles, O’Malley built a suburban-accessible baseball paradise with five tiers and private clubs to give fans the option of exclusion while maintaining the façade of inclusion that kept them coming to the park. Owners designed later parks with similar suburban accessibility and amenities. Together with the Astrodome, the subject of my fifth chapter, this chapter analyzes the multi-use era, or parks built in the 1950s,
1960s, and 1970s that were influenced by white flight, suburbia, and Modernist architecture.

Astros owner Roy Hofheinz convinced the National League to expand to Houston with the promise of a futuristic, suburban-style domed stadium in a car-accessible part of the city’s periphery. The Astrodome offered its customers more technological sophistication than all other parks. With its air conditioning, cushioned seats, and its promise to provide “luxury for all,” it offered an image of equality and inclusion. It was, however, a more divided and exclusive ballpark than anything that had come before it. It had seven tiers, including the first modern skyboxes hidden away at the very top of the ballpark for the wealthiest of wealthy fans. Much like Disneyland—an inspiration for the Astrodome and for Dodger Stadium as well—if you did not have a car, you could not get to the dome and Hofheinz, despite his commitment to formally desegregating his facility and public accommodations across the city, did not think of the team’s white and black fans in the same way. The Astrodome’s innovative skyboxes spread throughout baseball in the years after the park opened. Although the Astrodome was initially successful, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, fans seemed to want something else. The hermetically-sealed dome could have been anywhere, it lacked the connection to a city and the urban architecture that had been a part of the game’s past.

In 1992, the Baltimore Orioles opened Camden Yards, a downtown ballpark designed to flow seamlessly with the city around it to draw fans back to the game. Influenced by festival marketplaces like the nearby Harborplace, the Orioles, led by owner Eli Jacobs, team president Larry Lucchino, and Vice President for Stadium Development Janet Marie Smith, made fans think of the game’s past. Camden Yards
renewed the sentiment of inclusion that proliferated at classic-era parks, but maintained the exclusion that made public spaces a draw. The park offered all the exclusive spaces that parks like the Astrodome had and even fewer cheap seats than most multi-use era parks. It was significantly further from Baltimore’s black neighborhoods than the team’s previous home had been. Camden Yards was tremendously influential and spurred a host of retro-chic ballparks that sprang up across baseball in the 20 years after it opened.

Throughout the twentieth century, ballparks were important places where Americans gathered together. Where those parks were located, how fans got there, where they sat when they arrived, and how they behaved tells us that middle- and upper-class white Americans wanted to spend their free time in spaces that felt inclusive, but were far from open to all Americans. At the ballpark and other spaces that felt inclusive and democratic, but were far from it, middle- and upper-class whites were not prompted to think about the limits of American democracy, making it hard for them to see it outside the park too.
CHAPTER 2

THE POLO GROUNDS: HOT DOGS AND A TIERED EXPERIENCE AT THE BALLPARK

At the turn of the twentieth century, the New York Giants played their home baseball games in the afternoon—but never on Sundays—in the Polo Grounds, a wooden ballpark that seated fewer than 20,000 fans and created the impression that all fans were equals. Looking back at that era from 1924, concessionaire Harry M. Stevens claimed that “at the counters in the rear of the Polo Grounds you would find a prominent banker eating a frankfurter and drinking a glass of beer, and beside him would be a truck driver doing precisely the same thing.” Stevens implied that hot dogs, beer, and baseball made people in different occupations and economic classes equal. The notion that all fans at the park were equals became a central part of the idealized ballpark experience.

The kind of equality Stevens described, one in which class did not matter, was fundamental to how people understood the experience of going to the Polo Grounds and other ballparks, but that did not mean the experience was truly equal. African Americans were segregated at some parks and treated as inferior to white fans at the Polo Grounds.

1 Although the Dodgers played a few regular-season Sunday games in Brooklyn in 1904, 1905, and 1906, they did so in violation of New York state law and the courts ultimately punished them for doing so. The Giants played some charity exhibition games at the Polo Grounds on Sundays, especially during World War I, but did not play a regular-season Sunday game there until state law changed in 1919. See Steven A. Riess, Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era Revised Edition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 138-150 for more.


3 Black fans were segregated into a fenced-off section of Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis and largely confined to the bleachers in a less formalized system of segregation at
Similarly, women were treated as inferior to men in the park, as were poor fans in comparison to rich fans. Day games—the only time baseball could be played in this era—meant it was doubtful a “truck driver” would have been able to get off work to go to a game. In other words, the two fans Stevens described were more similar than he framed them, but his framing was echoed far and wide and made the park seem like a site of equality. The rhetoric of inclusion without having actual equality in the park helped to create an atmosphere that evoked democracy and freedom and was attractive to middle-class customers. Perhaps no other park illuminated this contradiction more than the Polo Grounds because it was in New York City—the center of the nation’s media—and games were played there for nearly eighty years, making it one of the most famous ballparks of its time.

The feeling of inclusion at the Polo Grounds had some basis in reality; on occasion, as Progressive reformer Jane Addams described it, fans were “so fused together that a man cannot tell whether it is his own shout or another’s that fills his ears.”4 That fusing, however, took place in a space where the Giants owners created a tiered experience so that their wealthier white male fans did not have to interact on an equal basis with poorer fans, women, and African Americans. Aside from the physical divisions that separated poor and rich fans, the tiered experience was also manifested psychologically in ladies’ day, the team’s treatment of African Americans, and in descriptions of bleacher fans.5


5 In addition to the physical and spatial divisions at the park, owners used what I call “psychological tiers” to further divide fans. These tiers were another way owners
Nonetheless, the myth of equality at the ballpark solidified by the experience at the Polo Grounds stayed with baseball for a long time to come.

In addition to the gap between rhetoric about the ballpark experience and the reality of that experience, this chapter also shows that the Polo Grounds helped establish other ballpark norms like eating hot dogs and the use of security to police the limits of acceptable fan behavior. It does so by analyzing the development of the Polo Grounds and the life story of Harry M. Stevens. The Polo Grounds took shape in an era when team owners lacked the power and political capital to completely remake urban spaces the way they would be able to do later in the twentieth century, which limited how they could respond to changes in fans’ expectations. Although Major League Baseball was played at the Polo Grounds into the 1960s, this chapter focuses on the years up to 1940. In its final quarter century, the Polo Grounds did not change much and no longer featured the cutting-edge design it once had.

**Polo Grounds I**

The name “Polo Grounds” was used for four different ballparks the Giants played in between 1883 and 1957. The very first baseball fields—before the Polo Grounds and in an era before they could even be called ballparks—were located wherever players could find sufficient open space to lay out a diamond. When baseball became a commercial industry in the 1860s, businessmen put fences around these fields, forcing fans to pay for clear views of the action. The first Polo Grounds was built to host polo marked fans as different at the park. They are evident in who was seen as “real” fans and how owners treated different demographic groups. The also allowed owners to create the exclusion and division necessary to draw large audiences.
matches and was little more than a fenced-in field. It opened in 1876 and was located on 110th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in Manhattan, diagonally across from Central Park. Although prime real estate today, that part of Manhattan was so sparsely populated in the 1870s that most of the islands’ roads did not yet extend there. Polo matches were relatively infrequent, so the Polo Grounds’ owners rented it out for baseball games as well. The Polo Grounds hosted professional baseball beginning in 1880 and in 1883 its first National League (NL) game as the home field of the New York Giants, a ball club owned by John B. Day. When the Giants began play there, the park had double-deck wooden grandstands behind the infield and a capacity of 12,000.

Although the stands at the first Polo Grounds were primarily a male space, to control fan behavior Day tried to use gender norms to his advantage starting in the club’s first season. Expecting that men would be more likely to eschew rowdy behavior in the presence of women, Day and owners across baseball let female fans into the stands for free on ladies’ days so long as they were accompanied by paying male fans. According to the New York Times, on June 16, 1883, more than 500 women (all of whom sat in the grandstands—the covered and more expensive seats behind home plate) ventured to the Polo Grounds to join a crowd of 5,000 to watch the home team defeat the Cleveland

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Throughout the rest of the 1883 season and at least into 1884, the team sporadically held other ladies’ days. Whether men modified their behavior in the presence of women was not clear, but the inclusion of women gave the game and the stands a more middle-class vibe than barrooms or other single-gendered spaces like the bleachers (the uncovered, cheaper bench seating further from home plate) that were deemed too rowdy for women. In addition to the price of the tickets, the gender divide created a tiered experience between the middle-class grandstand and the more working-class bleachers.

Throughout professional baseball in the 1880s that tiered experience took place in small, impermanent parks that were largely made of wood. These parks were small not only because of the limits of wood as the primary building material, but also because it was not clear that investing in larger parks would pay off. Frequently, they sat on rented land and team owners could disassemble their wooden bleachers and move them to a new location if their lease on the land expired. That mobility was a sign of how little control team owners had over urban space. For example, when the New York City government expanded Manhattan’s street grid further north in 1889, the site of the first Polo Grounds fell victim to an extended 111th Street that cut right through the playing field, leaving the Giants without a home park.


10 Riess, *Touching Base*, 100.
Polo Grounds II

Halfway through the 1889 season the Giants found a new home, which they again called the Polo Grounds despite its being built primarily for baseball. Perhaps Day called his new park by an old name because the team’s fans had grown accustomed to watching them play in a place called the Polo Grounds and he liked the consistency. The second Polo Grounds was also built mostly of wood—some of which had been salvaged from the first Polo Grounds—and was located further north in Manhattan at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue in Washington Heights. It had a capacity of 15,000 and double-deck grandstands behind the infield with uncovered bleachers beyond left field.

The second Polo Grounds was more than forty blocks further away from where many of the Giants fans worked than its predecessor. Like other major league owners, in order for Day to acquire enough affordable land to build a ballpark, he had to look on the outer reaches of residential neighborhoods where real estate was relatively cheap, but where trolley and other mass transportation lines already ran. Washington Heights in 1889 met these requirements. As stadium engineer William Woodbury wrote, a “location

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12 Lowry, Green Cathedrals, 150 and Lamb, “Manhattan Field.”

13 Riess, Touching Base, 99.
[...] which expects to attract the public must be convenient.”

That was the case for the second Polo Grounds, even though it was far from downtown Manhattan.

**Polo Grounds III**

The 1890 season saw the construction of a larger park adjacent to the second Polo Grounds. It was built as the home of another team also called the Giants, this one in the brand-new rival Players League. That park, called Brotherhood Park when it opened, initially consisted of just a grandstand. The Players League lasted only one season and for the 1891 campaign, Day’s NL New York Giants moved into Brotherhood Park and renamed it the Polo Grounds—making it the third park with that name. In the early years of the third Polo Grounds, fans sat in grandstand seats or on bleacher benches Day built, but the bleachers did not go all the way around the outfield. Before bleachers completely enclosed the playing field, sections of the outfield were roped off so that fans could watch the game from their parked carriages and later automobiles. For the most popular games, these roped off areas were full of fans, but ropes were insufficient to keep them from directly impacting the game. Fans at the Polo Grounds, and other ballparks with similar arrangements, often pushed these ropes towards home plate, making the playing field smaller when the home team was at bat and did the reverse when the home team was in the field.

Day sold the Giants not long after he moved the team to the third Polo Grounds. In 1891, he sold some of the team’s shares to Edward Talcott, the former co-owner of the

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15 Gershman, *Diamonds*, 40.
Players League New York Giants. In 1893, Cornelius C. Van Cott, postmaster of New York and also a former co-owner of the Players League Giants, bought the rest of Day’s shares. Neither held them long. Talcott and Van Cott sold their shares to Andrew Freedman, a Tammany Hall politician, after the 1894 season and Freedman owned the Giants through the 1902 season. At the end of the 1902 season, Freedman sold the Giants to John T. Brush, who had previously owned the Cincinnati Reds. When Freedman and Brush owned the team, the Polo Grounds solidified the ballpark as a place to eat hot dogs together, helping to cement its status as an all-American site of equality.

The third Polo Grounds is the park most responsible for the connection between food, especially hot dogs, and the fan experience. The most well-known concessionaire of the classic ballpark era, Harry M. Stevens, used the Polo Grounds as a stepping stone to fame and fortune and according to a story often retold in the baseball press, he invented the hot dog in 1901. Key elements of the story told about Stevens were untrue, but that does not take away from the importance of the Polo Grounds in establishing the connection between food and baseball.

What we know today as the hot dog was originally a German sausage called a frankfurter. However, before they became mainstreamed through their association with baseball, frankfurters were almost exclusively an ethnic German food. Their taste did not

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16 Lamb, “John Day.”


18 Lamb, “Manhattan Field.”
resonate with the English-style of cooking that Anglo-Saxon Americans were familiar with and many native-born Americans saw it as below their social position to purchase meat from a German immigrant butcher—then the only place to purchase frankfurters.\footnote{The song “Where o Where Has My Little Dog Gone?” which was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, indicates why native-born Americans might have been uncomfortable with German butchers. The song suggests that a missing dog wandered into a German butcher shop and ended up as part of the sausage mixture. The popularity of the song hints that at some level there was a fear of what kind of meat went into frankfurters, a fear that was more than likely enough to keep native-born Americans away from them.}

With a subtle flavor change and an important name change, hot dogs became something native-born Americans could eat without social repercussions. Most importantly, hot dogs became associated with baseball, which made them seem as American as the game itself, a stand-in for ideas of democracy, equality, and a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality.

Although there are several origin myths for the hot dog and none of them is entirely true, the one that was centered around baseball was most often repeated and the verifiable parts of it help explain the popularity of the hot dog.\footnote{Other origin stories about the hot dog trace its roots to Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904, and a food cart on Coney Island in the 1870s, but none of those stories had the staying power of the one involving baseball and none are supported by available evidence.}

Tracing the myth is also useful in helping to understand the role of hot dogs, and food more broadly in the fan experience. The myth began with Harry M. Stevens, an English immigrant who came to America in 1882 with only $5 in his pocket.\footnote{Bruce Kraig, \textit{Hot Dog: A Global History} (London, UK: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2009), 24. An 1896 newspaper cites 1879 as the year Stevens immigrated to America, but it is the only source I have come across that cites that date instead of 1882.} Stevens was born the son of a barrister in
London in 1855 and reportedly had worked as a lay preacher in Macclesfield, England.22 When Stevens’ boat from England to the United States docked briefly in Nova Scotia, Canada, Stevens supposedly disembarked, bought a barrel of apples, re-embarked, and sold apples to his shipmates at a significant profit. In short, according to the mythology surrounding him, well before he discovered baseball, Stevens sold food for profit.23

When Stevens arrived on American shores, he and his family made their way to a train station where, according to one source, Stevens asked for tickets to “Niles” for the family. The ticket salesman asked Stevens which Niles, to which Stevens responded, “the one with the steel mills” and he was sold tickets to Niles, Ohio. It is not clear if this was the Niles Stevens intended to travel to or not, but it is where he ended up.24 Stevens and his family moved to the central-Ohio town where he worked in a steel mill for a few years before a strike closed it in 1885.25 Stevens had three young children and needed money to feed them, so when the strike started, he became a door-to-door book salesman to make ends meet.26


24 Bob Trebilock, “The Man Who Made the Hot Dog Red-Hot,” The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer Magazine, April 23, 1989, 37, 40. Several of Stevens’ obituaries noted that the reason he selected the otherwise anonymous town of Niles, Ohio was that his wife had friends or relatives in the town.


In 1887, Stevens’ sales travels took him to Columbus, Ohio, where he met the owners of the Columbus Senators baseball team, Conrad Born and Ralph Lazarus. Like any good salesman, Stevens was always on the lookout for new business opportunities and he convinced Born and Lazarus to sell him the rights to vend scorecards at Columbus’s games that season for $500. One source claims that Stevens bought the scorecard rights not with $500 in cash, but on credit and then found a printer who was also willing to work on credit. Stevens was aware of existing scorecards’ shortcomings in helping fans to follow the game—they were rarely updated to reflect changes in the starting line-up from one day to the next—and was confident that he could profit by making his scorecards more useful and by selling advertisements. According to family lore, Stevens made more selling advertisements on his scorecards than it cost him to buy the rights to sell them. Aided by fast-selling and up-to-date scorecards that helped fans


28 According to food historian Bruce Kraig’s 2009 Hot Dog: A Global History, Stevens went to a Columbus baseball game because he was looking for some entertainment after a long day selling books far from his family. Stevens, who had not attended a baseball game before that day, bought a scorecard in an attempt to understand the game. It was no help. Stevens, however, realized that there was money to be made in a helpful scorecard and got in touch with the team’s owners about purchasing the rights to sell scorecards at Columbus’s games. A 1926 article in The Sporting News by Fred Lieb based on an interview with Stevens, told a somewhat different story. Stevens, in that article never mentioned he was ignorant about the game, but focused on his desire to make a more accurate scorecard to help fans follow the game better. See Paul D. Adomites, “Concessions,” in Total Baseball, ed. John Thorn and Pete Palmer (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 669-670 and “The Red Hot Stevens,” 103 for more information.


30 Lieb, “Turning ‘By-Products’ of Baseball into Millions” and “The Red Hot Stevens,” 103.
follow the game and his sales pitch of “you can’t tell the players without a scorecard!” Stevens had secured a small, but integral role in baseball history, though he was not yet done impacting the game.

Once he established his scorecard venture Stevens purchased the rights to sell food at the Columbus ballpark too. This meant Stevens paid to be the exclusive concessions vendor at the ballpark. In his early days as a concessionaire, Stevens sold hard-boiled eggs, sandwiches, and coconut custard pies. He was successful in Columbus and expanded his business to other Midwestern cities. By 1892, his eponymous company, Harry M. Stevens, Inc. (HMS, Inc.), also owned rights to sell at ballparks in Toledo, Milwaukee (where he sold scorecards in English and German), and Pittsburgh. At a game in Pittsburgh in 1893, Stevens struck up a conversation, and the beginnings of a friendship, with John Montgomery Ward of the New York Giants—one of the best known, and most educated players of the era. Stevens saw the Giants as a great opportunity because New York’s population dwarfed those of the Midwestern cities where he already owned concessions rights. Relying on his newfound friendship with Ward and his reputation in the Midwest for credibility, Stevens traveled to the National League winter meetings in the winter of 1893-1894 with the goal of expanding his business.

31 Adomites, “Concessions,” 669-670. A few years later, Stevens sold ham and cheese sandwiches, but it not clear what kind of sandwiches he sold in Columbus.

At those meetings, Stevens secured the rights to sell scorecards at the Polo Grounds for the 1894 season, presumably by negotiating with the Giants owners Talcott and Van Cott. Repeating the steps he took in Columbus, he soon parlayed that scorecard agreement into a food concessions contract. The story Stevens told about himself—immigrant works hard, makes good, becomes wealthy and famous—was, just like the game of baseball, wrapped up in the mythology of America. Exaggerating his Horatio Alger-esque life story, his descendants even suggested he was broke when he moved to New York City in 1894. Given his success in the Midwest, this seems unlikely. Although many sources credit Stevens’ move east to his relationship with Ward, one of his great-grandsons believed that Stevens moved east because he acquired the rights to sell concessions at the Belmont Aqueduct Racetrack outside of New York City. Another great-grandson believed that Stevens’ move from Pittsburgh to New York was not connected to Ward, but to Frank Farrell, future owner of the New York Yankees who Stevens met in Pittsburgh. In the 1890s, Farrell ran a hotel on Staten Island popular with fans of the America’s Cup sailing race then contested in New York harbor and Farrell hired Stevens to cater race events. Regardless of which story is true, the Ward and


35 Hector Griswold (great-grandson of Harry M. Stevens and former employee of Harry M. Stevens, Inc.) in discussion with the author, January 8, 2015. There was not then and is not now a track called “Belmont Aqueduct.” A track called Aqueduct opened in 1895 and one called Belmont opened in 1905. Both continue to exist. It is not clear what track Griswold was referring to, casting significant doubt on this version of events.

36 Frank “Sandy” Rose (great-grandson of Harry M. Stevens and former employee of Harry M. Stevens, Inc.) in discussion with the author, January 20, 2015.
Farrell stories both tie Stevens to baseball and the important point remains that Stevens came to New York City in the 1890s and first sold food at the Polo Grounds during the 1894 baseball season.

When Stevens first worked at the Polo Grounds, journalist and author Damon Runyon described him as a “heavy-set young man in a brilliant red coat” who sold primarily peanuts, ham and cheese sandwiches, and beer. Stevens took credit for introducing baseball fans to the idea of eating peanuts at the game, which rapidly became popular, especially in New York. Whether this was true or not, he certainly popularized peanuts—and not just in the Big Apple. Soon after arriving in New York City, Stevens obtained the rights to sell concessions at all three Major League parks there, both Major League parks in Boston, multiple racetracks, and many smaller baseball parks up and down the East Coast.

He also became somewhat famous. An 1896 article called Stevens “undoubtedly one of the best known characters on the baseball field” and highlighted his rapport with professional baseball players. He developed a friendship with John McGraw, the colorful and famous Giants manager, as well as with players on other teams in whose

37 Unknown paper from Youngstown, Ohio, unknown date, Harry M. Stevens Subject File, A. Bartlett Giamatti Library and Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. (Hereafter HoF.)

38 “Ball Fans Must Eat.”


home ballparks he owned concession rights. He had moved up the social ladder from a poor immigrant to a successful businessman.

Even more notably, Stevens was given credit for inventing the hot dog at the Polo Grounds in 1901. Although he was probably the single person most responsible for popularizing the hot dog and cementing its association with baseball, he did not invent the food or the term.\(^{41}\) There is no evidence that Stevens personally claimed to have invented the hot dog. In 1926, he gave an interview to journalist Fred Lieb that touched on many subjects, including the food sold at baseball games, giving Stevens an opportunity to take credit for inventing hot dogs. Instead, Stevens claimed that his son Frank was responsible for the idea of selling what came to be called hot dogs, but that Stevens did not sell them until a six-day bicycle race at Madison Square Garden in 1906.\(^{42}\) Casting more doubt on the idea that Stevens invented the hot dog, in a 1924 interview, rather than make himself the key actor in the introduction of hot dogs at the ballpark, Stevens used the passive voice, saying, “ham and cheese sandwiches had things to themselves for the first fifteen years of my time at the ball park [1887-1902]. When frankfurters were introduced they were sold in the back of the grandstand.”\(^{43}\) In that interview, Stevens made no reference to how hot dogs came to baseball games and did

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\(^{41}\) His *Washington Post* obituary and a 1979 *New York Times* article by Craig Claibourne both credit Stevens as the first to add mustard and pickles to the hot dog, but not the first to serve a sausage on a bun and call it a hot dog. I found no evidence that Stevens was, or was not, the first to add mustard and pickles to a hot dog.

\(^{42}\) Lieb, “Turning ‘By-Products’ of Baseball into Millions.”

\(^{43}\) “Ball Fans Must Eat.”
not mention any role he had in their creation. In fact, the origin of the hot dog predates Stevens’ arrival in New York.

The term “hot dog” seems to have had two original usages. One was for someone who was showing off, much like it can still be used today, and seems to have originated on college campuses. The other usage began as a joke based on the fear that sausages sold at German American butcher shops actually contained dog meat. Both usages first appeared in print in the mid-1880s—just about the time Stevens began his door-to-door book salesman career and long before his purported invention at the Polo Grounds.44 Stevens’ sons seem to have been responsible for the myth that Stevens invited the hot dog at the Polo Grounds in 1901. That myth first appeared in a 1935 article in Collier’s by Quentin Reynolds and Stevens’ sons likely intended the story to bolster their father’s legacy (he had passed away the year before), their company, or both.

Per Reynolds, on a cold April day in 1901, Stevens tried to sell his usual fare of peanuts, ice cream, and cold drinks at the Polo Grounds.45 The crowd of 50,000,

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45 For reasons beyond my comprehension, a fiftieth anniversary celebration of the creation of the hot dog was held in New York City in 1941 and honored Stevens by feting his surviving sons. By every account, Stevens was still in the Midwest in 1891 and had not yet “invented” the hot dog. A program from this event is in the “Harry M. Stevens” subject file at HoF. That banquet featured a four-foot long, 60-pound hot dog nestled in a five-foot long roll. Neither the hot dog nor the roll are in the subject file.
however, was more concerned with staying warm than with choosing ice cream flavors.\footnote{The seating capacity for the Polo Grounds was less than 50,000 in 1901, so either there were a lot of standing room only tickets sold, or Reynolds exaggerated the attendance. It is doubtful that many people could even fit in the Polo Grounds.} Looking for anything he could sell to such a large crowd, Stevens thought of something his son Frank had brought up a few days earlier. Stevens instructed his employees to go into the upper Manhattan neighborhood around the Polo Grounds and round up all the German sausages, rolls, and mustard they could get their hands on. Stevens wanted to sell something hot to Giants fans, something red hot. Calling his creation “red hots” or perhaps “dachshund sausages,” Stevens sold all the sausage-roll combinations he could acquire on that chilly April afternoon.\footnote{Quentin Reynolds, “Peanut Vendor,” \textit{Collier’s Magazine}, October 19, 1935, 69-70.}

Also according to the myth, the influential sports cartoonist T. A. Dorgen (known by his initials: TAD) was in attendance that cold spring day and memorialized Stevens’ creation in a cartoon, renaming the dish the “hot dog” purportedly because he could not spell “dachshund.”\footnote{Reynolds, “Peanut Vendor,” 69-70.} The popularity of the bun-wrapped sausage was instantaneous and widespread. In a flash, Stevens had supposedly invented hot dogs and the American tradition of eating them at baseball games. As one obituary noted, citing a slightly different date for Stevens’ monumental brainstorm, “historians may note that Harry Stevens sold his first hot dog at the Polo Grounds in 1900. Before that time, sausages had been sold in rolls, but the hot sausage in the hot roll, with mustard or pickle, was
Stevens’s own idea.” In case that alone had not made Stevens a significant historical figure, some accounts also credited him with introducing the straw to baseball so that fans could sip their sodas without having to take their eyes off the game. Per the myth, Stevens used his hard work, ingenuity, and, most notably, his special sausage and roll creation, to kick start America’s first sports concession empire.

The myth, however, does not stand up to scrutiny. There is no TAD cartoon about hot dogs from 1901, but there is one from a six-day bicycle race at Madison Square Garden in 1906. Although the combination of the Lieb and Reynolds articles and TAD cartoon makes it seem likely that Stevens “invented” the hot dog at a 1906 bicycle race and that the Reynolds article was wrong on the year and location of the invention, hot dogs predate 1906. However, by tying hot dogs to baseball, Stevens’ sons came up with an interesting and American story that, in the midst of the Depression, might have helped them to sell more food and burnished their late father’s legacy. Years after his death, Stevens’ descendants and company spokespersons occasionally waffled on the claim that


51 Stevens’ eponymous company, Harry M. Stevens, Inc., grew to dominate the sports concession industry and existed as an independent company operated by the Stevens family and selling concessions at Major League parks until it was purchased by Aramark in 1994.


53 A journalist in the 1980s claimed that Frank had the idea at a six-day bicycle race at Madison Square Garden, but that Harry shot down the idea until a cold day at the Polo Grounds, thereby turning this chronology on its head. See Trebilock, “The Man Who Made the Hot Dog Red-Hot,” 37, 40.
he invented the hot dog; at times they simply (and accurately) said Stevens popularized
the hot dog or was instrumental in its association with baseball.54

The true aspects of Stevens’ story fit with the idea that games were places where
Americans of all walks of life could interact as equals without regard for their social or
employment status. Stevens formed bonds with wealthy owners and famous ballplayers
when he was a poor salesman and later with poor rookies when he was a rich man. Even
if Stevens made friends with Ward, McGraw, and others out of genuine regard for them
and not because those friendships provided a boon to his business, Stevens was part of
the segment of Americans—middle- and upper-class white males—who owners
privileged at the ballpark. His friendships showed that at baseball games white men could
intermix as relative equals, not that all Americans could join in that social intermixing.
Despite its reputation, ballpark equality was not for everyone.

Perhaps the most important reasons that hot dogs became popular at baseball
games were not mentioned in any of its origin myths. Hot dogs were ideal for both the
concessionaire and the fan. Hot dogs were great for concessionaires because they were
inexpensive and because there were few left over at the end of a game. Unlike many
other hot prepared foods, hot dogs could be made in almost the exact amount that would
be sold on a given day. This lack of waste meant greater profits. As Harry M. Stevens’
son Frank told a journalist in 1941, “Dad realized that anything that could be prepared
swiftly, that was compact, tasty and cheap, and would furnish a small meal in a short
time, and could be taken to his seat by the fan—or purchased right at the seat—had vast

54 “Hot Dog! Stevens Inc. Now in South Brunswick,” Business Journal,
September 1, 1987.
possibilities.” Hot dogs were great for fans because they could be eaten easily, without too much of a mess, and using only one hand. In addition to watching the game, as hot dogs increased in popularity, eating them became another thing that fans who did not know each other did together as equals in the park.

Ballpark food also fostered the notion that games were sites of equality because all the concessions sold in the Polo Grounds were available to all fans. Food was primarily sold in two ways in this period: by roving vendors who traveled through the stands selling food and drink from carrying cases strung across their chests and from semi-permanent stands located under the bleachers. There was no place in the stands that the roving vendors did not travel and because the highest-priced seats did not have exclusive catering options, concessions stands had to be accessible to everyone. Paying more for tickets or being willing and able to pay more for food at the game, did not mean that any one fan had access to any more meal options than any other fan. Moreover, the style in which hot dogs and other ballpark foods were consumed—informally and without plates or silverware—reinforced the equality of the fans who ate them by rejecting snooty, elite manners. That equality was restricted to the middle- and upper-class white men who made up the vast majority of fans though.

One way the Giants made sure that the majority of their fans remained middle- and upper-class white men was by using a variety of methods to ensure appropriate fan behavior at the Polo Grounds. They made use of New York City police offices for that purpose until 1907, when a new, reform-minded mayor was elected. That mayor

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determined that it was against the law to use the police in private buildings without a clear danger to citizens of the city. Since most games did not present a danger to fans, New York’s finest would no longer be on regular duty inside the Polo Grounds. They would, however, continue to patrol outside of the ballpark, on the public streets, in order to keep the peace there. Then team owner John T. Brush thought this was a preposterous decision, refused to hire his own private police force, and declared that if the fans got out of control it would be the police’s fault. The 1907 season began without any police officers stationed inside the Polo Grounds and without a private security force there either. At one game the crowd got out of control and stormed the field. New York City police officers, on duty outside the Polo Grounds, refused to enter to restrain the fans, forcing the team to forfeit. Brush concluded that he had to pay for in-park security to ensure an experience that fit with middle- and upper-class social norms after all. The Giants ultimately hired uniformed Pinkertons, private security guards, to patrol the Polo Grounds and keep the fans in line. However, as historian Steven Riess argues, these private security guards did not have much sway with rowdy fans because Pinkertons did not carry the authority of the police.\footnote{Riess, Touching Base, 86.} Nevertheless, the team became more popular.

Becoming more popular meant the team was more profitable and Brush invested in the Polo Grounds, hoping to further increase profits. By 1910, he had wooden bleachers built that completely enclosed the field, largely eliminating the roped-off areas. That year, he also added a small parking lot with a valet service and a ramp from the 157th Street Subway station right into the grandstand, which meant that grandstand patrons and
bleacher patrons did not have to use the same entrance. The team also installed telephones and employed staff to alert fans at their seats if they had a call. These developments put the Polo Grounds at the cutting-edge of ballpark design.

By 1910, most owners had selected or were on the lookout for locations to build new, concrete and steel ballparks. They searched for locations that were mass-transit accessible and in solidly middle-class neighborhoods. Barney Dreyfuss, owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates, made sure his Forbes Field, one of the first classic-era parks, was not in what he deemed a bad neighborhood because the “better class of citizens, especially when accompanied by their womenfolk” would not want to go there. Similarly, Ben Shibe described his park as being for “the masses as well as the classes.” As a residential neighborhood grew up around the Polo Grounds, it met these criteria, but in contrast with rhetoric about the park, its location, along with the timing and cost of tickets, limited who could actually go to games.

Writing about the atmosphere at the ballpark in Harper’s Weekly in 1910, Edward Moss, also the sports editor of the New York Evening Sun, noted “business and professional men forget for the time their standing in the community and, shoulder to

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57 “Improvements at the Polo Grounds,” unknown newspaper, April 19, 1910, Harry M. Stevens Subject File, HoF.


shoulder with the street urchin, ‘root’ frantically for the hit needed to win the game.”

Despite Moss’ rhetoric, fans did not have equal access to the park. From the outset, admission was charged at every professional game, which restricted fans who were unable to purchase tickets and assured that the fan make up at games was not representative of the general population. Owners divided their paying customers by building barriers between the bleachers and the grandstand like the Polo Grounds’ direct connection from the subway to the grandstand. Despite that, the appearance of equality at the ballpark persisted. Owners like John Brush were able to celebrate fans’ vision of America by using rhetoric of equality while providing an experience that allowed them to avoid people they did not want to interact with.

In the same article, Moss denigrated the working-class fans who could only come to games on weekends and holidays, describing them as ignorant and largely out of control. He wrote “the weekend crowds do not grasp the finer points of the play with the same ability the regulars do, and are prone to blame the umpires and visiting clubs for slip-ups in the play which are clearly due to laxity on the part of the local team members.” Moss argued that the behavior of fans who worked white-collar jobs and therefore could come to games on weekday afternoons was superior to working-class fans’ behavior, which made those white-collar workers feel even more central to the experience. The presence of these poorly-behaving fans though was a sign that equality at

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the park was real—at least for white men—but the language describing it psychologically reinforced the tiered experience.

Similarly, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, one journalist described bleacher fans as Micky O’Hooligan, ‘Rastus Jones (a derogatory term for a black person that emerged out of blackface minstrelsy), a truckman, and a freckled office boy. That author wrote that the stereotypical bleacher fan was “in the initial stages of civilization” because he had not yet “acquire[d] the art of thinking with [his] mouth shut.”63 Classifying bleacher fans as out-of-control immigrants, racial minorities, and lower-class workers who were not as civilized as other fans furthered the divide between the bleachers and the grandstand, but by including them in the fans at the park, owners presented the experience as one that represented all of America.

Despite barriers to interaction between bleacher and grandstand fans, class separation at the park was not complete because not all middle-class fans sat in the grandstand. Some middle-class fans preferred the bleachers and the ability to act outside of their typical behavioral norms.64 However, owners largely separated these fans, or at least separated the fans who behaved by those norms from those that did not. Moreover, because the ballpark was not really open to everyone, it served as something of a safe space for fans to misbehave or comport themselves like a bleacher fan when they had the status of a typical grandstand fan without facing the consequences to their social standing that might have followed in a truly accessible venue or on a public street.

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64 Riess, *Touching Base*, 42.
Polo Grounds IV

Like all wooden ballparks, the third Polo Grounds was vulnerable to fire and collapse. On April 14, 1911, a fire destroyed much of the park. Three games into a new season, the Giants rented nearby Hilltop Park from the American League’s New York Highlanders (the team that later changed its name to the Yankees). Meanwhile, team-owner Brush worked to build a fourth Polo Grounds on the site of its mostly destroyed predecessor.

Built of concrete and steel, the fourth version of the Polo Grounds was essentially fireproof just as pioneering new parks that opened in 1909 in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were too. It was also much larger than its predecessors because concrete and steel facilitated a larger structure; it had the largest capacity in the majors until 1923. Perhaps more importantly for the growth of professional baseball, parks like the fourth Polo Grounds were not mobile. To make the construction of a concrete and steel ballpark worthwhile, team owners needed to own the land on which they built their ballparks—or in the Giants’ case have a long-term lease they could count on. If nothing else, this signified that major league baseball was a permanent part of the urban entertainment landscape.65

The fourth Polo Grounds was representative of many elements in classic-era ballparks. Like most of his fellow owners in the classic era, Brush did not hire an architectural firm to redesign and rebuild the Polo Grounds. Instead, he hired the

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engineering firm, Osborn Construction Company, which went on to be involved with the
construction, design, and/or remodeling of more than ten other MLB parks. Osborn
designed a park that, according to Brush, included grandstands that were “majestic, 100
feet above the ground and more than 1,000 feet in length” and “decorations [that were] a
step in advance of the past or present age in exterior adornment and represent[ed] the
taste and skill of the best designers, sculptors, and artists in the country.” It also
featured marble fixtures, avoided stairs in favor of ramps wherever possible, and because
Brush said fans preferred to sit in more expensive seats, had fewer cheap seats than its
wooden predecessor. Brush’s view of fans’ preferences suggests that owners thought
the psychological barrier built up between the bleachers and the grandstand brought more
middle- and upper-class fans to the park.

Brush’s contractors worked quickly and the Giants were able to move back into
the Polo Grounds in late June 1911. Work on the fourth Polo Grounds continued after the
team moved back in, lasting throughout the 1911 season when almost the entire park was
built out of concrete and steel. Although the team referred to the reconstructed fourth
Polo Grounds as Brush Field for several seasons, fans continued to call it the Polo

Grounds.

66 Richard Sandomir, “Design: Rising Above the Field: In a Golden Age of
Stadiums, the Houses that Osborn Built Were Nonpareil,” *Sports Illustrated*, August 5,

Magazine*, April 1912, 3.

Grandstand,” 1-3.
The new park, even with its greater division between the bleachers and the grandstand, did not undermine the idea that parks were accessible to all Americans. Epitomizing that notion, in 1913, journalist H. Addington Bruce wrote that “the spectator at a [base] ball game is no longer a statesman, lawyer, broker, doctor, merchant, or artisan, but just a plain every-day man, with a heart full of fraternity and good will to all his fellow-men.” Bruce described fans in the stands as equal regardless of their employment status or social background. His view was echoed by many notable figures associated with the game including sporting goods magnate Albert Spalding. Spalding called the game a “democratic breeding ground” and viewed it as a place where the only distinctions that mattered were knowledge of and interest in the game. However, when writers celebrated the different kinds of people who came to baseball games in this era, they almost always focused on men from white ethnic immigrant groups, inadvertently highlighting the limits of equality at the park and in so doing, framing men who appeared or could pass as white as the only people that mattered.

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70 For more on Bruce and Progressive Era thoughts on baseball, see Riess, *Touching Base*.


72 For example, see Frederick G. Lieb, “Baseball—The Nation’s Melting Pot: Many Races are Represented in the Shifting, Changing Personnel of the Major Leagues—All Develop Great Players and Intense Enthusiasm for the Game,” *Baseball Magazine*, August 1923, 393-395, 419.
The lengths the Giants went to preserve the façade of equal access is evident in how they handled highly-coveted World Series tickets and how they responded to controversy about these tickets. During the regular season, Brush sold tickets at a price most middle-class fans could easily afford. Although Brush sold tickets for World Series games for higher prices than regular season games, his team never sold tickets to the highest bidder. Even when his product was at peak demand, Brush tried to keep it relatively accessible rather than charge outlandish prices. In 1911 and 1913, the Giants met the Philadelphia A’s in the World Series and scalpers acquired World Series tickets, forcing the general public to pay more than the sticker price if they wanted to see a game and severely limiting who could afford a ticket.

Unlike most Major League games during the 1911 season, there was a greater demand for tickets than there was a supply of seats at the World Series. To manage this imbalance and ensure that games were accessible to any fan who could afford the $3 grandstand tickets, as compared with $1.25 and $2 during the regular season, the Giants limited each fan who sent a check for tickets to a maximum of four tickets per game. The Giants hoped this would prevent scalpers from buying lots of tickets and reselling them to the general public at a markup. Giants officials did not want another entity profiting off their games; they wanted baseball to appear accessible to as many fans as possible and they did not want fans to feel cheated by the cost of a ticket to the game. The team also took pains to mail tickets to fans in a variety of ways to disguise that they were highly-coveted World Series tickets. The A’s took steps to reduce the chances of scalpers
acquiring tickets to games at their home field too.\textsuperscript{73} In other words, the purported equality in the stands had a basis in reality—for those who could afford tickets—thanks to the efforts of owners like Brush.

Despite those efforts, and particularly in New York, scalpers were able to acquire lots of tickets and garnered as much as five times the face value of these tickets on the resale market. Given the steps the Giants took to ward off scalping (which also included hiring a private security force to patrol outside the Polo Grounds where scalpers operated), fans and the press assumed that someone in the Giants organization had covertly helped scalpers get tickets. Both were outraged that the Giants would take actions that made tickets unaffordable to middle-class Americans.\textsuperscript{74} Fans’ belief that the ballpark was a site of equality was under threat. Owners had to act.

In January 1912, MLB owners issued a report on the 1911 World Series ticket scandal but did not reveal how the scalpers got their tickets. The report absolved all members of the Giants and A’s organizations from any wrongdoing and made three recommendations for how to avoid scalping in the future. One was for the Giants not to offer tickets for all the games at the Polo Grounds for sale at the same time; another was to promptly return checks sent with ticket requests that could not be filled; and the third

\textsuperscript{73} Lloyd F. Lonergan, “Public is Unmercifully Fleeced by Greedy Baseball Magnates,” \textit{Morning Oregonian}, October 22, 1911. Ticket scalping problems had also occurred at the 1910 World Series and despite Giants’ owner John T. Brush’s offer of a $5,000 reward to anyone with a foolproof plan to stop scalping, the money remained unclaimed. See Harry M. Ziv, “Ticket Scalping,” \textit{Baseball Magazine}, January 1911, 59-61 for more information.

\textsuperscript{74} Lonergan, “Public is Unmercifully Fleeced by Greedy Baseball Magnates.”
was for owners to lobby their local elected officials to stiffen the penalties and enforcement on scalpers.\textsuperscript{75}

Although not all team executives were worried about the scandal—one Giants official told a journalist that complaining fans would “be around fast enough next season”—the complaints indicated that fans thought they were entitled to access to the park.\textsuperscript{76} Forcing Giants fans to pay exorbitant prices for tickets from scalpers was contrary to the idea of equal access and threatened to dampen fan interest in baseball. In contrast to that unnamed Giants official, the report on the World Series ticket scandal showed most owners thought the issue was serious. The report was a message to the Giants fans that the Polo Grounds was a site where they should be ensured equal access in the future.

Two years later, the Giants and A’s met in the World Series again, but again tickets found their way into scalpers’ hands. Unlike 1911, the team immediately took action. The \textit{New York Times} reported that “Secretary John B. Foster of the New York Club announced that the club had detectives making the rounds of the various ticket agencies getting the seat numbers of the tickets which found their way to the speculators’ hands” so they could provide them to MLB headquarters. The club’s new owner, Harry Hempstead, John T. Brush’s son-in-law who took over in 1912 after Brush died, took scalping seriously.\textsuperscript{77} He offered $2,500 to charity if anyone could prove “that even a

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\textsuperscript{75} “Reds Dooin to Lead Phillies,” \textit{The Anaconda} (Montana) \textit{Standard}, January 6, 1912.

\textsuperscript{76} Lonergan, “Public is Unmercifully Fleeced by Greedy Baseball Magnates.”

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single ticket went from the office of the New York Club to a ticket speculator.” It clearly mattered to the Giants that their fans feel like equals in the park.

Aside from being sites of equality, to the commentators and journalists of the day, classic-era parks like the fourth Polo Grounds were enormous structures that towered over the playing field and the streets around them. These ballparks, as historian Robert F. Bluthardt argues, heightened the separation between the players and the fans as they largely eliminated roped-off standing-room only sections, which had allowed fans to easily interfere with the game. This protected (although not completely) both players and umpires from objects thrown from the stands. These new parks were also better situated to rival amusement parks and other activities competing for the middle-class entertainment dollar because they were more comfortable and more visibly appealing. The new, larger parks meant that more fans could come to games, which required new methods of crowd control including ramps, turnstiles, and multiple points of entry and exit and more effective policing.

At the fourth Polo Grounds, the Giants tried to improve their security force by replacing the little-respected Pinkertons. In 1913, they hired a former employee of Pinkerton, Harry V. Dougherty, who had started his own private security firm and had

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79 Bluthardt, “Fenway Park and the Golden Age of the Baseball Park,” 46. There were numerous instances of fans throwing bottles on the field at parks throughout baseball.


close ties with the New York police department, as their head of security. Dougherty only hired burly men, trained them for weeks, and outfitted them in military-looking uniforms. These new security guards seemed more effective than their predecessors and garnered more respect from fans, likely due to their uniforms and comportment. This helped owners like Hempstead maintain the park as an appropriate place for middle- and upper-class fans by ensuring that the behavior of fans met social norms.

Writing about this new security force in *Baseball Magazine*, R. G. Wilson noted that “the fan is usually an orderly person, but it is hardly reasonable to suppose that thirty thousand people can gather together, and be subject to as much stress and strain as the average ball game calls for, with its close decisions and disappointing features, without occasionally giving way to a bit too strenuous display of enthusiasm.” Wilson also noted that, “a squad of plain clothesmen [were] on duty at the gates and also prevent[ed] any betting.” The security guards seem to have been a way to guarantee that the Giants preserved their fan base by rooting out the kinds of behavior that might have threatened fans’ expectations of the experience. Wilson noted “Dougherty’s Military Police will remain quiet and dignified, but should there be any sign of hoodlumism, it would be well for such persons to remember that Dougherty is on the job and that his men are instructed

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83 Riess, *Touching Base*, 86.

84 Wilson, “Policing the Greatest Baseball Stadium in the World,” 66.

85 Wilson, “Policing the Greatest Baseball Stadium in the World,” 67.
to act and act quickly.” The Polo Grounds security force would allow fans the privilege of yelling at players and umpires, but was intended to prevent them from going too far.

Many owners also sought to prevent fans from going too far by limiting alcohol sales. Drinking at the ballpark had long been part of the fan experience and owners’ revenue streams. However, ballpark alcohol sales were complicated by owners’ desires to draw middle- and upper-class fans and people who wanted to behave in ways commonly associated with that class status, many of whom opposed public consumption of alcohol and supported the temperance movement. In 1880, four years after the league was created, National League owners banned most alcohol sales at their games. The NL team in Cincinnati refused to abide by the ban because they feared a loss of profit without the ability to sell alcohol in their park. In reply, the other NL owners forced Cincinnati out of the league.\(^8\)

Partially in response to the alcohol ban, a new league, the American Association (AA), began operating in 1882. The AA featured teams in some of the same cities as the National League, as well as the NL’s old Cincinnati franchise. Because AA teams sold alcohol and several team owners had made their fortunes from brewing or distilling, the AA came to be known as the “Beer and Whiskey League.” AA games were popular and the league posed a real threat to the primacy of the NL, leading some NL owners to rethink their policy on alcohol. NL owners adopted some of the AA’s successful strategies including, after the NL pushed the AA out of business in 1891, selling alcohol

\(^{86}\) Wilson, “Policing the Greatest Baseball Stadium in the World,” 67.

at their ballparks. This meant that by their second season in the third Polo Grounds, the Giants could sell alcohol. NL owners’ concerns about alcohol dissuading middle-class attendance were likely reduced by the attendance success of the American Association and careful managing of alcohol sales, but the fight over the place of alcohol at the ballpark was far from over.

During the two decades before Prohibition in 1920, the idea that drinking in public was inappropriate for the middle- and upper-class Americans who made up the majority of fans gained adherents. In response, many, but not all, owners again stopped selling alcohol in their ballparks. Efforts to remove beer and liquor from Major League parks were spearheaded by Ban Johnson, the American League (AL) President, and August Herrmann, the Cincinnati Reds’ owner and the chair of the National Commission that governed baseball. Johnson had been opposed to AL teams selling alcohol in their parks since the league was founded in 1901. He gained traction on the issue over time and by 1910, only one AL team, the Chicago White Sox, sold liquor in their park. When the White Sox moved to a new park that July, owner Charles Comiskey opted not to sell alcohol there. It was not as though Comiskey stopped selling alcohol because it was not a profitable venture; according to one estimate, he made $10,000 a season on alcohol

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Comiskey gave up significant profit presumably to ensure the experience at his new park would appeal to the fans he wanted to draw.

Despite Herrmann’s influence, the National League was slower to remove alcohol from its parks. In 1911, Herrmann announced that he thought selling alcohol at NL games should be prohibited and beginning that season he ceased selling alcohol at his park. Herrmann, who was not a temperance advocate outside the park, except perhaps when it came to his own players, said that “baseball and booze do not mix well” because it led to disorder in the stands and to fans assaulting players and umpires. Herrmann told the press he thought he would be able to convince the rest of the NL, with the possible exception of the Giants and the Dodgers, to stop selling alcohol at their parks too. He was not confident about the Giants and Dodgers because both teams earned significant profit from alcohol sales at their parks. Sure enough, the Giants were the last holdout. By 1917, the only MLB park in which fans could still buy alcohol was the Polo Grounds. Exactly why this was the case is not clear, but it is safe to assume that Hempstead kept selling alcohol because he thought it was in his financial interest to do so.

That alcohol was sold under the terms of a contract that HMS, Inc. and the Giants had initially signed in 1910. It dictated that beer and liquor could only be sold from a bar

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91 “Wrestling Barred from Ball Park,” The (Salt Lake City) Evening Telegram, November 20, 1911.

92 It is not entirely clear if Herrmann ceased selling beer from vendors at his park, or if he entirely banned the sale of alcohol at his park from concessions stands as well.

93 Vila, “Bar Beer and Whisky from Big Ball Parks.”

beneath the stands that was screened off from public view, expressly prohibited the sale of alcohol by vendors in the grandstand, and stated that the team had the right to directly supervise alcohol sales to ensure that the concessionaire met their standards.\textsuperscript{95} There are two conceivable reasons the Giants might have dictated that the bar be screened off from public view—the first to hide it from fans who might disapprove of its existence and the second to hide those who chose to indulge from public view and scrutiny. That the Giants went to such lengths to continue to sell alcohol at the Polo Grounds highlights the fine line owners like Hempstead had to walk to maximize profit while attempting to maintain control over the fan experience.

When Prohibition became the law of the land, the Giants had to stop selling alcohol. Harry M. Stevens reported that during Prohibition his vendors shifted their beer sales to a variety of beverages including ginger ale, sarsaparilla, and near-beer.\textsuperscript{96} When Prohibition ended in 1933, the Giants and many other teams navigated new, post-Prohibition liquor laws and returned the profitable commodity to their ballparks. Teams closely controlled alcohol though to ensure that all fans behaved by middle-class norms, something that was increasingly a concern by the 1930s, as the park had become more accessible to working-class fans in the interim.

During the first three-and-a-half decades the Giants played at the various Polo Grounds, “Blue Laws” kept many working-class fans from attending games. These Blue Laws banned many commercial activities on Sundays in northeastern cities in accord

\textsuperscript{95} Contract, January 13, 1910 between Harry M. Stevens and the Giants, Harry M. Stevens Subject File, HoF.

\textsuperscript{96} “Ball Fans Must Eat.”
with the idea that the Christian Sabbath should be a day of rest. In New York and many
other cities, professional baseball fell under these Sabbath Blue Laws; therefore, it was
illegal for the Giants to play at the Polo Grounds on Sundays. Most lower-class New
Yorkers worked during the day all week and many on Saturdays as well. In an era before
night games, the only day they could have gone to games without skipping work was
Sunday. Although this ban helped the Giants foster a tiered experience at the Polo
Grounds because many working-class fans could not attend games, it cost them revenue.

Some opponents of Blue Laws argued that all Americans deserved access to
baseball games. They claimed their goal was not to help owners make more money, but
rather to give people “the privilege to choose between beer and poker in the stagnant
atmosphere of some drinking place and sunlight, fresh air and health watching an
invigorating ball game.”97 One former owner even argued that “Sunday ball games
constitute a great moral help to every community and are welcomed by the police
because they lessen crime.”98 By calling baseball a constructive activity, proponents of
Sunday baseball aimed to fit it with the goals of Blue Laws’ supporters.

The Sunday baseball ban was often a hot topic in New York City. In 1904, then
Giants owner John T. Brush announced that “he favored Sunday baseball” at the Polo
Grounds “if the people demanded Sunday ball and the courts were of the opinion it was

97 “What About Sunday Baseball?: The Mayors of the Majority of Cities in the
Empire State Have Voted for Sunday Baseball. The Majority of the Community want

98 Charles W. Murphy, “What Do the Blue Law Agitators Want?: Shall Nine
Million People Control the Country? The Truth About the Much Abused Continental
not against the law.”99 As it turned out the courts did enforce the state law against professional Sunday baseball, so Brush did not attempt to schedule a Giants game on a Sunday at the Polo Grounds that year. In another comment about Sunday baseball, Brush said “we want to give the public what they desire.”100 Brush’s statements ignored the tremendous financial benefit he would receive from Sunday baseball. Such a statement was unlikely to win over anyone who might be on the fence about supporting Sunday baseball, whereas arguing that he was simply fulfilling the demands of New Yorkers was likely to be a more successful strategy.

Brush’s customers did not have the final say about Sunday baseball, the New York state legislature did. Despite overwhelming support from New York City’s representatives, upstate New York legislators opposed repealing the laws banning Sunday baseball.101 There was enough opposition to prevent passage of the repeal until 1919. Although the legislature repealed the law before the 1919 season, New York City’s Council delayed the legalization of Sunday baseball until that May.102 Not only did the Sunday baseball ban outlive Brush, but by the time it was repealed, his son-in-law Harry Hempstead had sold the club to Charles Stoneham.103

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On May 4, 1919, when the Giants hosted their first Sunday game at the Polo Grounds, they drew a then regular-season record of 35,000 fans. The *New York Times* reported that those fans did not engage in any “disorder or rowdyism” in the stands. Instead, the crowd did nothing more “than turn loose a lot of excess vocal steam.”\(^{104}\) For the rest of the season, the Giants regularly drew between 25,000 and 30,000 fans for their Sunday home games.\(^{105}\) Sunday baseball was so popular and profitable in New York City that in 1923 the Yankees and Giants fought over whether both teams would be able to host games on the same Sunday.\(^{106}\)

Likely thanks to increased ticket sales following the end of the Blue Laws and in an era when New York City’s population continued to grow, Stoneham could afford to expand the capacity of the Polo Grounds. In 1923, he removed its last wooden sections, replacing them with double-decked concrete and steel seating going all the way around the ballpark. Much as Giants owners expanded the Polo Grounds over time, classic-era ballparks were not built with a master plan; instead, they were built as big as owners could afford, or thought they could fill, and then expanded over the years as finances and fan interest enabled and dictated. In the case of the Polo Grounds, double-decked concrete and steel bleachers were not financially feasible in 1911.

\(^{104}\) “Advent of Sunday Baseball Draws 60,000 Persons to Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1919.


Just as the ballpark changed due to technological development and in response to 
fan demands, so too did the food served there. In 1924, Stevens discussed several 
additions and innovations. Nine years earlier, his company began selling coffee at games 
and it sold especially well when it was cold out. When the technology to keep hot dogs 
warm as vendors carried them through the park was introduced, it pushed the sale of hot 
dogs up several hundred percent.\textsuperscript{107} Other technological achievements that helped to keep 
hot food hot and cold food cold aided Stevens’ vendors too.\textsuperscript{108} Stevens’ also noted that 
fans in the 1920s seemed hungrier than they had been in the 1890s. In the 1890s vendors 
had to work harder to convince fans to buy food at the park than they did thirty years later 
when food was a widely accepted part of the fan experience.\textsuperscript{109}

In addition to helping to shape the fan experience, food sales were a significant 
portion of a club’s revenue, even though they produced less revenue than ticket sales. 
Between 1929 and 1950, concessions revenue made up between five and ten percent of 
major league team revenue.\textsuperscript{110} Team executives in the 1940s and economic historians in 
recent years both argued that concessions revenue was the dividing line between a team 
that made money and one that lost it. The nature of the business meant that on attendance

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{107}“Ball Fans Must Eat.”

\textsuperscript{108}Daniel, “Peanuts, Pop and Popcorn!” 489-90, 522.

\textsuperscript{109}“Ball Fans Must Eat.”

alone most teams could not turn a profit. Although the profit margin on each food item sold was low, by selling lots of them, teams could earn enough revenue to profit. Ballpark concessions were such a big business that in the 1920s, HMS, Inc. employed between 200 and 250 vendors for the best-attended Giants games. In the 1930s, on days when the crowd was close to a sellout, fans spent as much as $15,000 per game on food.

Although the Giants agreed to let HMS, Inc. sell concessions at the Polo Grounds, they made sure to retain some control. The team’s concessions contract stated that they had the right to “debar and remove from the baseball grounds … any employee, agent or servant of [Stevens] who may be, in the opinion of the [Giants] objectionable.” In other words, although the Giants sold the rights to vend concessions at the Polo Grounds, they ensured that all of the people actually selling food and drink met their standards for

111 National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, *A Digest on the Discussions and the Conclusion of the First Baseball Executives Conference Conducted by the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, Columbus, January, 1948*, 138-139. Surdam, *Wins, Losses, and Empty Seats*, 36. Michael J. Haupert and Kenneth Winter, “Building a League One Dollar at a Time: The Story of the Immediate Success of the American League,” in *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture. 2007-2008*, ed. William M. Simons (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009), 157. Because baseball teams were private companies, the exact amount by which concessions revenue marked the difference between profit and loss is not always clear. Some club financial records are available to researchers, but most are not. Even the financial records that are available cannot always be taken at face value because for a variety of reasons, clubs had incentives to hide some of their earnings.

112 “Ball Fans Must Eat.”

113 Daniel, “Peanuts, Pop and Popcorn!” 489-90, 522.

114 Contract between Harry M. Stevens and the New York Giants, September 9, 1909, Harry M. Stevens Subject File, HoF.
behavior and decorum, thus maintaining as much control as they could over the tiered experience at the park.

In the 1930s, that tiered experience privileged middle- and upper-class white men, allowing them leeway in their behavior while treating other fans as lessors. Images of fans in the stands in this era showed mostly male, white people dressed in suits and ties and wearing hats. The few fans who were not in suits and ties tended to at least wear collared shirts. In 1934, Ballantine’s Ale ran an advertisement in New York City that showed three well-dressed men having a good time at the Polo Grounds. The text of the ad claimed that Ballantine “lets you loosen up” and “let go without going too far.” The ad suggested that it was expected that at a ball game, well-dressed men would drink and lose some of their inhibitions. The ballpark was a site where businessmen could drop some of their typical behavioral patterns. However, these male fans did not lose all their inhibitions—at least not in the grandstand—or else the tiered experience would have collapsed.

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115 Attire, however, did not necessary denote class. As Steven A. Riess notes, fans often dressed “formally in public” because “the development of mass-produced, ready-to-wear apparel had brought the cost of a handsome suit or lovely dress within most people’s budgets.” However, because as Riess explains, “nearly all fans wore the clothing associated with white-collar workers,” most fans appeared to be middle- or upper-class. See Riess, Touching Base, 37 for more on fan attire in the early twentieth century.

116 Oversize Folder 13, D’Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles Archives, 1929-1995 and undated, John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History, Duke University. [Hereafter Hartman Center]
When ladies’ days returned to the Polo Grounds in 1930—they had been banned by MLB in the early twentieth century—they contributed to the tiered experience there.\(^{117}\) The Giants announced that for every Monday home game beginning on July 14, 1930 women would be admitted to the park free of charge.\(^{118}\) Monday games were more likely to be sparsely attended than other days of the week, so bringing in lots of women would minimally impact other (male) fans. The Giants continued to host ladies’ days throughout the 1930s and 1940s, switching to Fridays in 1931 perhaps to draw even more women to the park. One Red Sox player speculated that owners used them as a loss leader in this era, arguing that ladies’ days made “the women baseball conscious, thus bringing more pairs of husbands and wives to the game on paying days.”\(^{119}\) The Giants (and all other clubs) did not actually offer completely free tickets to women. Instead, women had to pay the applicable taxes on their tickets at the rate for a ticket in that section on non-ladies’ days. During the Depression Era, this generally meant that women paid about 20¢ for a ticket that usually cost $1.\(^{120}\) Although the Giants hosted many ladies’ days, they did not seem to market the game to entire families in this era.

Ladies’ days, and the mere idea of women at the ballpark, were often fodder for jokes from journalists and fans alike. Reporting on a ladies’ day in Brooklyn in 1939, one


\(^ {120}\) Box 1, Folder 6, AL Admission Prices, Possible Reduction 1933, Ballparks and Stadiums File, HoF.
journalist made light of the stories of two men who were arrested for pretending they were women to gain free access to the park and of another man who sued the Dodgers for the cost of his ticket because the crush of women at the park prevented him from watching the game.\textsuperscript{121} Journalists often made jokes about how clueless women were about the game or claimed that their presence and ignorance about the game detracted from men’s ballpark experiences.\textsuperscript{122} As ladies’ days increased in popularity, some male journalists speculated about what would happen if women became the majority in the stands. One expressed the opinion that if current trends continued, Americans would eat “two cold suppers per week—on Sunday and Ladies’ Day” because wives would be too busy at the game to cook a hot meal. That same journalist was also worried that “the blue haze of cigar smoke” at the ballpark would be “replaced by a vaporous cloud of scented face powder.”\textsuperscript{123}

These jokes indicate that despite owners’ desires to bring women to the park, they had no interest in putting women on par with men there. Ladies’ day created a tiered experience by ensuring that every man in the park felt like more of a true fan than every woman there. Moreover, all the jokes about ladies’ day celebrated male status by putting down women’s intelligence or understanding of the game. If owners had wanted women

\textsuperscript{121} John Escher, “Baseball Madness in Brooklyn,” \textit{American Mercury} 48, no. 189 (September, 1939): 79-84.


to be seen as equals they would have contradicted predominant gender norms and pushed journalists not to make sexist jokes. By declining to do this, owners tiered their experience and guaranteed men would continue to come to the park.\textsuperscript{124}

By the mid-1930s, articles about women at games no longer suggested that they were completely ignorant of baseball’s rules, but women continued to be depicted as inferior fans. One journalist suggested that years of ladies’ days and baseball broadcast on the radio “has done much to attract the fair sex. In between cooking, sewing, and washing they have become ardent rooters.” However, advertisements about ladies’ days in the 1930s and 1940s featured women not closely following the game on the field, but rather admiring handsome baseball players.\textsuperscript{125} They implied that women were not true baseball fans, nor were they likely to ever become true fans; instead, they were simply there to gawk at attractive men. In other words, baseball (and the America it represented) was coated in a rhetoric of equality but built on male superiority.

A similar style of psychological tiering privileged white fans over black fans at the Polo Grounds. Although it was often the site of Negro League games, and even occasionally the site of post-season interracial exhibition games, the Polo Grounds did not play host to a black Major League player until Jackie Robinson and the Brooklyn

\textsuperscript{124} Because this kind of description was common throughout the game, it suggests it was both popular and successful. Although there does not appear to be direct evidence of Giants owners like Stoneham saying that psychological, or even physical, tiers were necessary to draw fans to the park, the context of the ballpark, the different kinds of experiences there, and the nature of the American social structure all indicate that this was the case.

Dodgers visited in 1947. This presumption of white supremacy likely also impacted who counted as a “real” fan. Moreover, the Giants did not demonstrate much respect for African Americans. In 1939, manager Bill Terry hired a young black boy, Cecil Haley, who had been opening and closing cab doors outside the home clubhouse for tips, to be the team’s mascot. The mascot job entailed sitting near the team’s bench so that “as the batsman passed young Cecil on the way for their turn at the plate, they would rub their hands over the boy’s head and pray.” Although the *New York Amsterdam News*, a local black newspaper, did not “find anything especially offensive about the players rubbing the youth’s head for good luck,” they called for the team to hire black players if they wanted to improve on the field.\footnote{126}{“Look, Mr. Terry,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 5, 1939.} The Giants put forth an image of African Americans as unable to serve as anything more than a token of luck. Even that token did not last long, because, as the *New York Amsterdam News* reported, “somewhere, somehow, the thought occurred to someone that ‘it didn’t look good’ to have a Negro sitting on the Giants’ bench.”\footnote{127}{Daniel, “Whitehead Will Play with the Giants Infield,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 13, 1940.}

The same year, Giants infielder and two-time all-star Burgess Whitehead reportedly visited a “cabaret in [sic] 133rd street and […] allegedly called Obadiah Green, one of the waiters, a ‘—r.’” Whitehead did not miss a game and the *New York Amsterdam News* noted that “Negroes were in the stands at the Polo Grounds the next day the Giants played here and were vociferous in their howls for Whitehead.” It seems that those black fans were so used to their second-class treatment that they did not bat an
eye at the team’s lack of response to Whitehead. Moreover, that off-season, Whitehead “brutally smack[ed] down a colored woman” in North Carolina and was slated to be in the team’s Opening Day lineup in 1940. That did not seem to deter black Giants fans, as the same paper reported “there are hundreds of Negroes in Harlem who have been planning on attending the Giants’ opener since the season ended last year. They’ll be in the line for tickets for grandstands, boxes and bleachers as though a Negro was in the lineup […] and not a fellow like Whitehead who expressed the utter contempt and hate a southerner can have for a Negro.” Even if black fans sat in the same section as white fans, the team’s refusal to treat virulent racism as any kind of problem created a psychological tier at the Polo Grounds between black and white fans, mirroring race relations outside the park.

That kind of psychological tiering might have given white fans space to behave in ways they would not outside the park. Yelling and jeering at players and umpires in language that fans would not have otherwise used was fairly common at the park. For many middle- and upper-class fans, baseball games were an opportunity to shed the strictures of regular society and act on their less-refined impulses by cursing umpires and players who earned their ire. Some players and managers, notably long-time Giants manager John McGraw, used the home crowd’s willingness to jeer the visiting team to

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128 Daniel, “Whitehead Will Play with the Giants Infield.”


their advantage. McGraw would often pick the best player on the visiting team, engage him in conversation, and wait for the home crowd to take it from there, hopefully distracting that visiting player and benefiting the Giants.\textsuperscript{131} Yelling and cursing was not normal behavior for most fans, but so long as it was done in the ballpark (as opposed to a truly accessible space), it did not imperil their social status.

There were limits, however. Violent behavior was not acceptable—even in what was largely a safe space to misbehave. During the classic era, there were many instances of players and umpires alike being hit by objects thrown from the stands. For example, in 1907 fans in Cleveland hit players with beer bottles and in St. Louis fans hit an umpire with a bottle.\textsuperscript{132} That year the Giants were forced to forfeit their home opener to the Philadelphia Phillies after fans at the Polo Grounds would not stop throwing snow balls at the visitors.\textsuperscript{133} Being in a park where fans yelled at players or umpires was fine, but violence was too much, even in a tiered environment.

To preserve baseball’s reputation as an appropriate place for middle- and upper-class fans, in the early 1920s owners and city officials in New York took drastic steps to stop bottle throwing. One city magistrate vowed “if I find any one else guilty in the future of the dangerous practice of throwing bottles at baseball games, instead of inflicting a fine, I will impose a sentence in the workhouse” because the fines did not seem to have


\textsuperscript{133} Paul D. Adomites, “The Fans” in \textit{Total Baseball}, 666.
any effect.\textsuperscript{134} In response, the city’s acting chief magistrate urged his fellow magistrates to send to jail for six months “any one who interferes with the play and endangers those who participate in it by throwing bottles.”\textsuperscript{135} The actions of the city’s magistrates suggest that this was a frequent problem and one that city officials thought could be curbed by increasing the penalty for being convicted of committing it. City officials did not call on owners to better control crowds at their games to ward off bottle throwing, but even so, the Giants chief rival, the Brooklyn Dodgers, took action to limit bottle throwing.

According to the \textit{New York Times}, in 1922, the Dodgers “decided to raise the admission fees to the bleachers” by a quarter to stop “the recent pop-bottle throwing.”\textsuperscript{136} It seems that the Dodgers owners thought that raising the price for bleacher seats would put the cost of attending the game above what the poorest fans, who they thought were the least well-behaved, could afford. It is unclear what evidence the Dodgers had that the poorest fans were the least well behaved, but implying that they were furthered the psychological tiering at the park. There is no clear evidence of whether any of these steps helped to reduce incidents of bottle throwing, but actions taken at other Major League parks suggest that the most effective tactics to limit the problem were to increase security and to stop selling drinks in glass bottles.


\textsuperscript{136} “To Stop Bottle Throwing Brooklyn Officials Will Raise Price of Bleacher Seats,” \textit{New York Times}, July 9, 1922. Reports throughout the game indicated that the bleachers were more chaotic than the grandstand, furthering the psychological tier between the two sections.
Rivalries could also lead to ballpark misbehavior, especially when teams were in close proximity. No two teams in the same league were closer together than the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1924, before a game against the Giants, some Dodger fans used a telephone pole as a battering ram to create a hole in the centerfield wall at Ebbets Field big enough for them to stream through. Those fans, for whom there were no seats, created antiquated standing-room only sections on the edges of the playing field and rushed forwards if a Giants’ outfielder tried to make a play on the ball and retreated if a Dodger outfielder tried to do the same. It is difficult to conceive of other spaces where people could break in, take in a spectacle without paying, and not be arrested or seemingly suffer any consequences from that misbehavior. Something about the nature of the ballpark experience allowed them to get away with it.

The Dodger-Giant rivalry continued into the 1930s. In 1934, an otherwise lackluster year for the Dodgers, Giants manager Bill Terry rhetorically asked a reporter, “Brooklyn? Are they still in the league?” Enraged Dodger fans responded by buying all the tickets to the Dodgers next series against the Giants to lustily boo Terry and the Giants. Rivalry games, especially when inflamed by what contemporary journalists might call “bulletin-board material,” could be especially lucrative and could influence the atmosphere in the park. In a poor year, Dodger fans might have been more likely to boo and jeer their own team, but after their bitter rival’s manager questioned the team’s very existence, Dodger fans heartily rooted for their team. Like the Dodger fans in the 1920s

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who battered their way into the park, rivalry games propelled fans to test the limits of acceptable ballpark behavior—something owners were aware of and concerned about.

In 1939, both the Dodgers and the Giants were in the running for the National League pennant and tensions at the ballpark were high. Dodgers president Larry MacPhail “became concerned there might be a murder or riot for which he might be held responsible”\textsuperscript{139} when the Giants played at Ebbets Field. To assuage his concerns, he required that concessions vendors pour all beverages into cups and keep the bottles. MacPhail also had his employees post signs around the ballpark reminding fans that anyone caught throwing items onto the field would be arrested, arranged for a larger than normal police presence, and ordered the team’s public address announcer to issue an appeal for sportsmanship before each game. MacPhail’s efforts appear to have been successful as “despite the customary vocal outbursts […] and the hurling of two or three miscellaneous articles of fruit, the series was quiet.”\textsuperscript{140} For the most part, the line between verbal and physical abuse was not crossed. That kind of verbal abuse and yelling was even more common in the bleachers than in the grandstand.

Journalist, author, and life-long baseball fan Arnold Hano’s book, \textit{A Day in the Bleachers}, illuminated the different experiences a fan could expect in the bleachers and the grandstands at the Polo Grounds. Hano, born in 1922 in Washington Heights, first attended a Giants’ game in the late 1920s. As a child, when Hano saw a game from the grandstand, the fans were quiet and polite, but, as Hano wrote, “even then I knew

\textsuperscript{139} Escher, “Baseball Madness in Brooklyn,” 84.

\textsuperscript{140} Escher, “Baseball Madness in Brooklyn,” 84.
something was lacking.”141 When he first sat in the bleachers, he learned there was a whole other kind of experience to have at a ball game—an experience that was loud and boisterous, one that he loved, and one where he “had a helluva good time.”142 Sitting in the bleachers in the 1920s and 1930s allowed Hano to be impolite, even “vindictive” in his commentary about the game in ways that simply were not acceptable in the grandstand.143 Hano, like many bleacher fans, felt that the way he behaved at the game indicated he was a true fan, superior to the more reserved grandstand fans who likely saw the boisterous bleachers as full of degenerates.

_A Day in the Bleachers_ was published in 1954 and is an account of the first day of the 1954 World Series between the Giants and the Indians. Hano had nearly 30 years of experience in the bleachers at the Polo Grounds by the time he wrote the book and he did not claim the bleacher experience had changed since he first sat there. It is not a leap then to assume that there were no great changes in the Polo Grounds bleacher experience between the late 1920s and 1954 and therefore, Hano’s words in 1954 also speak to the experience in earlier years.

Before the game, Hano waited in line outside the Polo grounds to buy a bleacher seat. When he got inside the Polo Grounds, it was hard to find a seat in the “unreserved” bleachers because so many fans had already “reserved” seats with a newspaper or a hat left behind to indicate they would be swiftly returning to reclaim it. In the code of the

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142 Hano, _A Day in the Bleachers_, 3.

143 Hano, _A Day in the Bleachers_, 4.
bleachers, these informal seat reservations were usually respected. As Hano wrote, “bleacher fans for all their vociferousness are a comradely bunch—at least until the game begins.”144 In the grandstand, fans had assigned seats and did not have to worry that someone would take theirs.

As Hano sat in the bleachers and rooted for the Giants, he engaged in competitive banter with Indians fans and felt as though he was a participant in the game rather than a spectator. Despite his differences with the Indians fans around him, Hano respected those who understood the game, but not, as Hano wrote, the one behind him who, while reacting to a good development for the Indians, “did the completely unethical. In all the din he managed to clap me on the back.”145 There were limits to what was acceptable in the bleachers when cheering for the visitors.

During the game, Willie Mays made a legendary catch in deep center field, right in front of the bleachers, and Hano lost himself screaming with other fans. He wrote, “I bellowed with the crowd, and I do not remember what I said or what they were saying, if they were saying any sense at all.”146 The emotions of the game and the freedom to express himself that came with his bleacher ticket took Hano out of his normal, well-spoken world into an unintelligible crowd mentality. That was the reason Hano enjoyed sitting in the bleachers, that was the experience he craved, that was a sign of how serious a fan he was. Yet, his social status was protected as he acted in ways that did not match

144 Hano, A Day in the Bleachers, 27.
145 Hano, A Day in the Bleachers, 54.
146 Hano, A Day in the Bleachers, 62.
that status because the ballpark was a safe space for white men to act outside of normal social patterns.

By the time Hano wrote about his bleacher experience, Horace Stoneham, Charles Stonham’s son, owned the team (the elder Stoneham had passed away in 1936). Unlike previous owners, and no doubt influenced by the Great Depression and World War II, Horace Stoneham did not make many changes to the Polo Grounds. The younger Stoneham was also constrained by his inability to remake the city around the Polo Grounds into the kind of space his desired fans, middle- and upper-class white men, wanted to spend time at in large numbers. In 1947, Stadium engineer William Woodbury highlighted many of the problems owners like Horace Stoneham saw in their classic-era ballparks. He noted that “the percentage of patrons using automobiles for attendance at athletic contests varie[d] greatly” but that on average more than half of fans drove to games. The Polo Grounds, like many classic-era ballparks, did not come close to being able to offer enough parking for half the fans who wanted to come to games.

In seemingly coded language, Woodbury wrote that “change brought about by the rapid growth of a city may render the site [of a ballpark] unsuitable for its original

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149 Woodbury, Grandstand and Stadium Design, 82.

150 Woodbury, Grandstand and Stadium Design, 83.
By 1947, the impact of the First and Second Great Migrations was apparent in many American cities as formerly white-ethnic neighborhoods were now mixed-race or completely composed of African Americans due to government policies that fostered the flight of whites from urban areas. That white flight also happened in the Washington Heights neighborhood surrounding the Polo Grounds.

For several interrelated reasons white flight made “the site unsuitable for its original purpose.” Owners continued to target middle- and upper-class whites as their primary fan base, many of whom did not want to travel long distances to the ballpark and did not want to do so into black neighborhoods. Moreover, owners were reluctant to welcome their new black and Hispanic neighbors as fans because of their own racism, their understanding of their fans’ prejudices, and fears about their team’s profitability. A 1946 MLB report argued that if Jackie Robinson, then playing in the otherwise all-white minor leagues, reached the Major Leagues, “the situation might be presented […] in which the preponderance of Negro attendance in parks such as Yankee Stadium, the Polo Grounds, and Comiskey Park could conceivably threaten the value of […] these clubs.” In order to continue making the game a draw for whites, owners felt they had to act. Without proximity to white fans, or white fans willing to come to the park, owners like Horace Stoneham looked for new ballparks in new cities.

The Giants continued to play in the increasingly outdated Polo Grounds and saw declining attendance until they moved to San Francisco following the 1957 season. Major

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League Baseball briefly returned to the Polo Grounds in 1962 and 1963. As the New York Mets, a brand-new team, waited for Shea Stadium to open, they played home games in the Polo Grounds, but it was no more accessible or appealing to Mets fans than it had been to Giants fans. The City of New York tore down the Polo Grounds in April 1964 and built a series of high-rise public housing projects on the site later in the decade. Beginning when Yankee Stadium opened in 1923, and increasing during the 1930s and 1940s, the Polo Grounds was no longer at the cutting edge of ballpark design in part because its main physical tier was only the division between the bleachers and the grandstand. Importantly, it was also increasingly inaccessible to white fans who moved to the suburbs. Fewer and fewer fans went to a park in a non-white neighborhood that was not right off the highway and did not have enough space for them to park their cars.

The four iterations of the Polo Grounds, however, shaped the outline of the tiered fan experience that still exists today. In 1935, in the New York Times, journalist Meyer Berger summed up that idealized baseball experience, writing in the midst of a ball game “the rooter knows no class distinction. The taxi driver or the garbage handler will sock the banker or broker in fraternal enthusiasm when the home team slugger belts one over the wall. The meek, inhibited bookkeeper rises to rare altitudes of scorn and vituperation in arguing the fine points of the game with the stiffish tycoon in the adjoining seat, and the unemployed dishwasher from the Bronx sounds his native note of derision when the

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Park Avenue penthouse dweller on his left doesn’t happen to share his views in matters pertaining to baseball.” Berger concluded, “in the park, every man’s a king,” but his description, just like the experience itself, revolved almost exclusively around middle- and upper-class white men.\textsuperscript{154} The ballpark had a reputation for equality, but a very different reality.

\textsuperscript{154} Meyer Berger, “In the Ball Park Every Man’s a King: Again, As the Season Opens, Boss and Office Boy, Hooting in the Stands, Play Equal Roles in National Drama,” \textit{New York Times}, April 14, 1935.
CHAPTER 3

YANKEE STADIUM: BIGGER IS BETTER, BUT LOCATION STILL MATTERS

On its first opening day in 1923, sportswriter Fred Lieb wrote “unlike the Polo Grounds, […] Yankee Stadium can be seen for miles, as its triple decks grand stand majestically rises from the banks of the Harlem. Approaching it from the 150th Street viaduct one is impressed with its bigness. It looks only a short walk ahead, but as one approaches from Edgecombe Avenue he soon discovers it to be quite a hike.”¹ Yankee Stadium’s size continued to impress visitors into the 1950s including actor, comedian, and life-long Yankees fan Billy Crystal. Looking back on his childhood, Crystal recalled, “first game I went to, May 30, 1956, Yankee Stadium, we drove from Long Beach, Long Island to the Bronx, it almost took two hours […] And as we came up into the Bronx and Jerome Avenue, my Dad said, ‘there it is.’ […] it like ate up the Bronx, it was the biggest thing I’d ever seen in my life.”²

When it opened, Yankee Stadium was at the forefront of ballpark innovation. Befitting the word “stadium,” it was taller and had a larger seating capacity than the parks, fields, and grounds that came before it. For example, it dwarfed the Polo Grounds. The combination of its “triple decks grand stand” and its bleachers allowed team owner Jacob Ruppert and general manager Ed Barrow to provide more separation between fans.


than previous parks. Increased separation was important because thanks to the legalization of Sunday baseball and the growing interest in baseball among second-generation immigrants, a wider array of people could come to baseball games. The capacity of Yankee Stadium allowed the Yankees to draw more fans than other teams, but the Yankees could also provide more status and separation to fans who wanted to purchase it. Without that status and separation, they ran the risk of losing fans who wanted to behave in accordance with middle- and upper-class norms as those fans would be likely to come in contact with fans who wanted to behave differently. The de facto class division at Yankee Stadium created by the park’s tiers gave middle- and upper-class fans the option of separation without challenging the impression that the ballpark was representative of all of America. From the most expensive seats, wealthy fans saw, but did not often have to interact with, a relatively diverse array of Americans. From the cheapest seats, poorer fans saw elite fans in better seats. To maximize attendance, the Yankees had to offer different experiences in different parts of the park.

The size, tiers, and the word “stadium” pioneered by the Yankees became standard features of subsequent ballparks, breaking the mold created by the Polo Grounds and its contemporaries. That said, Yankee Stadium was not a complete departure from its predecessors. The basic structure of the experience remained much as it had been at the Polo Grounds. Fans came to Yankee Stadium, a venue designed for baseball, to cheer on

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3 Much like at the Polo Grounds, there does not appear to be direct evidence of Ruppert saying that tiers were necessary to bring fans to the park—in this case because his correspondence with his ballpark designers is not accessible and may not exist. However, given the nature of American society and the restrictions on movement inside Yankee Stadium, I am comfortable asserting that Ruppert thought increased tiers were necessary to keep fans happy.
a team while surrounded by strangers doing the same thing, which provided a sentiment of equality and inclusion. In that way, Yankee Stadium highlighted both continuity and change in the fan experience when it opened and again when it was renovated in the 1940s.

In 1945, new owners, led by Larry MacPhail, took over the Yankees and heightened the divides between fans while simultaneously making Yankee Stadium accessible to more fans. MacPhail added lights to the park so fans who worked during the day could come to games more often and he built new exclusive spaces hidden away from the rest of the park for the team’s wealthiest fans. He brought in more working-class and lower-middle class fans and gave the richest Yankees fans the option of more distance from these poorer fans. In so doing, he established a new normative ballpark experience—night games and exclusive spaces that had little to do with baseball. Immediately after World War II, MacPhail’s changes to Yankee Stadium meant he was able to draw more fans to the park and maintain its appeal to wealthy fans. In the coming decades, however, later Yankees owners were unable to do the same because they could not change the city around the ballpark to make it appealing to rich fans again.

As Billy Crystal’s memory of visiting Yankee Stadium for the first time indicates, the Yankees were left behind by postwar suburbanization. The Crystal family’s two-hour commute to the Bronx on small, crowded roads presumably meant that coming to games was rare for them. Like classic-era parks, Yankee Stadium’s location, which had been an asset when it opened, became a liability by the mid-1950s. It lacked sufficient parking

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4 Yankee Stadium was one of the last park’s with lights, but MacPhail’s other innovations there were new.
and was not easily accessible to fans who fled the city for new suburban developments. In 1958, MacPhail wrote, “Yankee Stadium is the best ball park in the country. But a fan from Westchester, Long Island or New Jersey—after spending an hour getting there—has to put in an infuriating half hour finding a place to park” and instead chooses to do something else. Consequently, attendance at Yankees games declined in the 1950s and 1960s. The Yankees could not solve these problems without help from the city government, they could not remake an urban space into something that appealed to their increasingly suburban fans who wanted to go from their homes to a highway to a parking lot and right into the ballpark.

This chapter focuses mostly on the years between 1923, when Yankee Stadium opened, and the late 1950s, when the team struggled to draw its core constituency. It touches on the history of the Yankees before Yankee Stadium, and focuses on the design innovations of Yankee Stadium, crowd behavior there, how the Yankees tried to draw black fans, how the team used its park to respond to the Depression, and how team owners maintained a tiered experience throughout. The chapter concludes with an examination of Yankee Stadium’s shortcomings in the 1950s. In an era marked by flash, modernity, technology, newness, and suburbia, Yankee Stadium was classical, antiquated, and urban. Yankees owners, like their neighbors the Giants, could not remake urban space into what their fans wanted. Newer ballparks across the country like Dodger


6 It is possible that some of this attendance decline was due to fans getting bored with the Yankees success, but as attendance dropped through the league, that could not have been the only reason.
Stadium and the Astrodome better matched fans’ desires by offering parking, food, attractions, and status that could not be provided at Yankee Stadium.

**Team History**

When the American League (AL) was founded in 1901 it included a team in Baltimore, Maryland, but no team in New York City. For two seasons, the AL’s Orioles, owned by a group of investors including John McGraw, played in Baltimore. After a complicated 1902 season, during which McGraw became the New York Giants manager and took the Orioles best players with him, the franchise was sold to William S. Devery and Frank Farrell. Devery and Farrell were both powerful, Tammany Hall-connected New Yorkers. Over the objections of the Giants who wanted to maintain their monopoly on baseball in Manhattan, Devery and Farrell moved the Orioles to Washington Heights and renamed them the New York Highlanders. They opened a small wooden park called Hilltop Park on the edge of the city, close to a residential neighborhood, and in a mass-transit accessible location—much like the nearby Polo Grounds. The Highlanders

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played in Hilltop Park from 1903 until 1912, while Devery and Farrell maintained a frosty relationship with John T. Brush, the Giants owner.

When a fire destroyed much of the Polo Grounds in April of 1911, the Giants relationship with the Highlanders warmed as Brush became Devery and Farrell’s temporary tenants at Hilltop Park. This new relationship led to other changes too. The Highlanders abandoned Hilltop Park after the 1912 season to become the Giants permanent tenants at the Polo Grounds. Playing at the Polo Grounds gave Devery and Farrell the chance to make more money as, even after paying rent, the increased capacity meant greater opportunities for profit. After moving from Hilltop Park, Highlanders was no longer an appropriate name for the team. Devery and Farrell formally adopted a nickname that had been commonly used in the press, changing the team’s name to the Yankees. Before the 1915 season, Devery and Farrell sold the Yankees to Tillinghast L’Hommedieu Huston and Jacob Ruppert, a fantastically wealthy brewer and Tammany Hall-connected politician who had served four terms in Congress representing the Upper East Side of Manhattan.¹¹

The Yankees occasionally outdrew their landlords at the Polo Grounds. This happened more frequently after Huston and Ruppert acquired “Babe” Ruth in 1920. Ruth was far and away the biggest draw in baseball. His personality and reputation were perfect for the 1920s.¹² Ruth’s record-setting feats drew record-setting crowds. Giants

¹¹ Lamb, “Frank Farrell.”

management was not happy about being outdrawn in their own ballpark. Although they made more money at the Polo Grounds than they did at Hilltop Park, the Yankees could have made even more if they owned their own large ballpark. For example, in 1921, the team earned $8,000 from concessions sales at the Polo Grounds.\textsuperscript{13} During the team’s first five years at Yankee Stadium, with Harry M. Stevens, Inc. (HMS, Inc.) as their concessions firm, they averaged more than $94,000 a year in concessions profits.\textsuperscript{14} In 1920, Huston and Ruppert began looking for a site to build a park of their own, no doubt convinced they could afford it thanks to the crowds Ruth drew.

The Yankees could not find enough land in Manhattan at an affordable price for a new ballpark, so they expanded their search. By the early 1920s, mass transit connected Manhattan with much of the southern part of the neighboring borough of the Bronx and the Yankees, likely relying in part on Ruppert’s political connections, acquired enough land for a ballpark just across the Harlem River from the Polo Grounds. Before the park opened, Ruppert bought out Huston and became the team’s majority owner.\textsuperscript{15} It took eleven months and $2,500,000, including a $400,000 loan from the AL, to build Yankee Stadium, but it was ready to go for Opening Day, 1923.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Michael J. Haupert and Kenneth Winter, “The Old Fellows and the Colonels: Innovation and Survival in Segregated Baseball,” \textit{Black Ball} 1, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 82.

\textsuperscript{14} Haupert and Winter, “The Old Fellows and the Colonels,” 82.


Design Innovations and Achievements of Yankee Stadium

On opening day, April 18, 1923, a reported crowd of 74,200, a number later acknowledged to be artificially-inflated, attended the first game at Yankee Stadium.17 According to the *New York Times*, the new park stood out as “a skyscraper among baseball parks.”18 It was the first new MLB ballpark to open since 1915. Following it, no newly-constructed facility was called park or field again until the 1990s as stadiums dominated MLB for nearly 70 years.19 Before Yankee Stadium opened, ballparks like the Polo Grounds had been ignored by architectural journals. Starting with Yankee Stadium, that changed as architectural critics started to catalog ballparks’ designs and engineering achievements.20

One review of Yankee Stadium seemed to struggle to comprehend its size. Architect and critic Roi L. Morin wrote that Yankee Stadium’s original seating capacity, 58,000, was “probably already too large as the stands [would] rarely be filled except at World’s Series games, and then not always.”21 No previous ballpark’s original capacity came close to matching Yankee Stadium’s. Morin, and all other observers, only knew of


19 I use ballpark here and throughout this dissertation to encompass all MLB playing spaces, regardless of whether they had field, park, grounds, or stadium in their names.

20 Kammer, “Take me out to the Ballgame,” 131, 133.

smaller ballparks because that was all that had existed before. Moreover, the seating capacity of Yankee Stadium continued to grow, topping out at more than 71,000 in 1937. It was the biggest regularly-used ballpark in baseball until after World War II.\(^{22}\)

Not only was Yankee Stadium bigger than previous ballparks, it was also shaped differently. Rather than cluster the seats in the grandstand as close as possible to the field as previous parks had, at Yankee Stadium Osborn Engineering Company—the same company that designed the fourth Polo Grounds—pulled those seats back. Grandstand seats further from the field meant the team could fit more seats in that part of the park and still charge regular grandstand prices for them.\(^{23}\) This was key to the team’s ability to keep its middle- and upper-class fans happy. Before the legalization of Sunday baseball at parks like the Polo Grounds, fans who preferred a grandstand experience could spill over into the bleachers if the grandstands were full and, although the experience was likely to be somewhat different, it was unlikely that there would be too many working-class fans there. The Yankees did not have that luxury because more working-class fans could come to their park. Adding to the separation between fans, Yankee Stadium had three decks—more than any other park—making it more tiered than anything before it.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\) Cleveland Municipal Stadium, which opened in 1932, had a larger capacity, but the Indians quickly reverted to playing weekday home games at the much-smaller League Park, a pattern they maintained into the 1940s. See Steven A. Riess, “The Profits of Major League Baseball, 1900 to 1956,” in *Baseball in America and America in Baseball*, eds. Robert B. Fairbanks and Donald G. Kyle (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 108.


At Yankee Stadium, there were significant differences between the view from the cheapest seats and the most expensive ones. Morin noted “the top deck of [Yankee Stadium was] pitched almost uncomfortably sharp” and that from the back of that deck, “any fly ball, even a long, low Texas Leaguer, [was] lost from the time it [left] the bat until it land[ed] in the outfield” due to an overhanging façade. That façade also meant that “the large scoreboard in deep center [could not] be seen at all from the last four rows.”

25 The team invested in an ornamental façade that made the park look nicer to fans in more expensive seats and blocked the view for poorer fans. Although Morin complained about it, the façade allowed the Yankees to confer status on their richer fans. Additionally, the massive size of the playing field meant many outfield bleacher seats were more than 450 feet away from home plate, making it hard to view the action.

Morin did not just criticize the park; he had praise for many aspects of it as well. He commended its well-placed and well-equipped concessions stands that made use of technological innovations and knowledge of what worked in other parks. Morin also noted,

The toilet arrangements are perhaps the best to be found in any structure of the kind. There are sixteen distributed throughout the stands, including the bleachers, six of which are for women. Adjoining the men’s toilets are smoking and lounge rooms, and the women’s rest rooms, tastefully furnished with wicker chairs, dressing tables, etc., cretonne hangings and grass mats.

25 Morin, “The Yankee Stadium,” 413. [Italics in original.]

26 Morin, “The Yankee Stadium,” 413.

That kind of refined experience marked Yankee Stadium as different from its predecessors. Other parks, one journalist in 1922 complained, had one restroom each for men and women in the grandstand and that “this shameful lack of accommodation makes attendance at a baseball game a nightmare.”28 That journalist suggested “retiring rooms […] should be in convenient locations, plenty of them, and they should be kept in the best possible condition.”29 Plentiful and well-appointed restrooms made Yankee Stadium modern and therefore more appealing to fans.

Although Yankee Stadium’s designers intended it to draw more fans by offering more and better amenities than previous parks, the park did not provide lots of space for fans’ cars. Thanks in part to the affordability of the Model T, car ownership increased significantly between 1915, when the last new MLB park had opened, and 1923, when Yankee Stadium opened. Still, the Yankees expected most fans to arrive via mass transportation.30 Decades later, however, this relative lack of parking would become a problem.

The Roaring ’20s, Food, and Yankee Stadium

Yankee Stadium’s capacity and Babe Ruth’s popularity meant the Yankees made lots of money from ticket sales, but they also sought to maximize revenue by selling food and utilizing the tiered structure of Yankee Stadium to attract as many different fans as


29 Sheridan, “Yankee Colonels Have Chance to Set New Pace in Ball Parks.”

possible. Yankee Stadium’s size magnified the financial impact of the food sold there. In an era when complete sell-outs were rare, special occasions that brought extra-large crowds, like Independence Day or the World Series, meant opportunities for increased profit. For example, the Yankees won the 1927 World Series in four games (the fewest possible of a maximum of seven), which cost the team money. According to journalist and author Damon Runyon, both Harry Stevens and Yankees general manager Ed Barrow were miffed despite the Yankees’ victory. Barrow was upset about “the $217,000 he [had to] turn back to the [fans who bought World Series tickets in advance] because there [would] be no Sunday game.” Another game would have given HMS, Inc. a chance to sell more food and therefore to make more money from the crowd in the largest park in baseball.³¹

The food sold at Yankee Stadium was similar to most other ballparks, but New Yorkers had distinct tastes. Harry Stevens noted that fans in New York City did not like lemonade at games, even though it sold well in other cities. In 1924, Stevens told a reporter, “the day can be as warm as toast and lemonade cold as ice, and still it wouldn’t mean anything to [New York fans].”³² Stevens tried to introduce popcorn in New York and purchased a fancy glass-enclosed popcorn popper to attract customers. Some fans were interested in the new machine, but few bought the popcorn. Similarly, potato chips


were popular in some ballparks, but not in New York. Stevens also noted that although fans in other cities ate cake at games, New Yorkers did not. According to one journalist, the New York fan “seem[ed] to be in one tremendous hurry” at the park and was more likely to eat in his or her seat while watching the game than a fan in other cities. Food like hot dogs that could be eaten while watching the game fit the bill.

Like most but not all concessionaires, at Yankee Stadium HMS, Inc. employed vendors to sell food throughout the stands. Typically, vending food in the stands required the cooperation of fans too. If a fan in the middle of a crowded row wanted to purchase a hot dog from a vendor, the vendor would pass the hot dog down the row of fans and the hungry fan would pass his or her money in the other direction. This suggested a sort of community in the stands where no fan was above helping any other. However, in the tiered Yankee Stadium, these fans were already divided by how much they paid for tickets. Helping out was also practical because it limited the need to stand up to let other fans out of the row.

At least one team thought the presence of vendors and cooperating with them were unnecessary distractions for their fans. In 1917, the Cardinals stopped using vendors to sell food, switching entirely to concession stands. One reason the Cardinals made this

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34 “Ball Fans Must Eat.”


decision was that vendors occasionally obscured fans’ views of the game.\footnote{Paul D. Adomites, “Concessions” in \textit{Total Baseball}, ed. John Thorn and Pete Palmer (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 669.} The Cardinals also seemed interested in creating a more civilized, high-class atmosphere, that reflected their wealthiest fans’ expectations. By 1930, however, the Cardinals brought vendors back.\footnote{“Fans Can Buy Anything From Fish to Shines at Sportsman’s Park,” \textit{St. Louis Star}, May 23, 1930.} Presumably fans wanted concessions delivered at their seats and without vendors roaming the stands the team lost revenue.

**Children and the Fan Experience During the Depression**

Although they were successful in the 1920s, like all MLB teams, the Yankees struggled during the Great Depression and responded by trying to bring more fans to the park and create the next generation of fans. Yankee Stadium’s tiers meant the Yankees could draw different types of fans with less chance they would bother each other than at smaller parks. During the Great Depression, AL owners including Ruppert not only worked to increase short-term revenue as attendance fell to a 20-year low in 1933, but also aimed to hook young fans on the game. They sold half-priced bleacher-seat tickets to fans twelve and under, but continued to divide ticket revenue between the home and visiting teams and they did not discount the most expensive seats in the park.\footnote{Throughout Major League history, ticket revenue has been shared between the home and visiting teams.}
owners also only sold 1,000 half-priced tickets per game so they would not lose too much revenue when games were more of a draw to full-priced ticket buyers.\(^{40}\)

Some owners, like Tom Yawkey of the Boston Red Sox, were concerned about the impact of large numbers of unsupervised children on fans who paid full price. Yawkey created a special section of the Fenway Park bleachers for children who bought half-priced tickets to separate them from the rest of his paying customers.\(^{41}\) Only selling half-priced tickets in the bleachers meant grandstand fans did not have to deal with rowdy children in their sections. It reinforced the tiered ballpark experience and was easy to arrange at Yankee Stadium thanks to its unique design.

Other teams also recognized that unsupervised children at the park might bother their adult fans and established “knot-hole gangs” to teach children the proper way to behave and keep them away from paying fans.\(^{42}\) The St. Louis Cardinals set out a specific part of the left-field bleachers for their knot hole gang.\(^{43}\) If the Cardinals were going to let a large number of unsupervised children into games to entice them to become future paying fans, they had to ensure that the children would not negatively impact the

\(^{40}\) Winter Meetings, February 10, 1935, 10-14, Box 1, Folder 10, American League Meeting Minutes, 1934-35, A. Bartlett Giamatti Library and Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. [Hereafter HoF.]

\(^{41}\) Winter Meetings, February 10, 1935, 10-14, American League Meeting Minutes, 1934-35, HoF.

\(^{42}\) Knot-hole gangs were children’s groups and fan clubs sponsored by teams and named after the idea that kids used to watch the game for free through knot holes in wooden outfield fences.

experience of any of their paying fans. Segmenting them in the bleachers was one way to do this. Children were not the only fans who could threaten the ballpark experience, misbehaving adults could do that as well.

**Gambling and Fan Misbehavior**

The tiering of Yankee Stadium meant that the team could allow different behaviors in different parts of the park—an important quality when the Yankees, like all teams in the 1930s, struggled to bring fans to the park. That said, the Yankees maintained limits on acceptable ballpark behavior. For example, to maximize attendance, executives like the Yankees general manager Ed Barrow sought a middle ground between fans who wanted to gamble on the game and those who opposed all gambling. Gambling at the park did not fit with the experience some fans wanted, but was a draw to other fans and was common in most, if not all, MLB parks from the 1870s until the middle of the twentieth century. Although the Yankees did not permit obvious gambling, they did not strictly enforce anti-gambling policies in some parts of the park. Barrow used Yankee Stadium’s tiers to his advantage while privileging the largely white, male middle- and upper-class fans who sat in the park’s expensive seats where anti-gambling provisions were more strictly enforced. The park’s tiers allowed him to increase attendance without threatening wealthy fans’ status.

Gambling and baseball have a long and controversial history. As early as the 1870s, it was a cause of concern among owners, a concern that peaked after gamblers paid seven members of the 1919 Chicago White Sox to intentionally lose the World Series in an
event commonly called the Black Sox Scandal. Baseball officials, like soon-to-be commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, predicted that in the wake of the scandal fans would expect all games were fixed. Describing a hypothetical situation, Landis said, “two friends make a bet on the game. Somebody sees the money pass when the bet is paid. He recalls then that in a certain inning some player made a boner or struck out at a critical time. ‘Uh-huh!’ says this fan to himself, ’so it’s that way, eh?’ Then having in mind what happen[ed] at the world’s series in 1919, his suspicion grows.” Landis thought that gambling pushed fans away from the game and therefore it should be eliminated. Teams like the Yankees were unwilling and/or unable to eliminate all ballpark gambling though.

In late May 1920, when rumors that the 1919 World Series had been fixed were spreading, owners increased the number of private detectives they hired to root out gambling in the stands. The Yankees, still playing at the Polo Grounds, instructed the park’s ticket takers and gate employees not to let known gamblers into the park. Team owner Ruppert noticed that gamblers tended to congregate in the seats behind third base, so he sent undercover security officers there. The seats behind third base were part of the grandstands where wealthier fans who were likely to disapprove of gambling tended to sit. Ruppert used “chiefly women detectives [to spot gamblers there], because they

44 The eighth man, Buck Weaver, never got paid.

45 David Pietrusza, Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis (South Bend, IN: Diamond Communications, 1998), 313.


47 Not all fans who sat in the grandstand opposed gambling and not all middle- and upper-class fans opposed gambling, but given the correlation between the middle- and upper-class—the people who were likely to be able to afford grandstand seats—and
would be less apt to be identified.” Ruppert made use of gender norms that made it seem unlikely a team would hire women to identify gamblers.

Although security guards of both sexes could identify gamblers by overhearing them say “I bet” or watching money change hands, catching gamblers was difficult. Fans could say “I bet” rhetorically or exchange money to pay for food and drinks. Simply having undercover security guards was not a guarantee that gamblers could be stopped. Additionally, some fans who were thrown out of the Polo Grounds on suspicion of gambling sued the Yankees in response, potentially increasing the cost to Ruppert of cracking down on suspected gamblers.

The post-Black Sox Scandal crackdown on gambling did not just target the professional gamblers responsible for the scandal, but more casual ones as well. The same month Ruppert hired women to spot gamblers, four fans were arrested for gambling-related offenses at a Yankees game. Three of them had offered odds on the game. The fourth was charged with “interference with the police after first tipping off the

Progressive Era anti-gambling views, fans in the grandstand were less likely to gamble and more likely to be opposed to other people gambling too. For more on baseball gambling in this era, see Seth S. Tannenbaum, “‘The Ever Watchful Eye of the Magnate’: Policing and Ballpark Gambling in the Twentieth Century,” in All In: The Spread of Gambling in Twentieth-Century United States, eds. Jonathan D. Cohen and David G. Schwartz (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2018), 44-69.


others that detectives were nearby,” but charges against him were later dropped.\textsuperscript{50} Both the vastly different odds the three offered—ranging from eight-to-five for the Yankees to two-to-one for the opposing Tigers—and their inability to spot plainclothes officers on their own suggest that the three were not professional gamblers.\textsuperscript{51} A judge fined two of the three after he determined that moving around in the stands, in their case to find betting partners, constituted disorderly conduct.\textsuperscript{52} None of the fans was fined for violating anti-gambling statutes, but in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal and before the Depression, it seems owners were more concerned with removing gamblers than with losing revenue from fans who wanted to bet on the action.

After Yankee Stadium opened and as the fervor over the Black Sox Scandal died down, for a time the Yankees continued to remove gamblers, even though they could more easily separate fans into different sections. In August 1931 the Yankees threw about 100 gamblers out of Yankee Stadium. The team refunded most of those fans’ tickets, perhaps to keep them from suing the club or to entice them to return in the future.\textsuperscript{53} Having an increasingly tiered park did not mean the team stopped all gambling enforcement, at least not in 1931, but later in the Depression, they seemed to give gamblers more leeway in some parts of the park.


\textsuperscript{51} “Launch Drive on Baseball Gamblers.”


\textsuperscript{53} “Halting the Gamblers,” \textit{The Sporting News}, August 13, 1931, 4.
During the 1930s and 1940s, the Yankees kept daily logs of fan injuries and ejections from the stands for gambling and other violations of park policy. Three years of those logs—1936, 1938, and 1940—are available to researchers and they suggest that the team targeted professional gamblers and used the then-unique architecture of Yankee Stadium to separate fans who wanted to behave differently. The majority of fans ejected from Yankee Stadium were kicked out for gambling or related offenses such as bookmaking or being a “runner”—someone whose job it was to accept bets and relay them to bookies.\(^{54}\) Fans the Yankees kicked out seemed to be involved with professional gambling operations; the Yankees did not seem interested in or able to remove fans who made casual wagers with each other. Because gambling was illegal, fans who were “put out” of the park by stadium security (called “special officers” or “specials”) were not always willing to give their name. Consequently, the logs are full of names in quotation marks like “Spunky,” “Fats,” and “Toots.” Occasionally, descriptions of fans sufficed such as “colored man,” “Fab Fellow with Blue Sweater,” or “Curly hair—goes without a hat.”\(^{55}\)

Gambling was common at Yankee Stadium. The logs often noted that guards had kicked out fans in other years as well—even when fans refused to give their names. When the team kicked out four men for gambling in 1938, the logs revealed a special officer had “observed them for some time” and suggested that the officer knew them.

\(^{54}\) 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, Box 2, Folders 5-7, American League Base Ball Club of New York Papers, HoF.

\(^{55}\) 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
This familiarity indicates that many of the fans kicked out of Yankee Stadium were habitual gamblers or made bookmaking or running at least a semi-consistent occupation. The Yankees “put out” fans for gambling several times during each home stand, which, given the difficulty of identifying all gambling suggests that fans wagered at Yankee Stadium at every game in this era.

In 1936, specials observed “Leroy,” who the team had “put out in other years,” “taking bets and passing money,” he “refused to stop for specials,” and security removed him. The entry about Leroy shows that officers did not immediately eject fans for gambling—even if they appeared to facilitate betting for others—rather officials first gave them the opportunity to stop gambling or at least do a better job of masking their illicit activities. If the Yankees actually wanted to eliminate gambling in the stands, they would have tried to immediately remove every gambling fan. During the Depression, the logs show they did not. Gamblers were paying customers who made going to a game exciting and interesting for some fans, despite having the opposite effect on other fans and the Yankees wanted to maximize attendance.

Aside from the names of a few special officers who were tasked with removing gamblers, the most common name mentioned in the logs was “Mr. Barrow.” Ed Barrow was the Yankees general manager from 1921 to 1939 and team president from 1939 to

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56 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
57 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
58 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
1945. Barrow’s duties as one of the most prominent team executives included determining when gamblers crossed the line and had to be kicked out of the park. As he explained in his autobiography, casual gamblers who made “a sporting bet with a friend on whether a player would get a hit, or if there would be a score in that inning” were a welcome part of the ballpark experience. Barrow claimed to “despise the professional gambler who use[d] baseball as a medium,” that he and his staff “set our sights for the professionals and we kept them out,” and that “there never was a ball park as free of professional gamblers as the Yankee Stadium” during his time with the team. He wrote that in addition to ushers and special officers, he had “a small, plainclothes detective force that [he] used to root out gamblers,” which he called his “own private gestapo.” He claimed that “whenever we discovered [professional gamblers …] we threw them out. Bodily. And then their hats after them.” The team’s logs, however, indicate that Barrow might not have been as tough on professional gamblers as he later made it seem.

In June 1936 “Newark” was “put out” after being “observed by Mr. Barrow making […] bets in […] a section he had promised to keep out of.” This suggests that if Newark had stayed in sections not frequented by fans who opposed gambling he would have been

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59 Although his title was technically business manager, contemporary readers would better understand his potion as general manager, so I will refer to it as such.

60 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 205, 206.

61 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 205, 206.

62 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 205.

63 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 205.

64 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
permitted to stay and that Barrow was fine with gambling in some parts of the park. Maybe if Newark had not been quite so obvious, Barrow would not have felt the need to direct his special officers to put him out. If Newark operated in parts of the park where gambling bothered other fans though, Barrow had to remove him.

The architecture of Yankee Stadium gave Barrow an advantage when it came to isolating gamblers, so long as he could get them to stay in certain sections. As Newark made clear though, gamblers did not always do this. Judging by arrest records and the logs, most gambling happened in the less-expensive seats like the bleachers and upper deck, but some gambling did take place in the more expensive seats more likely to be occupied by fans who opposed gambling. The logs suggest that gamblers in the grandstand were not given the same warnings specials kicked them out as gamblers in the bleachers were.

Fans were not just kicked out of the park by stadium security, sometimes they were arrested by New York City police officers for violating city laws against gambling. Those gamblers were not always punished in court though. In 1938, four men were acquitted of gambling charges despite a police officer testifying that he had witnessed them “interfer[ing] with other bleacher seat occupants by offering bets on the game.”65 When the police arrested fans for gambling at the ballpark, they filed reports that noted the reason for the offense as, among other similar statements, “receiving bets at B. B. Game”—suggesting they facilitated gambling for others—and offered additional details about how they had observed the fan in question breaking the law. These arrest records

65 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
also indicated the suspects’ name, age, race, and occupation. Most showed white men in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, who had working-class or lower-middle class occupations like gardener, laborer, grocer, and clerk.\textsuperscript{66} Their occupations suggested that they were unlikely to frequent Yankee Stadium’s more expensive seats.

In the logs, every fan who was kicked out for gambling had a stereotypically male name, was referred to with male pronouns, and/or was identified as male in his arrest record. While this does not guarantee that no women gambled at Yankees games in 1936, 1938, and 1940, it was likely that women gambling in the stands was rare. Although women have always been a presence at Major League games, they have also always composed a minority of fans.\textsuperscript{67} Fewer women at games meant fewer women to engage in gambling. Importantly, when women did go to games, they tended not to sit in the cheaper seats where most gambling took place. Women were likely to sit in more expensive seats as social norms dictated that the bleachers and other cheap seats were not acceptable places for middle- and upper-class women in part because after the repeal of Prohibition, they were populated by fans who were sometimes drunk and out of control.

Prohibition was in effect when the Yankees moved into Yankee Stadium, but after it ended in April 1933, the Yankees quickly secured permission to sell beer at the park. However, they did not permit drunken fans to ruin the experience for others. Selling beer was not new to the team. They had sold beer at the Polo Grounds before Prohibition and

\textsuperscript{66} 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.

\textsuperscript{67} Estimates suggested that on ladies’ days, women fans made up less than half of all fans in the park. Even the most popular ladies’ days, for example at Wrigley Field, were capped to ensure men still made up at least half the crowd.
the team’s owner from 1915 until his death in 1939, Jacob Ruppert, (after which his estate owned the team until 1945) was a brewer. Ruppert brought back a profitable and in demand part of the fan experience during the Depression when attendance was down.68 Not all teams followed the Yankees lead, however. For a variety of reasons, the Pirates, Indians, Reds, Tigers, Senators, Browns, Cardinals, and Phillies did not immediately reintroduce beer.69 By 1937, however, beer was sold at all parks outside of Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.70 Alcohol was profitable and popular with many fans, but it also led to fans misbehaving, sullying the experience for others, and driving some fans away from the ballpark so Yankee Stadium security was on the lookout for drunk fans. The Yankees also paid attention to fans who misbehaved in other ways.

On occasion, fans were violent with one another, which threatened the vision of the park as an acceptable place for wealthy fans, a vision the team worked hard to establish. In September 1938, a man seated in a field box assaulted a woman seated with him. That man was then assaulted by another fan whose identity officials were unable to discover. The first man was ejected from the park by a police officer, but the woman he assaulted refused to press charges.71 Violence got in the way of the kind of relaxing atmosphere


69 As of April 1, 1933, neither the Red Sox nor the Braves had decided if they would sell beer at their home games. See “Pirates Ban Beer in Park: Club Officials Say They Will Not Permit Sale of Beverage,” New York Times, April 1, 1933 for more.

70 Daniel, “Peanuts, Pop and Popcorn!” 489-90, 522.

71 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
people at the park expected and that was detailed in advertisements about the fan experience.

Advertisements for White Owl cigars that aired during radio broadcasts of Yankees games in the 1940s claimed at the Stadium a person “couldn’t help noticing how many of the fans smoke cigars to add to relaxation of an afternoon of baseball.”72 Similarly, one advertising script noted “when you’re on your way to a ball park, you don’t worry about whether you’ll have a good time or not.”73 Fans going to Yankee Stadium could expect a pleasant and relaxing time because the Yankees enforced limits on acceptable behavior.

Relaxing ballpark experiences could also be ruined by injuries though. Causes of injury at Yankee Stadium included being struck by foul balls, splinters from wooden seats, twisted ankles and scraped knees due to falls on steps and ramps, and even trampling during rainstorms as fans rushed for cover. A few fans were injured by vendors who accidentally dropped their products from an upper deck onto a lower deck or who tripped in the aisle and fell on a seated fan.74 On several occasions, fans were injured by bottles thrown by other fans.75 The Yankees tried to make amends for as many of these injuries as they could because, as a profit seeking enterprise and especially during the

72 General Cigar (White Owl), Yankees baseball, 1946 Mar.-July, Reel 313, J. Walter Thompson Company, 16mm Microfilm As-Broadcast Scripts, 1928-1958, Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Duke University. [Hereafter Hartman Center]

73 General Cigar (White Owl), Yankees baseball, 1946 Mar.-July, Reel 313, JWT 16mm, Hartman Center.

74 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.

75 1936, 1938, 1940 Stadium Diaries, HoF.
Depression, they wanted to do everything they could to increase attendance and keep
their fans happy.

The Yankees, Yankee Stadium, and Race Relations

The Yankees also tried, at least to an extent, to attract black fans to Yankee
Stadium, in part because the park was located not far from one of the largest black
neighborhoods in the nation, Harlem. Especially during the Depression, it made financial
sense for the team to attract black fans. Although presumably the Yankees had black fans
at Hilltop Park and the Polo Grounds, because of Yankee Stadium’s multiple tiers, it was
less likely racist whites would be put off by the presence of black fans there. Moreover,
the presence of black fans at Yankee Stadium made the park seem like a site of equality.

While the Yankees treated their black fans better than some other teams—for example
they did not formally segregate them—they did not treat them the same as white fans,
employing a de facto psychological tier between the two groups rooted in the Yankees
tepid responses to racism and discrimination.

The team’s ability to attract black fans was threatened in 1938, when a radio
reporter asked Yankee-player Jake Powell how he stayed in shape during the off-season.
Powell responded, “I’m a policeman and I beat niggers over the head with my
blackjack.”\textsuperscript{76} His comments provoked outrage; black fans threw soda bottles at him in
Washington, DC and Chicago.\textsuperscript{77} The commissioner suspended Powell for ten days and

\textsuperscript{76} Steve Wulf, “Bigot Unwittingly Sparked Change,” \textit{ESPN.com}, February 22,
bigot-unwittingly-sparked-change}.

\textsuperscript{77} Daniel, “Whitehead Will Play with the Giants Infield,” \textit{New York Amsterdam
News}, April 13, 1940.
African Americans in New York City demanded that Powell apologize and that the Yankees release him. The New York Amsterdam News, the city’s largest black newspaper, argued that if the team kept him, it meant “they agreed with his sentiments.”

Powell undertook an apology tour of Harlem’s bars and newspapers and remained on the roster despite injuries and poor play, even though Ed Barrow said, “if the fans don’t want Powell […] we will have to release him.” In 1939, the New York Amsterdam News argued that by keeping Powell on the roster, “Barrow shows his disregard for colored people.” The Yankees’ response illuminated the limits of black fans’ power and which fans Barrow and the team prioritized.

Black fans’ demands in the wake of Powell’s comments put Barrow in a position of defending the club’s treatment of African Americans. Since the Yankees, like all Major League teams in the late 1930s, did not employ black players, Barrow turned his attention to matters off the field. According to Barrow, the Yankees hired some black plainclothes security guards. The Yankees were not alone in doing this, at least one other club did as well. Barrow acknowledged that the team did not have black concessions vendors

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79 “Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell,” Philadelphia Tribune, August 11, 1938.


81 “Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”

though. He noted HMS, Inc. hired their own vendors and therefore the club was not responsible.\footnote{“Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”} If Barrow and the Yankees had been serious about inclusive hiring, Barrow could have pushed HMS, Inc. to hire black workers, but he did not.

Barrow and the Stevens family had a long-standing relationship. Barrow first met Harry M. Stevens in Pittsburgh in 1893 where he became a partner in HMS, Inc. before dropping out of the partnership in 1895, and missing out on the millions the company would earn, to devote his full attention to running a minor-league team.\footnote{Barrow, \textit{My Fifty Years in Baseball}, 23, 25, 28.} When team owner Ruppert bought out his co-owner Huston in 1923, Ruppert invited Barrow to join as a minority owner, provided he could invest $350,000. Barrow immediately called Stevens, who loaned him the full amount the next morning. Barrow eventually paid Stevens back using the dividends from his portion of Yankees stock.\footnote{Barrow, \textit{My Fifty Years in Baseball}, 139.} Given Barrow’s history with Stevens, if Barrow wanted HMS, Inc. to hire black vendors, he could have asked the Stevens family to do so. He never appeared to ask.

Despite that, Barrow argued that Powell’s views were not the views of the Yankees as an organization and recognized the team made money from black fans. He said “no owner of a business permits his employes to be pert or insulting to the customers patronizing the business. And so it is with the Yankees team.”\footnote{“Yankee Manager Iterates Club's Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”} When discussing the

\footnotetext[3]{“Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”}
\footnotetext[4]{Barrow, \textit{My Fifty Years in Baseball}, 23, 25, 28.}
\footnotetext[5]{Barrow, \textit{My Fifty Years in Baseball}, 139.}
\footnotetext[6]{“Yankee Manager Iterates Club's Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”}
team’s fans, Barrow therefore included African Americans. That was a step further than Commissioner Landis was willing to go. When Landis suspended Powell, he said that “Jake Powell of the New York Yankees made an uncomplimentary reference to a portion of the population,” not even including African Americans as part of baseball’s fan base.\textsuperscript{87} Barrow, on the other hand, more acutely aware of the Yankees specific finances, could not completely disregard black baseball fans.

He further defended the team by noting that the Yankees supported the black community. Barrow claimed that the club allowed hundreds of black children into the park for free as part of a broader program for poor children. The Yankees’ program of giving free passes to the game to clergy, journalists, city officials, and friends of the ball club extended to African Americans, Barrow noted. He also claimed that on top of the Yankees’ annual contribution to the city’s YMCA, the team made a special contribution directly to the Harlem YMCA. Barrow pointed out that the team rented Yankee Stadium to black groups like Negro League teams as well.\textsuperscript{88}

In 1939, Barrow established the Jacob Ruppert Memorial Cup tournament for Negro League teams that played at Yankee Stadium. \textit{New York Amsterdam News} columnist Dan Burley argued that trophy ended the backlash over Powell’s words because “the race was lulled to sleep by the creation of a cup for colored baseball.”\textsuperscript{89} In

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{87} Wulf, “Bigot Unwittingly Sparked Change.”
\item \textsuperscript{88} “Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell” and Mel Antonen, “‘Dream Come True’ for Excluded Blacks,” \textit{USA Today Sports Weekly}, Keepsake Edition: Yankee Stadium, Spring 2008, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Dan Burley, “World Series Recalls Bars to Negro Players,” \textit{New York Amsterdam News}, October 14, 1939.
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\end{footnotesize}
explaining why he established the trophy, Barrow said, “the colored stars will undoubtedly attract thousands of fans and supporters who will help them in their fight to reach the pinnacle of organized baseball.”\textsuperscript{90} Couching Negro League games in that way likely only made them more attractive to fans, putting more money in the Yankees coffers. Ending the backlash over Powell’s comments was a nice bonus too.

Negro League rentals of Yankee Stadium were an important source of revenue to the team. Negro League teams that rented MLB parks, including Yankee Stadium, did not have access to the revenue from the concessions sold during their games. This was one of many inequities between Major League teams and Negro League teams, but it was particularly important because of the widespread contention that concessions revenue marked the difference between a profitable and an unprofitable ball club. Although it is not clear how much the Yankees made from renting Yankee Stadium during the Depression, after World War II, Yankees’ co-owner Larry MacPhail noted that his team made more than $100,000 annually from the concessions and gate receipts from Negro League games there.\textsuperscript{91}


\textsuperscript{91} “The Round-Up of Sports Appeasing Mississippi,” \textit{Headlines and Pictures}, November 1, 1945. Ballpark rental revenue is not a separate category in the publicly-accessible data on team finances. It is folded into an “other” category. See Riess, “The Profits of Major League Baseball, 1900 to 1956,” 102. This revenue likely explained why MacPhail opposed integration of MLB. He claimed it was on the grounds that integration would destroy the Negro Leagues. The revenue he earned from rentals, however suggests less charitable reasons. See Riess, “The Profits of Major League Baseball, 1900 to 1956,” 106.
While some Negro League fans carried their own food to games in MLB parks perhaps for economic reasons (it was cheaper) or political reasons (they wanted to limit the money they paid to discriminating white-owned Major League teams in an era when black newspaper columnists called for boycotts of white baseball), HMS, Inc. largely sold the same food at Negro League games at Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds as they did at Yankees or Giants home games. Concessionaire John Morley recalled working Negro League games at Yankee Stadium where, in addition to selling the regular fare of hot dogs, peanuts, cracker jack, beer, and soda, he sold fried pork skins too. Presumably this was an attempt by HMS, Inc. to increase concessions sales by offering its understanding of food that would entice black fans. In challenging economic times, HMS, Inc. was happy to sell food to black fans, but not to have African Americans serve that food. By taking steps like these to increase fans and revenue, the Yankees made it through the Depression relatively unscathed.

**World War II and the Postwar Era**

In strong economic times like the 1920s, teams could reliably expect to profit. In tougher times like the Depression, they innovated to bring more fans to the park. The Yankees, and all other MLB teams, made it through the Great Depression only to see US involvement in World War II hurt attendance between 1942 and 1945, which led teams to

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92 Frank “Sandy” Rose, in discussion with the author, January 20, 2015.

93 John M. Morley oral history, conducted by author, May 12, 2015. Transcript in author’s possession.

94 “Yankee Manager Iterates Club’s Fairness as Harlem Continues to Rap Powell.”
again innovate. Yankee attendance fell from more than 950,000 in 1941 to a little over 600,000 in 1943. With most of the best players and millions of fans serving abroad, there were fewer reasons to go to the game and fewer people to go. For the Yankees, the World War II years were also complicated because the team had new ownership for the first time since Yankee Stadium opened. In 1939, Jacob Ruppert died. After his death, Ruppert’s estate retained majority ownership of the team and Ed Barrow was promoted to team president. Barrow, just as baseball executives had during the Depression, again worked hard to bring fans to the park.

To draw more fans, during World War II, the ballpark became a site of patriotic fervor. Owners offered games as sites for war bond and war relief drives, they honored servicemen and veterans, and played the National Anthem before the first pitch of every game. Owners had sometimes played the Star Spangled Banner even before it was officially named the national anthem, but until World War II they generally only used it to mark special occasions, like the opening of a new ballpark or a World Series game. Despite owners’ efforts to aid the war effort and appeal to fans’ patriotism, there were only so many fans who could go to games. As the war wrapped up, however, that started to change and baseball began to reap the rewards of its war-time patriotism. Nineteen-forty-five was a good year for baseball’s attendance and the Yankees attracted almost 900,000 fans.

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96 Rushin, The 34-ton Bat, 216-218.
That year, Ruppert’s estate sold the club to Larry MacPhail, Dan Topping, and Del Webb. Led by MacPhail, the new owners had lots of work to do to increase attendance and profits in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II. By the mid-1940s, despite Barrow’s claim that he “never passed up anything that [he] thought would help the game or fans’ enjoyment of it,” once ahead-of-the-curve Yankee Stadium was outdated.97 For example, at the end of World War II, the Yankees were one of only five teams not playing night games in their home ballpark.98 As Barrow later wrote, “MacPhail’s way was not my way.”99 The two executives thought about the fan experience differently and MacPhail was not going to let the Yankees stay behind the curve for long. Instead, he created a new normative ballpark experience.

Larry MacPhail was one of the biggest influences on the fan experience in the 1930s and 1940s as he repeatedly transformed aging ballparks to accommodate changing demand. The New Yorker wrote that “unlike most baseball executives, [MacPhail] ha[d] no respect for the tradition of the game”—in other words, he was willing to make changes to the fan experience if he thought they would be profitable.100 MacPhail’s first job in baseball was in 1931 with the Columbus Red Birds, a minor-league affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals. In Columbus, MacPhail increased attendance and made the team

97 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 9.
98 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 8, 208.
99 Barrow, My Fifty Years in Baseball, 10.
100 Robert Lewis Taylor, “Profiles: Borough Defender ~ I,” New Yorker, July 12, 1941, 20. MacPhail certainly did not mind altering parts of the fan experience, but he did not alter traditions related to the racial makeup of MLB players. MacPhail profited off Negro League teams and opposed integration.
profitable—rarities during the Depression. MacPhail, however, was opinionated, came in conflict with his bosses, and left the position in mid-1933. He was not out of baseball for long though; after the 1933 season, he was named general manager of the Cincinnati Reds, where he introduced night baseball to the Major Leagues.¹⁰¹

Before owners installed lights at their parks, all MLB games were day games. Because of regular working hours, day baseball limited the number of games that working-class Americans could attend. Additionally, many lower-income jobs in the early twentieth century were six-days a week and when Sunday baseball was illegal, it was nearly impossible for people with those jobs to go to the park. After bans on Sunday baseball were abolished, Sundays became owners’ most profitable days. One historian argued Yankee Stadium should not be called the “House that Ruth Built” as it was commonly termed, but rather the “House that Sunday Baseball Built” because the Yankees’ increased revenue from Sunday home games paid for their stadium.¹⁰²

Although Sunday games drew lots of fans, attendance at weekday afternoon games remained poor. On Sunday afternoons, going to a game was possible for most fans. If owners could make going to weekday games feasible for more fans, they could increase profits. To Larry MacPhail, that meant adding night games.

Night baseball dates back to 1880, although all night games played from 1880 until the late 1920s were exhibitions and none involved two major league teams. In the early 1930s, teams teetering on the brink of financial insolvency, like minor league and Negro


¹⁰² Riess, Touching Base, 130.
League teams who were hardest hit by the Depression, began playing official games under the lights. They immediately saw increases in attendance and when those increases became widely known in 1930, the majors took notice. Despite their revenue-increasing potential though, most MLB executives opposed night baseball. Yankees manager Bob Shawkey, who admitted he had never seen a night game, claimed they were a “positive peril” and that under the lights, “players find it extremely difficult to judge a ball hit directly at them.” Shawkey argued that “at night [baseball] would be far more hazardous.” Like Shawkey, many owners were reluctant to invest in installing lights because they were concerned about the quality of the game. Cardinals owner Sam Breadon was not ready to support night games, but noted that “night baseball will make it possible for working people to attend a game whenever they want without missing an afternoon from work.”

Some owners did not support night games because they were concerned about the comfort and safety of their fans. They worried that in northeastern cities cold temperatures at night in April and September might lead fans to stay home. Journalist Roy Stockton mused about “baseball fans taking their overcoats and blankets” to the park.

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for night games.\textsuperscript{107} Conversely, Cubs president William Veeck argued “that night baseball in cities where afternoons are warm should be much more popular than afternoon baseball.”\textsuperscript{108} Stockton expressed concern over fan safety and crowd management writing, “it would be a serious police problem to have crowds of 15,000 or 40,000 persons gathering nightly at the ballparks.”\textsuperscript{109} Senators owner Clark Griffith, later a proponent of night baseball, argued “the benefits derived by patrons from attending the game are largely due to fresh air and sunshine.”\textsuperscript{110} Many owners, it seems, were worried that night games would not provide the relaxing and enjoyable experience they wanted to offer their middle- and upper-class fans.

None of these concerns troubled Larry MacPhail. His Reds played in MLB’s smallest city and had played poorly for several seasons. He needed a way to get more fans to the park. Before the 1935 season, MacPhail convinced NL owners to allow each NL team to play seven night games in their home ballpark. Although the votes in support were unanimous, road teams were allowed to veto playing night games. Three clubs refused to play any night games in 1935 and only the Reds installed lights.\textsuperscript{111} At the same time, the AL declined to allow night baseball. Yankees general manager Ed Barrow

\textsuperscript{107} Stockton, “The Pros and Cons of Night Baseball,” 392.

\textsuperscript{108} Lane, “The Romance of Night Baseball,” 484.

\textsuperscript{109} Stockton, “The Pros and Cons of Night Baseball,” 392.

\textsuperscript{110} Lane, “The Romance of Night Baseball,” 484.

\textsuperscript{111} F. C. Lane, “Will the Major Leagues Adopt Night Baseball?” Baseball Magazine, October 1935, 487-9, 522. Those three clubs were the Pirates, Giants, and Dodgers
explained that his opposition to night baseball was based on a bad experience he had in 1896 when he owned a minor league team that played a night game with inadequate lighting. In his own words, his nearly 40-year old experience had “colored [his] views about night baseball” and he said that baseball was “a game of daylight, a game of sunshine.”

On May 24, 1935, MacPhail arranged to have President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to flip a switch in the White House that turned on the lights at Cincinnati’s Crosley Field for the first night game in Major League history. Twenty-thousand fans saw a crisp and high-quality game with no reported misplays or errors due to the lights. In 1935, the Reds drew a total of 120,000 fans to their seven games under the lights—one-third of their total attendance for the season. Night games drew about seven times as many fans as weekday day games. On average, a Reds night game in 1935 drew as well as a Sunday game. In essence, the Reds added seven more Sundays to their home schedule with lights. As the Reds’ night game attendance numbers reverberated around baseball, some journalists noted fans wanted night baseball and owners would have to give the fans what they wanted.


115 Dan Daniel and Shirley Povich were among the journalists who made this claim.
Following the 1935 season, however, many AL owners continued to oppose night games because they worried about their long-term profitability.\footnote{Lane, “Will the Major Leagues Adopt Night Baseball?” 487-9, 522.} Although in February of 1935 Ruppert said he was “willing and ready to accept anything new which looks as if it might help the game and please the fans,” in October one journalist correctly concluded that Ruppert was opposed to night baseball and accurately predicted that the Yankees would be one of the last teams to add lights.\footnote{Daniel, “Night Baseball Nothing New,” 390 and Lane, “Will the Major Leagues Adopt Night Baseball?” 489.} Some owners recognized that the quality of the game at night was roughly similar to day games, but as Tigers owner Frank Navin said, “night baseball in my opinion is purely a spectacle.”\footnote{Daniel, “Night Baseball Nothing New,” 389.} After the novelty of the spectacle wore off, Navin and other owners thought attendance would rapidly decline.\footnote{Lane, “Will the Major Leagues Adopt Night Baseball?” 487-9, 522.}

Near the end of the 1936 season, when the Reds were still the only team hosting night games, MacPhail said “from every standpoint, night baseball has been more successful and satisfactory than could possibly have been anticipated.” He noted that there were “ten times as many potential customers at night as there [were] for week-day games [and] the clientele [was] entirely different at night than at day games.” MacPhail admitted that in Cincinnati, “the novelty [of night games had] worn off, but the attendance [had] increased.” He added that the quality of play under good lights was just as high as it was during day games. MacPhail also said that night games had a positive

\footnote{Daniel, “Night Baseball Nothing New,” 389.}
economic impact on the neighborhood around the ballpark. He reported that many fans went out to dinner at nearby restaurants before night games started.\textsuperscript{120}

The quality of play and the novelty of night baseball were not the only elements concerning owners though. In 1937, a \textit{Fortune} article noted that night baseball games drew a different kind of fan to the park. “Those who favor [night baseball], with its ‘shopping’ type of fan, its brass bands and fireworks, feel they can cash in on baseball as a form of general amusement. But the majority who oppose it see baseball as a tense competition involving violent partisanship, and prefer to put all their eggs in the basket of the stanch partisan.”\textsuperscript{121} This new type of fan added another behavioral pattern to the ballpark, another group of fans whose way of enjoying the game might bother other fans, just as gambling fans bothered some fans. As more fans with more ideas on how to enjoy the game came to the park, Yankee Stadium’s multiple tiers and ability to separate fans became even more beneficial to the team’s ability to please all their fans.

After his brief stint with the Reds (he lasted through the 1936 season), MacPhail was hired as president of the Brooklyn Dodgers in January 1938. In Brooklyn, MacPhail retrained the ushers who had a reputation for rudeness, repainted seats, added murals to the sides of concessions stands, and installed lights. After MacPhail put in lights in 1938, concessions executives noted that fans brought boxed dinners and red wine with them to


\textsuperscript{121} “Big League Baseball,” 116.
the park for night games. Soon, he and other owners would try to capture that dinner business for themselves.

In the late 1930s, owners across the majors began to shift their ideas about night baseball. By the end of the 1939 season, six teams hosted night games and drew a combined one million fans to those games. Average attendance for weekday night games was about 25,000 fans more than it was for weekday day games. In 1940, four more teams began playing night games at home. The Yankees remained opposed to night baseball though. Journalist Dan Daniel wrote that if Ed Barrow had “the final say, there [would never] be night ball […] in Yankee Stadium.” The following season, the last before the United States entered World War II, Clark Griffith installed lights at his park in Washington, DC, bringing the number of teams playing home night games to eleven.

In 1942, both leagues increased the maximum number of permissible night games from seven to 14 to increase profit and make the game accessible to war-time factory workers. The AL made an exception for the Washington Senators who were allowed to

\[122\] J. G. Taylor Spink, “Three and One,” unknown paper, February 13, 1941, Harry M. Stevens Subject File, HoF.
\[123\] Those teams were the Reds, Phillies, Dodgers, Indians, A’s, and White Sox.
\[125\] Those four teams were the Giants, Cardinals, Browns, and Pirates.
\[126\] Daniel, “Night Ball Irresistible,” 347.
\[127\] In early 1942, commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis wrote to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for permission to continue baseball despite the war. Roosevelt
play 21 home night games because so many workers in the nation’s capital were unable to leave their war-related jobs in time for afternoon games. Owners capped night games because they thought day-baseball fans would not come at night and eventually fans might tire of night baseball and stop coming entirely. Larry MacPhail, then president of the Dodgers, advocated returning to a seven-game maximum after the war was over, but once owners got accustomed to the increased revenue from additional night games, there was no going back.

After resigning from the Dodgers in late 1942, taking a commission in the army, and serving during World War II, MacPhail bought the Yankees in 1945. At that time, the Yankees were in the minority in MLB in not having lights at their home park. MacPhail was unable to install lights at Yankee Stadium in 1945, but he increased the number of twilight games the team played to draw more fans who worked during the afternoon. It should come as no surprise that the next year, MacPhail brought Yankee Stadium up to date by adding lights. MacPhail’s night baseball innovations meant that games were no longer exclusively played in the afternoon. Fans could work a full day and then enjoy a game, but night games meant they now had to figure out when and where they were going to eat dinner, how they were going to get home after the sun went down, and how gave that permission and suggested that making the game more accessible to war-time factory workers would be a morale booster.

128 1942 MLB Joint Meeting, Box 4, Folder 9, Joint Major League Meetings, HoF.


they were going to avoid coming in contact with people they would rather not sit near. To mitigate some of those concerns, MacPhail pushed Yankee Stadium ahead of other parks by introducing new ways to separate fans. Fed by high expectations on the field and MacPhail’s changes, the Yankees’ attendance outlook for 1946 was strong.

Before the first postwar season, spring training attendance was “unprecedented” as were advance ticket sales for the regular season.\textsuperscript{131} The \textit{New York Times} described the beginning of the peace-time season as “dreams come true—dreams in the clinging mud of foxholes, on the bomb-scarred decks of warships, in shot-riddled planes, in heat, cold, misery and peril.”\textsuperscript{132} In addition to returning veterans, the \textit{New York Times} also predicted that civilians would turn out in droves because instead of wartime replacements, “the professionals [would be] back.”\textsuperscript{133} The draw of returning superstars, like Joe DiMaggio of the Yankees, was powerful. In 1946 attendance skyrocketed across baseball. Also contributing to attendance were a strong economy, extended unemployment for returning veterans, which gave them money for tickets and time to go to games, and that many consumer goods were not yet back on the market, so there were a limited number of things Americans could buy.\textsuperscript{134} The Yankees experienced this attendance boom perhaps more than any other team. Despite beginning the season on Good Friday, they set an

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\textsuperscript{132} Daley, “More Stars, More Fans, More Everything.”

\textsuperscript{133} Daley, “More Stars, More Fans, More Everything.”

\end{flushright}
opening-day record with 55,628 fans. That season the Yankees also set a total attendance record of more than 2,250,000.

The end of World War II also brought new fans to the park who did not seem to understand the game. Long-time fans decried how those fans behaved. One “ancient tenant of Yankee Stadium” said new fans “boo the visiting pitcher as a matter of course. You never heard that kind of thing before the war. And when a foul ball goes into the stands, there is yelling and screaming such as was never heard except on Ladies’ Day before. Only these ain’t ladies.”

Ladies’ days were another part of the Yankee Stadium atmosphere that brought novice fans to the park. A 1946 article in Collier’s claimed that most of these women were so clueless about the game “that serious women fans prefer to pay full admission and sit where they choose instead of taking advantage of the cut rates which oblige them to remain in segregated sections with their shrill sisters.”

Provided novice fans did not disrupt the experience for everyone else, owners were thrilled with their presence at the park and MLB continued to draw well throughout the rest of the 1940s. This was especially the case in parks like Yankee Stadium where MacPhail increased the physical and psychological tiers by offering more amenities in exclusive spaces to the team’s wealthiest fans.


In 1946, Larry MacPhail renovated Yankee Stadium by adding the Stadium Club, “two swank taverns under the stands where thirsty holders of season tickets [could] quaff a stray beaker safe from the vulgar gaze of the hoi-polloi.”

Patrons had access to private dining areas and restrooms too. The Stadium Club was designed in part to extract more money from fans by getting them to buy their dinners in the park for night games. New York Times writer Arthur Daley described the Stadium Club as an “exquisite beauty in its modernistic décor” and “practically breathtaking.” The Stadium Club even had a “maître d’hôtel in a boiled shirt.” Journalist Gay Talese noted that “the elite meet to eat at the Stadium Club.” MacPhail also changed the park’s box seats, again heightening the distinction between the team’s wealthiest fans and everyone else, contributing to the Yankees reputation for drawing upper-class fans.

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140 The Stadium Club was not the first restaurant in an MLB park. In 1939, the Philadelphia A’s introduced “Shibe Park Cafe,” a restaurant-like area of the park designed to sell meals to fans, but it did not survive World War II meat restrictions.

141 Daley, “Opening Day at the Stadium.”

142 Daley, “Opening Day at the Stadium.”


MacPhail’s newly-redesigned box seats cost between $600 and $900 for the season and were sold both to individuals and corporations. Ticket holders got a brass name plaque affixed to their box and a “magnificent feeling of aloofness.”\textsuperscript{145} The box seats were “painted a pale green in contrast to the dark green of the general admission seats” as though to further distinguish fans who could afford the most expensive seats.\textsuperscript{146} A \textit{New York Times} article described the renovations as “Larry MacPhail’s dream of the best, most comfortable and most modern outdoor arena” in America.\textsuperscript{147} Ed Barrow’s only response to the sweeping changes MacPhail undertook was a shocked “Gosh!”\textsuperscript{148} Barrow also disagreed with MacPhail’s promotional tactics. He decried the “nylons, bathing suit models in jeeps, foot race, and barbershop quartets” MacPhail used to draw fans to Yankee Stadium.\textsuperscript{149} Thanks to MacPhail’s expansion of the fan base though, fans in the 1940s were different than they had been in Barrow’s day. These new fans needed extra inducements to come to the park.

Despite his tremendous success, MacPhail was not with the team for long. Rumors that he was interested in selling his portion of the club emerged in September 1947.\textsuperscript{150} Although MacPhail denied those rumors, he sold his shares to his partners following the
World Series that October. During his brief tenure, the Yankees twice set records by drawing more than two million fans to Yankee Stadium.¹⁵¹

MacPhail’s innovations reverberated around baseball, changing the ballpark experience for fans around the country. By 1948, only the Cubs did not play night games at home and the idea of the Stadium Club was quickly copied.¹⁵² In 1951, the Philadelphia A’s created an exclusive space for season ticket holders called the “Elephant Room.” Guests could enjoy refreshments without having to fight the crowds at concession stands. Additionally, club members had exclusive access to trophies and memorabilia from the fifty-year Hall of Fame managerial career of long-time A’s owner Connie Mack that lined the club’s walls.¹⁵³

The new fans MacPhail brought to the park seemed to have different expectations too—no longer did they seem interested in a chaotic urban experience that had once been standard. They would not tolerate inconveniences that fans in the 1920s and 1930s dealt with. For example, in the 1950s, MLB and the Quaker Oats company gave away tickets in every box of Quaker Oats that allowed children twelve and under free admission to the ballpark for select games, provided they were accompanied by a paying adult. Owners


¹⁵³ Philadelphia Athletics, “A’s to Build Elephant Room,” news release, November, 6, 1950, Series I, Box 2, Folder 11, Armstrong Collection, HoF and “Elephant Room Progresses Rapidly,” Along the Elephant Trail 6, no. 1, (March 1951): 1, Series I, Box 2, Folder 7, Armstrong Collection, HoF.
hoped this program would get kids interested in baseball and get their parents to the
game. Quaker Oats hoped it would increase sales of their products to kids who wanted
free tickets.

    New York Yankees general manager George Weiss was upset with the program
though because it did not seem to attract parents to the game. Instead, kids with these
tickets “gather[ed] in front of the park and ask[ed] adults to take them in.”154 The Yankees
were expanding their fan base, but children bugged paying fans, breaking down the tiers
that protected fans.155 According to one journalist, the Yankees had 400,000 child fans at
the park each season, but “letting children pester grownups at the gates, and come in free,
[was] something else.”156 Trying to bring the next generation of fans threatened the
team’s current, paying customers. In response, Weiss called for an end to the program.157
Weiss’ reaction suggests that while team executives were concerned about the future of
their business, they were more worried about maintaining the tiered experience and
avoiding chaos that would drive fans from the park. The team’s goal of avoiding a chaotic
experience extended to how vendors interacted with fans too.

    The career of long-time HMS, Inc. employee John Morley illuminates the lengths
the Yankees went to ensure fans had an orderly experience at the park. Morley grew up

154 Dan Daniel, “Box Top Ducat Setup Draws Weiss Blast,” Quaker Oats, Box 41,
Folder 8, American League Papers, Series 3, HoF.

155 Quaker Oats joint proposal, free tickets for children 1954-1955, Box 1, Folder
39, Ballparks and Stadiums, HoF.

156 Daniel, “Box Top Ducat Setup Draws Weiss Blast.”

157 Daniel, “Box Top Ducat Setup Draws Weiss Blast.”
about halfway between Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds in a section of Manhattan called High Bridge. He got his start at Yankee Stadium with HMS, Inc. as a 13-year old “stile boy” in 1944—his first job was literally to turn the stile so fans could get into the ballpark. For his labor, Morley got fifty cents and a free ticket to the game. Until he turned 14, Morley was not legally permitted to vend food or scorecards. In early 1945 Morley presented himself as a vendor at Yankee Stadium. Due to the vending seniority system, as a first-time vendor and a 14-year old, Morley was the last to be chosen for every game. Nevertheless, he showed up day after day.\textsuperscript{158} While this seniority system benefitted experienced vendors, it was also a boon to HMS, Inc. and the Yankees. Experienced vendors were more likely to know how to have a positive interaction with all their customers; they were more likely to deliver a courteous, efficient, and predictable experience that fit with what the team’s wealthier fans expected.

When Morley sold soda in the 1940s, he and his fellow vendors sold it in bottles handed out with straws. Some fans, however, threw bottles onto the field, and even if they did not, HMS, Inc. employees had to pick up discarded bottles at the end of games to sort and return them. Eventually, vendors began pouring soda into cups and keeping the bottles, which both took projectiles away from fans and made the process of collecting bottles at the end of the game more efficient. Although pouring slowed each soda sale, it reduced the opportunity for violence and chaos, the absence of which were important parts of the ideal baseball atmosphere.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{158} David Halberstam, \textit{Summer of ’49} (New York: W. Morrow, 1989), 240-41.

\textsuperscript{159} Morley oral history.
In 1949, Morley was both a “gateman” and a “beerman” at Yankee Stadium and could make a decent amount of money at every game. Before games Morley sold scorecards to fans outside the park and then rushed inside to sell beer when the game began. That year, he earned a 10% commission on each 35¢ bottle of beer he sold, which, plus tips, generally resulted in around $50 to $60 per game. On special days like the last game of the regular season in 1949, however, with the pennant coming down to the wire and a packed house in Yankee Stadium, Morley could earn as much as $150. On days like those, HMS, Inc. called in workers who typically worked at Ebbets Field to help handle the massive crowd.\textsuperscript{160} The additional vendors ensured that fans would be served quickly, even with a larger crowd than normal, maintaining fans’ expectations for the experience.

Morley worked under the watchful eye of Tom Carmody, who was then the director of concessions at Yankee Stadium. Carmody was an old-timer by the late 1940s—he had begun working at Yankee Stadium the day it opened—and he ruled with an iron fist. Vendors had to show up on time, never be flip, and always say “sir.”\textsuperscript{161} Aside from a quick interaction with a ticket taker or usher, concessions vendors were fans’ primary point of contact with the club. It was therefore largely left to concessions firms to ensure that vendors treated fans respectfully. Carmody’s strictness ensured this would be the case. In order to work, vendors had to be deferential to Carmody, just as they would have to be deferential to fans. Morley worked for HMS, Inc. through high school and college and in 1952 stopped vending to take a managerial position with HMS, Inc. as a

\textsuperscript{160} Halberstam, \textit{Summer of ‘49}, 240–42.

\textsuperscript{161} Halberstam, \textit{Summer of ‘49}, 240–41.
section supervisor at Yankee Stadium.\textsuperscript{162} His experience and education qualified him to ensure that other vendors also met fans’ expectations. Despite those efforts, there was only so much the team could do to control fans’ experiences with the changing city outside the park.

**Attendance Boom Wanes**

By the 1950s, after war-time restrictions on consumer goods had been discontinued, there were many more ways for potential fans to entertain themselves than there had been in 1946. Fans could go for a drive, or to a movie theatre, or to Disneyland, or even watch the game on television. Perhaps the most important good fans could now acquire was housing in suburbia that came with easy access to the newly developing interstate highway system. For decades, baseball fans had lived in cities and ballparks had been designed to serve urban residents, so the growth of the suburbs was problematic for baseball. In 1958, Larry MacPhail noted, “immense parking areas are now a necessity, but they are impossible to provide at most parks.”\textsuperscript{163} The geography and development around Yankee Stadium, meant the Yankees could adjust somewhat to the increase in car traffic in the 1950s, but not enough to serve everyone. Consequently, the Yankees struggled to draw the same crowds in the 1950s and 1960s that they had drawn in the late 1940s.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162} Morley oral history.

\textsuperscript{163} MacPhail, “A Pulmotor for Baseball,” page unknown.

According to MacPhail, “ball parks are for the most part now located in congested areas and slum districts, which women and teen-agers will not and should not frequent at night.”\textsuperscript{165} The Yankees thought many of their fans agreed with MacPhail’s assessment as the demographics of the Bronx changed. According to journalist and author Roger Kahn, in 1954, George Weiss explained that the Yankees had not hired a black player because doing so would attract more black fans and “it would offend boxholders from Westchester [a wealthy New York suburb] to have to sit with niggers.”\textsuperscript{166} MacPhail argued that “baseball [was] in real trouble” and “need[ed] a complete overhauling.”\textsuperscript{167} In the end, to fight the attendance decline in the 1950s, some owners overhauled their organizations by moving to new ballparks or to new cities to find newer (and whiter) fans.

Many factors contributed to that attendance decline, but owners tended to focus on just one. According to journalist Leonard Koppett, converting general admission seats into higher-priced reserved seats when attendance at Yankees games was strong, drove some fans away. He wrote “the tone of the entire operation was turned toward season-box, Stadium Club, wealthy or expense account patrons. The common fan, pushed out,

\textsuperscript{165} MacPhail, “A Pulmotor for Baseball,” page unknown.

\textsuperscript{166} Roger Kahn, \textit{The Boys of Summer} (New York: Harper \& Row Publishers, 1972), 164. In Kahn’s \textit{The Era}, published more than 20 years after \textit{The Boys of Summer}, he offered a slightly tamer version of that Weiss quote. In \textit{The Era}, Kahn quoted Weiss as saying, “the truth is that our box seat customers from Westchester County don’t want to sit with a lot of colored fans from Harlem.” See Roger Kahn, \textit{The Era: 1947-1957, When the Yankees, the Giants, and the Dodgers Ruled the World} (New York: Ticknor \& Fields, 1993), 45.

\textsuperscript{167} MacPhail, “A Pulmotor for Baseball,” 113.
developed other interests; his children developed other interests.”168 Some journalists blamed televised games for the decline in night game attendance, noting that fans could much more easily watch the game from home.169 Koppett wrote, “if all that mattered was the result, the fan got almost as much from radio and television as from attending the game.”170 He also noted something that owners paid far more attention to though. Koppett wrote that the “lack of parking facilities has hurt badly as potential customers moved to the suburbs.”171 The parks built in the 1960s and 1970s show that owners were most concerned with keeping middle- and upper-class fans coming to the park by focusing on suburban access.

At the end of the 1957 season, both the Dodgers and the Giants, unable to get many suburban fans to their parks, moved out of New York, leaving the Yankees as the city’s only Major League team. In 1957, the Yankees were in the midst of an unprecedented run of on-field success, which, combined with the loss of MLB competition in the five boroughs, should have meant increased attendance in 1958. However, Yankees attendance through late June was down over 100,000 fans compared with 1957.172 Moreover, that decline came after the team’s total 1957 attendance was 1,476,000—down


169 For example, see Dan Daniel, “TV Must Go … Or Baseball Will,” Baseball Magazine, November-December 1952, 6-7, 36-7.

170 Koppett, “Yanks: Healthy, Wealthy but Unwise.”

171 Koppett, “Yanks: Healthy, Wealthy but Unwise.”

172 Talese, “There Are Fans—And Yankee Fans.”
from 2,373,000 in 1947.\textsuperscript{173} Not even the installation in 1959 of the first scoreboard that could display electronic messages made a difference.\textsuperscript{174} The Yankees seemed completely unable to get former Giants and Dodgers fans to root for them perhaps because despite being abandoned by NL teams, they could not find it in themselves to root for the Yankees—a longtime rival of their since-departed favorite team. Journalist Gay Talese speculated that some of the unwillingness of Dodger and Giant fans to go to games at Yankee Stadium was due to the size of the park, which did not foster the same “feeling of togetherness between the spectators and the players” as Ebbets Field or the Polo Grounds.\textsuperscript{175} Owners did not agree with Talese’s assessment though as all new parks built in the next 30 years were more on the scale of Yankee Stadium than Ebbets Field and all offered massive parking lots with easy access to highways.

Despite how difficult it was for them to come to games regularly, if the fans who came to World Series games at Yankee Stadium were any indication, the Yankees doubled down on trying to appeal to suburbanites. Journalist Robert Lipsyte described the crowd at the 1963 World Series at Yankee Stadium as “orderly and pleasant and self-contained” but “stiff—slow to respond to a good play, ignorant of the so-called finer points, reluctant to scream or stamp or applaud wildly.”\textsuperscript{176} One wealthy Yankees fan who

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} MacPhail, “A Pulmotor for Baseball,” page unknown. Other teams who did not perform as well on the field as the Yankees saw their attendance decline by an even greater percentage.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Benjamin D. Lisle, Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
\item \textsuperscript{175} Talese, “There Are Fans—And Yankee Fans.”
\end{itemize}
only went to World Series games made no apologies for it. He said, “I deserve to see the Series, even if it is the first time I’ve been inside a ball park since last October. [...] I’m the backbone of this country, too, you know. I pay a lot of taxes. I work very hard.”

Suburban fans did not or could not go to many games, yet the Yankees continued to try to attract them. Gone were the days when the Giants took pains to make World Series tickets as equally accessible as they could. They were traded in for a focus on appealing almost exclusively to the wealthiest fans.

Yankees attendance continued to flounder in the 1960s, an age when many of their games were broadcast on local television; they drew fewer than 1.5 million fans every season after 1961. In 1964, although the Yankees had a good year—losing in the World Series—their attendance declined to just over 1.3 million fans, marking a 19-year low and fell further each of the next two seasons. In 1966, new Yankees president, Michael Burke, announced that Yankee Stadium would be reconditioned to return it to its previous prestige. The next year, Burke told the New York Times that the team was “determined to make attendance at a Yankee game a pleasant experience.” In 1970, to do that, the Yankees stopped scheduling Sunday doubleheaders, increased security, and built a barrier to keep rowdy children from moving to unoccupied expensive seats close to the field. Burke said those 1970s changes might “hurt the gate, but we have to take care of our

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177 Lipstye, “Time of the Dilettante.”


friends: our regular people. It is our responsibility to protect the fans.”

Since the changes shielded the fans in the most expensive seats from fans sitting in the cheaper seats, Burke seems to have thought of those richer fans as the team’s “regular people,” even though most of them did not live near the park.

In the early 1970s, the Yankees owners convinced elected officials in New York City, who were worried about the economic and political ramifications of the team leaving, to buy Yankee Stadium, completely remodel the interior, and make the location more friendly to suburbanites. As other owners moved to new cities where they could remake urban spaces into something that would attract suburban fans, the Yankees threatened to move. That threat gave them the political clout to force the city to pay for changes to Yankee Stadium. Although the park retained the same foundation in the same location, the remodeling in the 1970s essentially meant a completely new Yankee Stadium. The reformulated park was intended to “be equivalent in all respects with the best features” of Modernist multi-use “stadiums in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati.”

Yankee Stadium had been a trend setter in size when it opened in the 1920s and in luxury in the 1940s, but its location—and ultimately the limits on how much that location appealed to the team’s wealthiest fans—meant that it had to be completely

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rebuilt in the 1970s to try to meet changing demand.\footnote{That attempt was ultimately for naught as the House that Ruth Built was torn down after the 2008 season.} In the 1960s and 1970s, the teams drawing the most fans, like the Dodgers and Astros, had parks that were easily accessible by car and had more separation for the richest fans and protection from the chaotic city than even a remodeled Yankee Stadium could offer.
CHAPTER 4
DODGER STADIUM: A REMADE CITY

In 1957, Dodgers fans in Brooklyn had a number of ways to get to the team’s home ballpark, Ebbets Field, for games. They could walk through a neighborhood that was becoming less white and poorer than it had been in the 1940s. They could take the trolley there, but by the late 1950s, there were fewer trolley routes serving Ebbets Field than there had been in earlier decades and none that dropped fans directly outside the park. Importantly, many Dodgers fans no longer lived in Brooklyn because, like a growing number of middle- and upper-class white Americans, they had decamped to the suburbs.

Suburban Dodgers fans could take a train into Brooklyn and then a combination of subways, busses, trolleys, and walking to the park, or they could navigate narrow, crowded city streets in their cars, hoping to find one of the only 700 off-street parking spots in the dense residential neighborhood around Ebbets Field. Suburbanites favored mode of travel—driving along the growing interstate highway system—was supposed to be relatively relaxing and enjoyable. Driving through Brooklyn and parking in black and Hispanic neighborhoods was not that. It forced white fans to interact with people society deemed their inferiors. For suburban fans, going to a Dodgers game meant running the risk of sitting next to the people who lived around Ebbets Field, people a long-time team executive described as an “indigestible potpourri, at best,” a mix far different than the people who populated places like Levittown, Rockville Center, or Greenwich.¹

¹ Fresco Thompson with Cy Rice, Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964), 147.
Across baseball, at the start of the 1950s many middle- and upper-class white fans began feeling less comfortable attending games as the physical and psychological tiers of the classic era wore away. Night games increased throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, Sunday baseball bans were a thing of the past, and formal racial segregation at MLB parks was no more. Less exclusion and the unprecedented growth of the American economy—particularly the shrinking gap between the rich and the poor—from the end of World War II until 1973, lowered the barriers to attending games that had limited the number of working-class fans. In part due to the correlation between race and class, many middle-class white fans were not as comfortable surrounded by working-class fans as they had been surrounded by other middle-class fans. To make these fans comfortable again, to recapture the game’s traditional fan base by recreating the feeling of inclusion built on a framework of exclusion that had existed earlier, to turn an urban space into what fans wanted it to be, team owners had to act.

The Dodgers, like many teams, took action by moving to a new ballpark. They went further than some by moving to a new city, because they were able to remake the urban area around their new ballpark into something that was relaxing and comfortable, something that resembled suburbia. The Dodgers were not the first team to move in response to declining attendance and changing demographics, but their move to Los Angeles following the 1957 season was the most dramatic, they established the most

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2 The last formally-segregated ballpark, Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis, desegregated in 1944. Griffith Stadium, which had been less-formally segregated—black fans were routinely only sold bleacher tickets regardless of their ability to pay for more expensive seats—moved to a more accessible model around the same time. See Brad Snyder, *Beyond the Shadow of the Senators: The Untold Story of the Homestead Grays and the Integration of Baseball* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2003), 2.
consistently successful team in their new city, and their ballpark was a trend-setting model for others. Team relocations like the Dodgers’ move to Los Angeles brought significant changes to baseball and ultimately fueled a 40-year period of expansion that increased the number of MLB teams from 16 to 30, but they also reaffirmed the game’s traditional orientation toward middle- and upper-class whites by making it difficult for less-privileged fans to attend and creating new tiers between fans.

The Dodgers’ new Los Angeles stadium, which opened in 1962, was designed as a suburban-like space and engineered around fans arriving by car. It had 16,000 parking spots. Journalist Charley Einstein, wrote that Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley “put all the cars in one place, and he provided for the fans to enter the park on different levels. It was a short walk from the car, no matter where in the park you were seated.” Importantly, the city of Los Angeles obliterated the residential neighborhood that had once occupied the site of Dodger Stadium before the park’s construction began, so fans did not have to navigate an unfamiliar area on their way to games. That also meant O’Malley could remake the space into something akin to shopping malls or suburban developments where fans had the predictability of their own car and the ubiquitous

3 Despite Dodger Stadium being used primarily for baseball, I refer to this period as the multi-use era and Dodger Stadium as a multi-use stadium. Most parks in this period were built for multiple purposes—including Dodger Stadium even though it was always first and foremost a baseball venue. Like Dodger Stadium, these parks prioritized car access and were surrounded by parking lots in a location that was easily accessible from the suburbs.


interstate highway system for comfort and safety. Additionally, Dodger Stadium, was divided into five tiers so fans were unlikely to sit near someone different from them, someone who might make them uncomfortable. The lack of a neighborhood around Dodger Stadium and the limited interactions between fans, made it ideal for attracting a wider spectrum of fans than Ebbets Field had been. Wealthy fans had exclusive spaces and poorer fans had bleacher seats, but they were all in the park together. Dodger Stadium showed that fans, and the broader America they represented, were comfortable with even more segmentation and exclusion than had been on display in the classic era so long as it remained wrapped in the trappings of open access and democracy that were closely associated with baseball.6

This chapter begins with a history of Ebbets Field, the Dodgers, and Walter O’Malley. It discusses O’Malley’s concerns about Ebbets Field and his efforts to build a new park in Brooklyn. It then follows the Dodgers to Los Angeles, briefly examining the team’s temporary home, the Los Angeles Coliseum, before diving into the fan experience at suburban-like Dodger Stadium. I argue that the Dodgers were able to draw consistently large crowds by tiering the experience at the park to ensure that fans were surrounded by people similar to them and providing amenities, including elite dining spaces, to wealthy fans. I also argue that because of its location to hook the next generation of fans, O’Malley had to attract entire families to the park, so the Dodgers made more appeals to

6 This is similar to Lizabeth Cohen’s analysis of the suburbs and shopping malls in the 1950s and 1960s in *A Consumers’ Republic*. Cohen notes that these spaces were highly exclusionary, but framed as open access areas in a democratic society. The same was true of the different sections of Dodger Stadium. See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).
women than teams had previously. The chapter closes by examining the impact of Dodger Stadium on future ballparks.

**Ebbets Field and Walter O’Malley**

The Dodgers franchise traces its roots to 1883. The team joined the National League (NL) in 1890 and played home games in a variety of wooden parks in Brooklyn. Charles Ebbets, who began working for the team in its first season, had acquired some team stock by the time they joined the NL. Over the coming years he acquired more stock, becoming the majority owner soon after the turn of the twentieth century. About a decade later, he updated the team’s home park, moving them to brand-new concrete-and-steel Ebbets Field in 1912. Like the Polo Grounds, Ebbets Field was in a mass-transit accessible location that became a densely populated residential neighborhood in the first third of the twentieth century. The park was full of intricate design elements. It featured a marble rotunda with a tile floor inlaid with a design of a baseball and the words “Ebbets Field.” The rotunda was lit by a chandelier made to look like bats and balls. Like other classic-era parks, Ebbets Field supported its upper deck with pillars that blocked some fans’ view of the field and was gradually expanded over its lifespan, but that expansion was hemmed in by surrounding streets and buildings.7

Ebbets, who was far less wealthy than Jacob Ruppert, the Yankees owner and brewer who built Yankee Stadium, had to sell some of his Dodgers stock to new partners,

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brothers Stephen and Ed McKeever, who had been hired to build Ebbets Field, to pay for the construction of the park. As a result of this divided ownership, poor corporate management, and the economic struggles of the Great Depression, the Dodgers were deeply in debt to the Brooklyn Trust Company by the late 1930s. In the early 1940s, the president of Brooklyn Trust asked his firm’s outside legal counsel, Walter O’Malley, to help fix the Dodgers problems.

O’Malley was born in 1903 into a well-off family with connections to the city’s Tammany Hall Democratic Party political machine. In 1926, O’Malley graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and four years later he earned a law degree from Fordham University. During the Depression, O’Malley did bankruptcy and foreclosure work for Brooklyn Trust and other clients. At the same time, he made a number of shrewd investments and his wealth and political clout grew. In 1944, O’Malley, backed by a loan from Brooklyn Trust, purchased a 25% stake in the Dodgers. In his years as a minority owner from 1944 to 1950, he quietly worked on plans for a new ballpark. When he took full control of the Dodgers in 1950, he was its first majority owner since Charles Ebbets. As majority owner, he made it publicly clear that he wanted a new, larger, more-accessible ballpark to replace the aging and cramped Ebbets Field.

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8 Saccoman, “Charles Ebbets.”


10 Golenbock, Bums, 89-90.

11 Golenbock, Bums, 340.
Decline of Ebbets Field and Brooklyn

Ebbets Field’s age was not O’Malley’s only concern; changes in the borough of Brooklyn also worried him. In the years after World War II, many whites left Brooklyn for newly-constructed suburbs, and the borough’s demographics changed. Between 1950 and 1960, the white population of Brooklyn decreased by nearly 500,000 while the nonwhite population increased by almost 100,000. As Dodgers executive Fresco Thompson described this change, “the loyal and substantial fan, the family man, had moved away [from Brooklyn. …] He was replaced by the undesirables.”

Brooklyn also lost good paying jobs, department stores, and its only daily newspaper. A similar trend happened at Ebbets Field. Attendance peaked in 1947 and declined over the next decade. According to Thompson, in the 1940s and 1950s Ebbets Field’s steel girders were rusting, annual maintenance costs were increasing, and Walter O’Malley was concerned “that Brooklyn was becoming a decadent borough,” unsuitable for his team’s fans.

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13 Thompson, *Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle*, 145. Walter O’Malley wrote the foreword to Thompson’s book, suggesting that he endorsed Thompson’s claims.


16 Thompson, *Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle*, 121, 144.
Brooklyn’s changes made going to Ebbets Field less enticing for many middle- and upper-class whites. Suburban fans who drove to games had to park in a densely packed urban area that was poorer and less white than it had been earlier. In an era of increasing night games, fans had to walk down unfamiliar streets late at night to get to their cars before driving home. White fans in the 1950s were more likely to be exposed to an “other” around Ebbets Field than they had been in the past and than they were in the suburbs where discriminatory laws and lending policies largely excluded African Americans. One fan from that era recalled, “the talk began that the area around Ebbets Field was a ‘bad neighborhood,’ and that after a night game you better get the hell out of there fast.” O’Malley was not simply speculating that attendance decreased as Brooklyn became less white. Scholar Roger Noll, determined that ballparks in black neighborhoods drew fewer fans than stadiums in white neighborhoods.\footnote{Roger G. Noll, “Attendance and Price Setting” in \textit{Government and the Sports Business Studies in the Regulation of Economic Activity}, ed. Roger G. Noll (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1974), 128. Noll argued that “stadium quality”—the age and infrastructure around the park—caused the attendance gap, but the reason the infrastructure around the park was in decline was tied to redlining and other forms of racial discrimination that had created urban black neighborhoods in the first place.}

The demographics of the neighborhood around the park were not the only thing that changed, historian Eric Avila argued that the demographics of the crowds at Dodgers games had changed too in the 1950s.\footnote{Avila, \textit{Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight}, 150-151.} A Dodgers scholar noted that with their pioneering integration efforts—in 1947 Jackie Robinson became the first black MLB player in the twentieth century when he wore Dodger Blue at Ebbets Field—and their
black and Hispanic stars the Dodgers drew a number of racial minorities to the park. Sociologists R. Saylor Breckenridge and Pat Rubio Goldsmith concluded integration led to increased attendance, but that increase was stunted in areas like Brooklyn with larger nonwhite populations. Breckenridge and Goldsmith’s analysis fits the Dodgers’ attendance trends as it suggests that attendance at Dodger games would decline as the racial composition of the borough changed during the 1950s. They speculated that the overall decline in attendance was due in part to the notion that all fans at the park were seen as equals and for many white fans sitting in close proximity to nonwhite fans

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22 There are other explanations for the attendance decline in Brooklyn and across MLB. Immediately after World War II, baseball benefitted from returning soldiers’ extended unemployment compensation as well as the allure of returning stars. In an era of a crunch in urban housing, going to the ballpark was a way for some fans to let off steam in a manner they could not in crowded housing. Importantly, aside from the Depression and World War II, baseball had largely seen a steady increase in attendance over the years. Owners across the league likely saw postwar attendance as a return to that pattern, rather than as a bubble. Even as attendance dropped in the 1950s, it remained higher than before the Great Depression. Owners, who had rapidly grown accustomed to the profit associated with the postwar attendance boom, wanted that to continue. Maintaining that level required the drastic steps teams like the Braves and Dodgers undertook—moving to new cities. Had owners viewed the postwar attendance boom as a blip, rather than the new normal, perhaps they would not have been so quick to move.
threatened their understanding of white superiority. In short, Ebbets Field did not offer the same physical and psychological tiers that the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium had been able to provide in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s.

Brooklyn-native, journalist, and Dodgers fan Peter Golenbock argued that the change in the racial makeup of fans at Ebbets Field “disturbed” O’Malley. If Golenbock was right, O’Malley was not alone in that view, in the mid-1950s, there were reports that some season ticket holders cancelled their tickets because they did not feel comfortable at Ebbets Field. One fan recalled, “when the blacks started coming to the game [at Ebbets Field], a lot of whites stopped coming.” O’Malley tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to entice white former Brooklyn residents to come back to Ebbets Field by selling tickets at train stations that led to the suburbs. The issues O’Malley and the Dodgers faced were not exclusive to Brooklyn. A 1955 survey reported that across the majors, fans’ primary reasons for not going to more games were parking and stadium accessibility. To draw middle- and upper-class white fans, O’Malley began to realize he needed to move to a

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23 Breckenridge and Goldsmith, “Spectacle, Distance, and Threat,” 299-300.

24 Golenbock, Bums, 560.

25 Andy McCue, Mover and Shaker: Walter O’Malley, the Dodgers, & Baseball’s Westward Expansion (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 122.

26 Golenbock, Bums, 561.

27 McCue, Mover and Shaker, 114.

new stadium with massive parking facilities that was convenient to and felt safe for white fans. He needed a suburban ballpark.

Some observers cast the problems at Ebbets Field as behavioral ones rather than explicitly racial ones. To them, crowds at Ebbets Field seemed more out of control than usual by 1957. For example, dedicated O’Malley associate Fresco Thompson wrote that upper-deck fans “cascaded beer, ice cream, peanut shells, etc. onto the heads and clothing of those seated below. Cash boxes were repeatedly stolen from public telephones. Urinals were even pried from the men’s lavatories.” Although rowdy behavior was not unusual at the ballpark in earlier decades, such an atmosphere added to the multitude of reasons middle-class suburbanites, the fans O’Malley desperately wanted to draw, had for avoiding Ebbets Field.

The same changes that made Ebbets Field less enticing to middle-class white fans led O’Malley to question the team’s financial future too. O’Malley once asked long-time Dodgers employee Buzzie Bavasi to tell him what Bavasi saw out the window of the team’s headquarters. Bavasi responded, “I see a long, long line of poor Puerto Rican people getting their welfare checks.” Bavasi later wrote, “The Puerto Rican part did not bother Walter. What did bother him was the word ‘poor.’ By looking out his window, he could see the future. And the future he saw involved too many people without enough money to adequately support the Dodgers.”

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29 D’Antonio, Forever Blue, 236.

30 Thompson, Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle, 145.

Not all cities faced Brooklyn’s challenges though. For example, between 1945 and 1954, Los Angeles County gained over a million residents and more than 600,000 housing units.\textsuperscript{32} While industry fled Brooklyn, defense contractors and manufacturing remained in the Los Angeles area after World War II. Department stores, newspapers, and other urban bedrocks did not close in Los Angeles as they had in Brooklyn.\textsuperscript{33} O’Malley later said, “the inner city is dying in many places. The slums have taken over. Baseball fans have moved more and more to the suburbs. […] And when that happens, baseball has to get out in the sticks.”\textsuperscript{34} After rejecting some rather far-fetched plans to remodel Ebbets Field in the late 1940s, the first “sticks” O’Malley looked to move to was a more suburban-accessible location in Brooklyn, not sunny Los Angeles.

**O’Malley’s Push for a New Ballpark in Brooklyn**

O’Malley first started looking for ways to increase the Dodgers profits by improving or replacing their ballpark in the 1940s when he raised the issue of replacing Ebbets Field with the team’s board of directors.\textsuperscript{35} In 1948, designer Norman Bel Geddes presented a plan for remodeling the park to O’Malley and the Dodgers other owners. Geddes thought the park needed $650,000 in repairs unrelated to the redesign and noted

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\textsuperscript{35} McCue, *Mover and Shaker*, 56-7.
\end{flushright}
that the “cost of repairs in a few years will be greater than the carrying charges on a new
structure.” He thought if they did not act, a new ballpark would be necessary. The
Dodgers owners did not take up Geddes’ suggestions. O’Malley had to win over or buy-
out his co-owners before he could get them to spend on ballpark upgrades. For example,
he told a reporter that when he first came to the Dodgers he “spent a quarter of a million
dollars just to change the urinals, and Branch Rickey [a team co-owner …], nearly had a
stroke. He couldn’t comprehend spending that much money on the customers when we
could spend it on ballplayers.” After O’Malley took sole control of the team, he did not
have to worry about other owners’ priorities. As the cost of repairs grew, in the early
1950s O’Malley began trying to get support from New York officials for a plan to build a
new park in a more suburban-accessible part of Brooklyn.

When the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee for the 1953 season, O’Malley
kicked his efforts into high gear. The Braves moved into a county-owned stadium that,
following a year of renovations, had space for 43,000 fans (10,000 more than capacity at Ebbets Field) and 10,000 cars. In their final year in Boston, the Braves drew less than 300,000 fans. During their first year in Milwaukee, they drew nearly 1.9 million, a number they would surpass every year until 1959. Moreover, the Braves did not have to pay property tax on their ballpark because, unlike the Dodgers, they did not own it; instead they paid a very low rent to the county. All that meant the Braves made money hand over fist in Milwaukee. Looking at the Braves, O’Malley wondered, “how long can we continue to compete on an equal basis with a team that can outdraw us two to one and outpark us almost fifteen to one?” Given their revenue advantage, O’Malley thought the Braves “would eventually be able to buy better talent” than the Dodgers. He concluded a new ballpark was “a must if we are to keep our franchise in Brooklyn.”

O’Malley knew that he could not acquire the land he needed to build the ballpark in the whiter, more suburban-accessible location he desired without government assistance though. In New York City, government assistance in acquiring land required getting support from powerful bureaucrat and planner Robert Moses, so O’Malley began

to move themselves. The exact moment O’Malley decided to move out of Brooklyn is a hotly debated topic, but it certainly was not before the 1953 season when O’Malley’s goal remained securing land for a new park in Brooklyn.

40 Golenbock, Bums, 559.

41 Golenbock, Bums, 559. The Braves success in Milwaukee would not last—beginning in the early 1960s, attendance at Milwaukee County Stadium declined significantly, a new owner took charge, and despite a lawsuit that delayed relocation for one season, before the 1966 season, the Braves moved to Atlanta.

42 McGee, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, 236.
appealing for Moses’ help.\footnote{McGee, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, 236. For more details on O’Malley’s efforts to stay in Brooklyn, see Peter Ellsworth, “The Brooklyn Dodgers’ Move to Los Angeles: Was Walter O’Malley Solely Responsible?”Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture 14, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 19-40.} Perhaps in an attempt to more clearly make his case to Moses, O’Malley publicly complained about the state of Ebbets Field, the neighborhood around it, and the experience fans had there. According to Dodger fan and author Bob McGee, this made “the general public a little less inclined to go out to the ballpark.”\footnote{McGee, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, 240.}

Despite O’Malley’s complaints, he owned the most profitable baseball team in New York city.\footnote{McGee, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, passim.} In the ’40s and ’50s, the Dodgers never led the league in attendance, but until 1957 they always drew more than the NL average.\footnote{D’Antonio, Forever Blue, 114 and McCue, Mover and Shaker, 120.} O’Malley’s profits were also buoyed because he televised every Brooklyn Dodgers game. For example, in 1955, the Dodgers earned nearly $800,000 from radio and television broadcasts.\footnote{Avila, Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight, 152.} Televising games likely also contributed to the Dodgers low attendance numbers as suburban fans could watch the game from the comfort of their homes or neighborhood bars and not have to deal with the commute into Brooklyn. Nevertheless, O’Malley continued to complain about the state of Ebbets Field and his inability to attract suburbanites.\footnote{D’Antonio, Forever Blue, 139.}

To bring suburban fans back to the ballpark, even in bad weather, O’Malley planned to build an easily-accessible domed stadium in Brooklyn. He favored the Atlantic
Yards area, situated at the intersection of a number of subway and train lines and adjacent to downtown Brooklyn, for his new park. In addition to its mass-transit accessibility, the Atlantic Yards site offered easy access to highways. O’Malley also planned to build far more parking lots at his new park than Ebbets Field had. This new ballpark would be designed for white suburban fans with its emphasis on car and train access and its location in a whiter neighborhood than the area around Ebbets Field.

O’Malley worked with several architects on the plans for his first-of-its-kind domed stadium, including Norman Bel Geddes (whose publicity-seeking behavior seemed to wear on O’Malley over the years), renowned innovator of the geodesic dome, Buckminster Fuller, and some of Fuller’s graduate students in architecture at Princeton University. Although each architect planned some unique elements, they shared a number of common themes. The “Dodger Dome” would have created a perfectly controlled and repeatable atmosphere for all fans, would allow fans to drive to the park without having to interact with residential neighborhoods, and would have more physical tiers than Ebbets Field. From the weather to the people they would interact with, everything about the Dodger Dome was designed to give fans a predictable, safe, and enjoyable experience.

In 1956, O’Malley said, “we need more revenue, more ways of getting it. […] we must present comfort and a keen sense of wanting to cater to the fans, especially women.

This easy access is one of the reasons that the same Atlantic Yards site is now home to the Barclay’s Center, home arena of the National Basketball Association’s Brooklyn Nets and the National Hockey League’s New York Islanders. See Ellsworth, “The Brooklyn Dodgers’ Move to Los Angeles” for more on the different modes of access to Atlantic Yards.
To draw white women and children, O’Malley needed to resolve the concern about middle- and upper-class whites coming in contact with nonwhite fans that had hurt attendance at Ebbets Field. Rather than eradicate the ideas of white superiority that were threatened at Ebbets Field, the new park would reduce the interaction between white and nonwhite fans. Just like suburbia did, the increased physical tiers at the Dodger Dome would largely mimic racial segregation because of the correlation between race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. White fans’ ideas on racial superiority would not be threatened if they were sitting in a “better” section than most nonwhite fans.

The Dodger Dome was designed as a curative for Ebbets Field’s ills too. A Collier’s article about Geddes’ plans suggested that at aging parks “too many baseball fans have been in one too many traffic jams, climbed one too many [steps] and sat behind one too many pillars” and in response stopped coming to games. At the Dodger Dome, nothing would block fans’ views and it would fit over 55,000 as opposed to just over 32,000. All seats in the park would point at the pitcher’s mound and would be more comfortable than the ones at Ebbets Field. There would be more space between rows than at Ebbets Field and the aisles would be much wider. Although Geddes designed his park primarily with baseball in mind, he claimed that it would work just as well as a home for a number of other events. He included a parking garage and shopping center that would operate year-round, providing the Dodgers with a consistent revenue stream. Geddes

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claimed that carefully designed traffic patterns would eliminate traffic jams even when there were capacity crowds.⁵²

These plans meant nothing, however, without the city using its eminent domain powers to assemble the land at Atlantic Yards and turn it over to O’Malley. Moses, who was in charge of eminent domain in New York City, refused to do so. He would only use eminent domain to condemn land and turn it over to a private company if he determined the development would serve a public purpose. O’Malley thought the addition of much-needed parking lots, a new shopping center, and the remodeling and upgrading of an important mass transit hub would qualify as a public purpose.⁵³ Moses disagreed.⁵⁴ He did not care that O’Malley was willing to pay for the land—although most likely at a price below what it would cost the city to acquire it—and that O’Malley would also pay for his stadium privately, putting it on the property tax rolls in Brooklyn.⁵⁵ In 1957, other New York City officials offered plans for a ballpark across the street from Atlantic Yards, but those plans did not have Moses’ support either, so nothing became of them.⁵⁶

⁵² Meany, “Baseball’s Answer to TV.”


⁵⁴ D’Antonio, Forever Blue, 192, 198.

⁵⁵ McCue, Mover and Shaker, 136.

⁵⁶ McGee, The Greatest Ballpark Ever, 264. O’Malley’s attempts to get help in acquiring land for a new park were complicated by the fact that Brooklyn was not autonomous, it could not give O’Malley land without approval from city officials in the other boroughs, like Moses. Largely unexplored in histories of the Dodgers’ move to Los Angeles is the role the Giants played in Moses’ unwillingness to help the Dodgers acquire the land at Atlantic Yards. If Moses helped the Dodgers, perhaps the city would have felt it needed to offer similar assistance to its other two professional baseball teams and the prospect of turning so much land over to private hands was daunting.
Moses had remade urban space for former Brooklynites by building bridges, tunnels, and highways that allowed them to travel by car from the suburbs to the city, but refused to help O’Malley remake urban space for his new ballpark. Moses had approved the construction of the highways that made living in the suburbs, but working in the city, much easier for Dodgers fans, yet saw no reason to help O’Malley attract them to Brooklyn.57 Moses, was not opposed to a new home for the Dodgers in New York, but favored a municipally-constructed park in Flushing Meadows, Queens. O’Malley said, “if he were going to move to Queens, he might as well move three thousand miles away” because either way the team would no longer be the Brooklyn Dodgers.58

On the other hand, 3,000 miles away, Los Angeles city officials were developing a different understanding of the use of eminent domain. Politicians there felt it did serve a public purpose to turn land over to a private entity to build a professional sports stadium, so long as O’Malley promised to build a recreation center on that land too. A majority of Los Angeles officials were happy to do everything in their power to convince the Dodgers to move west.59

It took several attempts over a few years for Los Angeles officials to get O’Malley to think seriously about moving across the country. O’Malley was first approached about moving to Los Angeles in 1953, but turned down the offer.60 Los Angeles officials were

57 Sullivan, The Dodgers Move West, 50.


59 Podair, City of Dreams, passim.

60 D’Antonio, Forever Blue, 195.
persistent though because they wanted an MLB team so they could have the status of a “big league” city. During the 1955, World Series, several officials tried unsuccessfully to meet with O’Malley. During the next year’s World Series though, they succeeded.\footnote{Golenbock, \textit{Bums}, 569 and D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 227, 244.} O’Malley met with officials a second time while on a stopover accompanying his team on a post-season tour of Japan.\footnote{McGee, \textit{The Greatest Ballpark Ever}, 262 and Golenbock, \textit{Bums}, 570.} In December 1956, when O’Malley returned to Brooklyn following an extended vacation, his frustration with the lack of progress toward a new ballpark there grew. In response, he turned more attention to Los Angeles, traveling there again in January 1957.\footnote{D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 246, 250.} O’Malley’s first choice had initially been to remain in Brooklyn on his own terms but, by 1957 his second choice was to move to Los Angeles on his own terms. As the first choice became less and less likely because Moses would not help him and the second looked increasingly feasible, O’Malley leaned still closer to Los Angeles. In March 1957, a delegation of Los Angeles officials visited O’Malley at the Dodgers’ spring training. After the meeting, Los Angeles’ mayor was convinced the Dodgers were moving to his city.\footnote{D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 257. Poulson might have been convinced, but several scholars argue that O’Malley had yet to make up his mind.}

Despite having spent much of the mid-1950s trying to show New York City how much his team needed a new park in Brooklyn, O’Malley was reluctant to publicly share his progress towards moving to Los Angeles. In January 1957, he told the \textit{New York Times} that his recent visit to Los Angeles was “just window shopping […] We just
happened to be driving past Chavez Ravine [the future site of Dodger Stadium], so we thought we’d have a look.”\footnote{McGee, \textit{The Greatest Ballpark Ever}, 265.} A month later, O’Malley traded the Dodgers minor league franchise in Ft. Worth, Texas to the Cubs for their minor league franchise in Los Angeles. This meant the Dodgers would not have to buy out another team’s franchise if they moved to Los Angeles and gave O’Malley real estate in Los Angeles.\footnote{McGee, \textit{The Greatest Ballpark Ever}, 266.} The Dodgers tried not to attract attention to that very important development. O’Malley scouted Chavez Ravine by helicopter in May 1957 and reportedly told Los Angeles officials not to let anyone know about it or else the fans in Brooklyn “literally would kill him.”\footnote{McGee, \textit{The Greatest Ballpark Ever}, 263.} D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 261.

In June 1957, O’Malley was called in front of Congress as part of an investigation into baseball’s anti-trust exemption. In open testimony, he denied that he had made preparations to move to Los Angeles.\footnote{D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 266.}

There were a number of potential motivations for O’Malley’s actions; some scholars claim he hid his true intentions to extract as much money from Brooklyn fans as possible before abandoning them, while others claimed he honestly had not yet made up his mind about moving.\footnote{Neil Sullivan and Jerald Podair fall into the latter camp. The former is populated largely by Brooklyn Dodger fans.}

Regardless, after being rebuffed in his attempts to construct a domed stadium in downtown Brooklyn, O’Malley picked up his team and moved it to Los Angeles following the 1957 season. New York City did not seem to put in the effort that Los
Angeles did. New York was already a “big league” city and perhaps as Neil Sullivan has argued, city officials could not fully picture the Dodgers leaving. On the other hand, Los Angeles officials desperately wanted “big league” status. Los Angeles city officials were ready to use eminent domain to give O’Malley the land he wanted to build his gleaming baseball palace and its requisite parking lots. In Los Angeles, it would be far easier to market the Dodgers as a clean, family experience for middle- and upper-class fans than it had been in gritty Brooklyn. Fans would more easily drive to and park at Dodger Stadium than they could on the crowded streets around Ebbets Field. Interacting with strangers on mass transit would not be a concern in Los Angeles. Baseball in Los Angeles would mean a totally different experience. It would be one that revolved more around the comfort and safety of white families than had become possible at Ebbets Field.

Reactions in Brooklyn were initially somewhat muted to the Dodgers leaving. While most newspaper columnists blamed O’Malley, some also blamed Moses. Fans had seen the writing on the wall during the 1957 season; the move was not a surprise to anyone. Beginning in the early 1970s, when baby boomers wrote wave after wave of nostalgic books about their childhoods, the tide began to turn against O’Malley. Prominent authors from Roger Kahn to Peter Golenbock to Doris Kearns Goodwin wrote about the peak years of the Brooklyn Dodgers and blamed O’Malley for destroying their

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70 Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, passim.
youth and even the borough of Brooklyn itself.⁷¹ O’Malley did not create the changes happening in Brooklyn however and he had good company in seeking out a new ballpark.

O’Malley was not alone in moving to a more suburban-accessible area that would appeal to white fans. After ruling out ballparks’ ages, the income of fans, and team winning percentage, public health scholars Alan Sager and Arthur Culbert determined that the racial makeup of the neighborhood around a team’s ballpark was the deciding factor for whether or not a team moved during the 1950s and 1960s.⁷² Sager and Culbert found that teams that moved left neighborhoods that on average were 44.1% black.⁷³ By contrast, teams that did not move were in neighborhoods that were only 17.6% black. For teams that moved into new parks that were not in whiter neighborhoods, Sager and Culbert speculated that the construction of highways and parking lots, aside from giving fans an easy way to drive to games, served to wall the stadium off from the surrounding neighborhood, thereby limiting black fans.⁷⁴ Sager and Culbert’s analysis is provocative


⁷² Sager and Culbert had recently completed a study of hospital closure and relocation in urban areas, concluding that hospitals had been more likely to close or relocate if they were located in black neighborhoods than if they were located in white neighborhoods. Therefore, they had the necessary demographic data and analytical skills to examine ballpark relocation.

⁷³ That number would have been higher if not for Pirates and Braves who both moved out of neighborhoods that were less than 1% black.

and insightful, but also limited. It did not determine if night games in black neighborhoods played a role in team relocation, assess the role of population density in black neighborhoods, or the difficulty of building parking lots there.\textsuperscript{75}

**The Dodgers Move to Los Angeles**

O’Malley moved to Los Angeles with the expectation that the city would trade him several hundred acres it owned in Chavez Ravine for a much smaller, and widely regarded as significantly less-valuable, piece of Los Angeles where the minor league ballpark O’Malley acquired from the Cubs was located. The city also promised to provide nearly $5 million in improvements on the land it was giving to O’Malley.\textsuperscript{76} Chavez Ravine had been a thriving Mexican-American community for several generations before the 1950s, but when O’Malley came to Los Angeles, the land was largely vacant. In the early 1950s, the city of Los Angeles took control of Chavez Ravine using federal money and cleared out nearly all its residents because it intended to build a housing project there. In the Red Scare of the 1950s, however, support for public housing evaporated as it came to be equated with socialism and the city killed the project.\textsuperscript{77} Los Angeles was left with a

\textsuperscript{75} Sager and Culbert, “Why Baseball Teams Move.” Additionally, they did not examine if there were any differences by league based on the number of black players or stars in those leagues. Furthermore, although their study examined the ten teams that moved in these decades, as well as the six that did not, Sager and Culbert did not track the second relocation of teams like the Braves and A’s who moved twice. Those moves would have likely complicated their conclusions. Although they acknowledged that black neighborhoods were on average poorer than white ones, they did not test for economic conditions in the neighborhoods around ballparks.

\textsuperscript{76} Podair, *City of Dreams*, pasism.

nearly empty plot of land, close to highways and not far from downtown, the perfect place for O’Malley to carve a suburban-accessible ballpark out of the hillside. In the fall of 1957, the proposed land exchange was far from reality though.

When the Dodgers arrived in Los Angeles, there was no facility that had been designed for baseball that had a large enough seating capacity for a major league team so they spent four seasons playing in the Los Angeles Coliseum, a municipally-owned facility built for the 1932 Olympics. The Dodgers immediately drew very well there, as fans were excited about Major League Baseball in their city. The team’s first game in Los Angeles attracted 78,672 fans, then a regular-season record. During their first series at the Coliseum, the Dodgers sold over $200,000 in tickets and more than 150,000 hot dogs, nearly a quarter of a million sodas, and 75,000 scorecards. Over the course of the 1958 season, nearly 2,000,000 fans saw the Dodgers play in Los Angeles and the team made so much on parking and concessions that it was profitable before ticket revenue was factored in. Attendance was no doubt buoyed because, in a policy shift, when he arrived in Los Angeles O’Malley only televised Dodgers road games against the rival Giants. In public housing was going to serve the evicted Latino residents and the city’s voters were largely white.

78 Podair, *City of Dreams*, 96.


80 Podair, *City of Dreams*, 137.

1959, the Dodgers set a World Series attendance record that still stands, drawing 92,706 fans to the series’ fifth game.\textsuperscript{82} In Los Angeles, O’Malley only televised Dodger road games against the rival San Francisco Giants, meaning that if fans wanted to see the Dodgers, they had to go to the park.\textsuperscript{83} Fans could always listen to Vin Scully, the broadcaster who moved to Los Angeles with the Dodgers, call the team’s games on the radio though.

In his first year in Los Angeles, Walter O’Malley described baseball as a “democratic game” and by most accounts, the Dodgers drew fans across class, race, and gender lines to their new home.\textsuperscript{84} That said, there is no complete demographic record of baseball fans so it is impossible to tell if crowds in Los Angeles were more or less diverse than crowds at Ebbets Field. Perhaps because of the team’s history as an integration pioneer, the Dodgers enjoyed the support of black fans who were often treated as second-class citizens in Los Angeles. The team attracted lots of Hispanic fans, in part because O’Malley broadcast Dodgers games on the radio in Spanish beginning in 1958. That support was somewhat surprising because the team was controversially trying to move onto the site of the Mexican-American neighborhood in Chavez Ravine.\textsuperscript{85} The Dodgers widespread support, however, allowed them to sell more souvenirs and merchandise than

\textsuperscript{82} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 219.

\textsuperscript{83} Holmes, \textit{The Dodgers}, 63.


\textsuperscript{85} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 76-8.
other teams. Fans in Los Angeles seemed ready and willing to buy just about anything that celebrated the city’s new big-league status.

Dodger concessions manager Danny Goodman oversaw all souvenir sales. Goodman was an innovator; he found ways to sell items that, aside from being stamped with a team logo, seemed totally unrelated to baseball. He had worked in concessions and souvenir sales in baseball since he was a teenager. Goodman worked in minor and major league parks around the country for years before settling in Los Angeles and working at Hollywood Stars’ games in the Pacific Coast League. He had little formal education, but was a natural salesman who hobnobbed with Los Angeles celebrities and used them to help sell souvenirs. He operated 15 souvenir booths at the Los Angeles Coliseum that one journalist described as “sort of Dodger Disneyland drug store.” In 1959, he sold 12 kinds of hats, piggy banks, bath towels, ties, lighters, and more. Goodman eventually sold 80 items with the team’s logo on it, including t-shirts, key chains, flashlights, and radios. At the Coliseum, O’Malley had an important incentive to facilitate Goodman’s

86 McCue, Mover and Shaker, 238-9.


90 Podair, City of Dreams, 255-6.
souvenir sales. The Dodgers paid a portion of their food concessions and parking revenues as rent, but got to keep all the revenue from souvenir sales.  

One of the things the Dodgers tried to sell was bugles that had become a part of the fan experience at the Coliseum. The call and response—a traditional part of University of Southern California football games that also took place in the Coliseum—came to baseball late in the 1958 season when a Dodgers fan brought a bugle and played “da-da-da-DA-da-DA” followed by other fans yelling “Charge!” Soon enough, aided by support from team executives, it became a staple of Dodgers games. In 1959, O’Malley “authorized a bugle concession for the salesmen in Los Angeles Coliseum.” The bugles were sold for $1 but were poorly made and broke when dropped. Dodger fans, expecting them to work, were disappointed and O’Malley did not want disappointed fans, so he cut off bugle sales. Making money was important to O’Malley, but central to that goal was ensuring Dodger fans felt like they got what they paid for. Broken bugles were not going to convince fans to return to the park.

Complicating O’Malley’s desire to make sure fans felt like they got what they paid for, the Coliseum was not a great baseball venue. It only had bleacher benches, there was not much space for vendors to operate, and fans sitting in the highest rows had to

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91 McCue, *Mover and Shaker*, 237.
95 McCue, *Mover and Shaker*, 241.
trek up from almost field level to get to their seats.\textsuperscript{96} The views from the seats were poor, in part because a diamond did not fit well in the Coliseum’s oval shape. It was against stadium policy to sell beer, always a profitable commodity and by 1958 an established part of the ballpark experience, and without awnings or roofs, Dodgers fans suffered in the summer heat.\textsuperscript{97}

Nevertheless, the team drew well perhaps because of its novelty in Los Angeles and the relatively low ticket prices. The best seats in the park cost only $2.50 and $3.50 and most seats were even cheaper.\textsuperscript{98} O’Malley explained that he offered inexpensive tickets “to take care of the little man because he is the one that keeps us going.”\textsuperscript{99} O’Malley could keep those prices low because of the large park he was planning for Chavez Ravine and the team’s ability to attract wealthier fans too.\textsuperscript{100} Because the Dodgers drew fans from across the economic spectrum, their games reaffirmed the idea that the ballpark was a site of equality. Additionally, O’Malley noted that in Los Angeles, “there [was] more family attendance” than in Brooklyn and that in Los Angeles, “fans are loyal, win or lose.”\textsuperscript{101} Even before Dodger Stadium, O’Malley found his team was more attractive to middle-class families in Los Angeles than it had been in Brooklyn.

\textsuperscript{96} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 66.
\textsuperscript{97} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 140.
\textsuperscript{98} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 214.
\textsuperscript{99} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 74.
\textsuperscript{100} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 74, 97.
\textsuperscript{101} Jerry Wynn, “Man to Man,” unknown newspaper, unknown date, Walter O’Malley Archive, Los Angeles. [Hereafter O’Malley Archive]
Many of those Dodger fans brought transistor radios to the park because the layout of the Coliseum meant it was practically necessary to listen to Vin Scully’s play-by-play of the game to have any idea of what was happening. So many fans listened to the radio in the park that one day Scully asked his listeners to stand up and on the count of three yell happy birthday to one of the umpires. Sure enough, nearly the entire crowd stood up and yelled, “Happy birthday, Frank!” Dodger fans grew accustomed to listening to the radio broadcast while at the game. Even after the team moved to more spectator-friendly Dodger Stadium 1962, fans kept bringing their radios. Roger Angell estimated that in its first season, somewhere between a quarter and a third of fans at Dodger Stadium listened to the radio broadcast.

Dodger Stadium Design and Fan Experience

While the Dodgers drew millions to the Coliseum, the process of transferring Chavez Ravine from the city to the team ground on. O’Malley and most city officials thought the process would be simple. It was far from that. Angelinos who opposed turning over public land to a private developer instead of using it for a more obvious public purpose forced a referendum that was narrowly decided in the team’s favor, a series of lawsuits by some of the backers of the referendum delayed the project before the

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courts sided with the Dodgers, and the last remaining residents of Chavez Ravine were controversially evicted by local law enforcement in March of 1959 before construction could finally begin that September.  

In contrast to recently-opened parks, Dodger Stadium was going to be financed primarily with private capital. All new permanent parks that opened after Yankee Stadium and before Dodger Stadium, parks in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, were built mostly with taxpayer dollars. In part, Dodger Stadium was privately financed because it had to be. In 1955, Los Angeles voters rejected a referendum on building a new municipally-funded stadium. Instead of paying to build a stadium it would earn rent on, city leaders made an uneven land deal.

The city’s deal with O’Malley was a mix of positives and negatives. Because Dodger Stadium and the land it sat on were privately owned, the city received property tax payments from O’Malley. Given the success and profitability of the ballpark, between 1962 and 1975, O’Malley paid nearly $10 million in property tax on his land in Chavez Ravine, more than any other club paid in rent at a municipal stadium. That said, the city gave O’Malley a sweetheart deal by trading him valuable land at well below market rates—the land O’Malley traded to the city was worth far less than Chavez Ravine. The

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107 Podair, City of Dream, xvii.

108 The one exception was the temporary park the Houston Colt .45s played in while their municipally-financed domed stadium was under construction. In 1998, then PacBell park opened in San Francisco. It was the first privately-funded park since Dodger Stadium. All parks that opened since have been largely municipally funded.

109 Podair, City of Dreams, 301.
city also put nearly $5 million into improvements at Chavez Ravine in the form of highway access and grading. That, however, did not cover all the improvements necessary before construction could begin. The Dodgers pitched in another $1.4 million to finish grading Chavez Ravine and spent nearly $500,000 to purchase the few parcels of land that did not fall under the eminent domain proceedings the city used to clear the rest of the ravine. The team also paid $1.8 million to the city for water line installation and related landscaping. Despite the city’s largesse, O’Malley also took on financial risk in building Dodger Stadium as he went more than $10 million in debt to finance its construction.

After the last residents were evicted from Chavez Ravine, the Dodgers could build a stadium surrounded not by a neighborhood, but by parking lots and highways. The evictions and Los Angeles’ desire to be a “big league” city empowered O’Malley to remake an urban space into what Dodgers fans wanted it to be. Because no one lived in Chavez Ravine anymore and it served as a geographic barrier separating Dodger Stadium from the rest of Los Angeles, Dodgers fans would not have to worry about the neighborhood around the park like they did at Ebbets Field. That would make the park appealing to a wide variety of people. By moving into cleared Chavez Ravine, O’Malley and Los Angeles eliminated one of the issues that made white fans in Brooklyn reluctant

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112 Podair, *City of Dreams*, passim.
to come to the park. There was nothing around the park to make fans uncomfortable. Instead, it would feel like the suburbs, just like the Dodger Dome had been supposed to.

O’Malley designed Dodger Stadium to prioritize automobile access over all other means of transportation. It had more parking spaces than any other park until the Astrodome opened. When it opened, it was nearly inaccessible without a car, a feature copied by later multi-use parks as well. In Los Angeles, Dodgers fans would not have to search neighborhood streets to find parking, then spend the game worrying about their car. The Dodgers also made sure the parking experience would reflect suburbia by ensuring adequate lighting. During the design process, one employee wrote to O’Malley that the plans for “parking lot lighting […] were completely inadequate.” The plans showed “only two close-in towers” and that employee feared that “without additional illumination we will have considerable vandalism and hubcaps, accessories, etc. being stolen.”¹¹³ Those issues were resolved before the park opened to ensure Dodgers fans would remain comfortable at the park.

In many ways, O’Malley wanted Dodger Stadium to be a different experience from older ballparks, more like a suburban shopping mall. O’Malley asked, “why shouldn’t [ballparks] have good restaurants and other services?”¹¹⁴ He argued that baseball was “the same old show in dull, drab-green parks.”¹¹⁵ He insisted that “folks will

¹¹³ Dick Walsh to Walter O’Malley, Memorandum, December 5, 1961, O’Malley Archive.


always come out in person [to the park] if it’s convenient and pleasant for them.”

Before its design was finalized, O’Malley promised that Dodger Stadium would be “in beauty, landscaping, maintenance, and comfort […] absolutely the finest baseball park in the nation.” All those amenities and attractions were necessary to convince fans to forgo the easy entertainment of sitting in front of the television at home.

According to Dick Walsh, the Dodgers’ Vice President for Stadium Affairs, the design for that “finest park in the nation” “started back in Brooklyn at Flatbush Avenue, [with] the idea of the dome stadium” and with other parks as well. Walsh said, “if we found a good idea in another ballpark, we would use it if it was beneficial for our development.” O’Malley hired the New York city-based architecture firm Praeger, Kavanagh and Waterbury, led by Emil Praeger, to design Dodger Stadium. Praeger had worked with O’Malley in the past, consulting on the Dodger Dome and designing Holman Stadium, the Dodgers spring training ballpark in Vero Beach, Florida. Holman Stadium’s playing field was sunken below street level, a first for any ballpark.

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116 O’Malley quoted in Podair, City of Dreams, 93.
117 O’Malley quoted in Podair, City of Dreams, 102.
119 Schweppe, “Great Ideas at Dodger Stadium,” 2.
120 Podair, City of Dreams, 131.
122 Podair, City of Dreams, 131. Architect Normal Bel Geddes offered the Dodgers a proposed redesign of Ebbets Field in 1948 that included a sunken playing
sunken field at Holman Stadium meant that all fans had the benefit of walking down to their seats when they entered the park.

Praeger similarly planned to sink Dodger Stadium’s playing field below street level, limiting the steps fans would have to climb to get to their seats. Additionally, because Dodger Stadium was built into a hillside, its parking lots were at different elevations. Fans in the upper deck would enter at the top of the hill, behind home plate. Fans in the middle decks would enter further down the hill, closer to first or third base. Fans closest to the field would enter from the bottom of the hill, all the way out the foul lines. Fans in the pavilions, Dodger Stadium’s version of bleachers, would enter from beyond the outfield. Fans could walk straight into their level of the stadium from the parking lot without having to climb stairs nearly regardless of where they were sitting.\(^{123}\) O’Malley wanted “a ball park where people [could] park their cars,” one where people his age did not “have to walk up 200 feet to their seats” the way they did at the Coliseum.\(^{124}\) Throughout construction, O’Malley was in frequent contact with Praeger, Walsh and his contractor.\(^{125}\)

As part of his effort to plan a park that would please middle- and upper-class fans, O’Malley and staff paid close attention to the restrooms. The park would have 48 of them, half for women and half for men, all of which would be kept spotless at all

\(^{123}\) Podair, *City of Dreams*, 132.


\(^{125}\) Podair, *City of Dreams*, 244.
times.\textsuperscript{126} Together with Walsh, O’Malley made sure there would be enough bathrooms in the pavilions to accommodate the fans sitting there. They paid close attention not only to the location of restrooms, but the fixtures inside them too. Before the park opened, Walsh told Praeger, “we strongly recommend a second urinal in men’s toilet Room 533.”\textsuperscript{127} Walsh even asked Praeger for prices on different colored toilet seats because he thought a “white, rather than black, toilet seat would give a much better appearance of cleanliness.”\textsuperscript{128} O’Malley worked to create an experience that would more comfortably accommodate fans who did not fit the stereotype of the traditional Brooklyn Dodgers’ fans, gritty, rough-and-tumble, working- and lower-middle-class males. O’Malley’s actions set up Dodger Stadium for a different kind of atmosphere one that, due to its alignment with gender norms, would be more likely to attract women and families.

Dodger Stadium was quickly successful and popular. In October 1961, the team had already sold $3 million worth of advance tickets for the 1962 season.\textsuperscript{129} At its opening day in 1962, it was clear that Dodger Stadium was a sea change in ballparks. One journalist wrote that it was “the baseball stadium of the future. You’re going to have to give John Q. Public something beside a hard-seat bench, a greasy hot dog, and an ice-

\textsuperscript{126} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 279 and Steven Keylon, “Walter O’Malley and his Landscape for Dodger Stadium,” accessed November 1, 2017, \url{www.walteromalley.com}.

\textsuperscript{127} Dick Walsh to Emil Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive.

\textsuperscript{128} Walsh to Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive. Other things Walsh was concerned with included the mechanics of the shelves in the women’s rooms’ stalls, the best coating on the walls of the stalls to make writing graffiti more difficult, designs that would allow for easy clean-up in the bathrooms, and if the plumbing could handle sanitary napkins.

\textsuperscript{129} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 280.
filled cup that passes as a soft drink” to keep up with Dodger Stadium.\textsuperscript{130} In 1962, the Dodgers drew 2,755,184 fans and made a profit of $1,177,000.\textsuperscript{131} In only its second year, O’Malley noted that Dodger Stadium served as a model for other parks then in their planning stages.\textsuperscript{132} Immediately after it opened, journalists and architectural critics recognized its beauty.\textsuperscript{133} They celebrated the unobstructed views of the playing field, downtown Los Angeles, the surrounding hills, and the San Gabriel Mountains. They marveled over the parking lots and how easy it was for fans to walk right to their seats without having to climb a lot of stairs. In the \textit{Los Angeles Times} in 1962, journalist Charlie Parker called Dodger Stadium “an eyepopper, the most glamourous baseball park in history.”\textsuperscript{134}

The hillside that allowed fans to walk from the parking lots directly into their seats also had other benefits. It supported the upper decks, so no pillars blocked fans’ views like they did at Ebbets Field.\textsuperscript{135} As \textit{Sports Illustrated} noted in April 1962, “despite the height of the stadium—its elevators stop at nine levels—it does not look as

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\textsuperscript{130} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 293. \\
\textsuperscript{131} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 293. \\
\textsuperscript{132} UPI, “O’Malley’s Lavish Park Model for New Stadia,” paper and date unknown, O’Malley Archive. \\
\textsuperscript{133} David John Kammer, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame: American Cultural Values as Reflected in the Architectural Evolution and Criticism of the Modern Baseball Stadium” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 1982), 293. \\
\textsuperscript{135} “The Engineering of Cut and Fill,” \textit{Progressive Architecture}, April 1967, 156. 
\end{flushleft}
awesomely tall from ground level as Yankee Stadium.”\(^{136}\) Although the magazine attributed this to the decks not being constructed on top of each other (a benefit of the hillside), it seems more likely this was the case because the full height of the stadium was never visible to fans as they entered the park. Although the lower decks extended throughout foul territory, the upper deck was only behind the infield. Fans sitting closest to the field entered at a spot where the upper deck did not tower over them. Upper deck fans entered with only their part of the ballpark rising above the hillside.

The Dodgers tried to offer an attractive experience to all their fans with wider seats, all of which faced the infield, that had more legroom than older parks. Dodger Stadium’s seats varied in color by tier moving from yellow to blue as the seats rose in relation to the field to mimic a California sunset.\(^{137}\) Tickets and parking-level signs were shaded to match the seats. There were also designated spaces for wheelchairs and 2,000 pairs of seats with foldable armrests so fans could sit closer to each other if they wanted.\(^{138}\) Seventy percent of the park’s seats were in the infield area, the part of the park most fans usually wanted to sit in.\(^{139}\) The unreserved pavilions in the outfield, each of which sat 3,000 fans, had a roof to shield fans from the sun.\(^{140}\) Because those pavilions


\(^{137}\) Podair, *City of Dreams*, 246, 251, 252.

\(^{138}\) McCue, *Mover and Shaker*, 262, 263

\(^{139}\) Podair, *City of Dreams*, 251.

were low, they afforded fans in the rest of the park excellent views of the San Gabriel Mountains and the Los Angeles skyline. The park was also designed such that the prevailing winds helped to keep the 70% of the fans seated behind the infield cool.\textsuperscript{141}

Even if the Dodgers lost, fans would be comfortable in a beautiful, easily-accessible park.

Thanks to the park’s tiers and variety of ticket prices, fans from across the economic spectrum could partake in that experience. Dodger Stadium’s unreserved seats in the upper deck and the outfield pavilion, cost $1.50 in 1962. There were 13,500 of those seats and they could be purchased on the day of the game. According to one local columnist, the upper deck “provide[d] the best baseball view in America.”\textsuperscript{142} The park’s reserved seats, 15,324 in total, cost $2.50 and box seats, a total of 25,317, cost $3.50.\textsuperscript{143} Reserved and box seats could be purchased in advance, or on the day of the game if they were not sold out.\textsuperscript{144} A season of box seats cost $265.\textsuperscript{145} The large number of seats between the cheapest and the most expensive was an important innovation. Fans did not have to break the bank to purchase the bit of status that came with not sitting in the cheapest seats in the park. There were more expensive ways to buy status at Dodger Stadium too. O’Malley made sure that the wealthiest and most notable Dodger fans had access to the special services and amenities that would draw them to the park. The

\textsuperscript{141} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 251, 252.

\textsuperscript{142} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 290.

\textsuperscript{143} “Credit Where Credit is Due,” \textit{The Sporting News}, January 25, 1975.

\textsuperscript{144} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 257.

baseline for those amenities was $5.50 for one of the 1,732 dugout box seats.\textsuperscript{146}

The tiers themselves were further divided. None of Dodger Stadium’s five tiers had more than 22-rows and the park functionally had seven front rows.\textsuperscript{147} It had more aisles than other parks which further reduced the number of fans clustered together. As one journalist wrote, most seats were “in blocks of six and eight to decrease the nuisance of passing food and money” between vendors and other fans.\textsuperscript{148} Additionally, the Dodgers paid special attention to the dynamics of the places their wealthiest fans would sit. The club level had its own entrance to the park because the team did “not wish to have these people … stand[ing] in line.”\textsuperscript{149} Also, O’Malley told Praeger it was important that all season box seats have rails to separate them from regular box seats.\textsuperscript{150} Instead of the park being like one big neighborhood as Ebbets Field had been, it was more like a series of tiny gated communities.

All these divisions served a purpose. Although fans of different races and classes came to Dodger Stadium, the gated communities there reduced interactions between fans of different classes, and given the correlation between class and race, different races too. Adding to that was the direct access from parking levels to ballpark tiers, which meant

\textsuperscript{146} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 246, 257.


\textsuperscript{149} Dick Walsh to Emil Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive.

\textsuperscript{150} Walter O’Malley to Emil Praeger, August 29, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
fans parked next to people they sat near. There was also minimal connection between
decks once fans were inside the park, further reducing fan interactions.\textsuperscript{151} While there
were no explicit racial barriers in Dodger Stadium, the most expensive sections priced out
many racial minorities. This allowed the team to draw a diverse array of fans without
threatening white fans’ sense of racial superiority the way it had been threatened at
Ebbets Field. It let fans feel comfortable in a space that included people unlike them.
Similar economic barriers existed in largely racially segregated suburbs as well.
Consciously or not, O’Malley created spaces that were built on white privilege.

The Dodgers continued their attention to detail and the fan experience after the
park opened. To reduce the congestion of 16,000 cars exiting from Dodger Stadium’s
parking lots, down five access roads to three major highways, team employees in a
rooftop command post directed traffic.\textsuperscript{152} In mid-April 1962, O’Malley wrote a memo to
his head of stadium operations outlining some of the changes he wanted to see. He
wanted his ushers to “hustle” in “the way Candlestick Park gals” did and keep fans from
blocking other fans’ views.\textsuperscript{153} He also aimed to make the elevators more user-friendly and
the park visibly uncluttered by banning delivery trucks from the grounds less than an
hour before the gates opened.

\textsuperscript{151} UPI, “O’Malley’s Lavish Park Model for New Stadia,” paper and date
unknown, O’Malley Archive. That separation was intentionally not complete, though.
Some fans wanted to be able to roam the park and see the game from different angles, so
in 1963 the Dodgers added escalators to help fans more around the different levels of the
park.

\textsuperscript{152} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 259, 294.

\textsuperscript{153} Walter O’Malley to Dick Walsh, Memorandum, April 16, 1962, O’Malley
Archive.
Dodger Stadium was also visibly uncluttered because when it opened, Union Oil had the only non-team advertisement in the park.\textsuperscript{154} Dodger Stadium was not burdened with advertising as Ebbets Field and other classic-era parks had been. Visually it offered a clean, decidedly Modernist presentation with only scoreboards featuring information and promotions for future games and above one of them Union Oil’s “76” logo. That visual presentation, in conjunction with predominant architectural trends that called for uncluttered spaces, helped Dodger Stadium establish the new norm of minimal ballpark advertising in the multi-use era.\textsuperscript{155} The lack of advertising falsely suggested O’Malley was not interested in making money. Like the idea that the ballpark was an accurate representation of the nation, that suggestion likely drew more fans to the park though.

Dodger Stadium was also initially a novelty, but after that novelty wore off, O’Malley needed other ways to keep fans coming to the park. O’Malley found those ways in the amenities and experience at Dodger Stadium. The Dodgers appealed to commonly-held ideas about gender norms and used elaborate scoreboards that helped fans know when and how to cheer, and status to keep appealing to fans.\textsuperscript{156} While

\textsuperscript{154} McCue, \textit{Mover and Shaker}, 264.


\textsuperscript{156} Although the history of promotional giveaways is not entirely clear, sources credit former Major League owner and pioneering promotor Bill Veeck for popularizing giveaways in the 1940s and 1950s. During the Depression, teams sponsored giveaways, but they were more like raffles or sweepstakes than gifts to all fans.
O’Malley did not invent any of these additional ways to draw fans to the park, they were expanded and refined at Dodger Stadium.\textsuperscript{157}

O’Malley wanted his park to draw fans even on days when the Dodgers did not have games. He envisioned a team store open year-round and tram tours of the stadium modeled after Disneyland.\textsuperscript{158} Before the team had even broken ground, he predicted it would be “a tourist attraction surpassing famed Yankee Stadium.”\textsuperscript{159} A promotional flyer called it “another monument added to the many scenic beauties of Los Angeles, a ‘must’ on every tourist’s itinerary.”\textsuperscript{160}

O’Malley also wanted fans to have an enjoyable experience even if the Dodgers did not win the game. He aimed to make Dodger Stadium “the most modern and magnificent major league stadium in the world.”\textsuperscript{161} He wanted customers to enjoy the scenery and the game. If O’Malley could draw fans who would be pleased by Dodger Stadium’s amenities in addition to die-hard baseball fans, he would increase his revenue. O’Malley planted flowers on the hills around the park, spending nearly $3 million in the park’s first two years to beautify the surroundings and remake an urban space into a suburban-like oasis.

\textsuperscript{157} See Einstein, “The New Breed of Baseball Fan” for some examples of this.

\textsuperscript{158} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 132.

\textsuperscript{159} Taxpayers Committee for Yes on Baseball, “Dodger Stadium Vote Flyer,” National League Papers, A. Bartlett Giamatti Library and Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. [Hereafter HoF.]

\textsuperscript{160} Undated promotional material, O’Malley Archive.

\textsuperscript{161} Taxpayers Committee for Yes on Baseball, “Dodger Stadium Vote Flyer,” NL Papers, HoF.
The Dodgers tried to ensure that both die-hard fans and less-serious fans would have a good time with their high-tech scoreboards. They served to keep fans informed about the game, keep them entertained, and were something that could not be rivaled by staying at home and watching television. Dodger Stadium’s first scoreboard had more digital message space than any other in baseball, eight rows of 31 characters, allowing the team to more articulately communicate with fans and display statistics. O’Malley insisted on auxiliary scoreboards too so that fans who did not have a good view of the main scoreboards would not be left out. Dodger Stadium’s scoreboards used 17,000 lights and enough electricity to power 200 homes or 100,000 Christmas trees. Those lights were set to be brighter during the day to make it easier for fans to see. To alert fans that something exciting might happen soon, Dodger Stadium’s scoreboards encouraged fans to chant “go” when base-stealer extraordinaire Maury Wills reached base. Die-hard fans would have already been well aware of that though. Roger Angell, as keen an observer of the game as anyone, wrote that Dodger fans “respond to [the scoreboard’s] instructions with alacrity.” Such a reaction was a bit disconcerting to him, but it

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163 Podair, City of Dreams, 245, 252, 254.


166 Podair, City of Dreams, 254.

seemed to get less knowledgeable fans into the game and given the park’s “gated communities,” die-hard fans could sit apart from move novice ones.

The gated communities also helped the Dodgers attract groups of fans to the park by the busload. When he moved to Dodger Stadium, O’Malley made it as easy as possible for the Dodgers’ fans to attend games in groups and put their names on the scoreboard when they did.¹⁶⁸ Being with a group of similar people and having that group’s name on the scoreboard made it likely fans would have a good time even if the Dodgers lost. Long after the park opened, Dodgers fans continued to make use of the group ticket plan. In the 1970s, the Dodgers hosted more than ten groups of at least 5,000 fans each year. One group of 18,000 Sears employees was the largest ever meeting of employees of that company.¹⁶⁹ Given the tiers and sections of Dodger Stadium, groups could easily have entire areas to themselves and not have to interact with anyone else in the park.

Group tickets, gated communities, and the location of Dodger Stadium also created the image of a segregated ballpark. Although more than 20 years after the park opened a 1984 Greyhound Lines, Inc. print advertisement depicting six black fans at Dodger Stadium shows how this was the case. The six fans were shown reacting to a foul ball coming into the stands, but they were the only fans pictured; they were surrounded by empty seats. The copy for the ad suggested chartering a Greyhound to take a group of fans to the game. It suggested the only way for black fans to enjoy the game was to rent a

¹⁶⁸ Podair, *City of Dreams*, 246.

bus, limiting their interactions with other fans, and sit alone in a section of the stands.\textsuperscript{170} Black fans had access to the class-divided, carefully-controlled Dodger Stadium, but it appeared they only did far away from white fans.

The carefully-controlled, class-divided experience at Dodger Stadium extended to the food sold there, which was also something O’Malley paid close attention to. For example, O’Malley specified what grade of beef should be served in different parts of the park writing, “choice grade is generally acceptable, but in the Stadium Club it should be AA Eastern Prime (not Western Prime).”\textsuperscript{171} Dodger Stadium’s food helped to provide fans with an experience that they expected, one they could enjoy regardless of the outcome of the game, and one that fit with the idealized ballpark atmosphere.

When the Dodgers left Brooklyn, Harry M. Stevens, Inc. (HMS, Inc.) had been their concessionaire for more than half a century. According to Stevens’ descendants, O’Malley asked HMS, Inc. to continue on as the team’s concessionaire in Los Angeles, but the company declined his offer. Perhaps the selection of the Coliseum as the site for Dodgers games dissuaded HMS, Inc. from setting up in Los Angeles. That decision was not finalized until a few months before the 1958 season and concessionaire Thomas Arthur already owned the rights there. HMS, Inc. did expand to the West Coast though as

\textsuperscript{170} F310: Beer, 1984, Greyhound Advertisement, J. Walter Thompson Company, Competitive Advertising Collection, John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Duke University, [on the back of a Budweiser advertisement]. Whether this advertisement was actually shot at Dodger Stadium is unclear, but it was made to look that way.

\textsuperscript{171} Walter O’Malley to Dick Walsh and Burns, Memorandum, April 13, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
the Giants concessionaire in San Francisco, but Arthur stuck with the Dodgers when they moved into Dodger Stadium.\textsuperscript{172}

When Dodger Stadium opened in 1962, Thomas Arthur wanted to sell something special that was also tied to baseball’s past. He settled on something similar to the foot-long Nathan’s hot dogs he had eaten as a child in Brooklyn. Initially, Arthur sold what he called a “foot-long” hot dog at Dodger Stadium, but meticulous fans complained that these “foot-long” hot dogs were not actually one foot long. Arthur responded not by selling longer hot dogs, but rebranding them “Dodger Dogs.” The name stuck and they have since become an essential element of Dodger Stadium, even though, other than their length, there is nothing particularly special about them. Arthur, who held the concessions contract at Dodger Stadium until 1990, sometimes sold as many as 50,000 Dodger Dogs per game. He sold hot dogs in all areas of the park after he got a complaint from actor and Dodger Stadium-regular Cary Grant that there were not enough hot dogs for sale in the box seats closest to the field.\textsuperscript{173} Perhaps Grant wanted a hot dog because even in Dodger Stadium’s fancy new setting he, and seemingly other fans as well, craved the tradition of eating a hot dog at the park that was an established part of watching a game.

More than just food, Dodger Dogs became integral to the experience at Dodger Stadium. Carlos Bernal, general manager of Host Marriott, the Dodgers’ concessionaire in the early 1990s, said, “fans who’ve been coming [to Dodger Stadium] for 30 years want what they want. It’s almost become a tradition where you pass it down to your

\textsuperscript{172} Untitled, undated memo, author unknown, O’Malley Archive.

children to have a Dodger Dog. You’ll never change that.” An early 1990s effort to alter their taste was met with backlash and the original recipe was soon back at the park. Despite their tradition, Dodger Dogs are not very good. When Aramark held the Dodgers concessions rights, the company went through more mustard than most other ballparks because fans used so much of it to mask Dodger Dogs’ flavor. Aramark tried to introduce an alternative, all-beef kosher-style hot dog at Dodger Stadium, but it did not sell well because fans wanted the traditional Dodger Dog.

When the park opened, there was far more than just Dodger Dogs for sale, but like the park itself, that food was tiered. Dodger Stadium offered standard ballpark food at low prices in the upper decks. In the middle decks fans had access to more variety at snack bars, including food aligned with stereotypical palates of women and children, and the team’s wealthiest fans, sitting closest to the field, could join the Stadium Club and eat more expensive, high-brow food. The Dodgers Stadium Club was modeled on the one at Yankee Stadium, but was marketed as an improvement on the one in the Bronx. It had a restaurant called the Diamond Room with an adjacent bar called the Abner Doubleday Lounge and food as good as the best restaurants in the city. The tables looked onto the field, fans’ seats were a short walk away, and members could reserve a party room.

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176 Carl Mittleman (President, Aramark Sports and Entertainment) in discussion with the author, May 18, 2017.

Stadium Club members had also their own entrance to the park. All 500 memberships at $250 each sold out before the park opened, which prompted O’Malley to make plans to expand the club for the 1963 season.\textsuperscript{178} Forty usherettes outfitted in patriotic red, white, and blue uniforms and tuxedo-wearing male employees worked at the Stadium Club.\textsuperscript{179} The park also offered “deluxe boxes with food service” and a restaurant for the general public at the park that offered views of both downtown Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Mountains.\textsuperscript{180} Middle- and upper-class families could eat meals befitting their class status at Dodger Stadium.

O’Malley also made sure middle- and upper-class families would have a customer service experience that matched their class status. The team had fan representatives on each level.\textsuperscript{181} To help fans more quickly purchase tickets and enter the park, the Dodgers employed 50 ticket sellers and 50 ticket takers.\textsuperscript{182} Inspired by nearby Disneyland, where he sent Walsh and other executives to scout out the experience, O’Malley made sure all employees treated fans with “courtesy, consideration, and respect.”\textsuperscript{183} Many of the Dodger Stadium’s seventy ushers were full-time employees, which made them more


\textsuperscript{181} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 294.

\textsuperscript{182} Thompson, \textit{Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle}, 211.

\textsuperscript{183} Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 246.
likely to seriously follow O’Malley’s dictates and be familiar with the requirements of their jobs. O’Malley said “there will never be a time when mothers and fathers will have the right to ask any of our officials, players or anyone else in the Dodger organization to apologize for their conduct.”\footnote{Walter O’Malley, quoted in Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 51.} In other words, everything about the Dodgers would be attractive to families and conform to stereotypical expectations of suitable outings for women. O’Malley also said, “you cannot operate a major-league franchise today unless you are very, very much aware of the comfort requirements of men, women and children.”\footnote{Melvin Durslag, “A Visit with Walter O’Malley,” \textit{The Saturday Evening Post}, May 14, 1960, 31, 105.} O’Malley also mimicked Disneyland’s cleanliness to help him attract families.\footnote{Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 246.} He insisted that the park and every seat be cleaned following every game.\footnote{D’Antonio, \textit{Forever Blue}, 316.} The team hired 60 workers who took six hours to clean the park as well as 40 maids and porters who worked during the game.\footnote{Thompson, \textit{Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle}, 212.} As a result, sixty percent of Dodgers fans thought the park was clean, higher than the MLB average.\footnote{Lieberman Research Inc., “How Sports Fans Feel About Baseball: An Attitudinal and Motivational Investigation: Los Angeles Dodgers,” October 1973, C-2, Bowie K. Kuhn Collection, HoF.} That emphasis on cleanliness continued into the 1970s when one article noted that the Dodgers had employees who sped around the park on skateboards and motor scooters making sure everything was clean and

\footnote{Podair, \textit{City of Dreams}, 51.}
O’Malley also thought about where women would leave their handbags when they got to their seat or used the restroom, ensuring that everything conformed to gendered expectations.

Drawing women and families to the ballpark was not a new idea, but it took on added urgency in Los Angeles. In the Polo Grounds, Yankee Stadium, and Ebbets Field, young fans, mostly boys, could walk or take mass-transit to the ballpark for day games in the summer. That was simply not possible at Dodger Stadium. The Dodgers needed someone to drive their next generation of fans to the park. The team played a majority of their games at night at a park that fans could not walk or take mass transit to. Moreover, Dodger Stadium was close to downtown Los Angeles, making it convenient for fans who worked downtown to go to games straight from the office. In order to bring children to the park, O’Malley had to make it enticing for whole families because children needed someone, often middle- and upper-class suburban mothers, to drive them to the park.

O’Malley planned on having 300,000 children admitted to the park for free each year to create the next generation of fans. In 1964, the Dodgers had 11 weekday-night games when they let children and their chaperones in the park for free. A total of 3,000

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190 Fimrite, “They’re Beginning to Sound Like a Broken Record.”

191 Podair, City of Dreams, 247.

192 Perhaps the most well-known fan at Ebbets Field was Hilda Chester, a woman who usually came to the games alone or with her adult daughter. The Dodgers hosted father-son days at Ebbets Field and even a few mother-child days.

fans would be allowed in one of the pavilions, completely filling it, and each adult would serve as the chaperone for up to five children. Confining free tickets to the outfield pavilion was a tried and true tactic for owners to avoid annoying their paying customers and one that Dodger Stadium’s “gated communities” were perfectly suited for. The Dodgers also offered free tickets through the Boy and Girl Scouts.¹⁹⁴

Despite his attempts to create a family-friendly, Disney-like atmosphere at Dodger Stadium, O’Malley and the Dodgers planned for the possibility of rowdy fans. Before the park opened, O’Malley asked Prager to add “wire mesh in front of the first rows of the various levels to prevent items being thrown […] onto the heads of the people […] below.”¹⁹⁵ Walsh asked Prager to install “recessed mirrors and closed circuit television cameras” to police behavior in low-traffic areas of the park.¹⁹⁶ He also wanted the fence separating the ballpark from the parking lot to be 12-feet tall “angled upwards and outwards with barbed wire on the top to preclude entry by those persons who lack the funds to buy tickets.”¹⁹⁷ It seems Walsh envisioned a certain type of person who might do that. He told Praeger he was concerned that “people could enter into the stadium via the mechanical equipment rooms and some of our former Chavez Ravine residents could construct a bedroom in the area directly behind the elevator shafts.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Dick Walsh to Walter O’Malley, Memorandum, December 5, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
¹⁹⁶ Walsh to Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
¹⁹⁷ Walsh to Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
¹⁹⁸ Walsh to Praeger, March 2, 1961, O’Malley Archive.
O’Malley further prepared for out of line fans by ordering “a security officer on a scooter to come around on the playing field after the final out and between his scooter and a whistle he can see that no one enters the dugouts or the bull pens.” He also called for “security officers on each level.” He wrote, “perhaps one [guard] should be assigned to each extremity to work toward the center to get the kids out of the seat area. They should not disturb adult patrons who might want to sit for awhile [sic] and look at the moon.” The park also had “a small jail to detain troublemakers until police arrive[d] from the downtown area.”

The Dodgers also used the atmosphere at Dodger Stadium to control even as they sold more beer there than any other venue in the United States. Dick Walsh claimed that there were few disturbances caused by beer drinkers at Dodger Stadium because of the “facilities idea,” the concept that “if you have an attractive setting and maintain your plant in spotless conditions you get others to appreciate and respect it.” That was a marked difference from the atmosphere at deteriorating classic-era parks like Ebbets Field. Despite that idea, in the 1970s, the Dodgers responded to repeated instances of fans in one part of the ballpark fighting and throwing trash on the field by eliminating beer sales there, which seems to have solved the problem. Since Dodger Stadium was

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199 O’Malley to Walsh, April 16, 1962, O’Malley Archive.

200 O’Malley to Walsh, April 16, 1962, O’Malley Archive.

201 Carlos Salazar, “it says here …” paper and date unknown, O’Malley Archive.

202 Salazar, “it says here …,” O’Malley Archive.

203 Fimrite, “They’re Beginning to Sound Like a Broken Record.”
divided into so many sections and tiers, this misbehavior was less likely to impact other fans than it would have elsewhere. Those divisions also made it easier to cut off alcohol sales in one particular part of the park where the facilities idea did not seem to take hold.

Despite occasional rowdy fan behavior, O’Malley’s efforts to create a suburban-style ballpark and remake the city around the park into what his fans wanted worked so well that it reminded famed baseball writer Roger Angell of a grocery store, an icon of suburbia. Angell wrote:

Dodger Stadium […] was designed by an admirer of suburban supermarkets. It has the same bright, uneasy colors (turquoise exterior walls, pale green outfield fences, odd yellows and ochers on the grandstand seats); the same superfluous decorative touches, such as the narrow rickrack roofs over the top of the bleachers; the same preoccupation with easy access and with total use of interior space; and the same heaps of raw dirt around its vast parking lots. There is a special shelf for high-priced goods—a dugout behind home plate for movie and television stars, ballplayers’ wives, and transient millionaires. Outside, a complex system of concentric automobile ramps and colored signs—yellow for field boxes, green for reserved seats, and so forth—is intended to deliver the carborne fan to the proper gate, but on my two visits to O’Malley’s Safeway it was evident that the locals had not yet mastered their instructions, for a good many baseball shoppers wound up in the detergent aisle instead of the in the cracker department, with a resultant loss of good feeling, and had to be ordered to go away and try again.204

O’Malley had remade an urban space into a suburban one. The suburban-supermarket feel emphasized that the fans at the park were those who were likely to frequent suburban grocery stores—middle- and upper-class whites.

Like the suburbs, Dodger Stadium appeared immune to the turbulent 1960s. As one Dodger fan who was a teenager in that decade wrote, “the real world never intruded [in 1969] at Dodger Stadium. Everything there was as it always had been. You looked out

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at the hills and the same purple sunset. The organist played the same show tunes. It was
its own kind of opiate, a fantasyland." Even in times of national upheaval, the America
on display at Dodger Stadium was one that would not trouble middle- and upper-class
whites.

Armed with that appeal, the Dodgers continued to draw well for decades. In the
1970s, the Dodgers became the first team to draw more than three million fans in a
season. Fifteen years after the team moved to Los Angeles, Dodger fans were more likely
than average to think baseball was good to watch in person, had tradition, was exciting,
and was both reasonably priced and a good value. They were also more likely than
average to think baseball was an American game, a family game, an outdoor game, and
an exciting game. In 1988, Bob Wood, a baseball fan who spent the summer of 1985
traveling to all of what then were the 26 Major League ballparks, wrote that Dodger
Stadium “welcomed a fan into its arms” and “glitter[ed] in the sunlight.” He ranked it
first among all Major League parks. In 2017, long-time Washington Post baseball
columnist Thomas Boswell ranked Dodger Stadium as his fifth favorite ballpark writing,
“wow! … What a setting” featuring “classic fabulous architecture” that was not

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206 “How Sports Fans Feel about Baseball: Los Angeles Dodgers,” A-1, Kuhn Collection, HoF.

207 “How Sports Fans Feel about Baseball: Los Angeles Dodgers,” A-2, Kuhn Collection, HoF.

successfully copied anywhere in the country.\textsuperscript{209} The same year, Boswell’s colleague Adam Kilgore wrote “everything about the stadium seems timeless.”\textsuperscript{210}

**Impact of Dodger Stadium on Other Parks**

The Dodgers’ move to Los Angeles had a profound impact on Brooklyn, but it also created a ripple effect throughout Major League Baseball. Team owners threatened to take baseball away from cities if municipal governments would not give them a park that allowed their mostly-white fans to enjoy a comfortable experience. Many cities responded by building new parks that were in “safer” neighborhoods or at least easily accessible by car the way Dodger Stadium was. That allowed owners to remake the city to meet fans’ expectations. In contrast to the aging Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium, these new parks were easily accessible by car and separated from deteriorating residential neighborhoods. Although O’Malley had discussed building a partial roof over Dodger Stadium so it could play host to non-baseball events, nothing much came of that idea, the ballparks built in response to Dodger Stadium were specifically designed to host multiple events.\textsuperscript{211}

Whereas in the classic era, teams built ballparks to make it clear to their fans they were a legitimate and permanent enterprise, in the multi-use era, cities built ballparks to


demonstrate that they were “major league.”

Stadiums were seen as “essential to attract shoppers and visitors and [were] built all over the country with taxpayers’ dollars.”

Following the increasing popularity of professional football, politicians sold the idea of building one status-enhancing multi-use stadium as half as expensive as building two single-use ones. Rarely did anyone discuss having privately-owned sports franchises build their own stadiums.

Additionally, as the 1960s continued, baseball stadiums’ appearance moved further from the game’s supposed rural origins. While Dodger Stadium seems positively pastoral in comparison to parks like the Astrodome, its technology, innovation, and location were a distinct break from its predecessors. Although not all multi-use parks appeared as disconnected from the game’s past as the Astrodome, other new stadiums also adopted electronic scoreboards and fake grass to guarantee predictable reactions from fans and predictable bounces. In the multi-use era, ballpark designers distanced the game from its past.

The Dodgers move to Los Angeles shows that obliterating a neighborhood and presenting a highly-segmented environment that could only be accessed by car helped teams keep fans coming to the park in large numbers. Baseball could remain attractive to its target audience—even as more fans from different backgrounds came to the park—so long as it was tiered enough to give wealthy fans the separation and sense of superiority.

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212 See David John Kammer, “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” 239 for more on this.

they craved. If the park recreated suburbia, fans would come. Other owners wanted to copy the success O’Malley had at Dodger Stadium, but could not reproduce the ballpark exactly because they were not in Chavez Ravine. They could, however, copy Dodger Stadium’s capacity to present a safe and comfortable vision of the nation by finding even more ways to ensure fans would not have to interact with people unlike them. The Astrodome is perhaps the chief example of this kind of highly-segmented park.
CHAPTER 5

THE ASTRODOME: A NEW, HYPER-DIVIDED AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

In the mid-1960s, a gigantic and unprecedented domed ballpark took shape on an undeveloped section of the prairie seven miles from downtown Houston. There were no houses nearby, no bus or subway stops, and no written history of people living in the area. The land was flood-prone and there was no protection against the hurricanes that regularly pounded Houston. It was mosquito infested and often when it was not raining, it was unbearably hot. It seemed far from an ideal spot for a baseball stadium. A domed ballpark, however, made all of that moot. Formally named the Harris County Domed Stadium, everyone called it the Astrodome after its primary tenant, the Houston Astros, which were added to the Major Leagues as a part of the league’s first wave of expansion.

The Astrodome was a modern marvel built for an antiquated game and it was full of contradictions. Everything about the dome, from the scoreboard to the seats to the astrological gender symbols on the bathroom doors, was new and futuristic. It introduced luxury skyboxes, indoor baseball, and plastic grass. Yet it was also designed to play host to a timeless game that had long been associated with outdoor entertainment and used to represent an ideal, pastoral America. The Astros’ owner claimed all fans were treated equally in the dome, yet it was segmented by class, race, and gender. Despite contradictions and flaws, the Astrodome changed the ballpark experience, not just for Houston fans, but for fans across the game.

Houston was not a realistic possibility as a home for Major League Baseball (MLB) until after World War II and many of the same forces that made Los Angeles an enticing and profitable destination for MLB were also present in Houston. Federal government
investment, in Houston’s case in the defense and space industries, pumped money into
the local economy. In conjunction with the booming oil industry, NASA headquarters,
the growth of affordable air conditioning, new highway construction, low taxes,
subsidized mortgages and a host of other benefits boosted population in the area. In 1940,
metropolitan Houston’s population was around 500,000.\footnote{Jason Bruce Crystal, “The Taj Mahal of Sport: The Creation of the Houston Astrodome, 1957-1967” (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2004), 5.} In 1950 it was almost 950,000,
in 1960 it was 1.4 million, and was nearly two million by 1970.\footnote{Benjamin D. Lisle, \textit{Modern Coliseum: Stadiums and American Culture} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 148-9.} That increase was part
of a national trend that saw the percentage of income earned by people in the West and
South grow from 33% of total income in America in 1940 to 43% in 1970. At the same
time, the population of the West and South as a percentage of total American population
population and the closest Major League team was nearly 700 miles away in St. Louis.
Thanks to jet airplanes, travel to Texas took only a few hours from anywhere in the
continental United States. It was ripe for a Major League team and local leaders wanted
to put Houston on the map as a “big league” city.
In 1960, Houston was the largest metropolitan area in the United States without a Major League team. The city had long been home to minor league teams, the last of which, the Houston Buffalos (nicknamed the Buffs), played in Busch Stadium. Unlike most other Major League cities, however, Houston’s public accommodations, including Busch Stadium, were segregated.\(^5\) In addition, that park was not up to Major-League standards due to its size, minimal parking lots, and distance from major highways. Houston had to have a new park and new laws if it was going to be a Major-League city and the Astrodome was the key to that process.

In this chapter I argue that to create a fan base in a city where residents might have been familiar with the game, but were not accustomed to Major League Baseball, Roy Hofheinz, the primary owner of the Astros, created a new kind of experience that revolved less around the game than had ever been the case before. That new experience kept customers entertained and coming back to the park even if they were not die-hard baseball fans. In Houston, a city with no long-time MLB fans, Hofheinz needed to offer something other than just baseball to bring people to the park. Due to decreased attendance across the league in the 1950s, owners in cities with long baseball traditions had to do the same as well. Hofheinz gave his customers more entertainment, more ways to tie the experience into their business lives, and more separation from other fans than anyone had had before.

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Hofheinz’s new ballpark experience also provided a level of luxury to all fans that was not available anywhere else and in providing that luxury, Hofheinz did not treat his customers equally. Instead, the Astrodome was deeply divided along class, race, and gender lines. Because Hofheinz and friendly journalists presented the experience at the Astrodome as encompassing all, fans who went to games and did not think hard about what they saw there could easily view the crowd as a representation of all of Houston, if not the nation. Hofheinz’s rhetoric and the experience he created presented an inaccurate image of America, but one that seemed enticingly static at a time of great social upheaval. This functioned much like Houston and America’s growing suburbs, which offered the promise of luxury for all, casting an image of equal access, but in reality were consciously segmented communities that often allowed whites to avoid living near nonwhites.

When the Astrodome was designed Houston was in the process of tearing down formal barriers to integration in public accommodations and I argue that the unprecedented separation between fans based on the price they could pay for tickets functioned as a proxy for racial segregation, allowing whites to continue to ignore African Americans’ place in the nation. Just as with the suburbs, the separation inside the Astrodome allowed many white fans to essentially buy their way out of having to sit near nonwhite fans. Moreover, the Astrodome was funded in part due to promises of equal treatment and integration. The Astrodome experience was a façade of equality undergirded by discrimination based on race, class, and gender. Although fans would eventually grow tired of this futuristic experience, the Astrodome fostered a wave of copy-cat features throughout Major League Baseball.
This chapter opens with an analysis of the process that led to Houston getting a National League team before moving into the complicated political maneuvering and racial dynamics involved in winning the bond referendum elections that paid for the construction of the Astrodome. It then goes in depth into the unique and futuristic features of the Astrodome that astonished most observers and created a new baseball experience. That new experience involved women in new ways, new ways to eat at the ballpark, and new things to do while the game was going on. All the while, price segregation at the park masked the structural racial discrimination that kept the most elite parts of the ballpark nearly lily white. The chapter closes by touching on how the success of this new experience was not sustainable.

**The Houston Sports Association**

George Kirksey, a sportswriter turned public relations specialist, led the drive to bring Major League Baseball to Houston. Kirksey loved baseball and his adopted hometown of Houston. He thought a Major League Baseball team would put Houston on the map. In January, 1957 along with Texaco heir Craig Cullinan, Kirksey created the Houston Sports Association (HSA), requiring investors to put down $500 for an option to purchase $30,000 worth of stock if a team became available.\(^6\) HSA first tried and failed to purchase an existing major-league team that was struggling due to declining attendance

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and move it to Houston. It then pushed for major-league expansion, first by adding a new eight-team league and later by expanding the AL and NL to ten teams each.

Kirksey and Cullinan saw that teams that moved in the 1950s, like the Braves, did so to existing major-league-ready stadiums or to cities where there was a clear plan to build a new park. As they tried to buy an existing team, Cullinan said the process “became tediously familiar.” Team owners and league officials told them “get a stadium and we will talk to you about a team,” while in Houston they were told “find a team and the city might talk about building a stadium.” Kirksey and Cullinan knew Busch Stadium was not big enough to be a Major League park, so they turned to municipal funding for a new park. In 1958, they convinced the county to hold a vote on $20 million in municipal bonds for a new open-air park for a team that did not yet exist. Voters supported the bonds by 81,403 to 24,395.

Much like other teams planning new parks in the 1950s and 1960s, HSA wanted one that would have massive parking lots and would be easily accessible by car from all over the city. If this could not be done, Kirksey wrote “all would be lost before we ever

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threw a ball or swung a bat.” Kirksey and Cullinan were not interested in a mass-transit accessible park, they wanted something that fit the America of the 1950s. Because Houston’s public-transit system was designed to take domestic workers from poor parts of town to the city’s elite neighborhoods and did not reach any of the potential stadium sites, HSA’s plan for the park excluded most Houstonians who did not own a car—many of whom were African American.

HSA’s stadium project stalled by 1960 because Kirksey and Cullinan struggled to secure a site for the park. Kirksey explained, “we had to have help, big financial help and even more than that, we needed know-how,” so they brought in oil magnate and real-estate tycoon R. E. “Bob” Smith for his money and his sometime business partner Roy Hofheinz to help navigate municipal bureaucracy. Smith and Hofheinz quickly secured a site.

Hofheinz led a fascinating life. He went to law school at 17, passed the bar at 19, was a state legislator at 22, county judge at 24 (where he garnered his preferred title, Judge Hofheinz), and was elected mayor of Houston at 40. He was also a personal friend of Lyndon Johnson. As mayor in the mid-1950s, Hofheinz integrated the city’s public libraries and all water fountains on city property. Although he faced backlash from many whites on both measures, Hofheinz held firm to his desegregation plan, aided by his

12 Quoted in Gast, *The Astrodome*, 90.


entreaties to the media not to cover the changes.\textsuperscript{16} After leaving the mayor’s office Hofheinz became a private businessman and considered hiring Buckminster Fuller to design a domed shopping center in Houston.\textsuperscript{17} Although that plan never came to fruition, Hofheinz became acquainted with the benefits of a dome and later said “Fuller convinced me that it was possible to cover any size space if you didn’t run out of money.”\textsuperscript{18}

Many who knew Hofheinz in the 1960s described him as a powerful personality who always got what he wanted. More than 40 years after they began working together, former Astros executive Bill Giles said “Hofheinz always worked in a black suit with a black tie, though the white shirt was never buttoned to the top and the coat was rarely on. He almost always had a cigar in one hand and a glass of Scotch in the other. And he insisted on complete loyalty. If he ever suspected you were talking behind his back, you were gone.”\textsuperscript{19} Long-time team executive Tal Smith said, “you could be in [Hofheinz’s] company for only five minutes and find yourself a great believer in whatever he was espousing.”\textsuperscript{20} Giles called him “a truly unique individual and one of the most creative and intelligent men I have ever known.”\textsuperscript{21} Wells Twombly, a long-time Houston sports


\textsuperscript{17} Trumpbour and Womack, \textit{The Eighth Wonder of the World}, 17.

\textsuperscript{18} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 257.


\textsuperscript{20} Giles, \textit{Pouring Six Beers at a Time}, 41.

\textsuperscript{21} Giles, \textit{Pouring Six Beers at a Time}, 39.
reporter wrote, “you sometimes get the feeling that if Hofheinz had stayed in politics, [President] Lyndon [B. Johnson] would still be a senator.”

Hofheinz rarely put anything in writing and “did as much business as possible by phone.”

Hofheinz explained that Kirksey and Cullinan “asked me to come in finally, but I went in on the understanding that I would run the show. They could be on the surface running press meetings and talking to the public and I would be in the basement making deals.” One undated memo between the architects the county hired to design the stadium quoted Hofheinz saying, “he explicitly instructed us to channel all publicity matters on the stadium through HSA for approval.” According to Hofheinz’s biographer, at the first meeting between Kirksey, Cullinan, and Hofheinz, Hofheinz “made it plain that he did not believe Major League Baseball would be profitable if the playing field was uncovered.”

Hofheinz’s friend and financial advisor, Ben McGuire recalled Hofheinz said, “people in Houston aren’t going to sit in big numbers in the hot sun and high humidity in the daytime or fight mosquitos at night to see baseball.”

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23 Giles, *Pouring Six Beers at a Time*, 40. Although this frustrates historians looking into his life, he was often quoted in the press.


25 Undated, untitled memo, Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. [hereafter Minchew Papers]


Funding, Support, and Planning

Hofheinz immediately got to work planning how to build an unprecedented domed park and secure a team. Although he had consulted with Fuller in the past and had even discussed how to put a dome over a baseball stadium, Hofheinz stuck with the mostly local engineers and architects the county had hired in 1958 who modified Fuller’s plans enough to make the Astrodome their own. The one out-of-town architecture firm involved was Praeger, Kavanagh and Waterbury, who designed Dodger Stadium and Shea Stadium among many others and mostly served in a consulting role on the Astrodome.28

Although the architects drew up rudimentary plans for a domed stadium, before the plans or funding could be finalized, HSA needed to secure a team. Hofheinz’s charisma might have helped him win approval from other MLB owners, but the Civil Rights Movement in Houston played a key role in securing a team in Houston. Before HSA was granted a National League (NL) franchise, Hofheinz promised civil rights leaders in Houston, including local YMCA director and activist Quentin Mease, that his team’s new park would be integrated. Although, this was a bold claim for Houston, no other MLB park was segregated in the 1960s. Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis, for decades home to two MLB teams, had been segregated until 1944 and Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. had a less formalized system of segregation until around that same time. While formal segregation was gone from MLB parks by 1960, minor league parks

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The city’s lunch counters, restaurants, and movie theaters were also segregated in 1960.

Historian Thomas R. Cole wrote that Mease was “one of the chief architects of the peaceful desegregation of public accommodations in” Houston. Mease was the conduit between student protesters, African-American businessmen, and white community and political leaders. He was co-founder of the Houston Business and Professional Men’s Club, a political force in Houston’s African-American community and had gotten to know Hofheinz when Hofheinz was mayor. Mease was not a radical, he advocated gradual integration, supporting a series of steps toward integration, and worked closely with white leaders, backing their plans to integrate without public announcements.

The Houston Informer, an African-American paper, thought that segregation in Houston would prevent the city from getting a team. In August 1960, J. Don Davis asked in the Informer “Do you believe that Walter O’Malley or Del Walsh [sic] or any of the owners with high-salary Negro stars will vote a franchise that would send their Negro players to second-rate and separate hotels? […] Wouldn’t it be easier for Frick and the owners to bypass Houston to avoid embarrassing incidents that subject some of the

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30 Thomas R. Cole, “Foreword” in Quentin R. Mease, On Equal Footing: A Memoir (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 2001), vii. Mease lived a long and incredible life. Among the people he met were labor leader John L. Lewis, Ronald Reagan, Mahalia Jackson, Muhammed Ali, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush. He was stationed in Hiroshima a week after the atomic bomb was dropped and was in Dallas the day John F. Kennedy was killed. Like many African Americans who served in World War II, Mease returned from his service determined to change discriminatory policies at home.
game’s top players to second-class citizenship?" Davis thought Dallas was more likely to get an expansion franchise because teams would not have to reserve one hotel for their white players and a different one for their black players there.

Despite Hofheinz’s history of integrating parts of Houston, his promise to integrate the dome, and Davis’ speculation about owners’ intentions, Mease felt he needed more leverage with Hofheinz because once the NL gave Houston a team, there was little to force Hofheinz to stick to his promise. As the National League met in October 1960 to vote on adding Houston as a franchise, Mease wrote a letter to the chair of the National League’s expansion committee. Mease’s letter arrived just before Hofheinz appeared to present his final case before NL owners. Mease wrote that Houston’s African-American community was excited about the possibility of a team, but would boycott and protest if the dome was segregated. Hofheinz had brought an early mock-up of the dome to the meeting, so other NL owners “saw” the new-age park while reading Mease’s letter. NL owners likely took Mease’s claim seriously because Houston civil rights activists were in the midst of a boycott and protest campaign against the Houston Oilers of the American Football League over segregated seating at their stadium. At the beginning of 1960, local African-American columnist Lloyd C. A. Wells


32 Mease, On Equal Footing, 84.


34 Louis Moore, We Will Win the Day: The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Athlete, and the Quest for Equality (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2017), 97-106.
had pledged “to give the jim crow [sic] teams like the Buffs and Houston Professional sports Association [sic] all the - - - - we can until they relent and accord Negroes the common courtesies all men deserve as citizens and human beings.”\^{35} It seems unlikely NL owners were interested in having the same negative attention focused on their newest club.

The NL told Hofheinz they would only grant him a franchise to begin playing in 1962 if he guaranteed the dome would not be segregated. Hofheinz agreed.\^{36} In retrospect, using a favorite turn of phrase, Hofheinz said, “I had a colored policy and that policy was ‘green.’ If you had the green you could get through the gate.”\^{37} Hofheinz might also have been thinking about his own green. In *The Houston Informer*, Lloyd C. A. Wells asked if the HSA “plans to do like the Houston Oilers here and introduce the only segregated seating city in major league baseball?? If so, it will get the same reception that the Houston Oilers did from tan fans.”\^{38} With a team finally obtained, HSA sold stock in November 1960. Smith and Hofheinz bought two-thirds of the stock (Hofheinz’s share was paid for via a loan backed by Smith’s endorsement), but Cullinan owned a significant portion as well.\^{39}

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\begin{itemize}
\item\footnotesize 36 Mease, *On Equal Footing*, 84.
\item\footnotesize 37 Quoted in Gast, *The Astrodome*, 57.
\end{itemize}
HSA then turned to how to pay for the dome. Smith and Hofheinz briefly explored private financing for the facility, but as McGuire recalled, they “tried several places, but [a dome] was too radical an idea to interest conservative money men.”\textsuperscript{40} HSA turned back to municipal funding, but did not want to use the bonds voters had approved in 1958 because they were revenue bonds which carried an almost six percent interest rate. If voters instead approved general obligation bonds, which had an interest rate below four percent, they would save money. Smith and Hofheinz convinced the county to hold another bond vote in January 1961. That vote was on $22 million in bonds—$18 directly tied to the domed stadium, $3 million to buy the site and $15 million for construction costs, and $4 million for roads and infrastructure around the park.\textsuperscript{41}

According to the architects, when the bond vote was scheduled, “only preliminary drawings had been made to establish costs on a project which had no real prototype.”\textsuperscript{42} The bond amount seems like it was tied to the architects’ total cost estimate in early January 1961 of $21,203,302.\textsuperscript{43} That preliminary estimate ended up far short of the final cost as the architects honed and expanded their design in 1961 and 1962.

Aware of Hofheinz’s guarantee to the NL, Mease used his political capital to round up support in the African-American community for the 1961 bond votes. Although

\textsuperscript{40} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 261.

\textsuperscript{41} Trumpbour and Womack, \textit{The Eighth Wonder of the World}, 25.

\textsuperscript{42} “Untitled architects summary of design process and cost escalations, March 12, 1963,” Minchew Papers.

\textsuperscript{43} “Harris County Sports Stadium, Analysis of Preliminary Estimate, January 10, 1961,” Minchew Papers.
a poll tax of $1.50 limited African-American voter participation, unlike other parts of the South, there was no grandfather clause or literacy tests to demonstrate voter eligibility in Texas, so African-American voters could swing close elections. As Mease wrote in his memoirs, Hofheinz was so pleased with Mease’s support, that the first place the large-scale model of the dome was publicly displayed was Mease’s YMCA in the African-American section of the city.⁴⁴ Mease recalled, “I figured if we could get that stadium built on a nonsegregated basis, it would dovetail into our plans for desegregation elsewhere, without any friction, without any unpleasant happenings.” At the time, Mease thought an integrated Astrodome would “help getting other facilities open.” He concluded, that “it worked out that way, very well.”⁴⁵

Houston’s more radical Civil Rights Movement also supported the bond votes. Eldrewey Stearns, a part-time law student at Texas Southern University was one of the African American activists most responsible for integrating Houston. Mease had introduced Stearns to the sit-in protests that began at North Carolina lunch counters in 1960 before Stearns formed and led the Progressive Youth Association (PYA) in Houston. They PYA planned and conducted sit-ins and protests at segregated lunch counters, restaurants, movie theaters, and train stations in the city.⁴⁶ Like Mease, Stearns “saw in the Dome Stadium that it would bring about integration.”⁴⁷

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⁴⁴ Mease, One Equal Footing, 83.
⁴⁵ Mease, On Equal Footing, 87.
Stearns took time away from planning sit-ins, boycotts, and protests to canvas in support of the bonds. As Cole wrote, “Hofheinz hired Stearns to lobby in the black community on behalf of the domed stadium. Stearns in turn paid PYA members to drive through the Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards with loudspeakers urging African Americans to vote for the bond issue.”

“In Stearns’ words, “we had jeeps to go out in the white community. … It would be a black driver and a white announcer announcing, ‘Come vote. Don’t fail to support the greatest wonder of the world, the Dome Stadium!’ Out in the black neighborhoods, the white boy would be driving and a Negro doing the talking on the loudspeaker, and this is something they hadn’t seen, so that got their attention.”

Hofheinz recognized the importance of African-American voters in getting the bonds approved. As Giles recalled, Hofheinz “pointed out to us that the key to getting the referendum passed would be to convince African Americans to vote for it and to make sure they were able to get to the polls. It would be a desegregated facility that would bring jobs to the area.”

The dome’s integrated status was not public at the time, but it was far from secret in the African-American community. Before the bond vote, Hofheinz met with the Harris County Council of Organizations (HCCO)—an African-American businessman’s association—to discuss his plans for the stadium. The African American Houston Forward Times featured a photograph of Hofheinz at this meeting on the cover of its January 28, 1961 issue and quoted Hofheinz as saying the “benefits derived from

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50 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 60.
the stadium will be shared by all citizens.” Saying “all citizens” was perhaps a way to
signal the dome would be integrated without having to say it outright. Following the
meeting, HCCO ran advertisements in Houston’s black newspapers supporting the bonds.
The ads did not mention integrated seating, but it seems safe to assume the community
leaders whose names appeared on the advertisements, including Stearns, had gotten
private assurances from Hofheinz that the dome would be integrated.

Others claimed to have known the dome would be integrated. In late March, 1962,
Lloyd Wells revealed that he “knew in advance that [team] officials had to assure the
National League the seating would be fully integrated.” Bud Johnson wrote in the
*Forward Times* that “when talk of a major league team started circulating, the men behind
the baseball setup quickly cornered Negroes who are suppose [sic] to be able to spread
the word among their race and informed them that segregation would never rear it’s [sic]
ugly head again at a Houston baseball game.” Like Mease and Stearns, much of Harris
County’s African-American population supported the bonds likely because they too saw
it as part of the city’s progress toward racial equality and knew the park would be
integrated.

Some whites also recognized that broader segregation in the city was holding
Houston back from being a Major League city. In advance of the 1961 bond referendum,

51 “‘Approve Stadium Bonds,’ Urges Ex-Mayor,” *Houston Forward Times*,


53 Bud Johnson, “Bud’s Eyerview on Sports,” *Houston Forward Times*, July 14,
1962.

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team executive Bill Giles ran a trip for Houston politicians and business leaders to San Francisco and Los Angeles, so they could see the benefits that seemed to be accruing to those cities from their new MLB teams.\textsuperscript{54} Historian Thomas R. Cole wrote that on that trip “in each city, the host baseball club gave receptions that conspicuously included African American players.”\textsuperscript{55} One Houston media executive echoed J. Don Davis, perhaps unwittingly, and asked Hofheinz, “have you thought about what will happen when the Giants come to Houston? They will want to stay at the Shamrock Hotel. And you can’t have Willie Mays and other ball players staying at a segregated hotel.”\textsuperscript{56} Hofheinz responded that the city would have to do something about that before the 1962 season.\textsuperscript{57}

Although Giles recognized the importance of African-American voters, recalling “I recruited Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, and Ernie Banks to do radio and TV spots promoting a positive vote on the referendum,” he did not recognize African Americans’ roles in integrating Houston.\textsuperscript{58} Nowhere in his description of the integration of Houston did he mention Mease, Stearns, the PYA, protests and boycotts that had led to integrated lunch counters in Houston in 1960, or the numerous calls for the integration of sporting

\textsuperscript{54} Giles, \textit{Pouring Six Beers at a Time}, 60.

\textsuperscript{55} Cole, \textit{No Color Is My Kind}, 78.

\textsuperscript{56} Cole, \textit{No Color Is My Kind}, 78.

\textsuperscript{57} Cole, \textit{No Color Is My Kind}, 98.

\textsuperscript{58} Giles, \textit{Pouring Six Beers at a Time}, 60.
events that appeared in *The Houston Informer*. Protests and boycotts were an attempt to demonstrate African Americans’ status as American citizens.

Despite promises to integrate the stadium in public, some officials hedged on the idea, seemingly in an effort to win votes from racist whites. In refusing to publicly comment if the stadium would be integrated, County Judge William Elliott said, “we have worked so hard on this project we hoped the racial question would not be injected into it. Our primary concern is to get the bonds passed.” According to the *Houston Chronicle*, an “H.S.A. spokesman said the stadium could not be segregated” but “the league secretary Fred Fleig in Cincinnati said [...] segregation] is a matter to be handled locally.” In a frequently asked questions exposition in advance of the referendum,

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60 Despite the focus on the Civil Rights Movement and Jim Crow laws, Houston did not just have a black-white racial binary. The city was home to a large number of Mexican-American and Creole residents whose presence complicated the black-white binary that existed in the city’s laws. Before the rise of Black Power and the Chicano movement in the late 1960s, leading Mexican-American activists focused their energies on ensuring that Mexican-Americans, legally coded as white, received the full benefits and privileges of whiteness. Because the effort to integrate the Astrodome, and the rest of Houston came before the rise of the Black Power and Chicano Movements, it largely functioned on a black-white dichotomy though. For example, as Steptoe notes “the most prominent Mexican American activist in Houston, Felix Tijerina, staunchly opposed black activists’ participation in nonviolent direct-action campaigns in the 1960s” and “refused to allow black Houstonians to enter his ‘white only’ restaurant.” Tijerina thought that the best course for African Americans was to “remember that his best friend has been the white man of good will” and not anger anyone who might employ African Americans. Although the racial dynamics of Houston were far more than a black and white story, the legal process of ending Jim Crow segregation laws was not. See Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 189-90.

Marshall Verniaud of the *Houston Post* wrote that “nobody will give a definite answer to” whether the stadium would be segregated. “To do so would automatically alienate a large number of potential voters, regardless of what answer was given.”

Some voters opposed the bonds, not because they wanted to maintain segregation, but because they thought the money could be used to help struggling Houstonians. Just before the vote, letter writers to local papers were split on the idea of funding the stadium with municipal support. One argued against it saying, “all over this county and Houston there are residents who have bad streets, polluted water, open sewage, [and] sorry (or none at all) public transportation.”

Even though the vote was close, concerns about better use of public money and a desire to maintain the racial status quo were not enough to defeat the bonds thanks largely to support from the African-American community. Early reports from the evening edition of the *Houston Press* indicated that voting in the 1961 election was heavy in some predominately African-American parts of the county and lower in white precincts. Election analysis in the *Houston Chronicle* noted that “Negro boxes went for the bonds, by about two to one.” The day after the election the *Houston Press* noted that “most

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predominately Negro precincts voted heavily in favor of the bonds.”  

More voters turned out than had ever voted in a special bond election in Harris County’s history to that date by nearly 45,000 voters. The final tally was 61,568 in support and 54,127 opposed. 

Just because the bonds passed with significant African-American support does not mean the referendum tells a complete picture of support for the bonds or the dome. The poll tax, although only $1.50, kept many away from the polls as did a complicated property tax requirement specifically for bond elections. One analysis discovered that nearly 100,000 new voters registered in Harris County after the poll tax was abolished nationwide in 1966. County Clerk R. E. Turrentine, Jr. estimated that about 200,000 residents of Harris County, out of around 392,000 who had paid the poll tax, met the property-owning requirements. Without those restrictions, it is quite likely the vote margin would have been even larger.

After the election, many public accommodations in Houston remained segregated. Hotel segregation was an image problem for Houston and the HSA as one media executive had predicted to Hofheinz in early 1961. In his autobiography, Bill Giles wrote


67 Scarlett, “Bonds for Stadium Win in Record Vote.”


that in 1961 he invited African American and future Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Gibson to speak to a meeting of the Houston Sportswriters Association held at the Shamrock Hilton. Although Gibson was the featured speaker, he was denied a room until Giles persuaded the hotel to let Gibson stay in the suite that Hofheinz rented on an annual basis.71 Realizing that further overt discrimination was likely to hurt the new franchise, Giles wrote that “George Kirksey and I met with the hotel and restaurant association and convinced them that if Houston was going to become a truly ‘Major League City,’ that they had to allow the visiting teams to stay in the good hotels and eat in the fine restaurants. […] The Shamrock Hilton […] was the first to integrate. Eventually all the hotels and restaurants joined the Hilton in time for our first game.”72

Before the Astrodome’s construction could kick into high gear, Hofheinz showed signs of sticking to his promise to Mease and the National League. HSA purchased the Buffs before the 1961 season, the team’s last year in existence.73 Lloyd C. A. Wells noted in The Houston Informer “it won’t be long before we actually see if the HSA means what they say about cutting out segregation at their games. […] If [the Buffs] allow all of the people to go in the same gate, sit where they please in lieu of the price ticket they buy, then they will be starting off in gaining our support at the new stadium.”74 According to

71 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 44. That meeting is not mentioned in either of Gibson’s two autobiographies and in 1961 Gibson had yet to establish himself as a dominant starting pitcher, so perhaps it did not happen as Giles recalled.

72 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 44.

73 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 96.

Hofheinz, when he bought the Buffs “I called in the newspapers and told them […] we’ll [integrate] without any fanfare. My policy then and now is an all-green policy. If you’ve got the green you can buy a seat wherever you want to sit.” Hofheinz explained after he integrated the stands, “there were no phone calls, no protests, because no one knew what was happening.”75 At the end of 1961, George Kirksey echoed Hofheinz, telling a Houston Informer reporter, HSA “would have only one segregation rule. Green is the color that will be given first, last, and only preference.” He continued, it “would be Houston’s team without regard to any racial preference.”76

The site Hofheinz and the HSA selected for the dome was primarily suburban-accessible. It would eventually be surrounded by roads, highways, and a massive parking lot. Baseball could hardly have been more divorced from the city than it would be in the Astrodome. The massive parking lot would give fans easy entry to and exit from nearby highways, which skirted the congested downtown area.77 HSA would later claim, “it will not be necessary to enter the downtown area to reach the Astrodome regardless of which direction the out-of-town patron may be coming from.”78

75 Tex Maule, “The Greatest Showman on Earth, and He’s the First to Admit It,” Sports Illustrated, April 21, 1969: 38.

76 “G Kirksey Says No Baseball Bias Here.”

77 Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet, Series 3, Box 46, Folder 18 Stadiums – Astrodome, American League Papers, A. Bartlett Giamatti Library and Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. [Hereafter HoF]

78 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 90.
About a year after the bond election, HSA broke ground for the “World’s First Air Conditioned Domed Stadium.”79 In stereotypical Texas fashion, the dignitaries who gathered to break ground at the future site of the Astrodome did not do so with spades, but by firing revolvers loaded with wax bullets into the ground.80 In Jim Crow style, the groundbreaking for a ballpark that was not going to be segregated was both separate and unequal. The first, large group of men to fire revolvers into the ground were all white. They received much of the attention and their photographs ran in the local press. When they were done, Mease and two other African-American community leaders fired revolvers into the ground. They received far less attention and their photograph did not run in the local papers.81 Following the groundbreaking, workers dug a giant hole where the dome would eventually be constructed, but did not do much else. Before any construction could begin, the hole filled with rainwater.

Hofheinz and the HSA had been granted a team in the National League to begin play in 1962, but it quickly became evident that the Astrodome would be little more than a hole in the ground by opening day of that season. The team needed a temporary home and Busch Stadium would not suffice. The new Houston franchise, then called the Colt .45s, played for three seasons in Colt Stadium, a quickly constructed, single-deck ballpark without even a partial roof to protect fans from the Texas sun and rain. Like the


Astrodome, it cost more than anticipated. Also like the Astrodome, it was integrated; The Houston Informer even described the “racial conditions” at the park as “excellent.”

Even though it was put together quickly and open-air, Hofheinz tried to create an experience that was similar to what he envisioned for the domed stadium. Hofheinz tried to attract women, in part by hiring “an attractive, imaginative blonde with a journalistic background and a rare enthusiasm for baseball” as promotions director. Kirksey argued “the success of this ball club will be in direct proportion to the promotion we generate among women and children.” He noted, “even our stadium was built to appeal to women. The colors are turquoise, chartreuse and Rio Grande orange, hues that would dress up a rainbow.” Hofheinz also hired female ushers, called “Triggerettes.”

Colt Stadium featured several other amenities that Hofheinz would incorporate into the Astrodome. It had 13,000 parking spots and all employees wore old-West style consumes to match what was then the team’s theme. Tickets were colored to match fans’ seats. Hofheinz installed extended dugouts at Colt Stadium. Kirksey said the dugouts

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82 Trumpbour and Womack, The Eighth Wonder of the World, 23.
83 “Roman Mejias Sparks 45’s to Opening Day Eleven-Two Win,” The Houston Informer, April 14, 1962.
85 Nealon, “Colt Will Lasso Gal Fans—Hire Woman Publicist.”
86 Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” 32.
88 Lisle, Modern Coliseum, 158 and Gast, The Astrodome, 97.
had to be 75-feet long in part so HSA “could take care of as many people as possible who want those seats behind them.” Hofheinz experimented with themed restaurants and exclusive clubs too. The Stadium Club was called the “Fast Draw Club;” it sold Tex-Mex food and featured wooden floors with sawdust scattered about to give it an old-west feeling. Despite those attractions, the Colt .45s drew fewer than one million fans during each of their three seasons at Colt Stadium, likely because the team was bad, their stadium was bland, and most importantly, it was exposed to the elements.

As the architects’ design of the Astrodome developed in 1961 and 1962, they realized it would cost more to complete than the first bonds would cover. Some of the features added after the initial estimate were cushioned seats and convention facilities. In late May 1962, the architects informed the county the dome could not be built for the $15 million earmarked for construction from the 1961 bonds. Hofheinz convinced the county to hold another bond election, this time on $9.6 million more in general obligation bonds for stadium construction. That election was held in December 1962 and faced many of the same conditions as the first vote. One of the only differences was that HCCO advertisements in the local African-American press were more direct about the dome’s integrated status. They used phrases like “for use by all the people,” better things for all


90 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 49.


92 Lisle, Modern Coliseum, 154-6 and Nealon, et. al, “The Campaign for MLB in Houston,” 37.
of us,” and “vote for the new Domed Stadium where we will always be welcomed.”93
Again, the election was successful, largely on the backing of African-American voters
who, if they listened to an editorial in the Houston Forward Times, voted for the bonds
because of the dome’s “vast contributions to race relations.”94 The Houston Chronicle
reported overwhelming support from African American areas of Harris County, crediting
African-American votes for the margin of victory.95 The bonds were approved by 42,911
to 36,110.96 The original 1958 bonds, which were never sold, were eventually
invalidated. With all the bonds approved and the ground breaking taken care of
substantial construction began in March 1963.97

In total, HSA put up $6 million for the dome’s construction, the rest of the
funding, $34 million, came from city, county, and state sources.98 HSA agreed to pay a
maximum rent of $750,000 per year for forty years—less than the Dodgers paid in
property tax by the end of the 1960s. That rent was supposed to pay off the interest on the


97 Houston Sports Association, Astrodome.

bonds every year.\textsuperscript{99} In 1971, however, one stadium architect admitted “we haven’t found any stadium that pays for itself.”\textsuperscript{100}

Although it was primarily designed for baseball, the dome was never intended as solely a baseball venue. Where Walter O’Malley had considered a number of alternate uses for Dodger Stadium after it opened, Hofheinz planned the Astrodome as a multi-use site from the start. Before the park opened, one report noted that HSA aimed to secure both of the 1968 political conventions for the dome.\textsuperscript{101} The Astrodome would eventually host basketball games, rodeos, craft fairs, car shows, political conventions, and many other events that would have been impractical in an open-air stadium.

The financial benefits of multiple uses were clear to stadium designers like Richard Praeger who noted, “it is economically unsound to consider a multi-million dollar investment based on receipts for eighty games a year. […] additional uses must be sought.”\textsuperscript{102} Along with John Waterbury, Praeger also wrote, “the economic key to many of these new ball parks stems from their convertibility factor and year-round use capabilities.”\textsuperscript{103} That was essential in the Astrodome that HSA estimated cost about

\textsuperscript{99} Nealon, et. al, “The Campaign for MLB in Houston,” 37.

\textsuperscript{100} “All-American Monument,” \textit{Progressive Architecture} (November 1971), 86.

\textsuperscript{101} Dave Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium,” \textit{Texas Parade} n.d., Series 3, Box 46, Folder 18 Stadiums – Astrodome, American League Papers, HoF.


\textsuperscript{103} R. Q. Praeger and John W. Waterbury, “Convertibility,” \textit{The American City} (August 1966): 100.
$10,000 per day to operate even when there was no event planned, which meant the dome needed about 125 events per year just to break even.\footnote{Roger Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” \textit{The New Yorker}, May 14, 1966, 135 and Zarko Franks, “Dome Brings Millions to City,” \textit{Houston Chronicle}, date unknown.}

In addition to financial reasons, multi-use stadiums like the Astrodome reflected the architectural trends of the era. As one architectural historian noted, Modernist architects of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s “strove to create non-specific interior spaces which could then be arranged to best suit the particular function of a given space.”\footnote{Allgood, 13.} Modernist architects looked not to the past and architectural history for their inspiration, but rather looked to create something for the future. They aimed to avoid nostalgia in their designs as well as any “allusive ornamentation.”\footnote{Allgood, 36.} Although Hofheinz employed all sorts of ornamentation inside the Astrodome, from the outside the dome appeared utilitarian.

Planning for the Astrodome began in an era when many teams were struggling to get fans to the park. Hofheinz thought baseball’s problems were “a matter of giving more service at the store.”\footnote{“The Business of Baseball,” \textit{Newsweek}, April 26, 1965: 67.} He made sure the design of the Astrodome had a more to offer than older parks. Clark Nealon, a long-time sports reporter in Houston wrote that “Roy
Hofheinz was in baseball to make money, not for the love of the game … He produced baseball as the grand opera … with all the trimmings, the comforts, for fans.”

Hofheinz was closely involved in the design and construction of the park. His involvement also contributed to the dome’s escalating cost. In 1962, Hofheinz promised, the Astrodome “will antiquate every other structure of this type in the world.” Freed from having to worry about winning public approval for more bonds, Hofheinz made sure the design matched what he envisioned. Hofheinz solicited feedback on the dome’s plans from the Dodgers’ Dick Walsh in May 1963. Walsh made a number of recommendations Hofheinz followed up on including adding escalators, numerous directions signs, and concessions stands that blocked as little of the concourse as possible. Among the other topics Hofheinz discussed with the architects were sight lines, cleaning, and the design of women’s restrooms. One of the dome’s lead architects said Hofheinz “became the leader, and it was a good thing because without Roy we would not have the [Astrodome].” That architect also said Hofheinz “was always running on our tails. He was always getting new ideas and saying, ‘let’s try this.’”

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Adding those new ideas was complicated by the park’s municipal funding. Design changes had to be approved by the county commissioners who did not have extra money to pay for cost overruns. Some of the changes Hofheinz called for in 1963 were relatively simple like making the dugouts 30 feet longer than the initial plan. Others, like adding the skybox level at the top of the dome were much more complex. The dome’s initial plans called for massive air ducts at the top of the park, but in 1963, at Hofheinz’s behest, the dome’s architects began planning luxury boxes there.\textsuperscript{114} Walsh provided Hofheinz with feedback on the skybox plan in May 1963 and at the end of the month, architects were planning for the boxes’ specifications.\textsuperscript{115} In November 1963, the architects discussed what they had to redesign to make space for the elevators to the skyboxes.\textsuperscript{116} Hofheinz did not alert the county commissioners of the change until March 1964 and did not officially request permission to build skyboxes until that June.\textsuperscript{117} In April, a \textit{Houston Chronicle} editorial explained that Hofheinz wanted the county to pay $153,000 to build the boxes. That editorial asked “why [Hofheinz] waited [to ask the county for the money] until the contractor said he had to know right now or the rooms couldn’t be built.”\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{114} Gast, 107, Giles, 67, and “Domed Stadium Changes 29 May 1963,” Minchew Papers.

\textsuperscript{115} Dick Walsh to Roy Hofheinz, May 22, 1963, Minchew Papers.


\textsuperscript{117} Roy Hofheinz to Judge Bill Elliott, “Harris County Domed Stadium,” June 13, 1964, Minchew Papers.

Ultimately, HSA put $1 million of its own money toward the construction and furnishing of skyboxes.\textsuperscript{119}

Hofheinz made sure his plans were enacted as well. One observer witnessed him sitting in his office in the not-yet-complete Astrodome “with a large pair of field glasses [watching] all of the workers installing chairs and doing other things to complete the building.” If he saw someone not working hard enough for his liking, he would “get in touch with the contractor’s people … and say, ‘Hey, that fellow up there’s not doing anything. Get him on the job!’”\textsuperscript{120} Hofheinz once said “it’s all right to delegate authority. But I want to make sure every detail on this place is perfect. If you farm out even a little of the detail work, pretty soon you find yourself letting a lot of it get away.”\textsuperscript{121}

Hofheinz was so confident that every detail was perfect and that the dome would be such a draw that he predicted Houstonians “are going to have to change their habits. They used to wait until they could see what the weather was going to be before they got their tickets. Now that baseball can be played rain or shine, people are going to have to plan ahead and make reservations in advance.”\textsuperscript{122} Hofheinz had leveraged his political skills, charisma, and the promises of the Civil Rights Movement to fund an almost inconceivable dream of a domed baseball stadium.

\textsuperscript{119} Gast, 134-5.
\textsuperscript{120} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 305.
Opening and Impressions

The Harris County Domed Stadium was finally ready for baseball in April 1965. Before moving into the new home, Hofheinz renamed his team the Astros to better match the park’s futuristic feel. He also began referring to the park as the Astrodome and the name stuck. Hofheinz was confident. He told a journalist before opening day, “I can’t think of anything that can possibly go wrong […] We’ve checked and double-checked. There won’t even be a traffic problem, even though we expect a sell-out.”

The Astros opened the park with five exhibitions against two teams over three days. Those five games drew nearly 190,000 fans. For the first exhibition game, all hotels and motels within ten miles of the dome (this included downtown Houston) were fully booked. Hofheinz claimed that 65% of opening day tickets were sold to fans who lived outside of Harris County and 40% from beyond Texas.

Nearly all of the 47,000 fans who came to the first exhibition game at the dome arrived by car and parked in the dome’s 30,000 parking spots at a cost of 50¢ per car. The massive parking lot provided fans with their first in-person impression of the dome whether they first came to the park on opening day or later in the season. The Astrodome offered more parking spaces than any other ballpark. By some estimates, it had the largest

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125 “1965 Season Official League Admissions,” George Kirksey Papers, University of Houston Special Collections. [Hereafter Kirksey Papers]
126 Lipsyte, “Johnson Attends Opening of Houston’s Astrodome.”
127 Gast, The Astrodome, 124.
parking lot in the world.\textsuperscript{128} Aside from the Los Angeles Angels—then playing at Dodger Stadium—the Astrodome provided more parking than all American League parks combined.\textsuperscript{129} HSA spent $62,000 on signs to help fans find their cars in the massive, symmetrical parking lot.\textsuperscript{130} Those signs did not always work though. Journalist Larry McMurtry reported that on his first trip to the park “after three hours in the Dome my sense of direction was in” bad shape “and I exited on the north side of the stadium, well over a mile from my car.”\textsuperscript{131} The team offered free “Rocket Trains” (similar to the trams that O’Malley tried and discarded at Dodger Stadium) to ferry fans to the dome from the outlying areas of the parking lot.\textsuperscript{132}

With the potential of that many cars coming to the park, HSA wanted to make the trip as efficient as possible. A team employee, stationed in a traffic observation platform on the dome’s roof, helped to direct traffic by radio.\textsuperscript{133} According to the Astrodome’s designers, even if the parking lot was completely full, it could be emptied in only 22 minutes.\textsuperscript{134} Half-full, with 15,000 cars, only 1,000 fewer than the capacity of the parking


\textsuperscript{129} Houston Sports Association, \textit{Inside the Astrodome}, 91.


\textsuperscript{132} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 301.

\textsuperscript{133} Houston Sports Association, \textit{Astrodome}.

\textsuperscript{134} Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.”
lot at Dodger Stadium, they estimated the lot could be emptied in 12 to 15 minutes.\footnote{Houston Sports Association, \textit{Inside the Astrodome}, 90.} Reality did not quite match this prediction. After the first game, a sellout, the \textit{Houston Chronicle} reported the parking lot was empty in 40 minutes and quoted Leroy Mouser, a night captain in the police patrol division saying, “we didn’t have any trouble at all. It was well executed.”\footnote{Ted D’Andriole, “Traffic Clears Stadium in 40 Minutes,” \textit{Houston Chronicle}, April 10, 1965.} On a night when police directing traffic reported no issues, emptying the lot took nearly twice as long as the designers estimated.

Brochures produced by HSA portrayed the stadium as grand, modern, and palatial. HSA described it as “a monument to man’s daring imagination, ingenuity, [and] intelligence.”\footnote{Houston Sports Association, \textit{Astrodome}.} They frequently referred to the Astrodome as the “eighth wonder of the world.”\footnote{Houston Sports Association, \textit{Astrodome}.} HSA claimed, “the sports fan who comes to the Astrodome steps right into the Age of Automation” and celebrated “the Stadium Control Center, a 17-foot console, [that] combines the most modern system of electronic and mechanical gadgets, gauges, scanners, testers and instruments of its type ever put together in one operation.”\footnote{Houston Sports Association, \textit{Inside the Astrodome}, 52.} The Astrodome represented America’s bright innovative future but HSA also balanced references to technology with references to antiquities. They wrote “the Astrodome is the Taj Mahal of all stadia from Rome’s Colosseum on down to this day.”\footnote{Houston Sports Association, \textit{Inside the Astrodome}, 8.}
Public reaction to the Astrodome fell into several categories including astonishment. Evangelist Billy Graham called it a “great wonder of the world” putting it almost beyond comprehension. A journalist from New Orleans argued that the first astronaut to walk on the moon “won’t be any more awed by the sight than you’ll be the first time you step inside the Astrodome. […] It’s like stepping out of the real world into a land of make-believe.” Astros’ player Larry Dirker said he “felt like [he] had walked into the next century” when he first entered the dome.

Others turned to the most elegant and inventive things they could think of, both real and fictional, as a reference. Joe Trimble of the New York Daily News wrote, “any stadium built in the future will be obsolete before its doors are opened if it doesn’t contain the magnificent climate-control of this Taj Mahal of sports.” Arthur Daley of the New York Times wrote, “the only sight this wandering reporter ever saw that surpasses it is the exquisite Taj Mahal at Agra in India.” Chester L. Smith of the Pittsburgh Press said the Astrodome “makes the Taj Mahal look like an abandoned

141 Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.
142 “What Writers are Saying About Dome,” Houston Post, April 10, 1965.
143 Quoted in Gast, The Astrodome, 113.
outhouse.” Associated Press reporter Joe Reichler wrote, the dome “looks like it might have been built by Jules Verne in his most fantastic dream.”

The Astrodome’s color scheme turned some observers to Walt Disney’s creations for an appropriate comparison. Blackie Sherrod of the Dallas-Times-Herald wrote “when they turned the lights on, I thought Walt Disney must have built it. All that color jumps at you.” Walt Disney himself was reportedly awed by the colors of the dome including different colored seats on every level and a news account paraphrased him as having “said the total effect of the stadium [was] ‘terrific’” and “after a while you hardly realize you are indoors.”

Lou Maysel of the Austin American wrote, “baseball in the Astrodome is an orgy of color. It is as if Roy Hofheinz marched into a paint store, grabbed up the color book and said ‘Give me 500 gallons of each of these colors.’”

Some saw the dome as a sea change for the city and the game. Robert Lipsyte wrote in the New York Times that “nobody can ever see [the Astrodome] and go back to Kalamazoo, Chicago, New York, you name it, and still think [Houston] is bush league,

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147 “What Nation’s Writers Think of Our Dome.”

148 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 44.


150 “What Writers are Saying About Dome.”
that this town is Indian territory.”

He thought the dome would make a town where “men walk with open shotguns and one can buy a good automatic pistol for less than $50” modern and big league. Dick Peebles of the Houston Chronicle called the Astrodome “the greatest advancement in major league baseball since the lights were turned on in Cincinnati.”

The shape of the Astrodome also attracted attention, not all of it positive. HSA wrote that “from the outside, the gently curving blister-bubble roof resembles nothing so much as a lunar landscape.” In Texas Observer, Larry McMurtry wrote the roof looked “like the working end of a gigantic rub-on deodorant.” From the inside, McMurtry discussed “the brief, unpleasant sense of disorientation that sometimes afflicts visitors when they first enter.” He continued, “the amount of physical space in the Dome is very great, but the psychological space is disproportionately small.”

Some writers criticized the dome, perhaps out of jealousy. Jim Murray, a syndicated Los Angeles sportswriter, rejected any association between the Astrodome

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154 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 8.


and classical architecture. He wrote, “it’s not Cheops Pyramids, The Colossus at Rhodes. It was built by bulldozers, mechanical hoists and all the inventive paraphernalia of the 20th century.” He did not find it at all impressive, continuing, “as an engineering feat, it probably ranks well below the Holland Tunnel—or even the electric light.”

Larry McMurtry, writing in *Texas Observer*, argued “it seemed a bit conscienceless for a city with leprous slums, an inadequate charity hospital, a mediocre public library, a needy symphony, and other cultural and humanitarian deficiencies to sink more than $31 million in public funds into a ballpark.” That said, the vast majority of first impressions were of awe, wonder, and astonishment.

**Layout and Seating**

Although the dome was massive, the seating and layout were both intended to make it feel more manageable and ensure visibility of the field. The park covered 9.5 acres and had a diameter of 710 feet. The playing field was 25 feet below ground level and visible without obstruction from each of 41,000 “theatrical style” seats. Hofheinz bragged “this is the only ballpark in America where no vendor ever passes in front of a seat.”

The seats were situated on six levels, each with its own front row. All of the seats pointed to a spot just beyond second base from where the outfield seats and the infield

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seats were nearly equidistant.\textsuperscript{162} Because there were six tiers and a host of elevators, the maximum vertical distance any fan had to walk was only 32 feet, far less than many parks.\textsuperscript{163} Hofheinz wanted a park built this way in part because he was “aware of the status symbol of walk-down seats.”\textsuperscript{164}

The biggest status symbol and perhaps the most influential feature of the Astrodome was its huge and numerous luxury skyboxes. The 53 skyboxes with a capacity of either 24, 30, or 54 fans could only be reached by private elevators, so patrons did not have to mix with the masses.\textsuperscript{165} All were leased on five-year terms, a 24-person box cost $15,000 per year, a 30-person box cost $18,600 per year, and the two 54-person boxes cost $34,000 a year.\textsuperscript{166} Hofheinz’s son, Fred (who would later also become mayor of Houston), was in charge of leasing them to clients. The first clients were mostly oil magnates, but astronauts like Alan Shepard also leased one.\textsuperscript{167} Famed baseball writer Roger Angell noted skyboxes were “the worst seats for baseball in the Astrodome,” but fans could also watch the game on a closed-circuit TV from their box.\textsuperscript{168} Other skybox

\textsuperscript{162} Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.

\textsuperscript{163} Ralph Dodd, “Portable Grass?” \textit{The Houston Post}, June 14, 1964.

\textsuperscript{164} Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” \textit{36}.

\textsuperscript{165} Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.


\textsuperscript{167} Gast, \textit{The Astrodome}, 134-5.

\textsuperscript{168} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” \textit{131}. 

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amenities included a Dow Jones ticker, ice maker, gold telephone, silver coffee urn, and private bathroom.\textsuperscript{169}

As a \textit{Sports Illustrated} reporter noted, each box was “decorated in a riot of astounding styles from western to Oriental to heaven-knows-what” by Hofheinz and named after that design theme.\textsuperscript{170} Some of those names included, Imperial Orient, The Red Dragon, Pagoda Den, Panjim Emerald, Egyptian Autumn, Old South, Southern Plantation, Old Mexico, The Aztec, Hispania, Spanish Lady, Laverne Aloha, Tahitian Holiday, Goliwoggs, and Petroleum Room.\textsuperscript{171} Hofheinz said he chose unique furnishings because he “didn’t want anyone to come in here and say, ‘I saw the very same thing last week in Joe’s Bar.’”\textsuperscript{172}

Although Hofheinz told a journalist, “whether you’ve got on a coat or a cocktail dress, you’re going to get in the act and shout when someone hits a home run,” fans looked and behaved differently in skyboxes than they did in other ballparks and even the rest of the Astrodome.\textsuperscript{173} Coats and ties were standard attire for many skybox patrons and becoming increasingly uncommon elsewhere. One Houston journalist argued that “to Hofheinz, the plush Skyboxes around the top of the dome are not only—maybe not even


\textsuperscript{172} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 311.

primarily—places to watch a ball game. They are sales booths.”

According to his biographer, Hofheinz thought about skyboxes as “expense account entertainment” as opposed to a place to closely follow the game. Sportswriter Jim Murray argued if you sat in a skybox, “you don’t have to watch the ball game if you don’t want to. […] There is no evidence anybody does and, to tell the truth, if I had my own butler, Dow Jones ticker, bedroom and Corot paintings, I’d be cussed if I’d want to waste them all watching the hit-and-run play.” Fred Hofheinz recalled the skyboxes were built “to attract people who used baseball games as a backdrop to sell their products.”

Although businesses had used baseball to entertain clients for decades, the Astrodome took that to its extreme and offered a level of luxury not available in other parks.

Except for the cheapest seats, all Astrodome seats had upholstered bottoms and backs. The center-field seats, the seats that served as the Astrodome’s version of bleacher seats, offered only upholstered bottoms. HSA claimed fans would “be able to sit in a chair as comfortable as any found in the world’s finest theatres and opera houses.” The American Seating Company argued that “even in theatres, music halls, churches, government buildings, auditoriums, or sports arenas, no more comfortable chairs have

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176 Murray, “Houston’s Astrodome Example of How Hot Air Flows in Texas.”
178 Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.”
179 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 41.
been provided.”  

One fan said going to a game at the dome was the “first ball game I ever been at where I enjoyed the seats.”  

HSA bragged that the dome’s seats would be the “first baseball seats to be vacuumed, instead of wiped or washed.”  

Hofheinz’s luxury for all extended to fans’ backsides, a far cry from baseball’s gritty history.  

Sixty-five percent of the seats in the ballpark were behind or near the dugouts because, just as with Colt Stadium, the Astrodome had unusually long dugouts. Hofheinz told a reporter that “the reason for [the 120-foot dugouts] is that when a guy drives all the way up from Cuero [about 150 miles from Houston] to see a ball game, he wants to go back and tell the folks that he had a seat either behind or near the dugout. It is a status symbol.”  

Nearly two-thirds of fans, so long as they could afford it, could have the luxury of those high-status seats.  

In total, the dome included 2,058 skybox seats, which cost an average of $7.70 per seat per game (they could only be purchased as an entire box and for an entire season). The 1,218 club box seats cost $5.50 each. The box seats at the field (10,532), mezzanine (1,920), loge (4,912), and upper levels (2,536) cost $3.50 each. Reserved seats in the mezzanine (7,282) and upper level (9,205) cost $2.50 each. The 1,423 general admission seats on the mezzanine cost $2 each. The 3,913 pavilion (center field) seats cost $1.50 each as did the thirty wheelchair accessible seats on the mezzanine. The


181 Lipsyte, “Johnson Attends Opening of Houston’s Astrodome.”

182 Houston Sports Association, *Astrodome*.

Astrodome also provided seats with the game piped in on the radio so that blind fans could enjoy the experience.184

Despite the luxurious and corporate appeal of skyboxes to the über wealthy, Hofheinz said “we also have the best seats and service at the dollar-fifty level” and claimed the dome offered “a seat at a price for everyone.”185 Hofheinz bragged, “let’s talk about real grandeur, about the guy who spends $1.50 to see a ball game and can sit on foam rubber, and have a reasonable meal without having to eat hot dogs.”186 Moreover, he foresaw a bond between the elite fans and the rest of the park, claiming “whether you’re wearing a T-shirt or a $300 tailored suit, you’re going to jump up and shout when someone hits a home run.”187 Hofheinz claimed, “we have thought of everybody, from the workingman right up to high society.”188 He expanded upon that saying, “what we have here is a new concept in professional sport. Baseball is the great common denominator. So here we give the bleacher fan an air-conditioned comfort for the same price he paid for an eight-inch board in the blazing sun or rain somewhere else.”189

Hofheinz argued he had to offer luxury to all fans because of Houstonians’ lack of familiarity with baseball. He told a reporter, “baseball people will tell you that you don’t

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184 Gast, The Astrodome, 126.

185 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 9.

186 Lipsyte, “Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas.”


need [luxury], just give them a cracker barrel seat and a stale frankfurter and they’ll be happy. Maybe you can do that with a real baseball fan but we’re just educating the people to baseball here.”

His son Fred noted that facilities like the Astrodome opened the game to new audiences. He told a reporter, “enormous new markets opened up and the Dome was part of that: If you were to go to a Houston Buffs minor league game, you would have seen the die-hard fans … that guy was the minority at the Dome. And at the Dome the wives came. The children came. Suddenly it was a whole new milieu of fans.”

Some journalists bought into Hofheinz’s analysis that the Astrodome provided luxury for all. Before the dome opened, the editorial board of the Baytown (Texas) Sun “saw the elaborate plans that are unfolding that will be of interest not only to the VIPs who come our way but also to Mr. Every Day Citizen. […] The facilities are so fine that the person holding a ticket stub to a bleacher seat in center field will be better taken care of at any sports, civic or religious event than the person holding the highest price box seat stubs in other stadiums.”

On the ground observers did not always report that the dome attracted an economically diverse crowd though. Walking through the parking lot, Larry McMurtry noted “that all the cars were new, or nearly so,” suggesting that all the fans were fairly well off. Hofheinz himself claimed, the Astrodome drew “by far a higher

190 Lipsyte, “Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas.”
191 Rushin, “How We Got Here: Home in the Dome,” 47.
percentage of fans in the upper economic brackets than you’ll find in any other park,” but the rhetoric of inclusion remained powerful.\textsuperscript{194}

That rhetoric was reinforced by the “ease of movement” that HSA claimed was “one of the trademarks of the Astrodome.”\textsuperscript{195} Unlike Dodger Stadium, and with the exception of the skyboxes, fans could move around the park with ease even though they could only sit in their ticketed seats. HSA’s goal was to “enable crowds to enter, move about and leave the Domed Stadium with the least amount of confusion and difficulty.”\textsuperscript{196} Roger Angell wrote the Astrodome’s “ramps are gentle [and] its portals and aisles brilliantly marked.”\textsuperscript{197} Those ramps, Astrodome publications bragged, made it so that the entire stands could be emptied in just nine minutes.\textsuperscript{198} Thanks to 9,000 signs and markers, HSA wrote, “if you can see and read and will follow directions, it’s going to be awfully hard to get lost at the Astrodome.”\textsuperscript{199} Hofheinz was characteristically blunt. He told a journalist, “a person that gets lost in this stadium will have to be color-blind or an idiot. For those, we will have ushers, beautiful ones.”\textsuperscript{200} Fans’ ability to see more luxurious

\textsuperscript{194} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” 135.

\textsuperscript{195} Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 9.

\textsuperscript{196} Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 85.

\textsuperscript{197} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” 130.

\textsuperscript{198} Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.

\textsuperscript{199} Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 88.

\textsuperscript{200} Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” 36.
sections of the park, even if they could not afford to sit in them, made it feel like that level of luxury was available to all.

Historian Benjamin Lisle argues that at the dome “the hoi polloi were invited to imaginatively enjoy luxury status by association” and that it was a site of “the fantasy of universal and democratic luxury.”²⁰¹ The stratification inside the park, however, meant an experience in which each socioeconomic class had the ability to pay enough to be separated from all the classes below it when they were in their seats. Although scholars of the Astrodome have referred to it as “a modern public square, a place where people of all income levels could come together to share a relatively common experience” many people were left out.²⁰² The Astrodome’s ability to draw a more economically diverse fan base than older parks cannot be divorced from its hyper-separation and multiple tiers, suggesting that division was necessary in order to draw “people of all income levels.” Luxury for all rested on exclusion and barriers.

Hofheinz and the HSA did not seem to think much about the experience of African-American fans, relegating them to a secondary position. HSA’s 250-page souvenir book, Inside the Astrodome, was full of photographs and images of fans, HSA officials, and players, but the only black face who was not an athlete belonged to Joe Louis Holiday, who worked in “mail and delivery” for HSA.²⁰³ A 1965 article described

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²⁰¹ Benjamin D. Lisle, “‘We Make a Big Effort to Bring Out the Ladies’: Visual Representation of Women in the Modern American Stadium” in The Visual in Sport, ed. Mike Huggins and Mike O’Mahony (New York: Routledge, 2012), 118.


²⁰³ Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 107.
Holidays’ job as “butler-bartender-cook-dishwasher for the Astros Box.” Similarly, a video shot during the dome’s first year shows overwhelmingly white fans. Hofheinz told the Houston Chronicle, “we did a lot of research before choosing the colors [of the skybox level]. We made sure the color complemented the complexion and clothing of women. It took us two weeks to get the right color of blue. Many blues would give ladies a pasty-looking complexion.” His concern about women’s potential “pasty-looking complexion” was almost assuredly limited to white women. He likely could not envision African-American women sitting in the most exclusive and expensive part of the dome.

Additionally, the skyboxes’ expensive reputation might have kept some poorer fans away. A 1973 survey revealed that sports fans in Houston did not attend more Astros games because the tickets were too expensive. However, most fans thought general admission tickets were more expensive than they actually were. Although the survey did not ask for reasons why fans had that misconception, it might have been due to the skyboxes and other elite areas of the park that gave the Astrodome an aura of wealth, not affordability.

Even the one place in the dome seemingly designed for poorer fans did not consistently draw lower-class fans. Although Roger Angell thought the dome made fans

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204 Scarlett, “Goldphone.”

205 “‘The Astrodome,’ 16 mm color positive release print,” Minchew Papers.


of spectacle and not baseball, he thought he found a few “true” baseball fans at the
Astrodome. In the seats beyond centerfield, where fans could not see the scoreboard
and only the seat bottoms were cushioned, Angell encountered one group of fans who he
deemed behaved “properly.” They were a racially diverse group who were younger than
other fans, wore short sleeves, yelled at the players, and cheered when the Astros made a
big play. A Houston journalist, however, came to a very different conclusion about that
section of the park. Wells Twombly noted it had “no elephant-throated drunks trumpeting
at a far distant umpire. There are no hairy-bellied blobs sitting around swilling beer, sans
tee-shirt.” Twombly observed that “on weekends, teenagers show up on dates. The boys
wear coats and ties and the girls come wrapped in party dresses.” He even went
“undercover” as a typical bleacher fan, but “people kept staring at him as if he’d lost his
grip.” A female usher “suggested rather sweetly, that it might be wise to dress
properly.” Twombly and a regular in that part of the park agreed that it was “about as
wild, colorful and exciting as a Junior League charity tea.”

The Astrodome’s luxury for all approach limited its potential customers to those
who could afford to drive to the park and pay at least $1.50 for a ticket. Moreover, its

211 Wells Twombly, “Gone with the Dome.”
212 Wells Twombly, “Gone with the Dome.”
213 Wells Twombly, “Gone with the Dome.”
numerous divisions created a stratified fan base even among those who could get into the park. Nonetheless, rhetoric of “all” allowed fans who did not think deeply about the forces keeping some fans out and limiting their interactions with others to imagine that all of America was represented at the park. Anyone who was not in the park then was not part of their understanding of the nation.

**Creating an Elite, Feminine Experience**

To offer the appearance of luxury for all, Hofheinz had to create an experience that would match prevailing notions of acceptable space for women. Such an experience contrasted with stereotypical images of a rough-and-tumble, lower-class, masculine ballpark experience. Hofheinz told Angell, “we make a big effort to bring out the ladies. [...] Once they’ve seen what it’s like here, they won’t feel so bad about letting their husbands and boys go off to the ball game any old time they want.”

As owners had aimed to do for decades, Hofheinz wanted to draw women so more men would come to the park. Hofheinz, with his air-conditioned domed palace, had an advantage other owners could only dream of.

In trying to draw women and businessmen looking to entertain clients, Hofheinz pushed for pristine cleanliness in the dome. Ben McGuire, one of Hofheinz’s advisors, said “Roy would walk through the Dome and if he saw a scrap of paper on the floor, he’d pick up the nearest phone and call the cleaning department and complain.” NBC News host David Brinkley, who first visited in May 1965, called the Astrodome “a whole new

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dimension in baseball stadiums. I’m used to thinking in terms of Washington’s Griffith Stadium where we had cold hot dogs, warm beer, and dirty seats.”

Hofheinz argued that cleanliness was fundamental to the dome’s success saying, “if you look like a tobacco-spitting venture, it won’t work. You’re in show business.” HSA bragged, “the Astrodome will be kept spic and span and shiny new.” Hofheinz argued, “there’s a psychological deterrent to littering in an indoor arena. Many people won’t scatter peanut shells on the floor.” Roger Angell echoed this, writing “the floors are so antiseptically clean that one hesitates before parting with a peanut shell or cigarette butt.” A reporter noted that “the message board flatters the audience each night by flashing ‘We are all proud of our beautiful stadium. Let’s help keep it clean.’”

The roof was perhaps the most important element in making the dome fit with prevailing notions of acceptable space for women because it protected fans from the elements, even though it initially caused a bevy of problems. The roof was built to withstand sustained winds of 135 MPH and gusts of up to 165 MPH. However, it leaked for a few weeks after the park opened. The skylights, intended to diffuse light cross the field to help the grass grow, instead made it impossible for fielders to spot fly


217 Ray, The Grand Huckster, Appendix B.

218 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 86.


221 Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.
balls during day games. While the roof survived decades of Texas weather, the skylights did not make it through the first season. Hofheinz ordered them painted over so that his outfielders could see the ball. The paint job worked, but without natural light, the grass died. By the end of the season the grounds crew painted parts of the field green to make it look like the grass was alive. Before the 1966 season, Monsanto installed Astroturf in the dome, the world’s first fake grass; it became one more spectacle at the park.

In 1962, Hofheinz thought the roof and the accompanying air conditioning would “produce 250,000 extra customers a year.” Three years later, Hofheinz bragged, “when it’s raining and miserable from New Orleans to El Paso and from Amarillo to the Rio Grande Valley people are going to say, ‘Let’s get away from all this drudgery, let’s go on up to the dome, see the game, eat in the fine restaurants, sit on the upholstered seats’” He told another reporter, “the beauty of the Dome is that somebody can start out from Corpus Christi, 300 miles away, in the morning and know that he’s going to see a baseball game even if it’s raining.” Hofheinz predicted “we’ll knock [our competition for entertainment in Houston] out of business because the biggest thing is keeping cool, and you can keep cool in the Astrodome.”

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224 Lipsyte, “Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas.”
225 Twombly, “Money Flows Like Oil Into Astrodome.”
226 Lipsyte, “Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas.”
The air-conditioning that made the Astrodome so attractive in the Texas heat ran 24 hours a day so that the heat and humidity would not build up. Pulling this off was no easy feat. Air conditioning a space that was 642-feet wide and had a 208-foot-high ceiling took a lot of energy, enough for a city of 9,000 people. Because smoking was allowed inside the dome, the system also had to remove smoke-filled air from the park. This required ten boxcars worth of activated charcoal. The system cycled 250,000 cubic feet of air in and out of the park each minute. To keep all parts of the facility at a constant temperature, the dome had a three-level system that could heat one part while cooling another. Astrodome designers acknowledged that such an intense flow of air created a light breeze in the park, but they denied it had any impact on the game. In the New York Times, Arthur Daley wrote “the Astrodome approaches the 99 44/100 perfection of Ivory soap. It is an arena whose watchword is uniformity. No matter how hot, how cold, how rainy or how dry is the world beyond the enclosure, the controlled temperature within will always be 72 degrees, give or take a couple.” Such a guaranteed experience was likely to appeal to the fans Hofheinz sought.

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227 Astrodome tri-fold pamphlet.
228 Gast, The Astrodome, 70.
229 Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.”
231 Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.”
The roof and the air conditioning convinced George Kirksey that “women will take a different view of sports events. … They can have their hair done, wear a new dress, and come to a ball game as easy and as comfortable as going to the opera.” Per HSA, “a fashionable new world has opened up with the luxury of air conditioning … A continuous 74 degrees in the Domed Stadium will enable Milady to dress in style, from the tip of her head to the tip of her toe.” HSA continued, “the Astrodome will make history as the most fashionable ‘runway’ in America.” Hofheinz told a reporter that “the Astrodome will get a promenade of the best-gowned, best-looking and most-influential women ever collected.” He continued, “women will go to the ball game now because there will be no wind to whip their hairdos, no rain to ruin their dress and no sun to turn them red.” He explained to a female reporter that “every day here will be ladies’ day.”

Reporters in Houston echoed what HSA suggested about the Astrodome experience. In the Houston Post, Virginia Drane McCallon noted, “the Harris County Domed Stadium should change our ideas on what to wear to a baseball game. We won’t be wilted by heat or sprayed with dust by a fast slide into base. We won’t have a hat blown off even

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233 Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.”
234 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 39.
235 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 39.
during a doubleheader.” McCallon advised, “spectators should dress as they do for the races and horse shows. … we should dress as if we were going to the races at New Orleans or even to the Kentucky Derby” and noted “the guests who are invited to watch a game from the prestige boxes or on closed-circuit television in the private rooms, will not be overdressed in covered cocktail clothes.” In McCallon’s view, women at the park were first and foremost guests at a social event. Her colleague at the Houston Post reported “decor-conscious women, who are decidedly more interested in pop art than they are in pop flies, probably will be more enthralled with the offstage drama than they are with the doings on the diamond.”

Some of the early marketing material for the Astrodome showed well-dressed and refined white women with trendy hairstyles in the stands and restaurants and even in the dugouts. Historian Benjamin Lisle writes, “these visual displays of women in stadium space were crucial devices for getting women, particularly those uninterested in sport, to the games by encouraging both female and male customers to visualise women within the space.” Lisle argues these images “fused gender and class signifiers to imaginatively construct a new kind of stadium space that had little to do with sport, but a lot to do with status.”

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239 McCallon, “Fashions Under the Dome.”


241 Lisle, Modern Coliseum, 179.

242 Lisle, “We Make a Big Effort to Bring Out the Ladies,” 119.

243 Lisle, “We Make a Big Effort to Bring Out the Ladies,” 125.
Despite trying to get more women to come to the park, HSA executives did not think of them as real fans. The language Kirksey used to describe the fan experience reveals who he thought of as fans. Kirksey said “for the first time the customer has been given primary consideration. It will be easy for him to get to the stadium. A short walk will put him in his upholstered seat.” Kirksey only saw men as Astrodome customers. Women were an afterthought.

Hofheinz also used women as sex symbols to attract men, employing female ushers called “Spacettes.” A journalist wrote that the Spacettes’ “job combines glamour with a lot of hard work. Each girl is expected to be a combination hostess, tour guide, traffic cop, and diplomat. She must be friendly, polite, and well groomed.” Spacettes were sent to the same charm schools as airline stewardess in an age when stewardesses were seen as not much more than sex objects. The day before the dome opened, the Spacettes’ supervisor told them “you must be neat and courteous and always keep a smile on your face.” In claiming to provide luxury and an elite experience to all, Hofheinz and the HSA thought of women only as a way to enhance men’s experiences and bring more men to the park, treating women as subservient to men and reifying patriarchal society as representative of the entirety of America.

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244 Bruce, “Rain or Shine Stadium.” (Emphasis added.)


246 Lisle, Modern Coliseum, 183.

247 Bill Connolly, “The Dome is Ready—So Are the Crowds,” Houston Chronicle, April 9, 1965.
Scoreboard

Another feature that made the dome elite and luxurious was its 474-foot long scoreboard. Nothing remotely approaching its size and capabilities had been installed in any stadium before and no fan had anything like it at home. HSA claimed the scoreboard put “the Aurora Borealis to shame.” It weighed 300 tons and included 1,200 miles of wiring. The scoreboard had three main panels, two text panels that were 141 feet by 21 feet each and sat on either side of the 30 by 35 foot Astrolite—essentially an early black and white videoboard. Astros publicity director Bill Giles described the Astrolite as a feature that “had never been constructed before.” Giles wrote “we had animations for the national anthem and some serious features, but we also had a lot of humorous clips” to display on the board.

The root of many of the scoreboard’s innovative features could be found in other owners’ innovations. Jack Foster, chief engineer of the company that built the scoreboard told a reporter, “we built the Astrodome board, but the Judge did a lot of the planning. He took [White Sox’s owner Bill] Veeck’s fireworks and put them into electric lights. He took [Dodgers’ owner Walter] O’Malley’s CHARGE and turned it into a special

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249 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 80.


251 Gast, The Astrodome, 128-30.

252 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 68.
show.”” That said, by combining them into a computer-operated electronic marvel, Hofheinz created something new and appealed to Houstonians unfamiliar with baseball by providing them a unique form of entertainment.

When an Astro player hit a home run, all sections of the scoreboard collaborated in a celebratory show called the home run spectacular that included mock fireworks and old west scenes. Most of the spectacular was set in an area 360 feet by 36 feet above the main scoreboards that used 1400 lights. As Hofheinz joked to a reporter, “if we can find somebody on our ball club to knock the ball into the seats, the scoreboard show will be worth the price of admission.” Sportswriter Jim Murray described the homerun spectacular as “an electronic form of the DT’s. Cowboys rope steers in moving color lights, the flag of Texas, the United States and, probably, Albania wave before your eyes.”

The scoreboard and the homerun spectacular together fit into Hofheinz’s analysis of how to solve baseball’s problems. They provided more entertainment, more information, and more services than anything before them. They offered a show customers could not get anywhere else, not simply a baseball game, giving fans at the

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257 Murray, “Houston’s Astrodome Example of How Hot Air Flows in Texas.”
Astrodome a different experience from fans in classic era ballparks. The scoreboard and the dome’s other features led one journalist to compare Astros fans to patrons at a theater because they were in the park for a show, not a game.\textsuperscript{258} The scoreboard and all the other amenities and attractions at the dome meant that it offered an experience fans could not get from watching on television.

HSA thought its scoreboard attracted fans claiming, perhaps facetiously, that “some fans now say: ‘Let’s go to the Scoreboard tonight,’ instead of the tried and true ‘Let’s go to the ball game.’”\textsuperscript{259} Larry McMurtry thought the scoreboard served its fan-pleasing purpose. He wrote, “it was obvious from the first that most of the fans would not have sat through [a game] if it had been taking place elsewhere; even in the Dome many of them would not have stayed with the game had it not been for the big electronic screen in center field.”\textsuperscript{260} Bill Giles reported “40\% of those who wrote in for tickets would request seats in sight of the scoreboard.”\textsuperscript{261}

As Roger Angell noted, the scoreboard distracted fans and kept them from doing “normal” things like keeping score at the game. Hofheinz thought this was because the Astrodome “keeps [fans] interested enough so they don’t have to keep busy with a pencil and scorecard. […] This place was built to keep the fans happy. They’ve got our good


\textsuperscript{259} Houston Sports Association, \textit{Inside the Astrodome}, 82.


\textsuperscript{261} Butwin, “An Unbelievagable Boom,” 35.
seats, fine restaurants, and our scoreboard to look at.” Hofheinz continued, “we have removed baseball from the rough-and-tumble era. I don’t believe in the old red-necked sports concept, and we are disproving it here. We’re in the business of sports entertainment.”

Even Angell, a die-hard baseball fan, found the scoreboard drew his attention from the game.

To some observers, the fans seemed controlled by the scoreboard. Angell noted that Astros fans did not seem interested in cheering much—unless the Astrodome’s massive scoreboard prompted them to cheer. McMurtry wrote, “when an Astro got on base there was a blare of heraldic trumpets and a little cavalryman (Teddy Roosevelt?) thundered across the screen, sabre raised. The word CHARGE! appeared, and the fans yelled CHARGE!” McMurtry continued, “when an Astro performed some particularly daring feat of baserunning (like not quite getting picked off) the screen flashed OLE! and the fans yelled OLE!” The inclination to yell “Charge!” was practically contagious. McMurtry, fully aware of the absurdity of the situation revealed “every time the trumpets blared I felt the word ‘charge’ forming on my lips.”

Former player Jim Bouton argued that “in Houston, the management puts fans down by telling them what to do. Fans would sit on their hands until the scoreboard told

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them to applaud. If the scoreboard was late, they wouldn’t know enough to applaud.”

Giles, whose chief duty was running the scoreboard, did not think he was insulting fans, rather he thought he was helping them understand the finer points of the game. He wrote, “Houston fans were real novices about the nuances of baseball [when the dome opened], and the scoreboard was a help to them.”

While in other parks, fans likely knew to direct their ire at umpires following close calls against the home team, at the Astrodome the scoreboard allowed Giles to lead all fans in that show of displeasure. During the 1965 season, umpire John Kibler made contested calls against the Astros on consecutive nights. The second night, Giles wrote “Kibler Did It Again” on the scoreboard. Frank Secory, the umpire crew chief, said “that’s about as low as you can get, when you start putting stuff like that on the board. […] This is something to incite the fans.” Giles defended himself saying “we didn’t intend anything derogatory. We think the game is played for the fans’ entertainment. Whatever we can do to add to that enjoyment we want to do.”

Giles tried to add enjoyment whenever he could. In its first year of operation, when an opposing player hit a home run, the scoreboard, in the words of the New York Times, “somewhat ungenerously” flashed “Tilt”—a reference to cheating at pinball—suggesting that the only way an Astros’ pitcher could give up a home run was if the opposition had

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268 Giles, Pouring Six Beers at a Time, 70.


cheated.271 “Tilt” was replaced with “Phffft!” in 1966, merely suggesting the opposition was weak.272 When an opposing pitcher was removed from the game, the scoreboard showed a graphic of him in the shower, to reiterate to the crowd that he was “hitting the showers.” At the same time, the sound system played songs like “April Showers” or “Singing in the Rain” to further drive the point home.273 Other scoreboard messages included “Howdy Y’all” and a sarcastic wind report of “Blows in for Them and Out for Us.”274 Despite some backlash and kitsch, the Astrodome’s scoreboard changed how fans experienced the game. It provided unparalleled entertainment for all while attracting and instructing patrons who might not have been die-hard baseball fans.

Astrodome Food, Restaurants, and Clubs

The Astros also used food to create an elite atmosphere and attract customers who were not die-hard baseball fans. HSA bragged, “no longer does a sports fan have to put up with grabbing a quick hot dog or hamburger on the run when he comes to the dome. Every taste and every appetite is catered to with a variety of food and a speed of service never attempted before at a baseball park.”275

Much like with the dome’s construction and cleanliness, Hofheinz paid close attention to how food impacted the fan experience. Sports Illustrated reported “the Judge

271 Lipsyte, “Johnson Attends Opening of Houston’s Astrodome.”
273 Twombly, “Money Flows Like Oil Into Astrodome.”
275 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 58.
concerns himself with the gustatory welfare of his customers. [...] From his office aerie Hofheinz keeps an eagle eye on the vendors. ‘If I see one sitting down or watching the game,’ he says, ‘or if I see a section with no vendors I call down and raise hell.’”

No matter what fans ate, Hofheinz wanted them to have the best possible experience.

Among the options at the Astrodome were five restaurants, some open to all, others exclusive, with space for 3,300 fans in total. Season ticket holders had access to the “Astrodome Club,” a restaurant and lounge with space for 600 fans. It was 500-feet long and decorated with historical images ranging from the nineteenth century to the space age. The Astrodome Club had three different bars, one was 100-feet long, another was 90-feet long, and a third, featuring oysters in addition to alcohol, was for men only. It offered five-course meals and a special postgame breakfast. The Houston Chronicle reported that “meat carvers in the Astrodome Club must be of 6’2” height, imposing bearing, and dignified demeanor.” HSA presented the club as on par with the finest restaurants in the city, right down to advertised images of it featuring well-dressed customers.

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276 Tex Maule, “The Greatest Showman on Earth, and He’s the First to Admit It,” Sports Illustrated, April 21, 1969: 44.

277 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 59.

278 Houston Sports Association, Astrodome.


280 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 58.
The Skydome Club, open only to fans with tickets to skyboxes, was even more exclusive. It had a capacity of 80 and was a blacklight-illuminated, space-themed, Japanese-style steakhouse with a 210-foot-long window, the only one in the entire facility, overlooking downtown Houston. HSA publications showed images of white, well-dressed fans at the Skydome Club. Each skybox lessee had their own golden spatula to serve themselves. Journalist Ann Valentine called it “sleekly sophisticated […] with its bold diorama [sic] murals and planetarium lighting effects.” She argued its “design combines luxury and elegance with down-to-earth practicality,” although it is not clear what elements she saw as practical or what part of the space-themed décor she found down to earth.

In 1967, The Economist wrote a review of the Astrodome, echoing Hofheinz it declared, “the clubs at the Dome have only one colour line; if your dollar bills are green, you get in […] If you are a Negro, that makes no difference.” The magazine made no claim to how many African Americans in Houston had or could afford the tickets required to access the clubs. This rhetoric of inclusion and the idea of luxury for all, however, obscured the economic, social, legal, and historical structures that prevented a good portion of Houston’s residents from accessing the clubs. The rhetoric also allowed club

281 Houston Sports Association, Astrodome.

282 Houston Sports Association, Inside the Astrodome, 58.

283 Gast, The Astrodome, 127.


members to imagine that what and who they saw there represented the whole of Houston.
Outside the dome then, anyone who was not represented in the clubs was a lesser part of
the city. As if it constituted equal access, The Economist also noted “there [was] a
conscious effort to ensure that a high percentage of the employees [were] Negro and that
the Negroes employed [would] share all levels of jobs.” There was quite a difference
between working at an exclusive club and being a member though.

Skybox ticket holders could also eat right in their boxes and in trying to create an
upscale environment, the skyboxes initially did not offer hot dogs. One Houston
journalist wrote that instead of the “smell of popcorn, hotdogs and beer,” skyboxes
featured the “aroma of caviar, stuffed shrimp and martinis.” But those gourmet menu
choices did not appeal to everyone.

One of the dome’s first skybox holders, astronaut Alan Shepard, Jr., wanted hot
dogs in his box likely due to their traditional association with baseball. As Bill Roberts
wrote in the Houston Post, “if owners of Sky Box suites want hot dogs they have to send
their butlers down to a lower level to buy them just like anybody else.” Shepard and his
box co-owners Bill McDavid and Jess Hall wanted their hot dogs fresh, so that option
would not suffice. As Roberts described it, they “installed a machine which keeps the
wieners and hot dog buns warm. They refused, however, to pay the going rate for hot
dogs on a lower level—15 cents for wieners and 10 cents for buns—and each night were
bringing their own hot dogs and buns from the outside world into their suite.” The head

\[ ^{286} \text{From a Correspondent in Houston, “Bigger and Better in Texas,” 1125.} \]

\[ ^{287} \text{Joe Adcock, “No Smell of Popcorn, Hotdogs and Beer,” Houston Chronicle,} \]
\[ \text{April 10, 1965.} \]
waiter for all the skyboxes told Shepard he could not bring in outside food. Incensed, Shepard called Hofheinz and complained that “his guests were ‘starving to death like the Armenians.’” As Roberts wrote, “the judge told Shepard he could have all the hot dogs he wanted, he could bring them in from the outside, or he could buy them downstairs if he wanted to.” Frank Keogh, the manager of the Astrodome’s food operations, arranged for Shepard to buy his hot dogs and buns from HSA at cost.

Shepard was not alone in craving hot dogs in the dome, luxury for all and indoor baseball could not totally upend tradition. It seems that after Shepard brought up this issue with Hofheinz, Hofheinz expanded Shepard’s special arrangement to other skyboxes as an August 1966 article noted that “hot dogs tucked between warm buns and covered with plebeian onions and nippy chili […] are served every night” in skyboxes.

Other fans told a Sports Illustrated reporter “we would rather have hot dogs, beer and peanuts—that’s half the fun of going to a ball game.” A “middle-aged” woman was quoted saying, “I just couldn’t wait to get my hot dog and get into this stadium.” For others though, non-traditional baseball food in less exclusive venues was a draw.

The dome’s less-exclusive restaurants included the Trailblazer, a 300-seat facility open to all ticketed fans. HSA described its decor as a “historical theme, depicting man’s


struggle for a better life down through the ages.”

It offered pre-prepared meals on reheated trays. The Countdown Cafeteria, another 300-seat facility open to all ticketed fans, had a limited menu and was designed to serve fans quickly. It was decorated with images of athletic scenes from 500 BCE to the 1960s. Patrons picked up their trays at a location marked “10” and moved through a countdown to the cash register at “blastoff.” As Giles noted, “once we decided to tie the names of the team and the stadium to a space theme, it was important that everything be tied to that theme.”

The Domeskeller, described by Houston journalist Ann Valentine as a “folksy Bavarian beer garden,” was as close as the dome came to a working-class joint; one journalist called it a “shirtsleeves-and-soda pop atmosphere.” It had 2,000 seats, but could fit as many as 10,000 for special occasions. Valentine wrote that its “walls are treated with German shields, brightly colored satin banners, and decorative three-dimensional beer casks.” Larry McMurtry noted, “the management so clearly regarded [the Domeskeller] as a plebeian eatery that they hadn’t fixed it up much, whereas the

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292 *Astrodome: The Astrodome is More Than a Stadium – It’s a Way of Treating People!* Houston, TX, 1968, Houston Sports Association, Inc.

293 Houston Sports Association, *Astrodome*.


297 Houston Sports Association, *Astrodome*.

298 Valentine, “A Touch of Midas in Decor, Too.”
other places are so thoroughly fixed up they leave one gasping for breath.” McMurtry also noted the Domeskeller was not usually crowded and suggested several reasons for its relative emptiness: “It’s a long walk down, […] and it is a lower-class eatery. Everyone who comes to the Astrodome considers that they have escaped the lower class.” It seems fans took to the idea of luxury for all.

Finally, the park also had 49 conventional concessions stands that were evenly distributed throughout the concourses. Thirty-four of those stands sold both food and beverages, ten sold only peanuts and popcorn, and five were portable stands. HSA advertised that “in addition to the traditional hot dogs and hamburgers, many items not usually found at concession stands, including ham, swiss cheese, corned beef and roast beef sandwiches are on the bill of fare.” Even traditional ballpark food venues offered more elite food at the Astrodome, offering luxury and unusual baseball game treats for all who could afford tickets, helping to draw new fans.

**Fan Behavior and the Popularity of the Astrodome**

Although Hofheinz aimed to draw middle- and upper-class fans and provide luxury for all, he also prepared for rowdy behavior. During the dome’s first three games sheriff’s deputies and police officers led by Sheriff’s Captain Edd White and traffic police Sargent L. W. Redden were stationed at the park, but had little to do. White said, “the crowds have been most well behaved. We have made no arrests for any reasons.”

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300 Houston Sports Association, *Astrodome*.

Although their fourth-floor office was capable of holding detained fans, Redden told a journalist “we don’t even have a key for [the cells] yet.”

In late April of 1965, just a few weeks after the Dome opened, a Houston reporter noted that the dome already cost the city $80,000 in police overtime due, in part, to security. Not all Houstonians were pleased with the show of force in the dome. Writing in the *Houston Chronicle*, Allison Sanders asked “we all know that a Harris County deputy sheriff without his pistol feels as necked [sic] as September Morn [sic]. But with all due regard for the deputies’ modesty, is it really necessary that they dress for a shoot-out while moonlighting as Astrogoons?” Sanders insisted, “it just doesn’t make much sense to have an overwhelming display of artillery at a baseball game.”

The Astrodome remained peaceful and popular throughout its opening season. According to team figures 2,151,470 fans attended regular season Astros games in 1965 (that does not include attendance at exhibition games), a remarkable improvement over the fewer than one million fans the franchise had drawn annually at Colt Stadium.

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302 Jerry Zuber, “No Troublemakers In Dome’s Crowds,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 11, 1965. In his May 22, 1963 letter to Hofheinz on his impressions of the Astrodome’s plans, Dick Walsh of the Dodgers recommended that Hofheinz add cells to this office. Walsh also suggested the office include “a toilet and wash basin, since you will not wish your security officers taking suspects to the toilets.” Walsh continued, the Dodgers “experience has been that all people apprehended as suspects at the ball park have bad kidneys.”


dome was a big draw unto itself; in 1965, 500,000 people paid $1 to tour it when nothing was happening on the field.\(^{306}\) HSA made $8.5 million in profits in the dome’s first season.\(^{307}\)

Despite success at the box office, there was tension behind the scenes. HSA’s initial partnership did not last long. At the end of 1962, Smith bought out all shares of stock from everyone other than Hofheinz and Kirksey. Kirksey was pushed out of power following the 1965 season, eventually selling his shares to Hofheinz in May 1966.\(^{308}\) The relationship between Smith and Hofheinz grew cold as the Astrodome’s construction heated up. Smith told a friend “I sure am getting tired of defending Roy Hofheinz.”\(^{309}\) He also said, “Roy is just too autocratic.”\(^{310}\) In May 1965, Smith announced that Hofheinz had until August to buy out all but 10% of Smith’s shares or Smith would buy him out. Hofheinz mortgaged properties, took out loans, and bought out Smith.\(^{311}\)

Four years after it opened, according to Hofheinz the dome was still a draw. He told a reporter, “I figure at most events 50% come for the stadium and 50% for the sport. When people come here for a vacation or for a convention, the one they have to see is the Astrodome. That’s what their neighbors are going to ask them about when they get


\(^{307}\) Trumpbour and Womack, The Eighth Wonder of the World, 119.

\(^{308}\) Trumpbour and Womack, The Eighth Wonder of the World, 29-30, 96.


Nine years after the Astrodome opened, the New York Times wrote that tourists still came in droves to see the Astrodome—even without any events going on inside it—and it reportedly brought $100 million into the Houston economy.\(^{313}\) In its initial decade, fans at the Astrodome were peaceful and in awe of their surroundings.

### Changing Views of Dome

Even though the Astrodome was initially successful and continued to astound visitors, by the late 1960s, in the wake of taking on debt to buy out his partners and expand his other businesses around the Astrodome, Hofheinz faced significant financial pressures. In the midst of this crunch, he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1970. Although Hofheinz returned to work full-time the following year, he never regained his mobility.\(^{314}\) Beginning in 1971, the Astrodome lost money every year at least into the mid-1980s if not for the duration of its time as the Astros home.\(^{315}\) By 1975, Hofheinz’s Astrodome operation (the dome and its surrounding businesses) was $38 million in debt and he had to give up control of the organization to its creditors. The new owners ignored Hofheinz’s contributions to baseball in Houston, choosing not to invite him to the park. They owned 

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\(^{312}\) Maule, “The Greatest Showman on Earth, and He’s the First to Admit It,” 44. (Emphasis in original.)


the Astros until 1979 when they sold the team to John J. McMullen who quickly honored Hofheinz with Roy Hofheinz Night at the Astrodome.\textsuperscript{316} Hofheinz died in 1982.

The Astrodome did not quickly slip into obscurity and obsolesce, but it did eventually go out of style. There was no clear moment when this switch happened, but when fans were no longer awed by the dome, they might have been able to focus on some of its limitations. If a fan looked around the Astrodome, even without getting out of his or her seat, it was clear that the stadium was not designed exclusively for baseball. While there was a baseball diamond at the center of the park, tarps and other coverings could only do so much to mask the additional seating used for football or the grid lines on the field from Oilers’ games.

Additionally, by the mid-1970s, a new style of architecture, referred to as inclusivist or post-modern, emerged. That style celebrated buildings designed for specific purposes with historical allusions, instead of multiple uses with futuristic visions. Post-modern architecture was also more concerned with how new buildings fit into their surroundings than modernist architecture was. Although the impact of this architectural style in new baseball parks would not be seen until the 1990s, it made venues like the Astrodome seem out of date well before then. Moreover, as architectural critic John Pastier noted in 1975 and others echoed in succeeding years, many teams copied the Astrodome, which led to fans becoming bored with repetitive parks and the game becoming less popular.\textsuperscript{317} There was little reason for out-of-town fans to see the

\textsuperscript{316} Ray, \textit{The Grand Huckster}, 515, 518.

Astrodome if they could see essentially the same park in their hometown.

Like many ballparks, the Astrodome underwent significant renovations over the years. As football increased in popularity, some of the Astrodome’s unique features fell by the wayside. To better accommodate the Oilers, in 1987 a $50 million renovation added 15,000 seats, but removed the famous scoreboard.\(^\text{318}\) The last home-run spectacular played on September 6, 1988.\(^\text{319}\) Although those renovations helped the Oilers bottom line, they did not make the park more popular for baseball.

Writing in 1988, Bob Wood, a fan who appreciated classic ballparks and had seen all 26 of the major league parks then in use, ranked the Astrodome as MLB’s worst park. Wood was not a fan of domes or plastic grass and found the towering height of the Astrodome overwhelming. The dome, he wrote was “pushed back off the road and raised up in the middle of its huge parking lot, it dominates its Astro neighborhood.”\(^\text{320}\) Wood thought the field was ugly, the scoreboard tacky, the food lousy, the atmosphere lacking charisma, and the staff less than helpful. He did think the seats were comfortable, albeit far from the field, and found the parking lots passable. The technological wonders that astounded fans in the 1960s no longer held the same cachet in the 1980s when fans begin to yearn for more direct ties to baseball’s idealized history. Wood wrote baseball’s “beauty is found in a reflection of the past, not in a high-tech world of efficiency.”\(^\text{321}\)


In 1991, in response to results from a fan survey that showed the top reason fans were not coming to games was because of the cost of the experience, the Astros experimented with making the dome’s aging luxury affordable to more fans for a three-game series. They halved prices on hot dogs, soda, beer, peanuts, and popcorn, and cut all ticket prices by $4. That series attracted an average of over 25,000 fans per game, an increase of more than 10,000 over their average attendance that season. According to one report, the Astros seriously considered making those reduced prices a permanent feature.\(^{322}\)

Despite being unpopular by the 1990s, the Astrodome had a powerful impact on the fan experience across the game. In 1994, *Sports Illustrated*’s Steve Rushin wrote, “even as baseball emerges from the architectural dark ages of the 1960s and 1970s, marked by the blight of the multipurpose stadium, and begins once again building traditional parks like Camden Yards and The Ballpark at Arlington, these […] are designed around the luxury skybox and the elaborate electronic scoreboard.”\(^{323}\) Even the parks that rebelled against the dome, were inspired by its most innovative and popular features. The aesthetics of the dome went out of style, but Hofheinz’s innovations became a permanent part of ballparks.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Astros were done with their outdated dome. Backed by municipal funding once more, they opened a new park in 2000. Their new park was domed as well, but completely different from its predecessor. Its roof was


\(^{323}\) Rushin, “How we Got Here: Home in the Dome,” 44.
retractable, the park was only designed for baseball, and was not intended as a vision of the future, but as an homage to the past. It incorporated an old train station into its design rather than a space theme.\textsuperscript{324} In 1999, when the last Major League game was played in the Astrodome, Jim Yardley, writing in the \textit{New York Times}, noted “baseball purists […] blame[d] the Dome for many of the modern ills of the game” and “baseball traditionalists […] despise[d] the Astrodome and the artifice it brought to the game.” Yardley correctly predicted the Astrodome would become “a monstrous, climate-controlled white elephant” sitting empty on the Texas prairie for years.\textsuperscript{325}

After the Astros left the dome, there were a number of proposals for what to do with it. They varied from tearing it down to putting a smaller arena inside of it to turning it into a science museum. Each was projected to cost taxpayers millions while the county was still paying off the original bonds. In 2010, Harris County still owed $40 million on the dome and was spending $2.4 million a year to pay off the debt and interest and $2 million in insurance, utility bills, and maintenance.\textsuperscript{326} The projected cost to tear down the Astrodome ranged from $5 million to $873 million and to turn it into a museum ranged

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\textsuperscript{324} Gast, \textit{The Astrodome}, 179-80.


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from $900 million to $1.35 billion.\textsuperscript{327} Plans to build an arena inside of it were pegged at
$400 million.\textsuperscript{328} None of these plans came to fruition.

In September 2016, a plan emerged that seemed like it might preserve the
Astrodome. The county plans to spend $105 million to raise its ground floor by two
levels and add 1,400 parking spots underneath the new ground floor to make the facility
more suitable for festivals, conferences, and other commercial uses. One-third of the
$105 million will come from the county’s general fund (funded by county property
taxes), one-third from hotel taxes, and one-third from county parking revenue.\textsuperscript{329} In
February, 2018, county commissioners approved the $105 million plan, but it still has to
win the approval of the Texas Historical Commission because the dome is a “state
antiquities landmark.”\textsuperscript{330} Construction on this new plan began in October, 2018 and

\textsuperscript{327} Neil deMause, “Astrodome Reno Would Cost How Much?” \textit{Field of Schemes},
June 15, 2010, accessed March 23, 2018, 
\url{http://www.fieldofschemes.com/2010/06/15/2685/astrodome-reno-would-cost-how-much/},
Neil deMause, “Houston proposes $655m to redo Astrodome, replace Reliant
\url{http://www.fieldofschemes.com/2012/05/24/3449/houston-proposes-655m-to-redo-astrodome-replace-reliant-arena/},
and Neil deMause, “Houston Still Grasping at Ideas for
What to Do with Astrodome,” \textit{Field of Schemes}, March 31, 2014 

\textsuperscript{328} Neil deMause, “Houston considers building Russian nesting stadiums,” \textit{Field
\url{http://www.fieldofschemes.com/2012/06/27/3482/houston-considers-building-russian-nesting-stadiums/}.

\textsuperscript{329} Mihir Zaveri, “$105M plan could be Dome's saving grace,” \textit{Houston

\textsuperscript{330} Mihir Zaveri, “Harris County OKs $105 million renovation of Astrodome,”
includes a planned completion date of February, 2020.\textsuperscript{331} The Astrodome seems likely to live on, but it will never play host to a baseball game again and the multi-use stadiums it inspired are nearly all things of the past.

That said, the influence of the Astrodome lives on across MLB in luxury boxes, exclusive clubs, fancy restaurants, and the endless distractions from the game that entertain fans at contemporary ballparks. Other owners have also adopted Hofheinz’s luxury for all framing while using ticket prices to limit who can actually come to games. Even parks like Camden Yards that left Modernism behind and re-engaged with downtown areas, which helped them seem inclusive and representative of the entire nation, were just as exclusive as the Astrodome, if not more so.


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CHAPTER 6

OLD IS NEW AGAIN: CAMDEN YARDS AND THE MELDING OF BASEBALL’S PAST AND PRESENT

To get to the brand-new Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Maryland on Opening Day, April 6, 1992, a fan could have taken a light rail train that bore a resemblance to the trolleys that had been common around major league parks in the classic era. That fan would have gotten off the light rail close to the park, across the street from Camden Station, recently refurbished to look like it did in the 1850s. A short walk to the ballpark would have led him or her past a wrought-iron fence to the gates of the ballpark. Those gates, however, did not lead under the stands, but rather to a repurposed city block, Eutaw Street, outfitted with souvenir vendors and concessions stands and next to a 1,016-foot-long warehouse built in 1898. Fans could also drive to Camden Yards and park in a lot close to a gate that led to a private elevator taking them directly to the luxury-suite level of the ballpark. In the suites, fans could dine on a variety of atypical ballpark foods while watching the game from a private lounge. No matter how they got to the park, fans likely sat in seats close to the field that looked out on the city of Baltimore. Camden Yards engaged with the city in ways ballparks in the 1960s explicitly avoided and because of that, it was both revolutionary and extremely popular. Camden Yards took inspiration from different eras of baseball’s past and contemporary trends in architecture and urban development and combined them into a financially successful package.

The Orioles gambled that a nostalgia-inducing ballpark, built to remind fans of the 1940s and 1950s, would appeal to the masses. As author Peter Richmond noted, “the marketers of Camden Yards … hit upon a truth that … the past is comfortable. You can
go there and be safe. Nothing unknown is going to happen in the past.”¹ The Orioles were far from alone in aiming to take the feeling of safety in the past to the bank.

Camden Yards was part of a model of urban development that proliferated in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that sociologist John Hannigan and architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable called fantasy cities. Paul Goldberger, also an architectural critic, called these spaces urbanoid environments.² Historian Alison Isenberg detailed how the festival marketplaces that were the basis of many of these fantasy cities were spearheaded by developers and not explicitly demanded by the consuming public. Developers discovered that festival marketplaces—carefully-controlled urban spaces—appealed to suburbanites who were tired of bland Modernist design and that downtown buildings were cheaper to renovate than tear down and build anew. Festival marketplaces made use of old buildings and reengaged with the city, prompting consumers to think about an imagined version of the past, but they were not attempts to recreate history. They were not Colonial Williamsburg, instead, they were old-fashioned buildings that housed modern stores selling modern goods.³

Like festival marketplaces, Camden Yards was deliberately manufactured nostalgia with modern amenities designed to bring mostly white suburbanites back to the city by prioritizing their needs over the working- and lower-middle-class Baltimore residents


who lived closer. Not only was it built next to Inner Harbor, the site of Harborplace, one of the earliest and most successful festival marketplaces, but the team executives most involved with the design were influenced by Inner Harbor as were the elected officials who funded it. Camden Yards and its surroundings were an urbaniod environment, an urban space that was closely controlled and carefully regulated to limit unexpected events that might send customers back to the suburbs for good. Camden Yards’ enormous popularity in the 1990s, and that retro ballparks sprung up across MLB, shows that people of means, largely middle- and upper-class whites, wanted to engage with the city and the past, so long as it was safe, but exciting, and predictable, but not bland. The return to the past the team wanted to provide to their fans was a sentimental fiction—a fabricated vision of history that felt comfortable, but one that eschewed the atmosphere of ballparks of yore for a version devoid of drunken, unruly fans, dirty, cramped concourses, and fans hustling home after the game in fear of their safety. Just like festival marketplaces, although Camden Yards was very popular, it had its share of detractors, who found its fake nostalgia out of line.

Although it shared a lot with festival marketplaces, because it was built for baseball Camden Yards was also distinct from festival marketplaces. Its specific nostalgia had to be about the game and the rhetoric and imagery that came with it. As with all ballparks, Camden Yards needed to feel like a diverse space, but at the same time, be a tiered

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experience. With less space for cheaper seats in order to increase ticket revenue, Camden Yards garnered the feeling of a diverse space as much from its location in and engagement with downtown Baltimore as from the presence of poorer fans. That location also helped to make the park distinctive, a draw in an era when many ballparks felt like carbon copies, disconnected from their surroundings.

The task of creating a distinctive urban ballpark filled with manufactured nostalgia that appealed to 1990s consumers, an “old-fashioned park with modern amenities” as the team often called it, was shared between numerous parties, but in many ways, Janet Marie Smith, the Orioles vice president for stadium planning and development, was the face of the project. Smith, despite powerful sexism, made sure the Orioles new ballpark became the baseball version of a festival marketplace. Much like an electronics store in an old warehouse, its architecture and surroundings spoke of history while the product was thoroughly modern. From their seats, fans at Camden Yards could only see baseball-related things or the city of Baltimore, but all the amenities that drew fans to parks like the Astrodome and made going to a game an experience that could not be matched by watching on television were part of the experience too. Camden Yards offered the most lucrative elements of baseball’s past in one neat package.

**History of the Baltimore Orioles**

The city of Baltimore has a long history with the professional game. In the 1890s, the city’s team was one of the best in baseball. Baltimore was also one of the founding members of the American League in 1901. However, following the 1902 season, the Orioles moved to New York where they were eventually renamed the Yankees and Major League Baseball was not played in Baltimore again until the 1950s. In the interim though,
the city was home to a minor league team. By the early 1950s, many big league teams, including the St. Louis Browns, were struggling financially. Before the 1954 season, a group of investors from Baltimore bought the Browns, transported them to Baltimore, and renamed them the Orioles.

The Orioles moved into Baltimore Memorial Stadium, a city-owned ballpark. Memorial Stadium was in a residential neighborhood but was not a classic-era ballpark. It had initially been designed as a football stadium before a remodeling in the early 1950s made it a multi-use facility. It was no Modernist concrete donut though; it was a brick building with an open outfield. The park’s location fit more squarely into classic-era trends—it was far from major highways and not surrounded by parking lots—but its layout more closely hewed to multi-use era patterns. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the neighborhood around the stadium changed. As manufacturing jobs left Baltimore, so too did white residents. In a shift mirrored across the country, the neighborhood became increasingly poorer and more African American.

Memorial Stadium’s location, age, and lack of amenities meant that by the 1980s, it did not seem to be anyone’s ideal park. Ballpark-grader Bob Wood gave Memorial Stadium low marks for how hard it was to drive to and park at the game. Wood was scared of many of the cities he visited, especially cities where the ballpark was in an African-American neighborhood, calling parks in Chicago, Detroit, New York City, and


Oakland “seedy,” located next to “ghettos,” and emphasizing they were “dirty” and filthy.” Despite his discomfort, Wood seemed to gain cultural capital from venturing to urban ballparks. He complained, though, about the “policy to check fans’ backpacks on the way into the stadium.” It seems that he wanted the ballpark to operate as a sanctuary from life outside it. He rated the classic-era ballparks he visited highly, aside from where they were located and their cleanliness, and called Fenway Park the “essence of tradition” and Tiger Stadium “the essence of city baseball.” Wood was not alone in his interest in baseball’s past. In the 1980s, books about the Brooklyn Dodgers were popular, baseball card collecting made a comeback, and fantasy camps where fans could suit up alongside aging former players proliferated. The Orioles needed to find a way to make a ballpark feel comfortable and welcoming for people like Wood who wanted the essence of baseball’s history in a carefully controlled environment. Baltimore, however, faced many of the same problems that beset the cities Wood disparaged—declining population and increasing unemployment.

Since the 1960s, most development in Baltimore had been centered downtown, first with corporate office towers and then with Harborplace at Inner Harbor in 1980. Although these developments were profitable for their financiers, as geographer David Harvey argued, they did little for the overwhelming poverty in the city, neither creating

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8 Wood, Dodger Dogs to Fenway Franks, 317.

good jobs for residents nor bringing people back to live in the city. Baltimore’s Harborplace profited by providing a link to the past while simultaneously being carefully controlled. It was essentially walled off from the rest of the struggling city and inaccessible to many urbanites, creating a predictable and safe environment for those who came to shop there. It was a national success story in part because it offered patrons an experience that was distinct from bland suburban shopping malls. Orioles executives took notice of fans’ interest in the past and the success of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor-centered fantasy city, but did not want to pay to build a park that would serve as the baseball equivalent of a festival marketplace.

New Stadium Funding and Development

For nearly two decades, the Orioles and their co-tenants at Memorial Stadium, the National Football League’s Colts had discussed plans for a new park with local politicians, but it took the Colts leaving for a new stadium in Indianapolis for politicians to act. When the Colts left, Washington, D.C.-based attorney, Edward Bennett Williams owned the Orioles. Williams’ home in the capital and his previous position as the president of that city’s NFL team led fans to fear the Orioles would move too. Williams, however, told the press, “for as long as the city will support the team, it will stay.” The Colts’ departure devastated Baltimore sports fans. Some of them directed their ire at

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11 Levine, “Downtown Redevelopment as an Urban Growth Strategy.”

politicians, who became acutely aware of the electoral value of retaining the Orioles, the state’s last major professional sports franchise. In that political climate, the Orioles long-standing complaints about Memorial Stadium—its insufficient parking and grandstand seats, poor access to highways, and its abundance of obstructed view and bleacher seats—resonated with elected officials in new ways.\textsuperscript{13}

Then Baltimore mayor William Donald Schaefer, who one scholar described as “strong-willed and authoritarian” and a columnist said “wield[ed] near dictatorial power” was determined not to lose the Orioles.\textsuperscript{14} Although he had once opposed public financing of sports stadiums, in the words of authors Neil deMause and Joanna Cagan, he “abruptly became the biggest booster of a new ballpark,” just as he had supported Harborplace.\textsuperscript{15} Along the same lines, in July 1985, governor Harry Hughes established the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) to orchestrate funding, planning, and construction of a new home for the Orioles and an expansion NFL team the city hoped to secure.\textsuperscript{16}

Mayor Schaefer, the Orioles, and MSA quickly agreed that the Camden Yards area, adjacent to Inner Harbor and downtown, and formerly the site of the rail yards leading to Camden Station, was the best location for a new park. Schaefer liked Camden Yards because “it’s accessible. It’s near the interstate. It’s near the mass transit system.

\textsuperscript{13} Miller, \textit{The Baseball Business}, 204-205.


\textsuperscript{15} deMause and Cagan, \textit{Field of Schemes}, 9.

\textsuperscript{16} Miller, \textit{The Baseball Business}, 300.
And there’s also adequate parking in the area.”\textsuperscript{17} Another city official favored Camden Yards because “people could get on the Metro in Washington and catch a train to the ballpark, thus negating or reducing the need for a lot of parking.”\textsuperscript{18} Perhaps because the success of Inner Harbor made it obvious, neither mentioned that cities appealed to white, middle- and upper-class suburbanites in the 1980s. The team’s owner hoped that like Inner Harbor, a park in Camden Yards would keep suburbanites who worked in downtown office towers in the city, spending money after the workday ended.\textsuperscript{19} In contrast, some neighbors were concerned about the impact of a stadium on their parking and quality of life.\textsuperscript{20} Other hurdles to putting a park there included the 20 businesses employing 1,600 people that would have to be relocated before construction could begin and, most importantly, funding the project.\textsuperscript{21}

Before funding was secured, Schaefer and a task force of city business leaders hired Ronald Labinski of the architecture firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK) to mock up a new stadium design. In early December 1985, Labinski submitted a $170 million plan for a towering, triple-decked, multi-use structure with access ramps on the

\textsuperscript{17} Sandy Banisky and Luther Young, “Mayor Prefers Camden Yard Stadium Site,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, August 23, 1985.


outside of the building and 9,000 parking spots. It provided between 50,000 and 55,000 seats for baseball and between 60,000 and 65,000 seats for football and 115 luxury suits. It was not a nostalgia-inducing design and did not include the now-iconic warehouse.22

Schaefer, who had first been elected Baltimore’s mayor in 1971 successfully ran for governor in 1986 and when he took office in early 1987, he prioritized the new stadium.23 After consulting with the Orioles and the NFL, MSA concluded that despite a $65 million cost increase, the best way to please two teams was to construct two, single-use stadiums, so that both teams could provide fans with an optimal experience.24 The Orioles, led by team vice president Larry Lucchino, had begun focusing on an old-fashioned style park, something that could not work as a multi-use facility. Marylanders polled by the Baltimore Sun were, at best, mixed on building two parks.25

Before the project could move forward, Schaefer had to figure out how to pay for it. When the park was open, rent and other revenues would be sufficient to repay the construction bonds and their interest, but another revenue source was needed to pay


interest on those bonds during the construction process. Schaefer ultimately turned to special sports-themed instant lottery games and set about trying to gain support for them. Unlike funding the stadium through taxes, which would have drawn more money from wealthy, and mostly white, Marylanders, the state’s black legislative caucus opposed “the use of an instant game to fund the project because of the disproportionately high number of blacks who play the lottery.” Moreover, per the Baltimore Afro-American, “Sen. Decatur Trotter said [people who play the lottery] are the same people who are least likely to use the new facility because of the high price of tickets.” Before the first shovel-full of dirt was moved, the new park was on its way to providing an experience geared toward suburbanites.

Although Williams told the Baltimore Sun in 1987 “I’m not going anywhere, for God’s sake,” he told legislators that a new park with twice as many expensive seats as Memorial Stadium was “necessary if the Baltimore Orioles are going to remain a viable franchise.” Despite Williams’ commitment to Baltimore, state lawmakers explained their support of the lotteries in part because they needed to keep the Orioles in town.

Senator Paula C. Hollinger said, “I don’t think it’s worth the risk to lose one team and have no teams representing Maryland in the nation.”\(^{31}\) In March and April 1987 the state senate finalized the plans to fund the park through special lotteries.\(^{32}\) Although a group of Marylanders sued the state to stop the lotteries, their case was dismissed and special lottery tickets went on sale.\(^{33}\) With funding squared away, MSA set a November 9, 1987 deadline for proposals from architecture firms interested in designing the two parks. Eight firms, including Labinski’s HOK, met that deadline.\(^{34}\)

HOK had a division solely focused on stadiums and was in the midst of several other baseball projects at the time. In 1988 they remodeled Wrigley Field by installing 66 luxury suites to, in the words of one Cubs executive, “provide additional amenities for our fans.” HOK and the team also prioritized “preserv[ing] the existing Wrigley Field ambiance” during the remodel.\(^{35}\) HOK was also working on New Comiskey Park in Chicago at the same time. Designing a baseball-specific ballpark gave HOK more ways to incorporate retro-inspired features than Labinski had in his initial plan and HOK had gained more experience fusing older styles with modern amenities in the interim as well.


\(^{32}\) deMause and Cagan, *Field of Schemes*, 11.

\(^{33}\) deMause and Cagan, *Field of Schemes*, 12.


\(^{35}\) Chicago Cubs, “Cubs to Spend $14 Million to Improve Wrigley Field Seating, Concession and Press Facilities,” Press Release, October 25, 1988, American League Papers, A. Bartlett Giamatti Library and Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. [Hereafter HoF]
Their growing experience with incorporating modern amenities into older style ballparks meshed with the Orioles and MSA’s ideas about the park.

MSA told architectural firms they wanted an “old-fashioned park” that would be “an ideal place in which to enjoy America’s national pastime.”\(^{36}\) Herbert J. Belgrad, chairman of MSA, said the idea of an “old-fashioned park” came from team vice president “Larry [Lucchino who] was the first person to mention building a park that was both old and new.”\(^{37}\) Lucchino had seen the impact and attractiveness of Inner Harbor in his time with the team and it seems to have influenced his thinking on ballpark design.

MSA wanted firms to include, but did not guarantee it would ultimately be able to afford, renovation of Camden Station and the warehouse because they were “deeply rooted in the history of Baltimore.” To ensure modern amenities, the designers were also told to include as much on-site parking as possible, 50,000 seats, no obstructed views, at least 52 skyboxes with seating for at least 12, three different indoor dining facilities, and a 4,000-person fan picnic area. Other specifications included a modern scoreboard and a height that was “at the practical minimum above grade” so it would resemble classic-era ballparks.\(^{38}\)

In late January, 1988, MSA selected HOK over what the *Baltimore Sun* characterized as “strong objections from the Baltimore Orioles.” The team released a


\(^{38}\) Gunts, “An ‘Old-Fashioned Park’ on Authority’s Wish List.”
statement saying that it had “made known to the stadium authority our preference and recommendation for an architectural team to plan and design the baseball facility. The stadium authority chose not to accept that recommendation.” ⁴⁹ The team’s disapproval of HOK, led by Lucchino, stemmed from Lucchino’s attitudes about HOK’s other work. He did not like the plans that HOK was developing for New Comiskey Park, which he saw as insufficiently urban and too modern. ⁴⁰ Lucchino later said of HOK, “Comiskey would have been the stadium they’d have built, given free rein” in Baltimore. ⁴¹ Nevertheless, he told a reporter, “we are hopeful that we will get a fine facility from HOK.” ⁴²

That said, because Lucchino got MSA to agree to a “design concurrence” clause in the team’s lease, he was essentially assured that he would get the baseball version of a festival marketplace he wanted. Design concurrence meant that if the Orioles did not agree with the design of the ballpark the lease would be void. This required the two entities to jointly approve the design. It basically guaranteed that the Orioles vision for their new ballpark would eventually come to bear. ⁴³ The design HOK presented to MSA in late 1987, one not yet approved by the Orioles, included retaining the portion of the warehouse closest to the park, but also included ramps on the outside of the park that would not become a part of the finished facility. It did not yet include turning a section of

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⁴⁰ Richmond, Ballpark, 116.

⁴¹ Richmond, Ballpark, 114.

⁴² Gunts, “Stadium Authority Approves Designer for Complex.”

⁴³ Richmond, Ballpark, 148.
Eutaw Street into part of the concourse.\textsuperscript{44} It was moving towards becoming a baseball Harborplace, but had not gotten there yet.

As the Orioles, MSA, and HOK went back and forth on the design in 1988, the cost of the project escalated. In mid-1988 the total cost estimate increased to $315 million before some cutbacks brought it back down to $264 million.\textsuperscript{45} The cost to build the baseball park alone, excluding buying the land and building the football stadium, was then estimated at $70 million.\textsuperscript{46} By the end of 1988, that price increased to $78 million.\textsuperscript{47} By June of 1989 it was $105.4 million.\textsuperscript{48} The final cost of acquiring the land in Camden Yards, paying to relocate businesses, and tear down buildings came to nearly $100 million.\textsuperscript{49} An additional $18.6 million was spent on things like renovations to the warehouse and Camden Station.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{44} Gunts, “Stadium Authority Approves Designer for Complex.”


\textsuperscript{49} “Stadium Doctor” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, March 15, 1992.

In August 1988, while that design back and forth was happening, Orioles owner Edward Bennett Williams passed away. By early December 1988, Williams’ widow had agreed to sell the team to Eli Jacobs, a New York billionaire who was both passionate and knowledgeable about architecture, for $70 million.\textsuperscript{51} MLB finalized the sale early in 1989. Lucchino, who got his start with the Orioles because he was one of Williams’ law partners, continued on with the team as a minority owner and its president.\textsuperscript{52} Lucchino’s continued role and Jacobs’ interest in architecture meant that the team remained focused on creating the baseball equivalent of a festival marketplace.

Jacobs had grown up in Boston attending games at Fenway Park and was determined to have his new team’s new park match the sensibilities of classic-era parks. He quickly endorsed Lucchino’s vision for the new park and took advantage of the design concurrence clause. \textit{New Yorker} writer Roger Angell paraphrased Jacobs saying that “his main early contribution to the work was simply saying no to his architects until they began to get the idea” of a nostalgic park with modern amenities.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite his interest in the design, Jacobs had his own business affairs to deal with and could not oversee every step of the design and construction. Similarly, Lucchino had too much on his plate as team president to focus on it. The pair realized they needed to hire someone who shared their vision and understood the appeal of nostalgia, someone who would not be flustered by dealing with state bureaucracy, someone who was

\textsuperscript{51} deMause and Cagan, \textit{Field of Schemes}, 149.

\textsuperscript{52} Miller, \textit{The Baseball Business}, 306.

tenacious enough to see the project through in the way they envisioned. He and Jacobs found that person in Janet Marie Smith, whom they hired in January 1989 as vice president for stadium planning and development. Smith, then 32, had not worked in baseball before, but was intrigued by Baltimore “because she “admired the way [it] had changed itself from an industrial city into more of an entertainment center by adding the aquarium, the science center, [and by putting] in the convention center downtown.”

Smith grew up in Jackson, Mississippi at a time when many white parents pulled their children out of public school and enrolled them in all-white segregation academies, but her parents kept her at public school. Smith said that decision “made [her] aware of a bigger world.” A reporter said it “left her with a great admiration for her parents and a belief in the need to develop responsible citizenry.” Smith’s first visit to a major league park was to the Astrodome as an eleven-year-old in 1968. Twenty-two years later, she told a journalist “the thing I remember most is the spirit of the fans and the scoreboards. I was greatly impressed by the drama of bells, lights and whistles.” Smith brought an appreciation of modern amenities with her, but also experience in architecture and design.

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Smith earned a bachelors in architecture from Mississippi State University and a masters in urban planning from the City University of New York. After graduate school, she worked on the Battery Park reconstruction in New York City and the Pershing Square redevelopment in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{59} She later explained, her “work on Battery Park City very much influenced my thoughts about Camden Yards because it was one of the first big projects in America to shun the planning of the ‘60s and ‘70s of […] ‘object’ buildings as opposed to something that was more contextual and integrated with the city.”\textsuperscript{60} Smith’s description of Battery Park would have worked for festival marketplaces and Camden Yards too.

Smith sort of stumbled upon the Camden Yards project. According to her, in 1988 she “was living in Los Angeles [while working on the Pershing Square project] and had to give a speech in Philadelphia.” As a baseball fan, she decided that she wanted to see the Orioles play in Baltimore, so she flew there before taking the train to Philadelphia. Smith was keeping score at Memorial Stadium, but missed a play, so she turned to the fans next to her to ask them what happened. She got the answer and struck up a conversation. Those fans told her the team was planning to build a new park downtown. She thought to herself, “that ballpark would be a great thing to work on. They probably don’t have anyone managing it.”\textsuperscript{61} Smith was ready for a new project because Pershing

\textsuperscript{59} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 82.

\textsuperscript{60} Lemire, “World Series a Celebration of Ballpark Architect Janet Marie Smith’s Work.”

\textsuperscript{61} Bandler, “Baseball Fan Coaches New Stadium Into Its Rookie Season.”
Square was stalled in a sea of bureaucracy. She was drawn to the Orioles new park because it was “being built downtown in an era when most municipalities [were] moving their ballparks out.” Smith wanted to help baseball reengage with the city.

Smith managed to get her cover letter and resume onto Lucchino’s desk at just the right time. She did not ask if Lucchino needed someone to manage the project, instead, as she explained to a reporter, “I wrote, ‘You need someone.’” Lucchino said his “first impulse was to send polite regrets. But the combination of details on the résumé made it impossible to ignore.” He later said he “thought it was interesting that a woman was available who was an architect and urban planner.” Smith did not have an advanced degree in architecture though. Shortly before Camden Yards opened, she described herself to a reporter as “not an architect with a capital A, but I guess I’d like to think I know something about good urban and graphic design and architecture—the whole gamut. What I really do is manage a project.”

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62 Frenkiel, “The Stadium Builder.”
64 Peter Richmond discovered evidence suggesting that the process that led to Smith getting the job as vice president of stadium affairs was not as simple or straightforward as either she or the Orioles made it seem. Apparently, she was encouraged to apply for the position by someone employed by the MSA.
65 Bandler, “Baseball Fan Coaches New Stadium Into Its Rookie Season.”
67 Bandler, “Baseball Fan Coaches New Stadium Into Its Rookie Season.”
Roger Angell described Smith as “a precise and enthusiastic woman” who “whisked [him] through blueprints and renderings, projections and problems, sometimes in the manner of a ten-year-old showing off her Christmas presents. Ideas and expertise flowed from her, but pleasure ran strongest of all.”\textsuperscript{68} Smith described herself as “not one of those iron fists in a white glove. I’m not one of those Southern belle types if by that people think of someone lacking substance. I don’t conform to the stereotype.” She also said, “what other people call ambitious is just me living my life. I don’t consider myself a workaholic and I love what I do.” Lucchino described her as “a bulldog in 3-inch heels.” One male author described her as a “sternly pretty woman in her thirties,” but made no similar comments about men.\textsuperscript{69} She was whistled at while on the construction site.\textsuperscript{70} In 1990 a \textit{Baltimore Sun} reporter noted that “although accessible and warm, she is also cautious in an interview. Around the Memorial Stadium offices, it is said that few really know her and many of the men and women are in awe of her, finding her a little bit too perfect.”\textsuperscript{71}

Smith, following her bosses’ views, wanted the park to be “an architectural throwback to baseball’s glory days before World War II” and “look as if Babe Ruth had played there.”\textsuperscript{72} Thanks to festival marketplaces like Inner Harbor, historic design was

\textsuperscript{68} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 81-2.

\textsuperscript{69} Richmond, \textit{Ballpark}, 10.

\textsuperscript{70} Richmond, \textit{Ballpark}, 197.

\textsuperscript{71} Frenkiel, “The Stadium Builder.”

clearly popular with the Orioles’ target audience—white suburbanites. Smith later said that “Lucchino had us study the older parks, and we did our best to quantify what gave them character and authenticity and to figure out how to translate that without seeming kitschy in the approach.” She complied her study in a book of “images of older ballparks which illustrate architectural qualities generally present in early baseball fields.” A note at the beginning explained, “these elements are being studied so that they can be incorporated into the new Orioles park [… which] should have the image of traditional parks and be a real part of Downtown’s urban fabric, and still have modern amenities and support the functions of newer stadiums.” The images—some interior, some exterior—were accompanied by brief captions highlighting some of their common design elements.

Smith repeatedly highlighted parks that were built “parallel to the street,” parks with façades “designed to be a part of the cityscape,” parks with two sets of roofs—one over the its outer walls parallel to the street and a second over part of the top deck—parks where the seating in the outfield corner was “angled inward toward the field,” and parks where the “sunroof [was] horizontal and [was] supported by decorative trusses.” When Smith showed these images to a visitor she said, “from their looks, some of these places


74 Photograph book, Janet Marie Smith Ballpark Development Collection, 1988-2001, HoF.

75 Photograph book, Janet Marie Smith Ballpark Development Collection, 1988-2001, HoF.
could have been downtown libraries or a city hall. We hope we’ll have that spirit when we’re done.”

76 She later wrote that old ballparks were “in urban neighborhoods, built on tight city blocks where the streets shaped the playing field and stands alike.”

77 Smith told a writer, older ballparks “were always steel, and not just post and beam, but steel trusses. The seats always had slats and cast-iron standards.”

78 Furthermore, she explained, “the colors were often very park-like—usually green, but not always. The most important thing was the fan’s relationship to the game—not only did you have a minimal amount of foul territory, since you weren’t trying to squeeze yourself into a football stadium, but you were completely surrounded.”

A memo that followed Smith’s photographs read, “the goal of the Orioles in directing the design of the new baseball park is to create a facility that has both the features of old ballparks that will give it an historical, intimate urban character and the modern amenities that will generate revenue and provide fan comfort.”

79 It highlighted several proposed Camden Yards features that recalled older parks including that it would have “a real bleacher section” and that its seats would be turned toward the field. The memo continued, exaggerating the number of ballparks that were built in highly developed areas, “by retaining the Camden Yard Railroad Station and the warehouse, we

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76 Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 83.


78 Richmond, Ballpark, 176.

79 Richmond, Ballpark, 176-7.

80 Photograph book, Janet Marie Smith Ballpark Development Collection, 1988-2001, HoF.
hope to emulate the feeling of enclosure and give a Baltimore identity to the ballpark.” It also noted that the new park would “be parallel to the street on both Camden Street and Russell Street so that the structure will be a part of the urban fabric.” In other words, Smith picked and chose from baseball’s past to select the features she thought would inspire feelings of nostalgia and create a distinctive urban atmosphere.

Armed with research about classic-era parks, Smith’s job was then to get MSA and HOK on board with Jacobs and Lucchino’s ideas about an old-fashioned park. This was difficult, she argued because “when you want things done a particular way,” as her bosses did, “you have to be careful not to alienate key players.” Most news reports indicated she was very good at that. In 1990, the *Baltimore Sun* wrote, “since Ms. Smith’s arrival here a year ago, she has dazzled almost everyone. Her combination of smarts, talent, ambition and packaging couldn’t be better. Although some of her colleagues say it’s all a little intimidating.” Smith also had to navigate the relationships between Governor Schaefer and the team. Discussing Lucchino and Schaefer, Smith said “each had a vision, and they were perfect together.” Lucchino wanted a more Disney-inspired nostalgia and Schaefer wanted a more suburban park. Smith helped fuse their ideas into a baseball fantasy city.

81 Photograph book, Janet Marie Smith Ballpark Development Collection, 1988-2001, HoF.

82 Smith, “Putting Together a Winning Team.”

83 Frenkiel, “The Stadium Builder.”

84 Lemire, “World Series a Celebration of Ballpark Architect Janet Marie Smith’s Work.”
Although multiple stakeholders with their own perspectives caused problems, it also meant the final result was a collaboration as many people brought ideas to the table that ended up becoming vital parts of the finished project. For example, Jacobs took credit for the extra-tall wall in right field that compensated for the short distance down the line due to the warehouse and Eutaw Street. Lucchino described Jacobs’ “contribution to the design of the ballpark [as] enormous and pervasive, though largely out of public view.” Unlike creating an “old-fashioned park,” the idea to preserve the warehouse did not come from Lucchino. Eric Moss, a Baltimore native and architectural student who was not formally involved in the design process, came up with the idea to include the warehouse and shared it with people who went on to work for MSA and the Orioles. The idea eventually made its way to Belgrad. As Richard Justice wrote in the 

Washington Post, “Belgrad argued to keep the 87-year-old warehouse, Smith agreed and carried the argument to Lucchino.” After the idea of potentially keeping the warehouse became public, Richard deFlon of HOK said, “we’ve seen a lot of sentiment from the community and from the city of Baltimore for the building to stay. It’s a historic

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87 Richmond, Ballpark, 155.

structure. … It’s a sound building. It’s a landmark on the site.”

Orioles fans seemed attracted to the city’s past. Shortly after Smith was hired, MSA announced they could afford to keep and renovate the entire warehouse. Lead HOK architect Joe Spear said that without the warehouse, the park “would be a […] very strained design.” Smith wanted to keep it because it created a sense of nostalgia, saying “when you talk about kids and baseball, a recurring theme is broken windows. We want somebody to hit a home run and break a window.” Without it, she argued, Camden Yards “would have been completely different. The warehouse is the reference point for everything about the ballpark—its massing, its scale, its materials.” HOK aligned the park with the red brick warehouse by, as Baltimore Sun architectural critic Edward Gunts described, “cladding [ramps and stairs towers] in red brick and precast stone veneer along with the rest of the façade.” They made the park feel old by leading fans to think of the old warehouse.

Renovating the warehouse and Camden Station was historic preservation, but the decisions on which buildings to preserve were made primarily to create a fantasy city, not


for reasons of historical importance. Scholar Erin Donovan notes that there is “no interpretive signage to indicate to visitors the original use of the two buildings […] or the social history of the area as whole.”\(^94\) Instead, the site “focuses … on … reinventing the past to conjure feelings of nostalgia about the good old days and baseball to promote an image of progress.”\(^95\)

By April 1989, the parties had come to agree on most elements of the design of an old-fashioned park with modern amenities. MSA, aware of the financial success of Inner Harbor and its old-fashioned buildings with modern stores, was won over by the team’s similar vision for Camden Yards. Long gone were the plans Labinski drew up in 1985 for a multi-use park that barely engaged with the city. All agreed on a green color scheme for the seats instead of the multicolored menagerie of Dodger Stadium and the Astrodome. They were united on retaining Eutaw Street as part of the park; Jacobs recalled that he had “wanted to create an arcade [there. Because it would give] life to an area, bringing the city right into the ballpark.”\(^96\) Despite those agreements, Lucchino said, “there still is work to be done to reach the twin goals of creating an old-fashioned stadium that achieves a feeling of intimacy.”\(^97\)

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\(^95\) Donovan, 222.

\(^96\) Gildea, “Friendly and Familiar Confines.”

Some of that work included figuring out the slope of the upper deck. HOK had originally suggested 35 degrees, but Smith and the Orioles thought that was too steep. One *Sun* reporter argued that 35 degrees “might have meant shorter lines for cappuccino on the luxury levels, but at the expense of Joe Fan.” Too low a slope would make it hard for fans in the back to see the field though. Smith favored 30.5 degrees, which would help achieve the team’s goal of reducing the overall height of the ballpark, but that would force HOK to redesign the lower decks. Eventually, the architects and the team settled on a 31.4-degree slope, which reduced the height of the park from 140 feet to 125. The playing field was 16 feet below street level, which also reduced the park’s height. At a lower height, the park would feel more like it had always been there, meshing with the remodeled older buildings around it.

In June, HOK submitted their full design. The park’s brick exterior would match the warehouse, Camden Station, and nearby houses. Because the upper deck was set back from the outside edge of the park, it would appear to be about the height of a six-story building. The design, with its open outfield looking onto the city skyline would be unmistakably urban. Gunts described it as “an old-fashioned, intimate yet state-of-the-art ballpark that will have a distinctive personality and fit the city like a glove” and “the first

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98 Hyman, “Making a Ballpark the Old-Fashioned Way.”


100 Smith, “Back to the Future,” 56.

truly postmodern major league baseball stadium.” He continued that its “brick walls, arched openings, set back upper-deck and other old-time touches” put it in opposition to “the postwar push to the suburbs that took much of the character out of stadium design.”

Fans would be closer to the action than they had been at Memorial Stadium.

As a civil engineer on the project explained, “the [luxury] boxes aren’t going to be shoved in the faces of the forty thousand people who can’t afford them. They won’t have signs saying, ‘Rich people here, assholes and groundlings here.’”

Because of the ticket prices, location, and design, such signs were superfluous. It was not going to be accessible to most “assholes and groundlings” anyway.

Although the retro-inspired design appealed to Gunts and many others, it did not win universal acclaim in Baltimore, but neither did festival marketplaces like Inner Harbor. John Steadman wrote the design was “downright ugly. […] Baltimore is the only city in America that is actually trying to create an old stadium” and called the warehouse “both a dinosaur and an eyesore.”

A series of letters in the Sun expressed frustration with the design. Scott Cornwell complained about the “ugly, old, quarter-mile warehouse that will obscure the new stadium almost totally.”

“As for the design of the stadium itself,” he continued, “where is it written that a modern stadium can’t be beautiful?

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Purposely making it asymmetrical is corny and contrived. We’ve waited a long time for this stadium. Let’s make it ‘state of the art.’” Cornwell concluded, “it’s time for the people involved in this project to come to their senses. First, bulldoze that silly warehouse, and, second, send those architects back to the drawing board.” Sarah Crites said, “I almost cried when I saw the diagram of Baltimore’s new stadium. What an ugly place. Who told those designers that we wanted to go back 50 years to a nice old-fashioned ball park? No, no, no! We want a spanking new place to go to. We want beauty and comfort. Get rid of that warehouse, too. A new design should be drawn up and fast.”

In contrast, New York Times architectural critic Paul Goldberger called it “the best plan for a major-league baseball park in more than a generation.” He argued it would be “capable of wiping out in a single gesture 50 years of wretched stadium design.” Goldberger noted that unlike multi-use stadiums, Camden Yards “will look like a building from the outside, not like some vast feat of engineering.” Writing based on its blueprints, Roger Angell predicted it would be a “fans’ park,” a “new old-style ballpark,” and wrote that he had been waiting for a park like it for 20 years. It both meshed with

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109 Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 79, 80. (Emphasis in original.)
architectural trends and, in contrast to what came before it, seemed to prioritize the way fans once felt that they had been treated at the ballpark.

After HOK submitted their plans for the park and those plans had already garnered both praise and backlash, MSA and the team still had to agree on the main building material. Smith and the Orioles insisted on a steel-truss design that had been used in classic-era ballparks, instead of the concrete favored by MSA. Although they were initially opposed, HOK ended up supporting the team’s plan.110 According to the *Sun*, MSA learned in the spring of 1989 “that steel […] would cost $3 million more than concrete.”111 As Smith described it, she then “asked our construction-management company to have a look” and they “found that steel would be cost-effective if trusses were used more extensively.” To convince MSA that steel was the best material, Smith said she “presented [using steel] as an alternative that needed their input, which it did. They agreed with our assessment.”112 Smith explained “the use of steel trusses gave the architecture an old familiar feeling.”113 It was key to creating the nostalgic feel the team sought.

The last major detail to hammer out was the park’s name. Governor Schaefer favored “Camden Yards” while Jacobs insisted on “Oriole Park” and per the terms of the

110 Richmond, *Ballpark*, 173.


112 Smith, “Putting Together a Winning Team.”

113 Smith, “Back to the Future,” 56.
team’s lease, the two parties had to agree.\textsuperscript{114} Both names faced some public opposition. John Steadman objected to “Camden Yards” because Camden Street, and therefore Camden Station and Camden Yards, were named after Charles Pratt, the first Earl of Camden, a British aristocrat who died in 1794 and had no connection to baseball.\textsuperscript{115} He objected to “Oriole Park” because the original Oriole Park played host to the all-white minor-league Baltimore Orioles of the first half of the twentieth century. It was rarely leased to Negro League teams and when the Orioles played there, African-Americans were segregated into the worst seats in the park.\textsuperscript{116} Regardless, in the fall of 1991, Schaefer and Jacobs agreed to a compromise: Oriole Park at Camden Yards. Over the course of its first season, fans and journalists began referring to the park simply as Camden Yards.

After the big questions like using steel and keeping the warehouse were settled, Smith turned her attention to smaller details that would stimulate nostalgic sentiment. Peter Richmond observed Smith’s excitement anytime she could add a detail that felt like it came from an old ballpark such as the metal logos at the end of the rows of seats that echoed the logos on seats at older parks.\textsuperscript{117} Smith wrote that “the ‘Baltimore Baseball Club’ graphics at the aisle end standard [were] taken from the logo of the championship


\textsuperscript{117} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 81 and Richmond, \textit{Ballpark}, 250.
1892 Orioles team.” She made sure that fans would be reminded of the past the whole time they were in the park, yet would never have to sacrifice modern comforts.

As Opening Day 1992 drew near, the park attracted more attention and the sexism Smith faced became more evident in regards to who should get credit for the facility. One observer, Peter Richmond argued that Smith took credit for things that were not her doing. For example, he claimed Smith did not acknowledge the role Eric Moss played in the decision to keep the warehouse. Smith had also hired an architect and expert on baseball stadium design, John Pastier, as a consultant and made use of his ideas, before eventually letting him go. Richmond suggested that Smith’s decision to let Pastier go when she no longer needed his ideas was unusual, rather than normal business practice. Pastier took getting fired hard and said that “Janet Marie should be shot” for a design oversight that left PVC pipes visible on the concourse. Despite Smith’s extensive research on ballparks, Pastier also said “frankly, she knows very little.” Pastier was angry at being let go and frustrated because he felt someone else got credit he was due, but it also might have upset him that a woman was getting so much attention.

In the eyes of some of the stakeholders in the project, the flurry of articles about the new park that were published as Opening Day approached gave too much credit to

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118 Smith, “Back to the Future,” 56.

119 Richmond, Ballpark, 156.

120 Richmond, Ballpark, 170.

121 Richmond, Ballpark, 245.

122 Richmond, Ballpark, 247.
Smith and the Orioles. A March 1992 *New York Times* article claimed the park was “built by the Orioles and the Maryland Stadium Authority,” ignoring the source of the park’s funding and irritating MSA officials.\(^{123}\) That article described Smith as “the design conscience” for the team and “the architect and planner who was hired by the Orioles to shepherd the design.” Although calling Smith an architect might have upset HOK, she did have a B.A. in architecture and the article also said that “the new park was designed to the specifications of the Orioles and the stadium authority by the sports division of Hellmuth Obata & Kassabaum.” However, the article claimed that the team had made the “decision to retain and restore a 1,000-foot-long turn-of-the-century brick warehouse behind the right-field wall,” when that idea was not originally theirs.\(^{124}\)

MSA’s Bruce Hoffman said, “deep down, [Smith] must need credit. I don’t. My job is to get it done and not worry about credit.” Hoffman continued, “sometimes she’d take credit for things she didn’t deserve. They’ve designed stadiums before she got here and they’ll design them after. […] Yes, she poked at the [design] team and made them be more creative—I’ll give her a ton of credit. She’s smart. She did her homework. She got a bunch of old pictures and made some trips to other stadiums.”\(^{125}\) Hoffman’s conflicting statements about needing credit suggest that he, and perhaps the other men involved in the project, did not like a woman getting credit for helping to design the ballpark.


\(^{124}\) Brown, “A Field of Dreams Comes True for the Baltimore Orioles.”

\(^{125}\) Richmond, *Ballpark*, 253.
An April 5, 1992 *Chicago Tribune* article raised the ire of MSA and HOK officials, yet the opening paragraph is the following quote from Smith: “If it hadn’t been for the people above me who thought I could execute their dream and the people around me who said, ‘Let’s do our best to make it happen,’ I wouldn’t have been able to help accomplish what we did.”[^126] Smith credited, albeit not by name, the architects and MSA officials who made the park happen. The article’s author explained that Smith “declined to give an example of a particular idea of hers that has been incorporated into the project, viewing it as a collaborative effort.”[^127] Two years earlier, Smith told the *Washington Post* that then-manager “Frank [Robinson] and [General Manager] Roland [Hemond] played a real important part in establishing guidelines to make this an old-fashioned park.”[^128] Smith gave credit and did not take it for herself. Yet, Robinson noted that the ballpark took on “the look that [Smith] wanted. Not *similar* to what she wanted. What she wanted.”[^129] According to one Orioles official, Smith “was unbelievable. She was all over [HOK and MSA]. All the time. On everything.”[^130] Even though she did not take credit, she deserved it.


[^127]: Bandler, “Baseball Fan Coaches New Stadium Into Its Rookie Season.”


[^129]: Richmond, *Ballpark*, 189. (Emphasis in original.)

In contrast, however, a 1992 article in the *Washington Post* exclusively quoted the men involved in the project from Herb Belgrad at MSA to Lucchino and all gave credit back and forth to each other without mentioning Smith. Ignoring Smith’s role, Belgrad said “I can never say enough about architect Joe Spear. We came up with the concepts, but couldn’t translate them into a blueprint.”

When only the men involved in the project received credit, they did not publicly mention anything about Smith being left out. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of all involved and a lot of public money, the park was on schedule to open in April 1992.

The final costs for Camden Yards were $106.5 million for construction and $48.2 million in road, traffic, and public transportation improvement, not to mention the nearly $100 million to purchase the land and relocate businesses. Most of that $48.2 million was from federal funding, but $9.6 million came from taxpayers in the city of Baltimore.

By another accounting, the full project cost $410 million plus $30 million in federal transportation funding. Just before the park opened, MSA claimed that “construction of Oriole Park alone created 2,858 jobs, $54.5 million in wages and more than $11 million in state and local taxes” and when open was “expected to contribute $15.6 million to the

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133 deMause and Cagan, *Field of Schemes*, 11.
local economy.”

It also took a privately owned business district and converted it to non-taxable state land designed to attract people who did not live in the city.

**Camden Yards Experience**

Before the official Opening Day, April 6, 1992, the team held a few events to, as MSA’s Herb Belgrad explained, “get the wrinkles out.” Smith told a reporter, “there will be a period of time that we’ll be shaking the bugs out.” She explained “our real test is with the fans and how they react to everything.” On April 2, the team held a lunchtime open house and a rally at 7 pm and Camden Yards got rave reviews. Upon seeing the park, season-ticket holder Jim Lusby noted “I feel like I’m back in yesteryear.” Jim Butler of Alexandria, Virginia extolled how “easy to get to” the park was. He continued, “you don’t have to make a left turn or right turn, just point the car. It’s marvelous for people from D.C. and Northern Virginia.” Those fans first reactions were exactly what the team had in mind: nostalgia and suburban access.

Janet Marie Smith summed up the nostalgic sentiment the team wanted fans to get, saying, “we want people to feel as if they’ve been there before, even if it’s their first time.” All the nostalgic design elements and touches Smith had labored over seemed to

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134 Valentine, “Residents Worry Oriole Park Won’t be Friendly Neighbor.”


136 Farbstein, “The Woman Behind the Design.”


138 Gunts, “Grandstand,” 71.
serve that purpose. One Opening Day fan reported “it’s kind of like I’ve been here before, but I haven’t.”

William Gildea wrote that baseball fans “go to parks to see the game, of course, but also to remind [themselves] in a tactile way how constant baseball is in a turmoiled world.”

By relying on nostalgia, the Orioles found a way to make baseball seem even more constant by creating the feeling that not even the park had changed in 80 years.

Smith’s use of nostalgia included thinking about how fans would get to games. The memo accompanying her photo book noted that in the classic-era “the pedestrian approaches to the ballpark were carefully considered with particular emphasis on the landscaping and street furnishings.” Roger Angell noted “the main entrance to the park forms a natural target or terminus for the oncoming Russell Street traffic” and Smith selected fruit trees for the outside of the park that would blossom in time for opening day. Moreover, the park was mass transit accessible in ways most multi-use era parks had not been.

A new light-rail line, a pet project of Governor Schaefer and the 1990s equivalent of the trolleys many fans took to classic-era parks, was partially open by April 6. Like at least some trolleys of yore, that light rail line was designed to bring fans from the near

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141 Photograph book, Janet Marie Smith Ballpark Development Collection, 1988-2001, HoF.

142 Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 82.
suburbs into the city—not primarily to connect different parts of the city. For Opening
Day, its maximum capacity was only 1,600 people per hour and the Metropolitan Transit
Authority (MTA) was “worried that the crowds on light rail will be so great that more
people will show up than can be easily accommodated.”\textsuperscript{143} After Opening Day, city
officials estimated that one-third of fans, around 16,000 in total, took some form of mass
transportation to the game. The light rail was full, but not overly crowded.\textsuperscript{144} A month
into the season, MTA reported that about 3,000 to 4,000 fans per night took it.\textsuperscript{145} After the
season, the team estimated that nearly one in five fans, exceeding their expectations, took
mass transit or charter busses to the park.\textsuperscript{146}

Despite costly improvements to the transportation infrastructure around the park,
before Opening Day, MSA and city officials were concerned about potential traffic jams
as fans, especially those not from the city, adjusted to driving to a new part of town. In
early March, the \textit{Sun} reported that test runs from five different locations in the
Washington, D.C. area revealed that it would take fans about 20 to 25 minutes less to get
to Camden Yards than Memorial Stadium, perhaps enticing more out of town fans to

\textsuperscript{143} Peter Jenson, “Train Capacity May Bench O’s Fans,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, April 1,

\textsuperscript{144} “Going the Distance,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, April 7, 1992.

\textsuperscript{145} Peter Jensen, “Stadium Trips Help MTA Work Out Light-Rail Kinks,”

\textsuperscript{146} Mark Hyman, “At Oriole Park, a Very Good Year,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, October 4,
Sun}, April 7, 1991.
Colonel Joseph P. Newman of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), the officer tasked with leading the police efforts on Opening Day, advised “a good rule of thumb for anyone driving is that if you’re coming from the south, stay to the south. If you’re coming from the north, stay to the north.”

Everyone seemed to think the nostalgic park would attract fans from the suburbs who would drive there.

On April 3, when the Orioles played the Mets in a pre-season exhibition game, perhaps the most surprising element was the lack of traffic jams. The Sun reported that “traffic flowed around the ballpark as smoothly as beer through the insulated copper tubing inside.” Still, in advance of opening day, MSA suggested that if fans planned on driving that they arrive two hours before the first pitch. On Opening Day, traffic around the park was lighter than expected and few fans struggled to find parking. The main parking lot adjacent to Camden Yards only offered spaces for 5,000 cars—far fewer than most multi-use era parks—but most multi-use era parks did not have the mass transit options available at Camden Yards nor the surrounding parking garages that had been

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150 Stephen C. Fehr, “If You Must Drive, Be There by 1 p.m.,” *Washington Post*, April 6, 1992.

151 “Going the Distance.”
built to serve downtown and Inner Harbor.\textsuperscript{152} At the end of the season, Belgrad explained that “the predictions that gridlock would […] turn downtown into a traffic jungle, simply never developed.”\textsuperscript{153} Perhaps that was because more fans were taking mass transit to the park, taking advantage of other lots, or walking from downtown offices or Inner Harbor, leading them to interact with the city outside their cars.

Fans at Camden Yards interacted with the city even if they did not walk or take mass transit to the park because as Smith said, the park was “so specific to the site that you couldn’t pack it up and move it anywhere else.”\textsuperscript{154} Spear said, “what we did in Baltimore is a response to the city.”\textsuperscript{155} Jacobs said one of his requirements for the park was that “it had to be an integral part of the city.” Nearing Opening Day, he concluded, “I think its distinguishing characteristic is its authenticity. It fits. It belongs. It’s not ersatz … We’ve made a statement that this is Baltimore and baseball.”\textsuperscript{156} One visitor called Camden Yards “the perfect urban setting. It’s what we think it should be, to create what we think urban perfection can be. […] It’s open to the danger of urban life. But isn’t actually threatened by it. It’s a fantasy of a city.”\textsuperscript{157}

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\textsuperscript{152} Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Pits and the Pendulum,” 82.
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\textsuperscript{153} Mark Hyman, “At Oriole Park, a Very Good Year.”
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\textsuperscript{157} Richmond, \textit{Ballpark}, 250.
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Baltimore as Smith, Spear, and Jacobs claimed, but to a fantasy of what suburbanites thought Baltimore should be.

To ensure Camden Yards presented a nostalgic fantasy of a city, that city had to be carefully regulated. In the *Sun*, Sandy Banisky and David Simon wrote that if fans “are going to come back [to the park], they’ve got to feel comfortable.”

Underscoring the park’s connection to festival marketplaces, the Downtown Partnership, an organization of downtown and Inner Harbor businesses, aimed to make fans feel comfortable around the new park by “replacing dim street lights and […] scrubbing graffiti off walls.” They also asked merchants “to replace torn awnings and to wash windows.” The head of the organization told journalists, “we found there are a whole host of factors unrelated to crime itself that make people feel unsafe: dark areas, strangers on the street, [and] vacant buildings.” Crime, however, was an even bigger concern. Banksy and Simon noted, “although Memorial Stadium on 33rd Street was close to some high-crime areas, Baltimore police acknowledge that Camden Yards is hard by some tough neighborhoods as well.”

As Banisky and Simon wrote, “Newman and other officials say they are aware that the public may be nervous about being in strange territory at night, particularly in the wake of a recent spate of violent crimes downtown. Their response is to try to reassure visitors with an overwhelming police presence in and around the stadium.” BPD planned to have 48 officers stationed in the park with an additional 56 uniformed and plainclothes officers.

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158 Banisky and Simon, “Police Beef Up Ranks for Unfamiliar Stadium Site.”

159 Banisky and Simon, “Police Beef Up Ranks for Unfamiliar Stadium Site.”
officers outside. There would also be officers on mass transit looking out for pickpockets. The *Sun* reported “the department is increasing the number of foot patrolmen in the Central and Southern districts, which surround the new stadium. Mounted officers and patrolmen on foot and motor scooter will patrol the downtown parking garages and lots where many fans are expected to park.” Banisky and Simon further explained, “the Howard Street retail corridor—the route for the new MTA light rail, the site of the nearest Metro station and one of the more ragged sections of downtown after dark—will be heavily policed by both city patrolmen and transit officers.” To get suburban fans into the city, it had to be overwhelmingly policed to maintain the park’s sentimental fictions.

Given the emphasis on keeping areas around the park well policed and well lit, perhaps the best indication that fans felt comfortable at the park came during its first night game. The team drew nearly 43,000 fans to that game, an early-April game on a week night. Although many cars were ticketed and towed, there was no reported crime. It seemed the neighborhood around Camden Yards—at least on game days—had been successfully transformed into a fantasy of a city.

That neighborhood was far more than a site of crime—it was home to a number of residents who were concerned about the impact the park would have on their lives. One resident told a reporter, “we’re expecting lots of traffic and trash and people urinating on bushes.” Although some neighbors like Anthony Imes thought the park would “give us

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160 Banisky and Simon, “Police Beef Up Ranks for Unfamiliar Stadium Site.”


162 Valentine, “Residents Worry Oriole Park Won’t be Friendly Neighbor.”
a parking crisis and make the bar owners wealthy,” others like Sharon Reuter were cautiously optimistic. Reuter said, “it’s a beautiful stadium, and it’s right at the end of the block. But it is a little scary, I guess, although there’s less fear of the unknown the closer it gets to Opening Day.”163 After the first night game, one mounted police officer told a journalist that “some of the residents are happy to see us. If [the ballpark] has brought anything to their community, it’s more police officers.”164 A little more than halfway through the season, the Sun reported that neighbors around the park found it was not “as intrusive as they had expected,” noise levels were generally acceptable, and parking was actually easier than it had been before the park opened due to increased enforcement.165 Taming the neighborhood around the park helped the Orioles increase their revenue by ensuring it presented lucrative sentimental fictions.

The kinds and locations of seats Camden Yards also offered the Orioles the opportunity to earn more revenue than Memorial Stadium. The park had 17,392 upper deck seats, 4,958 club seats in middle deck, and 24,483 lower deck seats, plus 72 luxury boxes for ten to 14 people each and only 1,800 bleacher seats.166 It had a larger amount of expensive grandstand seats than Memorial Stadium and a smaller number of cheaper


bleacher seats. During its first season, the most expensive non-luxury box seats, the club seats, cost $18 per game. Most of the rest of the seats cost between $8 and $13 with general admission seats at $4.75 and bleacher seats at $4. It was built for wealthy suburbanites more than city folk. The seats at Camden Yards were also more spacious than at Memorial Stadium and they were the first plastic ones built with slats, rather than fully molded backs. As Smith said, “in addition to the comfort factor [of slats], we desperately wanted a chair that looked like the old-fashioned slat chair.”

Another revenue source, and another site of nostalgia, were the scoreboards and advertisements around the park. In the multi-use era, advertisements had vanished from outfield walls. They returned at Camden Yards, making it the only park with advertisements in fair territory. Moreover, many of the ads were retro-themed. The Budweiser one featured a “nostalgic diamond-and-bat motif.” The Coca-Cola ad made use of a simulated glass bottle and the company’s classic script logo. The analog clock on the top of the scoreboard was designed to look like the clock on the city’s famous


Bromo Seltzer Tower. Yet, the scoreboards also featured a Jumbotron and giant electronic screens and took eleven people to run. The park also offered an out-of-town scoreboard. According to Charles Steinberg, the team executive in charge of the scoreboards, they would “give the fans at the ballpark everything he or she will get at home watching on TV or listening to the radio.” In other words, the scoreboards, like the park itself, were a calculated mix of old-fashioned and modern.

An additional key to increased revenue at Camden Yards were luxury suites. Not only were they something that Memorial Stadium lacked, but revenue from luxury suites was guaranteed before the season began—even if the team struggled once games started. The Orioles planned to lease 60 of the 72 boxes, leaving 12 for team executives, elected officials, and their flagship TV and radio stations. The lease price ranged from $55,000 per year for the boxes furthest from home plate to $95,000 for the ones closest to the plate. Lease agreements ran for between three and five years. Food and drink were not included in the lease and their cost was steep. American sturgeon caviar appetizers for six cost $135, a poached salmon entree for six was $90, and jumbo kosher hot dogs were

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$4.50 each.\textsuperscript{175} The team official in charge of leasing the boxes, called them “an ideal way to entertain corporately.”\textsuperscript{176}

The luxury suites were designed to look like they fit with the rest of the park while offering exclusivity. Examining a model of the park, one reporter concluded that from the luxury suites, “corporate fans and their guests will get a swell view of the game […] but they won’t seem to be lording it over the proceedings.”\textsuperscript{177} Lucchino called them “baseball boxes” and said, “a major effort was made to make sure there were outdoor seats, so you’re not in an enclosed, hermetically sealed unit that doesn’t have the feel of baseball.”\textsuperscript{178} That said, the suites at Camden Yards were just as plentiful as they had been at multi-use stadiums and they came with similar access to amenities that “regular” fans did not have. Each suite came furnished with its own private bathroom, carpentered floors, a covered balcony with ten to 14 seats, and an air-conditioned indoor lounge.\textsuperscript{179} They also had two televisions, a wet bar, and a sound system that could be set to the radio or television broadcast of the game. Each suite holder received four guest passes, VIP parking, and could request special visits from players or the team mascot.\textsuperscript{180} Luxury suite


\textsuperscript{176} Mark Hyman, “Pitching the Suite Life,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, November 9, 1990.


\textsuperscript{178} Hyman, “Pitching the Suite Life.”


\textsuperscript{180} Morgan, “Mixing Business and Pleasure.”
patrons also had access to the exclusive stadium club on the concourse. Additionally, because fans in suites had their own elevators and concessions stands, one Baltimore columnist noted, they had “no need to worry about rubbing elbows with the riff-raff.”\textsuperscript{181} For fans still worried about the city, suites offered an extra layer of protection.

For some critics, the revenue producing aspects of Camden Yards fostered an elite atmosphere throughout the park rather than the reputed traditional baseball experience of equality. Although ballparks had always been tiered, for these critics, the increasingly tiered experience at Camden Yards did not fit with their understanding of baseball’s past. \textit{Sun} columnist Barney Kirby wrote that “the new ball park shows that Baltimore is no longer a city of the blue-collar worker but of the corporate commuter.” Kirby complained that Camden Yards “excludes rather than includes” and argued that “the Orioles don’t want fans; they want investors.” He saw it as a problem larger than just Baltimore, arguing that “baseball is no longer, if it ever was, a game for the middle-class and blue-collar American.”\textsuperscript{182} Just like festival marketplaces, Kirby saw Camden Yards as appealing only to wealthy suburbanites.

Some Orioles fans felt excluded by the increased price of tickets at the new park. A letter writer to the \textit{Washington Post} complained that “the wealthy—those who can pay $13 for a box seat or $18 for a club seat over a full season—have a large selection of great seats. The average fans, who cannot afford such luxuries, are left to compete for a


limited number of affordable decent seats.”Elizabeth Thorpe, a self-described “middle-class Baltimorean,” explained, “I’ve felt I had no voice in the stadium process. I’ve known all along this new stadium was not built for the people of Baltimore, but for the tourist industry.” She predicted “the average Baltimorean will be watching the games at home, one of the few places we feel welcome in our own city,” suggesting she felt left out of places like Inner Harbor. Fan Drew Farenwald wrote that “the citizens, and particularly, the baseball fans of Baltimore, have been sold a lie.” He noted that all the good seats have “been sold to corporations and ticket agencies.” “The real fan,” Farenwald argued, got stuck with awful seats “because this brand-new facility is set up as a money machine with the fan as the fuel for that machine.”

Rob McCracken, a Baltimore fan, felt that although “Camden Yards [is] unquestionably the finest ballpark in America, … the majority of these patrons [in the club seats] are tourists from areas where baseball is not played.” McCracken could only find real baseball fans in the bleachers and thanks to “the inclusion of a concession stand and restroom directly beneath the bleachers … the true fan [does not mix] with the suburban socialites and collegians.” Camden Yards’ tiered experience limited fan interaction, walling off fans inside the park just as the park was walled off from the city.

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185 Drew Farenwald, letter to the editor, Baltimore Sun, July 7, 1992.
The small number of “real” fans led one _Sun_ columnist to bemoan, “all those Washington people. […] Many of them are here on expense account deals. When the novelty of the new stadium goes away, so will a lot of those people. Meantime, the Orioles have alienated a lot of the old faithful.” Spectators from the nation’s capital and its surrounding suburbs had long been a part of the team’s fan base though. A 1990 article concluded that fans from the DC area made up one quarter of people at Orioles games. That said, even the _Washington Post_ noticed something seemed amiss. In a September editorial, the paper argued that despite all the fans at Camden Yards, “there is still something missing there. It’s called noise. By Baltimore standards, at least, the place does not rock.” By successfully attracting different fans, Camden Yards changed the typical ballpark experience. Moreover, the editorial board saw a link between these quiet fans and the team’s performance, writing “certainly Camden Yards, with its orderly, well-off crowds, high-priced tickets and great proportion of people who get out to no more than one game a year appears to have left the Orioles uninspired.”

At least one regular fan, however, thought that the park itself, not the fans, was responsible. Jonathan Yardley, a _Post_ columnist and frequent visitor to Camden Yards wrote that the new park “made it more than a little bit difficult for those of us in the stands to devote our undivided attention to the doings on the field” because of the view of

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the city distracted him. Yardley continued, “going to Camden Yards has been as much an architectural as a sporting excursion. Few plays on the field have given me so much pleasure as taking first-time visitors on a tour of the park.” He argued that “the people who designed Camden Yards thought of just about everything, but apparently it didn’t occur to them that raising and shrinking the upper deck in order to accommodate the ‘Club Level’ and its lordly occupants would produce a vacuum between the upper and lower decks that tends to muffle crowd noise.”

Barney Kirby also saw something lost in the new park’s location. He wrote that the trip to Memorial Stadium had exposed him to “neighborhoods that would have otherwise remained anonymous” and “the people who made up this city, […] a cigar-chomping man from Essex, a black family from Edmondson Village, some students from Hopkins.” He wrote, “the location of the stadium is a sign of whom the team really belongs to. Its convenience for northbound I-95 travelers makes it possible for them to avoid the city.” Kirby did not think Camden Yards was part of the real city where diverse people came in contact with each other. It was, however, the kind of urban space that drew suburban fans, which is what the team wanted.

In contrast, other observers thought that Camden Yards was a site of intermixing. For them, despite its exclusiveness, the rhetoric of baseball as a diverse space held true, thanks to its position in the city. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Eve Zibart called Camden Yards “the most embracing, class-leveling, elbow-rubbing baseball stadium of

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191 Kirby, “Orioles Don’t Want Fans; They Want Investors.”
our dreams.” Paraphrasing *Field of Dreams*, the hit baseball movie infused with a healthy
dose of nostalgia about the game’s past, she wrote, “they have built it, and we will come,
glorying in the stadium’s democracy, in its right-down-at-street-level accessibility.”
Zibart concluded Camden Yards was “Baltimore’s perfect melting pot, not only
embracing city life but bringing it into the stadium.”\(^{192}\) Kweisi Mfume, then a
Democratic congressman from Baltimore and later President of the NAACP, wrote that
Camden Yards was a place “where young people, old people; Black and White, people
who sometime believe they have nothing in common, can talk together for hours about
batting order, pitching rotation, and late inning strategy.”\(^{193}\)

Despite Mfume’s views, before the season even began the team also faced criticism
over their efforts to reach out to the city’s African American population. Not only was
Camden Yards adjacent to a much whiter neighborhood than Memorial Stadium had
been, but according to state representative Howard P. Rawlings, the team had “neglected
the city’s black majority and ignored efforts to include the community in the festivities
planned for the opening of the new Camden Yards.” He continued, “it’s a reflection of
their lack of awareness that […] Baltimore […] is more than 60 percent African-
American.” The team’s design decisions and their admiration of festival marketplaces
suggest they did not seriously consider attracting black fans. Rawlings argued “the lack


\(^{193}\) Kweisi Mfume, “If You Build It, They Will Come,” *Baltimore Afro-American*,
April 4, 1992.
of outreach to the African-American community” explained the low number of black fans at games in seasons past.194

Not all of African American Baltimore agreed with Rawlings’ explanation though. Joseph Simms told a reporter that in his capacity as a community leader the team gave him around 30,000 tickets to hand out over the previous twenty years and that he “wouldn’t be surprised if the Orioles don’t do more for blacks than any team in all of professional sports.”195 Some, like Edward R. Colbert thought that Rawlings could do more and should “present to Orioles President Larry Lucchino an opportunity for the creation and development of intern positions for young black males and females in sports administration at the entry, mid-level and summer work program positions.”196 Sam Lacy, the esteemed long-time sports columnist for the Baltimore Afro-American thought that the expense of taking a family to the park was “a devasting blow to the budget” for most African-Americans.197 White columnist John Steadman suggested that “the name Oriole Park may be a turnoff for blacks since it historically represented a place […] where


segregated seating prevailed” when the local minor league team played at the original Oriole Park.198

By the end of June, it was clear that the move to a new park did not attract more black fans. Rawlings noted that the black community’s “dollars helped build [the park] and the bottom line is you don’t see us there.” He, and a group of like-minded activists, described the Orioles’ marketing efforts in the black community as “barely impactive.”199 Their park, after all, had been designed to attract white suburbanites. In September, the Sun published a front-page article about the low numbers of African American fans at games. The Orioles estimated that only 5% of fans at their games were black, about the same as the percentage of black fans at all MLB games. One African American fan who came to Orioles games from his home two hours away noted that “every time I come out, I always look, but I hardly see any blacks.”200

Some black fans faulted the team for low black turnout, others, its players. David Kaintuck stopped going to Orioles games when the team moved to Camden Yards, choosing to listen on the radio instead. Once while listening on the radio, he heard an announcer try to entice fans to come to the park by saying “it’s a really nice day, and you can get a really good tan.” Kaintuck said the team and its announcers “just don’t realize

all the people they’re offending. He wasn’t inviting us to come out.”"201 In a letter to the
editor Wahseola Cain said aside from Eddie Murray, “the other [black] players and their
wives have not socialized or interacted with the black community or made themselves
available to organizations for blacks.”202 George Chainey, a local black businessman
argued that black turnout was low because the team was “not marketing to get black
customers. They’re trying to distribute the services to folks in the outlying regions.”203

The team did make some efforts to attract black fans. They made superficial
changes to the fan experience like honoring a black fan as fan of the game and changing
the music that played between innings to “include songs by artists who appeal to blacks,
such as Boyz II Men and En Vogue.” They also offered free tickets to local school
children and contributed to African American charities. However, Clifford Alexander, a
diversity consultant who had worked with MLB, argued “when you go to a school, have a
competition and the kids with the best grades get tickets to the ballpark, that’s fine. But it
isn’t a concentrated marketing effort” and therefore was not likely to have a lasting
impact.204

Highlighting how disconnected the team was from African Americans who made up
the majority of Baltimoreans, the Sun reported that Lucchino “appeared surprised at the
displeasure among local black fans.” Lucchino told reporters “we want to invite,

201 Bembry and Hyman, “Blacks Shun America’s Pastime.”
203 Bembry and Hyman, “Blacks Shun America’s Pastime.”
204 Bembry and Hyman, “Blacks Shun America’s Pastime.”
affirmatively invite, minorities into the ballpark. [...] We recognize it could be better, and should be better. And we want to make it better.” He admitted that the team could “absolutely” do better in attracting black fans and promised that team “certainly will continue to work on” attracting more African American fans. However, as Clifford Alexander noted, the Orioles had no incentive to advertise to African American fans because attendance was already very high and that most other MLB teams also lacked an incentive to market to black fans.205

In contrast to most other teams, the Orioles also did not extensively market the park to families. For example, they declined to create “family” sections of the park by banning alcohol in some places. In 1991, the team had designated part of the upper deck at Memorial Stadium as an alcohol-free zone, but sold only 17% of the tickets there. Roy Sommerhof, director of stadium services for Orioles, said, “we feel we can create a family section throughout the ballpark by training our ushers in better alcohol and fan management.”206 In other words, the team would carefully monitor alcohol consumption, but did not want to run the risk of empty seats.

The Orioles also did not market the ballpark as a place for women who were not interested in the game as the Dodgers and Astros had done at their new parks in the 1960s. The decision to not have anything about the design, or rhetoric the team used to describe the park, imply that women were anything other than baseball fans might have been due to Smith’s influence. In March 1989 Orioles executives, members of MSA, and

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205 Bembry and Hyman, “Blacks Shun America’s Pastime.”

Governor Schaefer visited Royals Stadium to gather ideas for Camden Yards’ design, Governor Schaefer was taken with the waterfall beyond the outfield fence there and insisted the new park have something similar. Schaefer, implying that women were not real fans, said the people of Baltimore have “to be entertained. You’ve got to bring the women in.” As Sandy Banisky of the *Sun* paraphrased, Janet Marie Smith responded by pointing out “that women come to the ballpark because they like the game.”²⁰⁷ Given her role with the team, Smith’s perspective on female fans likely had a significant impact on how the team presented their new park.

Despite low African American turnout, the team’s limited overtures to women and families, and high ticket prices, Camden Yards was very successful in its first season. The team sold a record 25,000 season tickets.²⁰⁸ They drew nearly 130,000 paying fans for the park’s first three games. On the resale market, Opening Day tickets in the bleachers were going for as much as $175 each. One ticket broker called it “almost like a Super Bowl type of event.” Another called it “hotter than Les Mis’ and Metallica.”²⁰⁹ The resale market remained strong throughout the season. In June, some $13 tickets were going for as much as $85.²¹⁰ By the last month of the season, it was clear that Camden Yards’

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opening season was going to be more successful than anyone had predicted. The team ended the season on a run of 59 consecutive sellouts and with the fifth highest single-season attendance in baseball history at nearly 3.6 million fans. In total, the team sold out 67 of their 80 home dates (there was one rainout made up as a single-admission double-header). Average attendance was 44,598, the smallest crowd of the season was 35,526 for a midweek game in early April—a number more than 3,000 higher than average attendance in 1991. MSA estimated that 850,000 fans had come from beyond the Baltimore-Washington corridor. The team had successfully merged festival marketplaces with baseball, creating a carefully controlled urban space that appealed to suburbanites.

All season, the park received praise from observers far and wide. Two weeks before it officially opened, Edward Gunts, the Sun’s architectural critic wrote, “with its asymmetrical field and set-back upper deck fashioned of steel trusses, Oriole Park is a fitting addition to the pantheon of green cathedrals that helped define their cities: Ebbets Field, Fenway Park, the Polo Grounds, Wrigley Field.” Gunts argued that the park

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“celebrates Baltimore along with baseball.” He continued, “they have created a seminal building that will influence the way major-league sports facilities are designed from now on. […] Baltimore will be remembered as the city where they broke the mold.” Gunts praised how “the architects broke down the ballpark’s apparent scale by setting the upper deck back from the street, so passers-by see what amounts to a five-story facade rather than a nine-story facade.”

In short, it was an urban nostalgia trip.

A week before the park opened, the Sun’s editorial page claimed “for once government has spent taxpayers’ money wisely: On April 6, officials will deliver, on time and at the promised cost, a top-quality, nationally recognized architectural gem that could prove as big a bonanza for Baltimore—and Maryland—as the Inner Harbor.”

Camden Yards was so well designed that even noted conservative columnist George Will wrote “the park speaks well of Maryland’s governor, William Donald Schaefer, who again has provided proof that government can do things right.”

The pages of leading architectural journals were also full of praise for the park. Writing in Architecture, Gunts reiterated his praise of the stadium and his expectations that it would reshape the field of ballpark design. In Landscape Architecture, John Pastier—despite his differences with Smith—called Camden Yards “the best of the

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219 Gunts, “Grandstand,” 64.
current breed” of ballparks.\textsuperscript{220} In \textit{Progressive Architecture}, critic Donald Prowler wrote Camden Yards was “arguably the most significant urban design intervention in America of the last decade.” He continued that it was “a great place to watch baseball. In contrast to the last generation of bland, symmetrical, suburbanized ‘multipurpose facilities’ that pass for baseball stadiums in most cities, Camden Yards is authentically quirky.” Prowler did not only look at the park through rose-colored glasses though. He noted that the “cacophony of ductwork and piping above the underdesigned concession stands gives the space a residual quality.” That said, he concluded by arguing that “Camden Yards is a great place to watch baseball, but it is an even better place to affirm the possibilities of the city.”\textsuperscript{221} The park also won awards from the American Institute of Architects and \textit{Time}.\textsuperscript{222}

A host of experts praised the park as well. George Will wrote that “no fan who goes to this park will find a place that’s better” and said critics celebrated its “urban setting.”\textsuperscript{223} Citing the warehouse and its similarities to Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field, Tom Boswell of the \textit{Washington Post} argued that after the pre-season exhibition game, “the only question left […] is whether Camden Yards is merely one of the half-dozen best


parks in baseball […] or whether it is already, all things considered, the best.”\textsuperscript{224} The \textit{Los Angeles Times} predicted it would be “the yardstick against which future sports facilities are judged.” \textit{GQ} thought “every baseball fan should kneel down this moment and thank God for Baltimore.”\textsuperscript{225} \textit{The New York Times} wrote “the intimacy this building establishes between players and fans, even those in the uppermost seats, is a marvel; so is the sense of connection with the city outside.”\textsuperscript{226} Camden Yards was revolutionary because it brought baseball back into an urban space, like festival marketplaces brought middle- and upper-class shoppers back into urban spaces.

Kevin McKenna, a fan, said that Camden Yards “captured the spirit of an old-time park with all the modern amenities. There’s a good atmosphere about it. There doesn’t seem to be a bad seat in the house.”\textsuperscript{227} Another fan, Tom Rother, noted that the park was “everything I thought it would be. The perception is so different. You’re right there with ‘em. At $8 a ticket, this is a bargain.” Rob Hamilton predicted, “people are going to want to hang out here. They’re not going to want to leave.”\textsuperscript{228} John Holman said, “what gets

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\textsuperscript{228} Susan Reimer, “Long Night’s Journey,” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, April 7, 1992:
\end{flushright}
me is it looks like it’s been implanted in the city. At first, I thought the warehouse should have been torn down, but that really fits, too. Everything fits.”

The park was not without its critics though. One observer argued that although the design was “pleasing to the eye” it lacked “originality since it’s a composite of other ballparks.” Another critic called it “a Frankenstein of grafted impressions.” John Steadman thought that Camden Yards was the third-best park in the league, but explained “it’s not what Baltimore has is so exceptional, but rather that those it’s being compared with are so dreadful.” Steadman did not approve of the retro advertisements, complaining, “it’s appalling to see a bush-league sign, ‘Hit It Here,’ displayed in right-centerfield […] It cheapens the surroundings.” The past, it seems, was not a draw for all.

The park had problems too. Despite claims that no seat would be obstructed, about 200 seats had partially obstructed views due overhanging decks or safety railings. A cluster of seats in the outfield bleachers closest to the “tall wall” had an

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obstructed view of right field and first base. Some fans who had season tickets at Memorial Stadium were not happy with the location of their seats in the new park. Seats in the right and leftfield corners pointed toward centerfield, not the mound or home plate, which gave the park an intimate feeling, but resulted in a Sun columnist developing a literal pain in his neck from twisting, complaining that he “never felt involved in the game,” and noting that his “friends seated with me said they spent long periods of time simply looking at other spectators.”

As soon as the Orioles played games in the park, Smith became aware of many of the problems. She noted “we saw a lot of things at the exhibition game that made you sort of shudder.” Smith vowed to fix what she and the organization could. She told a reporter that at “every game we have people who do nothing but just walk around and keep an eye on what’s going on and look for ways we can improve things.” She said, “it’s frustrating when you know something could be better and it isn’t.” Looking back more than twenty years later, Smith wrote “it is tempting to say here that Oriole Park at Camden Yards was an instant success, but that would be an exaggeration.”

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234 Richmond, Ballpark, 241.


238 Richmond, Ballpark, 245.

239 Smith, “Back to the Future,” 56.
however, did not publicly complain about the park’s neighborhood. At Camden Yards, the Orioles delivered a safe and comfortable fantasy city, even if the park was not perfect.

**Food Concessions at Camden Yards**

The concessions fare at Camden Yards fit with the park’s themes. It was tiered by class, explicitly local, and modern, yet nostalgic. Journalist Cathy Lynn Grossman described Camden Yards as a place where “the munchies menu matches the park’s familiar yet distinctive look: old-time faves with up-to-the-minute pizazz.” She explained that Camden Yards sold a large “variety without sacrificing hometown touches” including “such Maryland specialties as crab soup and, still more renowned, crab cakes, not packaged, but fresh.”

In 1992, fresh crab cakes cost $3.50 and *Washington Post* food critic Phyllis Richman called them “the all-star bargain of the major leagues.”

The director of public affairs for ARA, the team’s concessionaire, predicted that the crab soup would “set the trend for baseball.” Richman described it as “very salty and slightly sweet tomato base hinting of ketchup, spiked with a lot of Old Bay and cayenne, packed with vegetables—green beans, carrots, corn, onions—and lumps of crab meat.” Fans interested in healthier food could also purchase salads, soups, and lean, carved-meat sandwiches, but ballpark staples were not neglected.

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241 Phyllis Richman, “All’s Fare at Camden Yards and Crab is King,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1992.

ARA claimed the hot dogs at Camden Yards would be plumper and juicier than they had been at Memorial Stadium thanks to the latest hot-dog warming technologies—steam-infused glass cases—and because there would be less time between when they cooked the hot dogs and when fans ate them.\textsuperscript{243} ARA expected one in three fans to eat a hot dog at the park. They offered six different options at six different price points ranging from a $1 kids hot dog that weighed one tenth of a pound to a one-third-pound hot dog for $3.75. A one-third-pound Italian sausage and a one-third-pound hamburger also cost $3.75.\textsuperscript{244}

Most of the beer sold in the park was pumped out of a centralized refrigerated room in the basement. The maximum distance the beer could be pumped was 225 feet though, which meant that some concessions stands were beyond its range and kegs had to be trucked to those locations.\textsuperscript{245} The team, however, did not offer local beers when the park opened, which prompted a bit of a backlash. For the first time since 1954, the city’s iconic beer, National Bohemian was not for sale at Orioles games. Although the rest of the park was a nostalgia trip, its beer was not. ARA explained that they could only stock so many beers and local beers did not sell as well as national brands. Randy Smith, an executive with National Bohemian, argued that ARA’s decision was “symptomatic of the


\textsuperscript{244} Phyllis Richman, “All’s Fare at Camden Yards and Crab is King,” \textit{Washington Post}, April 1, 1992.

trend at ballparks to stock only the beers that spend tons on advertising.”

Even if the park’s beer did not fit with its nostalgia, it did fit with the team’s interest in increasing revenue as did the park’s restaurants and exclusive spaces.

Camden Yards had an air-conditioned all-you-can-eat buffet that club-level ticket holders and fans in suites could access if they paid $19.95 (or $9.95 for children under 12). It featured something called “da chi chicken” and marinated swordfish salad among other atypical ballpark meals. It also included roasted pork loin, grilled chicken breast with caramelized onions, broccoli florets, chocolate cheesecake, and artichoke salad. An ARA executive called the club level “nicer than most hotel lobbies in town.”

Season ticket holders who paid a $500 annual fee had access to the 200-seat Diamond Club Cafe where they could dine on rotini primavera with garden vegetables. Fans who paid the $1,000 initiation fee, the $45 monthly fee, and the $35 monthly food minimum could dine at the Camden Club, which offered steamed mussels and chorizo in a sweet pepper cilantro broth and chilled jumbo shrimp with southwestern slaw and tequila lime cocktail sauce. The Camden Club featured a custom carpet with the Orioles’ 1890s-style

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249 Richman, “All’s Fare at Camden Yards and Crab is King.”

250 Richman, “All’s Fare at Camden Yards and Crab is King.”
logo, a main formal dining room connected via a staircase to a less formal grill room, and a cocktail lounge.\textsuperscript{251}

Unusual ballpark foods met nostalgia in a more accessible atmosphere on the Eutaw Street concourse beyond right field, which one journalist described as a “food fest atmosphere.”\textsuperscript{252} It featured two restaurants, Bambino’s Saloon and Pastime Cafe, and one notable stand, Boog’s Corner. Pastimes offered a different hot entree every night, pizza, hamburgers, a variety of grilled foods, salads, sandwiches, and a kid’s menu. Bambino’s served sandwiches and bar snacks and the staff was outfitted in vintage baseball jerseys.\textsuperscript{253} Boog’s was run by former Orioles legend Boog Powell. By 1992, hulking former Orioles’ first-baseman and leftfielder Boog Powell’s days of mashing home runs and winning World Series were long since past, but he was a clear tie to that era. Although Powell did not cook any of the food himself, he was present at the stand for every game, and the chicken, pork, and beef that came off the grill was cooked using a recipe passed down through his family.\textsuperscript{254} Powell’s presence at a stand that sold food not usually for sale at a ballpark, represented what the team was trying to offer in Camden Yards; it was a place with nostalgic ties and modern amenities. Because of places like Boog’s Corner, Camden Yards changed what fans expected at the game—something the

\textsuperscript{251} Hyman, “Musseling in Traditional Ballpark Fare.”

\textsuperscript{252} Grossman, “Baltimore Park Menu Scores with Variety.”

\textsuperscript{253} Richman, “All’s Fare at Camden Yards and Crab is King.”

\textsuperscript{254} Gilda, “Friendly and Familiar Confines.”
Orioles recognized when they trademarked the phrase “the Ballpark That Forever Changed Baseball.”

**Camden Yards’ Impact on Baseball**

Twenty MLB teams moved into a new park after Camden Yards opened; the idea of a baseball version of a festival marketplace was incredibly popular. By 2009, only two classic era ballparks remained, Wrigley Field in Chicago and Fenway Park in Boston.\(^{255}\) Those parks were part of urban neighborhoods, were not surrounded by parking lots, and had asymmetrical playing fields dictated by the surrounding streets. They had all the elements Smith tried to recreate at Camden Yards. However, that did not mean that either park was unchanged. Quite the contrary, the Cubs in the 1980s and 2010s and the Red Sox in the 2000s significantly renovated both parks, turning something with natural nostalgia into something a like more like a fantasy city and enhancing their revenue streams while providing fans with the modern amenities they had come to expect at places like Camden Yards.

Larry Lucchino moved on from the Orioles not long after Camden Yards opened. He became CEO and minority owner of the Boston Red Sox in 2001. Lucchino promptly hired Janet Marie Smith to bring Fenway Park into the twenty-first century. Under her watchful eye, the team added seats above Fenway’s left-field Green Monster that were designed to look as though they had always been a part of the park. In 2002, the team got permission from the city to move their turnstiles from the gates of the park to the ends of

\(^{255}\) Of the other seven teams not to move to new parks since 1992, three—the A’s, Angels, and Rays—are actively trying to move to new parks, two—the Blue Jays and White Sox—moved into new parks in the three years before Camden Yards opened, and two—the Dodgers and Royals—play in baseball-specific parks.
the block of Yawkey Way (now called Jersey Street) adjacent to the facility. This copied Eutaw Street and effectively extended the footprint of the park by taking what had been a public street and turning it into part of the park, ensuring that the part of the city closest to the park would be carefully regulated.\textsuperscript{256}

The Orioles innovation changed how fans thought ballparks should look. Fans across the country wanted their own version of Camden Yards. For a while at least, Camden Yards also changed where owners thought ballparks should be located and how they thought about cities. Most parks built in the years after 1992 were in urbanoid environments. In recent years, as new ballparks that remain both baseball-specific and steeped in manufactured nostalgia open, they have increasingly been located in the suburbs, further removed from supposedly dangerous neighborhoods and the non-white people who often live there, or significantly less connected to the city than parks like Camden Yards are.\textsuperscript{257} It seems the fantasy the Orioles created in Baltimore was not enough for all baseball fans, but the pattern of municipal funding for new ballparks remains powerful.


\textsuperscript{257} The Braves new park is in a suburb of Atlanta, the Rangers are building a new, retractable-roof stadium in suburban Arlington, Texas. The Diamondbacks are on the lookout for a new domed stadium as well. The exception to this trend is the mockup of a new park for the A’s in a residential part of Oakland.
CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: IS BASEBALL’S FUTURE SUBURBAN?

Nearly every Major League Baseball team copied the Orioles model of using taxpayer money to build a brand-new retro-style ballpark in the 1990s and 2000s. Many of those parks were closer to the city center than their predecessors had been. Most owners were happy with new urban ballparks and the carefully-controlled neighborhoods where those ballparks were located. This was especially true when those neighborhoods included new businesses or housing aimed at middle- and upper-class whites. In some cities, however, new developments did not spring up around attractive and accessible ballpark. One of those cities, Atlanta, suggests that for baseball teams to continue to draw the middle- and upper-class white fans who have been the game’s lifeblood since the 1800s, teams might have to abandon cities for the suburbs all over again, so long as municipalities continue to foot the bulk of the bill.

Atlanta has been home to a major league team since 1966 when the Braves arrived as transplants from Milwaukee and moved into a multi-use stadium in the city. Although Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium was adjacent to the black neighborhoods of Summerhill and Washington-Rawson, an interstate highway made it difficult for fans to walk to games, creating a barrier between those communities and the ballpark. In the midst of the retro-chic ballpark trend, Atlanta hosted the 1996 Summer Olympics. When the Olympic flame was extinguished, the city converted the Olympic Stadium, which was across the parking lot from the park the Braves had moved into thirty years earlier, into a retro-chic facility named for the Braves owner, Ted Turner. The team signed a 20-year lease and moved into Turner Field to start the 1997 season. Most of Turner Field’s seats were in
foul territory and the outfield stands were low, so the majority of fans had a view of the city skyline. The park was unmistakably Atlanta and was full of the amenities like luxury suites and restaurants and the nostalgic touches like references to the team’s history that were common in other retro-chic ballparks.

The Braves had won the 1995 World Series when they played in Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and they continued their on-field success at Turner Field. Although they did not win another World Series, they were a consistent presence in the playoffs. At some of those playoff games, however, the team failed to sell all of the tickets in the park—something practically unheard of in modern postseason baseball. With their lease set to expire soon and questions about the appeal of Turner Field to suburban Atlantans mounting, in 2013—after just 17 seasons in Turner Field and with three years remaining on their lease—the Braves announced they had reached an agreement to move into a new ballpark in Cobb County, a suburb of Atlanta.

During the Braves last season in Turner Field in 2016, I went to Atlanta for a conference and paid a visit to the then twenty-year-old park. From my hotel on the edge of Georgia Tech’s campus close to downtown Atlanta, I walked for five minutes to a Metro Atlanta Rapid Transportation Authority (MARTA) subway station where I boarded a train that took me to a stop near the ballpark. Although that stop was not at the park, there was a line of free MARTA shuttle buses waiting to take fans to there. Overall, it was an easy and relatively relaxing trip with no concerns about traffic or parking.

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I intentionally arrived about an hour and a half before the first pitch, so I could walk around the park and try to understand why the Braves were abandoning such a new facility. Judging by the physical condition of Turner Field, it was hard to figure out. Unlike most other retro-chic ballparks, its playing field was not below street level and while that meant the park towered over its parking lots more than was the case elsewhere, it also meant that Turner Field felt different from other retro-chic parks. Although it was clearly influenced by Camden Yards, Turner Field’s height and its surroundings made sure it did not feel like a carbon copy of Camden Yards, instead it was part of the fabric of a different place.

Turner Field remained an attractive ballpark despite its age. Perhaps some of its paint had faded, but the massive fan area beyond center-field was full of people milling about on retro-looking paving bricks, listening to a live concert, playing in the kids zone, and partaking in numerous other activities. The park featured photographs of and anecdotes about every Braves team in Atlanta. There was a long wall dedicated to celebrating the history of Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. The team honored its past with a museum and by celebrating its best player, Hank Aaron, whose name, uniform number, and career home run total could be found imprinted on everything from the streets around the park to the exclusive clubs for season ticket holders.

Unbeknownst to me, the night I went to Turner Field was “Law Enforcement Appreciation Night.” For an hour between the end of batting practice and the beginning of the game, the Braves honored members of local law enforcement agencies. They played videos on the jumbotron that featured voiceovers that falsely claimed urban crime and crime against police officers had reached unprecedented levels. The narrators in these
videos asserted that the “mainstream media” denigrates police officers, they presented falsehoods about the state of American crime and American policing, and they insisted that a majority of Americans did not support the police. This combination of perceived victimhood and an unsubstantiated fear of urban areas was politically powerful in 2016 and explains why the Braves wanted to leave Atlanta for the suburbs. The fans the team wanted to draw, middle- and upper-class whites like law enforcement professionals and their families, were deeply uncomfortable in cities. The Braves felt they needed to do something to draw the fans who bought into the arguments the videos made back to the park more regularly.

Although I was appalled at the tone and falsehoods in the videos, I seemed to have held a minority opinion. The narrators’ lies were not met with boos. I heard no one around me question how the video presented the state of American cities, crime, or policing. Instead, after the videos ended, police officers and their families—overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, white—paraded around the park’s warning track to a standing ovation from the crowd. After the parade, the Braves aired more videos, this time featuring a series of interviews with members of the Smyrna Police Department. Smyrna is the suburban Atlanta town in Cobb County where the Braves new stadium was then being built. Again, the majority, but not all, of the officers who appeared in the video were white. The videos focused on the weapons and devices the Smyrna police used to “ensure citizen safety.” The succession of videos and events at the ballpark that night created the impression that the Braves, led by marching police officers, would soon be leaving the dangerous and out-of-control city for a suburb where the well-armed police force would protect families from harm—something they simply could not do at a mass-
transit accessible urban ballpark. Still, the decision to leave the city seemed extremely short-sighted to me.

The inanity of moving to a ballpark that was practically impossible to reach via mass transportation stood out on my trip back from Turner Field. I left the game before the seventh inning because I was presenting early the next morning and walked to the shuttle-bus stop to head to my hotel. I was one of the last people onto a bus of mostly white fans and a few black concessions workers. Around twenty fans were, judging by their appearance and their easily overheard conversations, celebrating their recent high school graduation. Despite being underage, they were absolutely plastered. They were loud, lewd, and completely inconsiderate. Aside from the annoyance of being near them, they made me grateful that I went to a game at a park that was mass transit accessible. The next year’s high school graduates looking for a fun night out at the park would have to drive. And then drive home, quite possibly drunk. Nevertheless, the Braves were moving to the suburbs, away from the mass transit that brought fans to Turner Field even as other teams moved in the other direction and heightened their urban connections with locally-specific concessions options.

For example, all around baseball, teams infused hot dogs with local flavors. At a Brewers game, fans could buy a hot dog inside a bratwurst, wrapped in bacon and served “on a fresh-baked pretzel bun that’s made locally [...] in Milwaukee.” In Arlington, Texas, fans could purchase a two-foot-long hot dog topped with “Texas Chili.” Glenn Richmond, senior executive chef at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, described his “Cheesesteak Dog” as food that “in this part of the world is a delicacy,” “iconic,” “very
synonymous with Philadelphia,” and even “smells like Philadelphia.” These parks used food to stress the connections with the city at the same time the Braves fled their city.

To make food even more local, several major-league teams planted vegetable and herb gardens in their ballparks and used the produce at their concessions stands. Although some groundskeepers in decades past had planted fruit trees or tomato plants, they were for personal use and enjoyment—not intended to appeal to fans. Newer ballpark gardens were influenced by the larger farm-to-table trend in food culture that emphasized the environmental and health benefits of locally-produced foods. Among the teams that operated their own vegetable or herb gardens were the Padres and the Rockies. The San Francisco Giants had a 4,320 square-foot garden that would, in the words of the director of communications for the team’s concessionaire, only grow “a fraction” of the produce they would sell though. In Boston, the Red Sox installed the largest rooftop garden in baseball at the game’s oldest park. Much of their home-grown food went into meals

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served at the exclusive club located behind home plate. For some fans, it seems locally-oriented food combined with the fantasy baseball city pioneered by Camden Yards was a draw that overcame the “danger” of the city outside the park. In Atlanta, however, the Braves decided it was impossible to overcome that danger.

The Braves new stadium in Cobb County, SunTrust Park, is not entirely inaccessible via mass transit—fans can take a MARTA train to the last stop where from Monday through Saturday the county runs shuttle busses to the park—but is much harder for Atlanta’s working-class and black communities to reach. SunTrust Park is at the intersection of two interstate highways and bound on a third side by the Cobb Parkway, a large, high-speed road. More than a year before the park opened, one local transit advocate foresaw problems saying, “we’re taking the most congested, most traversed roads in Atlanta and we’re dropping a sports complex right in the middle of it. It’s going to be a nightmare.” Before the park opened, the Braves too were worried about traffic. They shifted the start-time of their games from 7:00 pm to 7:30 pm in an attempt to wait

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out the traffic jams due to nearby residents coming home after work.\textsuperscript{9} Nevertheless, traffic and parking around the park remain bad.

Despite the traffic problems that were obvious to everyone who thought about them, the Braves moved because, as team official Derek Schiller explained, the new location in a far whiter suburb was “near the geographic center of our fan base.”\textsuperscript{10} One of their fans, a resident of Cobb County named Garland Hobbs, wrote, “I moved out of Atlanta to escape the bad element there. I also stopped attending Braves games because of the gauntlet of ‘street people’ begging, harassing, following and name-calling me while getting to and from my car. While I believe rapid transit helps bring growth and expansion, it also brings crime, ‘affordable’ housing, and marginal businesses that are frequented by people using rapid transit.”\textsuperscript{11} Garland’s racist dog-whistle language about mass transit fits with a “joke” told in some corners of greater Atlanta that MARTA actually stands for “Moving Africans Rapidly Through Atlanta.”\textsuperscript{12} They both make it plain that the Braves moved to Cobb County, a place one writer described as “a community built on the back of Atlanta’s hypertrophied white flight that saw more than


half of the city’s caucasian population abscond for the suburbs between 1960 and 1980,” to appeal to fans who wanted to avoid the city’s black population.\textsuperscript{13}

SunTrust Park essentially made it impossible for lower-income fans, who due to the racial wealth gap were more likely to be black than white, to get to games. Atlantan Darin Givens noted that “car-sharing services like Uber have proven popular as means to get to SunTrust Park, but the prices those services charge can be considerably higher than what you pay for bus fare. It’s a service that’s more likely to be used by wealthier people who want to get to a game without driving themselves.” Givens continued, “when the Braves were at Turner Field, it would have been one of the few opportunities for people from largely-white Cobb to mix face-to-face with people of color and people in lower economic classes.”\textsuperscript{14} Although Turner Field’s internal divisions, which were much like the divides at Camden Yards, meant it was unlikely such face-to-face interaction had been common, even the appearance of that intermixing was gone at SunTrust Park.

Similarly, as one observer noted, albeit misstating the true nature of other ballparks, “baseball stadiums from Fenway and Wrigley to Coors and PNC are welcoming, democratic places, stitched into the fabric of their cities. […] The unmistakable message is that these ballparks are for everyone. […] The Braves’ new stadium, by contrast, [is] an inaccessible suburban theme park.”\textsuperscript{15} The Braves and their fans rejected the image of the

\textsuperscript{13} Brown, “The Braves’ New Ballpark Is An Urban Planner’s Nightmare.”

\textsuperscript{14} Brown, “The Braves’ New Ballpark Is An Urban Planner’s Nightmare.”


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ballpark as a place where people of different races intermingled and the idea of inclusive democracy that went with it. Instead, they chose a much more racially homogenous ballpark experience and a closely-related conception of everyday democracy that excluded most non-white Americans—a vision of democracy that has gained increasing steam since 2016.
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