

The Casey Stengel Chapter Newsletter

The Lineup

Volume 2 Number 1

January/ February 2025

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Note to Readers

The Casey Stengel Chapter newsletter in 2025 is a **bimonthly** now and this January/February issue includes a new column: Baseball Trivia by Al Blumkin. Any reader can send in additional trivia, upcoming events, short but timely pieces, questions, or feedback of any kind at any time!

January/February Highlight: Ballparks

This issue looks at various aspects of ballparks which several SABR research committees dedicate their time and minds to exploring by researching, then sharing with us. The Ballparks Research Committee <https://sabr.org/research/ballparks-research-committee/> website states:

The Ballparks Committee was founded in 1982 to research and collect the history of current and past ballparks in the major, minor and Negro leagues. The committee now has an extensive set of files containing thousands of documents pertaining to ballparks.

In 1985, the committee published *Green Cathedrals* which was reissued in 1993. A revised third edition was published in 2006. The committee completed *City Baseball Magic*, the SABR Urban Baseball Design Project, in 1989.

An ongoing committee project is to make an effort to erect plaques or memorials for historic ballparks sites. The committee has lent its efforts to publicize the historical importance and value of parks such as Detroit's Tiger Stadium and Chicago's Wrigley Field. A subcommittee is collecting photographs of ballparks.

This issue also includes work done by the BioProject Committee and we are grateful for all the contributors on Ballpark Biographies, especially Bill Lamb.



The Baseball Research Committee

SABR members, get this e-book for FREE!

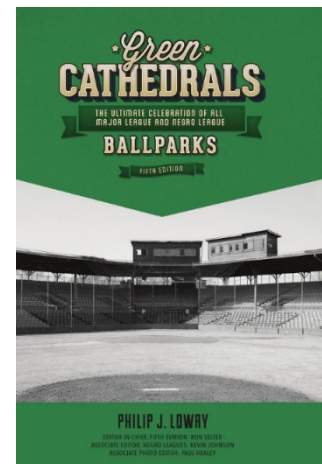
Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of All Major League and Negro League Ballparks, Fifth Edition

Author: Philip J. Lowry

Editor-In-Chief: Ron Selter

Associate Editor, Negro Leagues: Kevin Johnson

Associate Photo Editor: Paul Healey



At <https://sabr.org/latest/sabr-digital-library-green-cathedrals-fifth-edition/> this book is called “the Bible of ballparks” because it “documents every ballpark that has ever played host to either the major leagues or the Negro leagues.” Not only does it include 583 ballparks but it has 176 photos along with dates, dimensions, assorted stats, and “historical anecdotes and curiosities” and oddities.

A Biography of a ... [huh, what?] Of ... a Ballpark?

Whoever heard of a biography of a ballpark – and who would ever *write* a biography about a ballpark? SABR would and *does* write them! If you have not yet gone to the treasure trove of biographies on the BioProject website, then why not start here with HOW to write a Ballpark Bio?

At <https://sabr.org/bioproject/writing-sabr-ballpark-biography/> you will begin thinking about your favorite parks and places where games you saw were special and maybe, while you are there, you'll search to see if a bio of that special park already exists.

When I visited <https://sabr.org/bioproject>, I clicked on the BALLPARKS tab and was brought to 24 ballparks on page one! Pages two through five also showcased 24 per page, and on page six -- the last page -- there were “only” 6 parks with lot of room for 18 more bios on that page alone!

These 126 parks make for fascinating and informative reading! Within the five boroughs of NYC, I counted ten which had professional baseball that we explore in this issue. Alphabetically by borough (The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island) are the ten available biographies.

This is from the website:

The Baseball Biography Project is an ongoing effort to research and write comprehensive biographical articles on people who played or managed in the major leagues or otherwise made a significant contribution to the sport. The project is run by SABR's BioProject Committee. All biographies are written by members of SABR and all have been peer-reviewed for style and accuracy.

SABR members write about a lot more than just ballplayers. In addition, we have pages for Ballparks, Broadcasters, Executives, Games, Managers, Scouts, Spouses, Umpires, Writers, people who were Famous Outside Baseball, lots more.

Get involved: Writing a biography for the BioProject is a fun way to get involved as a SABR member. Find out how by visiting our BioProject Resources page or reading the FAQs section. Want to write a player's life story? E-mail bioassign@sabr.org to get started.

Negro Leagues bios: Biographical information from the Seamheads Negro Leagues Database appears courtesy of Agate Type Research LLC.

Remember to check the Sources and Notes *at the end* of each bio because some fascinating details are there, especially for long-term parks like the Polo Grounds, Ebbets Field, Yankee Stadium, and Shea Stadium. These biographies are not about the teams that played in the parks – those will appear in our next issue!

Yankee Stadium (Bronx, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/yankee-stadium-new-york/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Vincent Cannato**:

Yankee Stadium was not the first to be called a “stadium” – Griffith Stadium in Washington was built in 1911 and Harvard Stadium in Boston was built in 1903 – but it was certainly the largest and grandest. It was the first triple-decker ballpark, consisting of field level, upper deck, and a 19-row mezzanine in between.

The signature of the new ballpark began as a minor detail: a copper frieze, which hung down 16 feet from the roof of the upper deck. Along with pinstripe uniforms, the frieze (later painted white) became an iconic symbol of the Yankees.

The Yankees defeated the Red Sox, 4-1, on Bob Shawkey’s three-hit complete-game win, but the day belonged to Babe Ruth. In the bottom of the third inning, with two runners on base, Ruth launched a home run into the right-field seats, the first home run in the new stadium. Sportswriter Fred Lieb dubbed the new stadium The House That Ruth Built. It was true in more ways than one, and the name stuck for more than eight decades. Between 1923 and 1964, the Yankees had only one losing season.

[In 1955, eight years after segregation in baseball ended, the Yankees integrated the team.] Their slowness to integrate is ironic considering that the team had been welcoming Negro League games at the stadium for some time. The first Negro League game at Yankee Stadium took place on July 5, 1930, between the New York Lincoln Giants and Baltimore Black Sox. For the next two decades, Negro League teams regularly played games at Yankee Stadium.

From 1940 to 1947, the New York Black Yankees called it home, but many other teams also used the stadium. From 1940 to 1946, a total of 145 Negro League games were played at Yankee Stadium, attracting 984,000 fans. For Negro League teams, playing games in Yankee Stadium meant prestige, large crowds, and, most importantly, bigger gate revenues, which helped keep those teams afloat.

In the old ballpark, Death Valley contained the monuments of Gehrig, Ruth, and Miller Huggins, which had stood in the field of play along with a flagpole. Now the monuments sat behind the outfield wall, paving the way for the creation

of Monument Park. DiMaggio and Mantle received their own monuments there in the 1990s, with an additional 19 plaques going up between 1976 and 2008.

The Yankees also created what would become one of its greatest traditions. In 1947, the team held its first Old-Timers Day, featuring an exhibition game with retired players. *[The Yankees present the Old-Timers Day game every year.]*

The refurbished, city-funded stadium had stood for 33 seasons from 1976 until 2008 *[when]* they drew a record 4.298 million fans that 2008 season.

[For more about the team tragedies, triumphs, and traditions, read more online. The SABR BioProject site also details the religious appearances in the ballpark by evangelicals, Pope John Paul, Jehovah Witnesses and others, as well as football games, boxing matches, and the concerts held there over the decades.]



Eastern Park (Brooklyn, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/eastern-park-brooklyn/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by Bill Lamb

Eastern Park was built in 1890 as a home field for the city of Brooklyn's Players League entry *[the League that lasted one year]*. Handsome, spacious, and

well-maintained, the two-tier ballpark was also a versatile venue, accommodating high school, college, and semipro football, soccer, and track and field events [*yet the location*] in the East New York section of Brooklyn abutting the border with Queens ... isolated the ballpark from the population core of Brooklyn, then the nation's fourth largest metropolis, separate and distinct from adjoining New York City. Brisk winds regularly swept in from nearby Jamaica Bay, making the ballpark uncomfortably chilly for ballplayers and spectators alike into late July. Odd playing field dimensions — a short porch in left field and a cavernous center field — were another cause of complaint. [*Outfielders*]complained about shadows cast by the Eastern Park grandstand, and sportswriters were irked by the ballpark's lack of press accommodations.

Situated about five miles east of convenient and fan-friendly Washington Park ... Eastern Park served (1891-1897) as the base of operations of Brooklyn's National League club, the Brooklyn Bridegrooms. [*But it was*] beyond walking distance for most of the Grooms' fan base; a time-consuming rail or horse-drawn trolley trip was needed to reach the new place. Attendance at games at Eastern Park was a disappointment [*and*] as a result, the club was a money-loser through most of its tenure.

On April 30, 1898, some 15,000 fans attended the [*new*] Washington Park [*and*] in late December 1898, it was announced that lots [*of Eastern Park*] of various sizes had been sold to assorted buyers for an aggregate \$37,950.56 Soon thereafter, all trace of the ballpark disappeared.



Did you know that some of SABR's chapters are named for ballparks?

Elysian Fields Chapter
Field of Dreams Chapter
Hanlan's Point Chapter
Rickwood Field Chapter

(Can you guess where these chapters are? Answers are on p. 19)

Ebbets Field (Brooklyn, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/ebbets-field-brooklyn-ny/>

Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by John G. Zinn

In April of 1913, some 15 months after the announcement, Ebbets Field was ready to host its first game. Under the National League's rotating schedule, created by [Charles] Ebbets himself, the Dodgers were to open the 1913 season on the road [but] Ebbets's fellow owners [allowed] a special opener on April 9, 1913.



Ever since the team's founding in 1883, Dodgers fans whose only day off was Sunday were prevented from attending games by the so-called "blue laws," which prohibited baseball games with an admission charge on the Sabbath. From 1904 to 1906, Ebbets tried various ploys to get around those restrictions. In 1917, Ebbets tried again, only to be arrested and convicted of breaking the Sunday baseball laws.

Finally in April of 1919, legislative action removed the prohibition, and less than a week later, Ebbets Field hosted its first Sunday game. [Despite] little advance sale, about 22,000 attended, more than either of the 1916 World Series home games. By 1924 the Dodgers were once again in the heat of the pennant race and finished [with] a record-setting attendance of almost 819,000.

Brooklyn led the major leagues in attendance in both 1941 and 1942, outdrawing both the Yankees and Giants. Dodgers fans were disappointed by the 1941 World Series loss to the Yankees [but] the team's newfound success [attracted] some of the Dodgers' legendary fans, beginning with a "plump, pink-faced woman with a mop of stringy gray hair" named Hilda Chester.

The Dodgers' most famous group act, the Brooklyn Sym-Phony band, played at Ebbets Field as early as 1937, [although] they didn't attract media attention until the 1941 pennant race.

As with all ballparks, advertising was a regular feature at Ebbets Field, from the Bull Durham tobacco ad to the Schaefer Beer sign on top of the scoreboard [*and the*] famous Abe Stark signs.

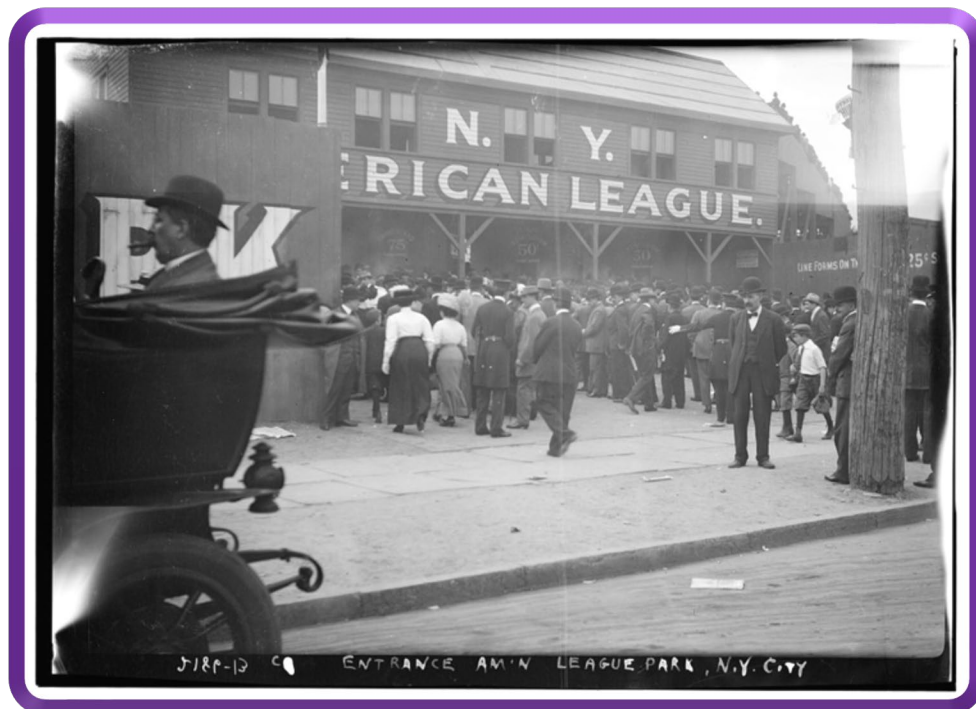
When Jackie Robinson ran out to first base on April 15, 1947, he not only became the first African American to play major-league baseball in the twentieth century, but also ushered in a new phase in the civil rights movement. He was [*not*] the first to play at Ebbets Field; that distinction went to the Bacharach Giants, who called the Brooklyn ballpark home from 1919 to 1921.

In 1935, Abe and Effa Manley arranged for the Brooklyn Eagles to play there. The Eagles left Brooklyn after one season, shifting to Newark, where they enjoyed so much success that in 2006 Effa Manley became the first woman inducted into the Baseball Hall of fame. The Dodgers played their final game at Ebbets Field on September 24, 1957, before a crowd of 6,702.



Hilltop Park (NY, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/hilltop-park-new-york/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Bill Lamb**

At a press conference on March 12, 1903, Ban Johnson revealed the location of the new *[American League]* ballpark: West 165th Street and Broadway, less than ten blocks from the Polo Grounds. While the borough of Manhattan covers more than 22 square miles, it then contained only two major-league-caliber baseball parks: Polo Grounds III and Manhattan Field. Both of these were under the complete control of *[New York Giants owner John T. Brush who resolved]* to keep the American League out of New York. Officially titled American League Park of New York, the premises were commonly called Hilltop Park, *[due to an]* erroneous notion that the ballpark sat upon the highest point on Manhattan Island.

Like the Polo Grounds and Manhattan Field, Hilltop Park ... served as home field for college football teams. The opening of a nearby West Side subway station *[in 1904]* made Hilltop Park much more accessible to the fans. The Highlanders hit bottom in 1908, their 51-103 log good for the cellar. *[They]* made progress in 1909, rising to fifth place and drawing more than 500,000 fans to Hilltop Park.

By the 1910 season, the once frosty relations between the two New York teams had thawed considerably. And as the Highlanders surged in the American League standings, holiday doubleheaders were sometimes switched to the more commodious Polo Grounds. At season's end the second-place Highlanders (88-63) and the second-place Giants (91-63) finally agreed to a postseason series.

As the 1911 season was about to commence, the Polo Grounds was almost completely destroyed by fire. *[The Highlanders]* immediately placed Hilltop Park at the Giants' disposal while the iconic Polo Grounds IV was being built. This accommodation was deeply appreciated by Brush and would redound to the Highlanders benefit in the years to come. On April 15, 1911, the Giants opened a pennant-winning season playing at Hilltop Park and continued to play home games there until May 30.

In the 1911 offseason, preliminary site work began on a new Highlanders ballpark, to be situated in the Bronx at 221st Street and Kingsbridge Road, hard by the Harlem River canal. The 1912 season for the Highlanders, by now more often called the Yankees, *[was their last at Hilltop Park and from 1913-1922 they]* would play their home games at the Polo Grounds.

Unloved and short-lived – it served as a baseball venue for only ten years – scant tears were shed when the confines passed from the major-league scene after the 1912 season. In 1914, the ballpark was demolished, clearing the site for more

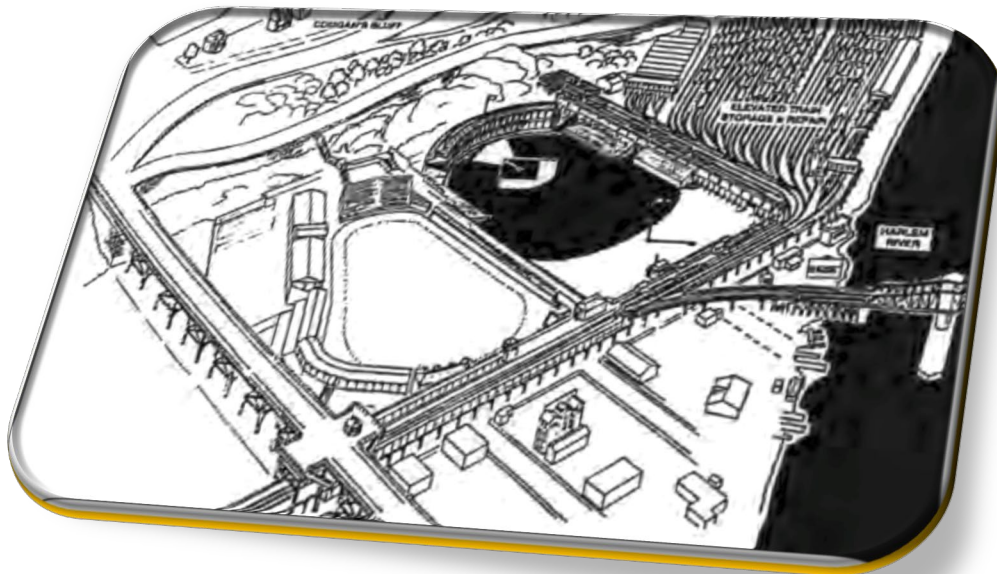
profitable investment prospects that were slow to materialize; later, the sprawling Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center assumed the grounds.

In September 1993, a small five-sided plaque was placed within the medical center confines. The inscription reads, “Dedicated to Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and the community of Washington Heights by the New York Yankees to mark the exact location of home plate in Hilltop Park, home field of the New York Highlanders from 1903 to 1912, renamed the New York Yankees.”



Manhattan Field (NY, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/manhattan-field-new-york/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Bill Lamb**

Hastily erected in 1889 to accommodate a displaced New York Giants franchise and initially called the New Polo Grounds, the park was an early success, hosting good regular season crowds plus that season’s inter-league championship match, won by the Giants in nine games. But its time as a major-league playing site was brief. Within two years, the ballpark lost both its team and its title, supplanted

as Giants home base by an adjoining edifice that assumed the name Polo Grounds as well. For the remainder of the 1890s, the abandoned park, renamed Manhattan Field, fell into disuse, and within 20 years of its construction, the ballpark was reduced to little more than the vacant ground that it had once been.

The site of this lost ballpark was ... situated at the far north of Manhattan Island, hard by the Harlem River and dominated by a 175-foot-high palisades that came to be known as Coogan's Bluff. During the 1880s, the hollow beneath the bluff was used for baseball and other amusements and at the conclusion of the 1888 season, the Polo Grounds Giants were baseball's champions. *[When]* plans to complete the local traffic grid by running a street through the Giants playing field, owner John B. Day cast his eyes northward and settled upon a grassy tract located at 155th Street and 8th Avenue — the locus of Manhattan Field.

With material salvaged from the original Polo Grounds, Day enlisted a small army of workmen who produced a usable, if unfinished, ballpark in a remarkable three weeks. The playing field was 360 feet, the fence in dead center field was actually closer to home plate than the left and right field corners. It also featured a steep incline fronting the outfield fence from center to right. Still, the enclosure, christened the New Polo Grounds, was a handsome, well-built ballpark. When completed, the New Polo Grounds featured a covered two-tier grandstand behind home plate, with a large clubhouse to the right and a covered grandstand (with horse stables beneath) extending down the entire left field line. An open bleachers section sat behind the left field fence. Capacity of the park exceeded 14,000 seats.

[When 20,000 fans watched for free] the 1896 Yale-Princeton game from outside the grounds, college football dates *[were]* transferred to Polo Grounds III (Brotherhood Park), a venue with far less commodious sightlines from the outside than Manhattan Field. *[Also, Giants owner Andrew Freedman got]* reimbursed for the annual cost of the Manhattan Field lease. That sealed the fate of Manhattan Field as a baseball venue. Although the outlines of its diamond were still visible in a 1901 panoramic photo of the grounds, Manhattan Field would be left fallow from then on, strategically withheld from use by the league.

Any prospects for a renaissance, moreover, were obliterated in September 1902 when Freedman sold the Giants to John T. Brush ... who had scant interest in the property—aside from keeping it out of American League hands. Under the new Giants regime, Manhattan Field was to be neglected, slowly dismantled over time for Polo Grounds III spare parts.

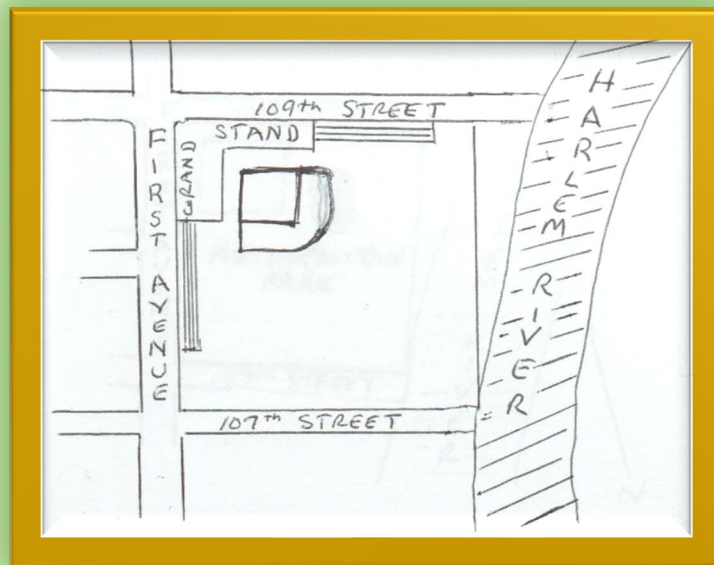
[Even when] a fire almost totally destroyed Polo Grounds III in April 1911, *[he did not]* rehabilitate Manhattan Field. Rather, Brush swallowed his pride and accepted the temporary use of cramped Hilltop Park from his AL competitors.

In the 1960s, the city acquired the Polo Grounds/Manhattan Field tract through eminent domain and, following demolition of the last New York Giants ballpark, converted the area into a high-rise public housing project.⁴⁰ Named Polo Grounds Towers, the site offered, at least, a bow to history. But no such reminder of the other sporting edifice that once adorned the grounds was planted on scene, finalizing the fate of Manhattan Field as New York's forgotten ballpark.



Metropolitan Park (NY, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/metropolitan-park-new-york/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Bill Lamb**

At the close of the 1883 season, the Metropolitan Exhibition Company confronted a logistics problem: the operation of its two major league baseball clubs — the New York Gothams (later Giants) of the National League and the New York

Metropolitans of the American Association — from a single, overtaxed north Manhattan ballpark: the original Polo Grounds.

The solution required relocation of the Mets, the company's less-favored team, to a new home field situated about ten city blocks to the east. At quickly-constructed Metropolitan Park, the Mets were near-invincible on the diamond, winning better than 80% of the games played there. But players, fans, and segments of the sports press hated the place. Before the season was out, the park was abandoned. Several years later, it was dismantled. And today, this unloved and short-lived ballpark is long forgotten.

The National League had expelled the Brooklyn-based New York Mutuals at the close of the 1876 season. Since then, greater Gotham had been without a major league baseball club. Revivification began in 1880 with the Metropolitan of New York club, an independent professional nine financed by cigar manufacturer and baseball enthusiast John B. Day. Like other New York clubs, the Mets began their playing existence in Brooklyn, then a municipality separate and distinct from New York and the nation's third largest city.

Day looked northward, eventually setting his eyes upon vacant meadowland located just north of Central Park at Fifth Avenue and 110th Street [*which had*] a portion of the grounds already enclosed, a legacy of the polo club that had used but since departed the premises. The Mets were installed at the "Polo Grounds," beginning play at their new home field on September 29, 1880.

In 1883, Day announced that an entirely new ballclub: the New York Gothams, or simply the New-Yorks. The home field of both [the Mets and Gothams] would be the Polo Grounds. To accommodate the Mets, a new landfill-based diamond with its own admission gate and grandstand was placed in the southwest quadrant of the Polo Grounds. As befitted their preferred status as Day's club, the Gothams were assigned the established diamond with grandstand on the southeast portion.

During the season, the Gothams and Mets largely avoided simultaneous home games. But on 12 occasions the two clubs were in dual action at the Polo Grounds. Their respective outfields were separated only by a temporarily erected canvas fence. This arrangement was unsatisfactory. To remedy the problem, the MEC decided to move the Mets. The Mets' new field, unoriginally named Metropolitan Park, would be built on waterfront property in East Harlem, about a mile-plus distant from the club's former home.

Unreserved seating for 5,000 more spectators was slated for the third base (109th Street) and first base (First Avenue) sidelines. When completed, the grounds, including left field by the river, would be enclosed by 14-foot-high walls. For transportation, fans heading to Metropolitan Park would be serviced by elevated trains running along Second and Third Avenues, and by waterfront stops made on game days by the ferries of the Harlem Steamboat Company.

As the Gothams improved, the Mets went into rapid decline, finishing the 1885 season as a seventh-place non-contender [*then were sold*] to railroader-entrepreneur Erastus Wiman, who promptly relocated the club to amusement grounds on Staten Island. Two dreary seasons later, the New York Metropolitan were defunct; long-gone Metropolitan Park is [*now*] occupied by a high-rise apartment building.



Polo Grounds (NY, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/polo-grounds-new-york/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Stew Thornley**

The Polo Grounds, an odd name for an odd stadium, was home to several baseball teams, most notably the New York Giants. Its horseshoe-shaped grandstand and elongated playing area provided for ridiculously short distances down the foul lines and equally ridiculous long distances to the power alleys and center field. So short were its foul-line distances that inches were sometimes included in the measurements — 279 feet, 8 inches to left; 257 feet, 8 inches to right. As for the distance to center, the figure almost could have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

The Polo Grounds is actually the story of several stadiums. The final three were located beneath Coogan's Bluff in upper Manhattan. But there was another location for the original Polo Grounds, the first stadium to use the name and the only one on which polo was actually played, at the corner of 110th Street and Fifth Avenue, just north of Central Park.

It wasn't until 1880 that professional baseball was played in Manhattan. Although New York had been represented in the National League's inaugural year of 1876, the team that carried the city's name actually played its games in the still-independent city of Brooklyn, across the East River from New York.

In 1880, a team called the Metropolitan was formed, an independent team, not affiliated with any league [*that played*] at the Union Grounds in Brooklyn. A series of events following the 1882 season resulted in New York getting teams in the American Association and in the National League. The Polo Grounds were being used for all types of baseball events at the time. On the rare days that neither the National League nor American Association team was using the grounds, college and other amateur teams played there.

The Metropolitans started the 1884 regular season in a different stadium: Metropolitan Park. It proved to be such a foul location that it made even the west diamond of the Polo Grounds look like a palace. After only five weeks, Day gave up on Metropolitan Park as the regular home for his team.

When the Metropolitans returned from a month-long road trip in mid-July, they moved back onto the Polo Grounds. At the end of the 1885 season, the Metropolitans were sold; in 1889 the city [created] a traffic circle .. going right through the heart of the field. Day arranged [*to use a Jersey City*] ballpark; after only two games there, though, he moved the team to another set of temporary quarters, the St. George Grounds on Staten Island, the same facility used by the Metropolitans in 1886 and 1887.

Polo Grounds II

The entrance to the New Polo Grounds was approximately 40 feet from the stairway of the Eighth Avenue elevated station on 155th Street. Over time, it featured a double-decked grandstand behind home plate and a large clubhouse behind first base. The area under the third-base grandstand included horse stables. Narrow on the western end and bulging toward the east, the playing area resembled a pear. Home plate was in the southern part of the lot with first base extending toward the Harlem River and third base toward Coogan's Bluff. The outfield featured a embankment running from center toward right field.

Polo Grounds III

Polo Grounds III was changing even before it became the Polo Grounds. During the 1890 season — when it was still Brotherhood Park — the stadium was undergoing a massive makeover that increased its capacity and redefined its dimensions. The first National League game in Polo Grounds III was played on Wednesday, April 22, 1891 [and 20 years later in April 1911, a fire destroyed the wooden structures, necessitating a new Polo Grounds.].

A Grand New Stadium: Polo Grounds IV

Construction in steel, concrete, and marble began on May 10th and by late June, fewer than 11 weeks after the wooden Polo Grounds had burned, the new stadium was ready for baseball. Three stadiums before had been known as the Polo Grounds, but the one that opened in 1911 would last twice as long as the other three combined. It would carry the Giants through the golden years of its history and then serve as the home of a new team after the Giants abandoned New York for the West Coast. And, for ten years in its early going, the Polo Grounds served as the home of the New York American League team in addition to the Giants.

Changes in policy were made in the late 1940s to help the players get to the clubhouse after games without having to interact with the fans on the field. Fans could still exit by their usual route, but they would have to wait until the players and umpires had reached their dressing rooms before going onto the field.

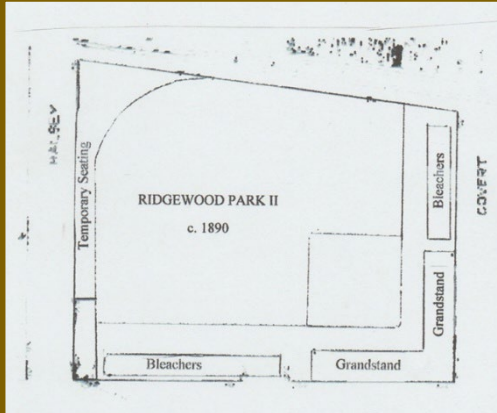
For more, read *Land of the Giants: New York's Polo Grounds* by Stew Thornley.



Ridgewood Park (Queens, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/ridgewood-park-ny/>

Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Bill Lamb**



For three consecutive seasons in the late 1880s, the Brooklyn Grays/Bridegrooms of the major league American Association relocated their home games from their grounds at Washington Park to a newly opened venue: Ridgewood Park II, originally known as Wallace's Ridgewood Park or Grounds. The reason was straightforward: Ridgewood was

located in Queens, where state blue laws prohibiting the playing of professional baseball and other amusements on Sunday were loosely enforced, if at all.

In 1890, Ridgewood Park II served as the everyday home ballpark of a hastily organized AA replacement club, the Brooklyn Gladiators. All the while and for almost three decades thereafter, Ridgewood also hosted amateur, semipro, and pre-Negro Leagues baseball contests, as well as soccer, hurling, and American and Gaelic football matches.

Despite their unpopularity with the Irish and German immigrants arriving in New York, Sunday blue laws remained sacrosanct to a New York state legislature dominated by nativist upstate Protestants. But by the 1880s, enforcement of Sabbath restrictions was spotty, particularly in the greater New York City area. In Gotham itself, then consisting of only Manhattan and parts of the West Bronx, pro-blue law forces were potent enough to prevent the playing of professional baseball on Sunday. The same held true in Brooklyn, then an independent municipality and the nation's fourth largest city. With the Sabbath being the only day available for pursuit of leisure activity by the middle and working classes, New York and Brooklyn clubs in the National League and American Association were therefore

precluded from opening their ballparks on the day most likely to attract a large number of fans. But the situation in Queens was different.

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

In early 1885, local brewery owner George Grauer purchased 10 acres of greensward adjoining his already popular picnic grove in Ridgewood, an ethnically German enclave situated in Queens, along the border with Brooklyn. There, he laid out an enclosed baseball diamond in hopes of attracting paying customers to games staged by the Long Island Athletic Club and other area amateur teams. These grounds were known as Grauer's Ridgewood Park, distinguished from our subject by designating it as Ridgewood Park I.

On April 11, 1886, the Brooklyn Grays of the American Association trounced the Ridgewoods, 22-1, in a Sunday exhibition game played at Ridgewood Park I. Among those impressed by the 3,000 spectators who paid their way into the ballpark to observe the non-contest was Brooklyn club owner-field manager Charles Byrne [*who noted*] lack of enforcement of Sunday blue laws. Recognizing the situation's income potential, the Brooklyn club boss promptly arranged the rescheduling of American Association games for the Grays on Sundays at Ridgewood Park.

On May 2, 1886, the Brooklyn Grays and the AA rival Philadelphia Athletics inaugurated Sunday major league baseball in New York with a poorly-played "muffin game" that ended in a 19-19 tie after eight innings. Thereafter, the Grays played 13 more Sunday afternoon games at Ridgewood Park I, winning eight. Those contests were almost invariably well-attended, a major factor in the 100,000-patron surge in Brooklyn home game attendance over the previous season

Ridgewood Park II

Major league baseball at Ridgewood Park II began in earnest on April 24, 1887 when Brooklyn and the Baltimore Orioles inaugurated Sunday major league baseball at the Ridgewood ballpark. The grounds were overwhelmed with nearly

10,000 reportedly in attendance. Every available seat was taken, with thousands more onlookers ringing the outfield fences. For the 1888 season, the Brooklyn club, now called the Bridegrooms, obtained no fewer than 20 Sunday home game dates. And when Brooklyn was on the road, either the Newark Trunkmakers or the Jersey City Skeeters of the minor Central League would be Ridgewood Park II's Sunday tenants.

Ridgewood Park II: The Ensuing Decades

Beginning in the late 1890s, pre-Negro League clubs like the Genuine Cuban Giants began playing an occasional Sunday game at Ridgewood Park. Prospects for major league baseball's return were dashed in 1904 when the New York Highlanders were thwarted in an effort to play Sunday games at Ridgewood Park II. Still, semipro and amateur games continued, and the pre-Negro Leagues New York Royal Giants became ballpark tenants in 1912.

On September 19, 1917, the grandstand and a large portion of the bleachers at Ridgewood Park II were consumed by a fire of unknown origin. Thereafter, a smaller version of the ballpark *[was built]* on the northern part of the site.

In 1959, the last remnants of Ridgewood Park II were swallowed by buildings construction. As with many other vanished ballparks, no memorial to the grounds can be found the on the site today.



Did you guess which SABR's chapters are named for ballparks?

Answers are below:

Rickwood Field Chapter (Alabama) Birmingham, AL

Hanlan's Point Chapter Toronto, ON

Field of Dreams (Iowa) Chapter Des Moines, IA

Elysian Fields Chapter Jersey City, NJ

Shea Stadium (Queens, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/shea-stadium-new-york/>

Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Rory Costello**

Shea had its drawbacks. Its location near Flushing Bay gave it something in common with San Francisco's Candlestick Park. Winds swirled, and the cold could be fierce, especially in April – let alone during winter football games.



The neighbors were noisy (LaGuardia Airport) and dirty (a forbidding maze of junkyards and automotive “chop shops”). The atmosphere in the concourse, stairways and tunnels was dank. The pitch of the upper deck was steep. The seats were cramped.

Still, this was a fun place to watch baseball. It had another extraordinary positive: peaks of intense excitement. The “Amazin’ Mets” of 1969 completed their most improbable run to a World Series championship there. When the Mets won their other World Series title, in 1986, Games Six and Seven at Shea both featured rousing comebacks. The two-out, three-run rally in the bottom of the 10th inning of Game Six – capped by the grounder that trickled through Bill Buckner’s legs – remains one of the most staggering episodes in Series history. When the house was packed to its capacity of 55,000-plus and “Mets Magic” was flowing, one could feel it swaying slightly on its foundation.

To understand the history of William A. Shea Municipal Stadium, one must know for whom it was named. Bill Shea (1907-1991) was a lawyer. The facility’s original name was Flushing Meadows Municipal Stadium. Other names were considered, but Mayor Wagner and his administration decided to rename it for Bill Shea – over the latter’s protests.

The dedication pamphlet proclaimed, “It is a stadium with many ‘firsts.’ It is the first of its size to have such an extensive escalator system carrying patrons to every seating level; it is the first capable of being converted from a football gridiron to a baseball diamond and back by means of two motor-operated stands movable over underground tracks; it is the first in which every seat in the permanently fixed stands is directed at the center of the field and not a single column obstructs the spectator’s view.”

Mr. Shea filled two empty champagne bottles with water – one from the Harlem River, near the old Polo Grounds, and the other from the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn. “Though you could not see the canal from Ebbets Field, he explained, you could always smell it.”

At the end of September 1973, Yankee Stadium in the Bronx had closed for major renovations. The prime tenants there – the Yankees and the New York Giants of the NFL – needed to find interim homes. The Yankees played at Shea during the 1974 and 1975 seasons. The Giants played most of their 1973 season and 1974 in the Yale Bowl in New Haven; they then moved to Shea for 1975. Thus, in 1975, Shea Stadium held an unprecedented four major sports franchises -- the Jets [*were*] the other longest-running tenant of the stadium.

The Yankees found their time at Shea Stadium hard. Mets Vice President Jim Thompson assigned the Yankees to the Jets’ clubhouse, while the team’s administration had to operate out of offices in Flushing Meadows Park across Roosevelt Avenue. The Mets’ scoreboard could not handle the letters “DH,” so the Yankees used “B” for batter when their designated hitter came to the plate. Little was done to make the Yankees feel at home beyond the big scoreboard display of the club’s logo during games.

According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the Mets finished with a record of 1,859 wins and 1,713 losses at Shea Stadium. Shea Stadium’s demolition began on October 14, 2008, and concluded on February 18, 2009.

[For more about the team tragedies, triumphs, and traditions, read more online. The SABR BioProject site also details the non-baseball appearances at Shea with tributes for city workers as well as the concerts and other events.]



St. George Grounds (Staten Island, NY)

<https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/st-george-grounds/>



Excerpts below are taken from the BioProject article by **Larry DeFillipo**

In 1880, Canadian-born businessman Erastus Wiman burst onto the scene. Stationed in New York City shortly after the Civil War, he envisioned Staten Island as a transportation hub for goods coming into the cities surrounding New York harbor. By 1886, a “small army of masons and carpenters” was erecting a wooden, two-deck (gallery) racetrack grandstand on a seven-acre parcel of land now known as St. George Grounds [with a] more than 300-foot-long grandstand, a 72-foot-high center section and two adjoining wings, oriented perpendicular to the shoreline.

The playing diamond was aligned so that the path between home plate and the pitcher was perpendicular to the grandstand, which provided splendid views from every seat. The structure included a flat roofline embellished by a center cupola and squat pyramidal towers at either end. The lower (main) gallery included 2,600 seats divided by 12 aisles, with a field-level walkway at its front. A 12-foot-wide promenade behind the gallery offered “unobstructed views of the entire [Upper] Bay, Narrows, Sandy Hook (New Jersey), Coney Island and the cities of

New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City.” The upper gallery had room for 1,500 spectators, with a glass-walled ladies refreshment room.

Hopes were high for the Metropolitans’ 1887 season. After losing all 10 games of a season-opening road trip, the Mets won their May 3 home opener against the Brooklyn Grays. The game drew about 3,000 spectators.

On October 7, just days before the end of the season, Wiman sold the Metropolitans to Charles Byrne, owner of the Brooklyn Grays. Byrne made it clear that if the franchise was to remain in New York, it would not be playing on Staten Island. The Mets ended their time at the Grounds (and their time as a franchise) with a dreary October 10 *[loss]*. The Metropolitans franchise folded after the 1887 season, with its most talented players retained by Byrne’s Grays.



What about upstate New York? What about New Jersey?

Five Ballpark Biographies in upstate New York are available:

East Field (Glens Falls) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/east-field-glens-falls-ny/>
Maple City Park (Hornell) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/maple-city-park-hornell-ny/>
McDonough Park (Geneva) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/mcdonough-park-geneva-ny/>
Johnson Field (Johnson City) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/johnson-field-johnson-city-ny/>
Silver Stadium (Rochester) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/silver-stadium-rochester-ny/>

Eight Ballpark Biographies in New Jersey are available:

Oakland Park (Jersey City) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/oakland-park-jersey-city/>
Ruppert Stadium (Newark) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/ruppert-stadium-newark-nj/>
Roosevelt Stadium (Jersey City) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/roosevelt-stadium-jersey-city-nj/>
Harrison Park (Harrison) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/harrison-park-harrison-nj/>
Wiedenmayer’s Park (Newark) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/wiedenmayers-park-newark-nj/>
Sprague Field (Bloomfield) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/sprague-field-bloomfield-nj/>
Waverly Fairgrounds (Elizabeth) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/waverly-fairgrounds-elizabeth-nj/>
Hinchliffe Stadium (Paterson) <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/hinchliffe-stadium-paterson-nj/>

SHARING OUR STORIES

EARLY DAYS OF THE BALLPARKS COMMITTEE

By Mike Frank

I came onto the Ballparks Committee in November 1982, just after Phil Lowry, author of *Green Cathedrals*, passed the chairmanship on to Bob Bluthardt (who ran the Fort Concho Museum in San Angelo, TX). Bob asked L. Robert “Bob” Davids for guidelines for committees, but there weren't any then.

Bob B. then suggested that there be three types of projects:

Preservation/Memorials
Research/Data Bank
Publishing

Bluthardt is from the northeast and would come to New York every year around Christmas, and he'd meet those members nearby for a good dinner. That eventually petered out. There was no committee project as such, but a lot of exchange of information, and individual projects. Here are a few:

- Answering criticism of plans to replace the big four of old ballparks: Fenway, Wrigley, Comiskey, and Tigers
- Helping Blue Ash, Ohio, to bring in pieces of Crosley Field
- Making sure Rickwood Field's final year wouldn't be 1987

Howard University wouldn't agree to a plaque at the site of Griffith Stadium because it represented segregated policies. Better, then-president Cappy Gagnon supported a plaque for the soon-to-be demolished Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City. Stew Thornley was active in Minnesota. Ernie Accorsi, then with the Cleveland Browns, joined the committee in 1985. Larry Lester requested park capacity data.

Forty-two years later, I'm still on that committee.

Mike Frank wrote about Hinchliffe Stadium in the last issue of The Lineup.

In his column, Mike Frank spoke about Bob Bluthardt's chairmanship of the Ballparks Committee. Here are three trivia questions about ballparks from Bob Bluthardt, taken from *The National Pastime: Premiere Edition* (1982) with the entire 50 Q & A <https://sabr.org/journal/article/ballparks-a-quiz/>

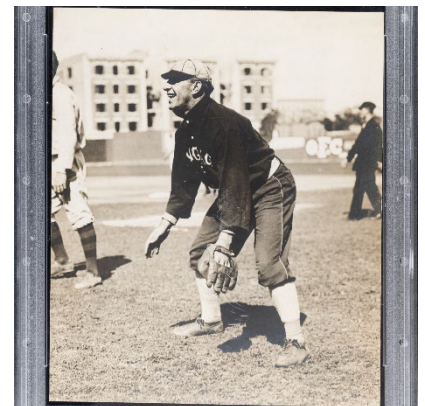
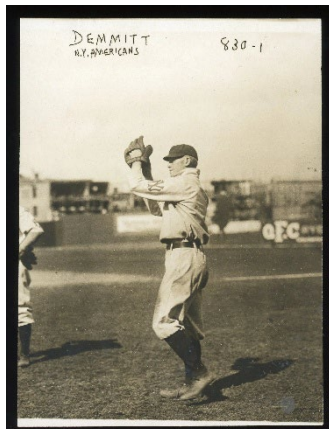
1. In what park was umpire George Magerkurth attacked by a fan?
2. Where did a groundskeeper live in the ballpark?
3. Who are the famous Yankees honored by the tablets that used to reside in the center field of Yankee Stadium?

Answers are on page 26.

This Note is taken from the May 2023 SABR Ballparks Committee newsletter on page 7: [file:///C:/Users/Evelyn%20Begley/Downloads/SABR-Ballparks Cmte-2023-05%20\(6\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Evelyn%20Begley/Downloads/SABR-Ballparks_Cmte-2023-05%20(6).pdf)

VISUAL DATING GUIDE FOR HILLTOP PARK IN NEW YORK CITY: Photo analyst Deron Dixon has put together a guide for dating photographs taken of scenes in which Hilltop Park appears. The guide highlights the construction details, buildings and advertisements at Hilltop Park and can be found here: <https://gumshoebaseball.com/hilltop-park-dating-guide/>

Mr. Dixon has graciously permitted to share some of these photographs of Hilltop Park, dated through the progress of the building construction in the background.



Baseball Trivia

By Al Blumkin

1. What two Hall of Famers got their 1st career home run off Vic Rashi?
2. What two Hall of Famers got their 1st career home run off Warren Spahn?

The Jints Column

By Gary Mintz

I am sharing an email from Jerry Grillo about a documentary by filmmaker Hal Jacobs which includes Johnny Mize for all fans of the Giants ...

Hey Gary,

Wanted to share this with the group. Atlanta award winning filmmaker Hal Jacobs is making a documentary based in part on my book about Johnny Mize, "Big Cat." It should be making its debut later this spring.

Hal put together a nice promo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttnw9rGIQNw>
And here is Hal's webpage: <https://www.hjacobscreative.com/>

Getting super excited about it, and glad to share more if you like.
Thanks so much Gary.
Jerry

TRIVIA ANSWERS

From Bob Bluthardt

1. In what park was umpire George Magerkurth attacked by a fan?

In Ebbets Field after a game in 1939.

2. Where did a groundskeeper live in the ballpark?

In the Polo Grounds, head groundskeeper Matty Schwab lived under section 31 in left field. Horace Stoneham had lured him from Ebbets Field, and he built an apartment for Schwab and his family under the stands.

3. Who are the famous Yankees honored by the tablets that used to reside in the center field of Yankee Stadium?

Miller Huggins, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jake Ruppert.

From Al Blumkin

1. What two Hall of Famers got their 1st career home run off Vic Rashi?

Hank Aaron and Whitey Ford

2. What two Hall of Famers got their 1st career homer off Warren Spahn?

Willie Mays and Sandy Koufax