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**“You’ve Got to Have Tangibles to Sell Intangibles’:  
Ideologies of the Modern American Stadium, 1948-1982”**

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**“You’ve Got to Have Tangibles to Sell Intangibles’:  
Ideologies of the Modern American Stadium, 1948-1982”**

by

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**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

In memory of Madge Lisle,  
who stoked my interest in the world of things.

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**“You’ve Got to Have Tangibles to Sell Intangibles’:  
Ideologies of the Modern American Stadium, 1948-1982”**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisor: Jeffrey Meikle

This dissertation investigates the modern American stadium from the late 1940s to the early 1980s, examining the ideologies that shaped these monumental buildings and the meanings people affixed to them. Stadiums were significant components of the modern landscape, frequently hosting massive audiences, costing tens of millions of public dollars, and uniquely symbolizing cities and their citizens’ civic spirit. Through interpretations of these stadiums’ architectural expression, spatial constitution, discursive construction, and visual representation, this study explores the ideological landscape of the modern United States, expands understandings of modern space, and examines what it meant to be “modern” throughout this period.

A response to the old stadiums they replaced—largely masculine, inter-class, inter-racial, rambunctious places locked into run-down neighborhoods—new stadiums eliminated traditional and iconic sites of urban diversity, reconstituting sports spaces as modern, suburban, and technological. They re-gendered stadium space, integrating women into it as consumers and service workers. They re-classed stadium space, outfitting it with exclusive restaurants and private luxury boxes. They technologized stadium space, conspicuously loading it with exploding scoreboards and massive video screens. They re-racialized stadium space, relocating it from old ballparks adjacent dense African-American neighborhoods to open sites along



freeways convenient to booming white suburbs or as anchors to clean-sweep downtown redevelopment. They fundamentally altered stadium experience, shifting emphasis from games on the field to entertainments and consumption opportunities around it. In doing all these things, modern stadiums materialized an ideological apparatus privileging a range of values and practices including gender distinction in mixed-gender settings, socio-economic and racial segregation, technological scientism, and consumption-oriented stimulation. Roy Hofheinz, the force behind the iconic Houston Astrodome's planning and execution, fully understood the relationship of the material and the ideological; as he put it, "You've got to have tangibles to sell intangibles." To illustrate these points, this dissertation engages postwar plans for futuristic new stadiums from designers like Norman Bel Geddes and Buckminster Fuller; the construction of new stadiums in the mid-1960s in New York, Houston, and St. Louis; and the increasingly routinized modern stadium of the 1970s—a controversial expression of modern progress for some, modern artificiality for others.

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Introduction

**“You’ve Got to Have Tangibles to Sell Intangibles’:  
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The Louisiana Superdome was a powerful and versatile symbol when it opened in 1975. Commentators called it a “symbol of economic progress,” a “symbol of the venality and deviousness that has placed Louisiana in a class by itself,” and a “staggering symbol of the city’s rush towards Americanization.” The Superdome was even a symbol of Lost Cause Southern identity; one man wrote to the stadium’s public relations director: “Ever since the Civil War, I’ve heard that ‘The South will rise again,’ but I never dreamed of anything like the Superdome.”<sup>1</sup>

Thirty years later, another observer too would link the stadium to the spectre of the old South:

The sight of tens of thousands of desperate black people crying for help outside the Superdome and the New Orleans Convention Center have had the same effect on viewers as the shots of Bull Connor turning firehoses and dogs on teenage demonstrators in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963. A hundred years from now, people will regard those pictures as symbols of American civilization at the dawn of the 21st century and of the continued isolation of poor blacks within the wealthiest nation on earth.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Superdome again fixed itself to the national imagination—though as a much more singular symbol than when it had opened. The awful conditions that poor, largely African-American New Orleanians were forced to endure there—overflowing sewage, rotting garbage, suffocating heat and humidity, no water or food, fighting, gunfire, and the bodies of deceased—made the “familiar and mighty landmark... a tattered symbol of national tragedy.”<sup>3</sup> A long-time symbol of New Orleans, it became “a symbol of something far worse, of flooding and failures, of promises made and

people let down.”<sup>4</sup> The stadium “became a symbol of relief efforts gone wrong, a scene of heartbreaking misery for thousands.”<sup>5</sup>

The Superdome was a reality and not just a symbol for some; they were bussed from one domed stadium to another—the archetypal Houston Astrodome.<sup>6</sup> Opened in 1965, the Astrodome had once been seen “as a symbol of Houston’s rise to greatness.”<sup>7</sup> As displaced Louisianans made it their temporary home, reporters recalled the stadium’s glorious past, when it was known as the “Eighth Wonder of the World” and “was a symbol of the nation’s self-confidence and panache.” Those days were gone, however; the stadium was then “in its dotage, abandoned by the sporting world and downgraded to a part-time convention centre.”<sup>8</sup> It was no longer even the largest stadium on the lot, dwarfed by a retractable roof football stadium next door since 2002. But for many in Houston, for whom the Astrodome was a durable capsule of gratifying memories, its resuscitation suggested a matronly dignity. Harris County Judge Robert Eckels reflected on the old stadium’s new utility: “I’ve been there for Elvis, the Luv Ya Blue, destruction derbies, WWF wrestling, the Astros in good years and bad, the rodeo... But with all those things, probably no single event has been more moving than what we’re seeing right now. She’s a proud old lady and this is her finest hour.”<sup>9</sup>

The catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina forced these two iconic modern stadiums back into the headlines. The Superdome, one of the purest expressions of modern hubris for all its monumentality and ambition, was recast as the ultimate dystopian chamber. It became shorthand for structural racism and criminal governmental neglect. The older Astrodome, arguably the most innovative and influential stadium ever, was rescued from its more recent second-rate irrelevance. Pitched against the Superdome, it seemed an icon of resuscitated

humanity, tragic for its necessity, but reassuring for its food and water, its safety and health care, its air conditioning at the end of summer, and its volunteer workers who cared for the displaced of New Orleans—sympathies that seemed wholly absent back in their native city. The circumstances of these stadiums’ revival on the national stage were ironic indeed. To be a “showcase for... the black underclass of many southern cities,” as a British reporter put it, was fully at odds with their original invention as luxurious, space-age symbols of civic pride.<sup>10</sup> Imagined as playpens for white, affluent suburbanites, they became dysfunctional, makeshift homes for black urbanites.

This study examines the modern stadium as it was planned and constructed in the United States from the late 1940s through the 1970s. It attempts to recover and chart the ideologies that shaped these monumental buildings and the meanings people gleaned from them, before they were dismissed as placeless and soulless icons of mid-century functionality and replaced through the 1990s and 2000s by seemingly more authentic and humane sports spaces. I examine the modern stadium as a vital site of identity construction in the 1960s and 1970s. Stadiums were (and remain) one of the most important and overlooked components of the American built environment. No other structures hosted such large and captive audiences so often (over four-and-a-half million people attended events at the Astrodome in 1965).<sup>11</sup> Few other structures were so costly or so controversial as public investments. Few other structures—for better or worse—symbolized cities as new modern stadiums did. They were rich and important cultural texts, and yet they have been largely neglected as cultural artifacts.<sup>12</sup> This study attempts to remedy this problem, and in the process explore the ideological landscape of the modern United States, expand scholarly understandings of modern space, and examine what it meant to be “modern” from the late 1940s through the 1970s. In examining

these issues, this project speaks to a range of audiences in urban geography and history, architectural history and material culture, visual and cultural studies, sports history, and the modern history of the United States.

Modern stadiums were monumental additions to dramatically changing urban landscapes. A response to the old baseball parks and football stadiums they replaced—largely masculine, inter-class, inter-racial, rambunctious places locked into run-down African-American neighborhoods—new stadiums eliminated traditional and iconic sites of urban diversity, reconstituting sports spaces as modern, suburban, and technological. They re-gendered stadium space, integrating women into it as consumers and service workers. They re-classed stadium space, outfitting it with exclusive restaurants and private luxury boxes. They technologized stadium space, conspicuously loading it with exploding scoreboards and massive video screens. They re-racialized stadium space, relocating it from old ballparks adjacent dense African-American neighborhoods to open sites along freeways convenient to booming white suburbs or as anchors to clean-sweep downtown redevelopment. They fundamentally altered stadium experience, shifting emphasis from games on the field to entertainments and consumption opportunities around it. In doing all these things, modern stadiums materialized an ideological apparatus privileging a range of values and practices including gender distinction in mixed-gender settings, socio-economic and racial segregation, technological scientism, and consumption-oriented stimulation. Roy Hofheinz, the driving force behind the Astrodome's planning and execution, was an expert salesman of ideas through things; as he put it, "You've got to have tangibles to sell intangibles."<sup>13</sup>

My method attempts to understand the built environment through the mediation of its architectural expression, spatial constitution, discursive construction, and visual



representation. Descriptively, I relate what these stadiums looked like and how they were physically experienced. I examine how they were written about and visually represented through illustrations and photographs. Interpretatively, I identify what stadium advocates and agents—those who played important roles in determining how these structures were built and explained (designers, politicians, civic leaders, sports businessmen, and supportive media)—believed they were constructing. This approach to interpreting stadium meanings relies heavily on representational aspects. The “official,” top-down sets of meanings—and even those weren’t monolithic—were important because they were the most prominent and publicized. But I also, as much as possible, plot counter-interpretations to these official meanings.<sup>14</sup> Stadium meanings, and the ideologies that animated them, were multiple and dynamic, and I certainly don’t mean to imply otherwise. Given the impossibility of addressing every meaning, much less writing about them, this study focuses on the more coherent, identifiable sets of meanings circulated in stadium discourse—the rhetorical and imaginary universe constructed around the stadiums. These are ultimately where the ideological currency of the stadium resided. These meanings suggest how the built environment was informed by and constructed in the image of certain sets of values and beliefs, and how it thus reinforced them through their materialization.

My interpretations rely on a range of primary sources. The most fruitful were sports club and stadium commission publications and print media. Club and stadium publications—dedication programs, souvenir guidebooks, ticket brochures, and yearbooks—articulated, quite transparently, what advocates and promoters hoped their stadiums would express. These vibrant and often hyperbolic materials framed the stadium for readers, telling them what was remarkable about the structure, how its builders were exemplary, and why those

things mattered. While any discerning reader would take their claims with plenty of salt, these documents provided ready-made interpretations of the space that were no doubt persuasive to many less skeptical readers caught up in the excitement of a new stadium. Popular newspapers and magazines were another vital source of information and subjects for interpretation. Reporters and columnists acted as go-betweens, connecting readers to stadiums as they were planned, built, and used. Some reporters and commentators were critical, readily pointing out problems in stadium design or fan experience, contemplating the effects of new stadiums on sports cultures. Most news sources, however, were surrogates for stadium advocates, and thus agents in selling the stadium. They repeated the words of stadium promoters. They constructed stories out of sports club press releases. They published enticing or awe-inspiring images of stadium construction, stadium interiors, and monumental finished products. Local newspapers and magazines particularly tended to support stadium projects, from the planning phases through construction. They supported these projects in large part because major-league sports were good business for local newspapers. National press—magazines like *Newsweek* or *Fortune* or quasi-national newspapers like the *New York Times*—tended to take a broader and more skeptical view. This study largely rests on these publicly circulated sources as it is concerned with public and shared meaning. However, archival sources—private correspondence, press releases, consultant reports, trade brochures, architectural notes and sketches, meeting notes, and internal memos—were often a useful route to understanding how stadium producers were thinking about their projects and how they transmitted those ideas to media. Site visits, as both fan and researcher, to modern stadiums such as Washington’s Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium, New York’s Shea Stadium, Houston’s Astrodome, Kansas City’s

Kaufmann and Arrowhead Stadiums, New Orleans's Superdome, New Jersey's Giants Stadium, and Minneapolis's Metrodome have been instrumental in helping me re-imagine and write about these structures as well.

I refer to these as “modern” stadiums, a distinction that requires some explanation. As a group, the modern stadiums that are my objects of analysis share a set of general characteristics that often distinguished them from a preceding generation of ballparks and stadiums built in the early twentieth century and a succeeding one of structures erected in the 1990s and 2000s. First, and most conspicuously, modern stadiums expressed a functionalist, engineered aesthetic. They were thoroughly rationalized, through their geometrically symmetrical shapes, standardized field dimensions, and ample use and conspicuous display of new technologies like video boards and synthetic grass. Second, they were all publicly subsidized—a reflection of the enormous expense of the projects and the willingness of political leaders and citizenry to invest in “big-league” status.<sup>15</sup> Third, they were almost all designed for a postwar and suburban sense of spaciousness and mobility, from their easy freeway access for a society given over to private automobiles; to ample parking for those automobiles; to broad, ramped concourses, escalators, wide rows and aisles, and larger seats. Fourth, modern stadium interiors were geared towards visitor comfort and consumption—resonating with more general postwar abundance—through padded or contoured seats, stadium clubs and restaurants, and private luxury suites. And finally, most of these stadiums were designed to adapt to a range of events—not just baseball, but also professional football (a game that exploded in popularity in the 1960s), religious revivals, rock concerts, and conventions. This accounted for their circularity, a necessary compromise between the fan-shaped baseball diamond and the rectangular-shaped

football field. Thus, the modern stadium was a sort of modernist universal space—adaptable to many functions.<sup>16</sup>

I use the term “modern,” as it applies to stadiums, more particularly than most. Since the 1800s, promoters, politicians, bureaucrats, reporters, commentators, and academics have used “modern” to mean “up-to-date” when describing stadiums. British Geographer John Bale, a pioneer in the study of stadiums, has used “modern” to signify any rationalized, enclosed, and commodified stadium space, including grounds from the nineteenth century. In spite of this precedent, I make a claim for the stadiums constructed in the 1960s and 1970s as particularly “modern,” and thus deserving of the title. These stadiums reflected a brand of modern thinking that exemplified that period. They were, their advocates would claim, exemplars of technological progress and symbols of a postwar prosperity. The stadiums cast aside the tired traditions of the old city and embraced the future. They were also, as their critics charged, rationalized to the point of becoming placeless, expressively functional to the point of aesthetic sterility, so spatially adaptable that they seemed to suit all human endeavors equally poorly. These qualities reflect the high-water mark of a postwar, rationalist outlook that makes them more “modern” than simply up-to-date. The modern stadium is modern like Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building, modern like a tangle of ferro-concrete freeway ramps, modern like Minoru Yamasaki’s Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, and modern like a climate-controlled shopping mall. It reflected a postwar modern impulse to engineer a new landscape befitting a new era of progress—a rejection of the old ways of living and recreating and a rejection of the old, tired city.

There are too many modern stadiums to address each fully, as distinct structures with unique histories *and* as types of a broader national, even international, built form. In an attempt to

capture both the discrete and the shared elements of the modern stadium, this study caps a series of city-based case studies with a final synthetic chapter. I try to be as comprehensive as possible, gesturing from each city to broader national contexts whenever possible; however, many important stadiums—San Francisco’s Candlestick Park, Washington’s District of Columbia Stadium, and Los Angeles’s Dodger Stadium to name a few—undoubtedly receive short shrift. A case-study approach was necessary, as each city’s situation—geographic, political, economic, social, and culture—is distinct, giving rise to stadiums that are uniquely planned, executed, and experienced in each separate urban setting. And yet, it is important to keep in mind that the modern stadium, like much of the rest of the modern landscape, revealed a significant, postwar cultural convergence. One of the fundamental themes of this study is the standardization of stadiums and stadium experience—a process that is reflected in and bound up with the impact of television and that great televisual sport, football.<sup>17</sup>

The reconfiguration of the stadium—the subject for this project—was intertwined with two other major developments from the 1950s through the 1970s: the ever-increasing influence of television and the ever-increasing popularity of professional football. Television became a serious threat to major-league baseball attendance beginning in the early 1950s, and was one of the many factors driving the construction of new modern stadiums. These new structures, in the hands of promoters and designers, tried to compete with television on its own terms—as comfortable and convenient sites to watch sports, just as so many suburban living rooms. Baseball owners also had to compete with professional football, largely an unstable and unglamorous regional game until the 1950s. But football was a sport arguably more conducive to television broadcasts than baseball, given its more compact spatiality. Professional football’s leadership was certainly savvier to the potential of television

than baseball's notoriously disjointed and unimaginative owners. Television and professional football made for a dynamic pairing, each scratching the others' back throughout the 1960s to very profitable heights.<sup>18</sup> By the late 1960s, many were pointing to well-publicized polls that suggested football had dethroned baseball as America's favorite spectator sport. The ascendance of football through the 1960s and the concomitant teeth-gnashing from baseball quarters—both well-documented in the press—might lead one to assume that that modern stadiums were being built *for* football. Indeed, some have pitched it that way.<sup>19</sup> While it is indisputable that many stadiums were built expressly to accommodate baseball *and* football in the 1960s, major-league baseball remained the gold standard in “big-league” status, and thus the primary driver for modern stadium construction throughout that decade. By the 1970s, this had changed—a change that becomes evident in this project's fifth chapter.<sup>20</sup>

These three developments—stadium reconfiguration and standardization, the soaring influence of television, and the irrepressible popularity of football—intersected thoroughly in the 1970s. Stadiums had once been distinctive from city to city. They had once been the primary source of income for sports clubs. In the 1970s, they were neither. Television revenue—which had driven professional football past major-league baseball as sports entertainment—had become the primary revenue stream. The sense of place that had marked the ballparks of an earlier generation was not particularly important to television producers; clear sightlines and well-positioned camera stands were. Baseball was a sport that had traditionally invited a keen cultivation of place awareness; its grounds were each different and visited up to eighty times a year by regular supporters, lazy summer after lazy summer. Professional football, relatively new on the scene, had little of that tradition. Its fans had been forced into awkward layouts as second-class citizens in baseball-first parks. It

was played in the autumn and winter, often in weather that hardly invited contemplative reflection. Its teams played just seven home games a season, a frequency less conducive to developing place attachment. Significantly, most football spectators were new to the professional game and had only seen it on television, from the comfort of their living room. That place distinction seemed less important for many in the 1960s and 1970s speaks to both the extremes to which the rationalization of the modern landscape went and to the decline of baseball. Though professional football is a cultural practice central to this study, it often seems a silent figure in the room—at least until the final chapter. Most of the sensitive accounts of stadium life and strident complaints about modernization came from baseball partisans because they were traditionally more sensitive to the role of place distinction in sport and because they seemed the ones who had the most to lose in the new modern order.<sup>21</sup>

But in the late 1940s, as baseball attendance was setting all-time records, all this would have seemed a brave new world. The first chapter, beginning in those immediate postwar years, examines two events instrumental in the development of the modern stadium. The first was Walter O'Malley's experimentation with a range of new stadium plans to replace Brooklyn's Ebbets Field. O'Malley, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball club, believed that postwar Americans would want modern sports facilities that were more comfortable, more spacious, and more convenient to automobile traffic. This conviction intensified as Brooklynites increasingly bought cars, moved to the suburbs, and stopped coming to the ballpark lodged into a dense streetscape. Fewer customers returned to an old place with small seats, obstructed viewing, and poor amenities as they became accustomed to their new, clean, and spacious suburban landscapes. The increasing popularity of television, and the

convenience of televised baseball, further troubled sports businessmen like O'Malley. The socio-economic and racial changes around Ebbets Field did as well, as many of Brooklyn's white, middle-class residents left the area. The Dodgers devised a series of new stadium plans from the late 1940s through the 1950s. These plans—developed by celebrity designers like Norman Bel Geddes and Buckminster Fuller—were early and well-publicized attempts to redesign the stadium. Though the Dodgers would put none of these plans to the shovel in Brooklyn, these visions were important nonetheless as prominent pretexts for the modern stadiums of the 1960s and 1970.

As Walter O'Malley and the Dodgers attempted to reconceive the sports stadium for the city, the Boston Braves left their city, and the urban scene altogether, when the club relocated to the suburbs of Milwaukee in 1953. The Braves' move—the first franchise relocation of a major-league baseball franchise in fifty years—illustrated the sport's instability in the postwar years and the primary mechanism for addressing it. The spatial fix—both from an old city to a newer one, and from an urban area to a suburban one—forecast the volatility of sports business in the coming years, a period of franchise relocation, league expansion, and new stadium construction. The suburbanization of customers, the physical deterioration of older stadiums, competition with television and other home-based leisure, and an over-saturation of baseball clubs in Northeastern cities drove many clubs elsewhere, to un-tapped markets that promised to build them stadiums that were new, publicly subsidized, and more convenient and comfortable for affluent and automobile-reliant suburban customers, with their expanding postwar paychecks and mannered behavior. The Braves were so successful in their new city that other clubs, covetous of their huge suburban



audiences, joined them in relocation—most famously O’Malley’s Dodgers who opened the 1958 season in Los Angeles.

The Dodgers’ reinvention of the stadium and the Braves’ relocation of the club illustrated baseball owners’ primary responses to postwar challenges, from the 1950s all the way through the 1970s. Many teams moved from the deteriorating inner city to its open suburban fringes. Many teams were invented from scratch in new markets, often in the bustling, business-friendly Sunbelt. Many moved within the city, from neighborhoods seemingly diseased by urban blight to ones reborn by urban renewal at the hands of powerful public-private development coalitions. Each solution was anchored in the construction of brand new, “modern,” publicly subsidized stadiums that were clean, comfortable, consumer-oriented, automobile-convenient, and family friendly.

Shea Stadium, opened in 1964 in New York City, was just such a modern stadium. When the Dodgers left Brooklyn for California, they were joined by their archrivals, the New York Giants, who relocated to San Francisco. The city built the modern Shea Stadium as a replacement for Ebbets Field and the Giants’ old stadium, the Polo Grounds in Harlem. In Chapter Two, I argue that Shea Stadium—sited in Queens, the “gateway to the suburbs,” amongst Robert Moses’ burgeoning web of freeways—was an expression of postwar suburban ideologies regarding racial escape from the city, private mobility and spaciousness, and domesticated comfort and consumption. This expression was manifest materially, through the physical character of the stadium itself, and representationally, through a shared stadium discourse constructed rhetorically and visually by city officials, sports executives, players, fans, and the media. Stadiums like Shea were important quasi-public sites where suburban virtues of newness, spaciousness, comfort, consumption, mobility, and

domestication were embodied and reinforced. They replaced old city stadiums like the Polo Grounds that were traditional and conspicuous expressions of mixed-class, mixed-race masculinity. Shea Stadium extended a suburban ideology into an iconically urban space, and in doing so cut yet another cord between the city and its satellites—a final reason to return to the city for some—thus sealing suburbanites ever more fully in that new postwar landscape.

No modern stadium sealed affluent suburbanites into its womb better than the Houston Astrodome—the first completely enclosed, roofed stadium. This monumental stadium—218 feet tall with a roof spanning 642 feet—sat seven miles southwest of downtown Houston, along a new freeway loop encircling the city, in the middle of a thirty-thousand-car parking lot. Chapter Three examines the Astrodome—an exemplar of modern progressive thinking and symbol of many Americans' faith in a social progress grounded in scientific and technological expertise. The Astrodome represented, for many, the capacity of the human mind to control the natural environment, an exercise worthwhile not only to express human and national excellence, but also to reap the just rewards of consumerist convenience and comfort. While celebrated as an icon of a particularly masculine inventiveness, the Astrodome also domesticated stadium space like no other stadium before it (or, arguably, since). Its feminine aspects were expressed through its creature comforts within—climate control that allowed patrons (particularly women) to dress more fashionably than functionally, cushioned theater seats, a range of themed restaurants and clubs for when one tired of sport, and exclusive luxury suites for Houston's elite social set. These ancillary spaces—restaurants, clubs, and suites—were always themed and served to locate the stadium in a broader historical arc. This interior design, coupled with promoters' frequent

comparisons of the stadium with the ancient wonders of the world, not only marked the Astrodome as one of humankind's great creations but also located it at the end of human progress.

Busch Stadium, opened in 1966, was significant for its location in downtown St. Louis—a new context for the modern stadium. Chapter Four assesses the modern stadium in its urban form. While the re-urbanization of the stadium may have seemed to mark an ideological shift in modern stadium construction—sports space returning to its roots, so to speak—in truth it represented the totalization of the modern, suburban, progressive ethos. To many Americans, urban areas seemed diseased in the 1950s and 1960s, their downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods plagued by a spreading blight of poverty and deterioration. Associations of business leaders, planners, construction workers, and business-friendly public officials promised to revitalize urban areas utilizing public funds, governmental powers, and private investments. In St. Louis, a downtown municipal stadium was promised to anchor urban renaissance—a model that would be investigated, planned, and executed in other American cities as well. Hardly a recovery of the city—at least as cities were historically understood as vibrant sites of diversity and exchange—developers in St. Louis reinvented the urban stadium in the image of the suburbs. It was a new, spacious, consumerist, affluent space amenable to the private automobile and cleansed of the idiosyncrasies of the traditional city. The modern stadium was thus an ideal suburban bulwark downtown, a launching point for wide-scale, clean-sweep reinventions of the city that made it a site of white-collar labor, up-scale entertainment, and perhaps even affluent and white repopulation. Whereas Shea suburbanized the urban stadium, materially, geographically, and ideologically, Busch urbanized the suburban stadium, though in terms of its location alone. Busch Stadium

discourse celebrated a city reborn, delivered from the decay of blight. It proposed a gleaming white stadium, a glowing vision of modernity, in the midst of a city that was blackened visually by age and racially by its housing policies.

The final chapter examines the modern stadium of the 1970s, what I call the “artificial stadium.” “Artificial” is a term embodying a range of meanings; it can reference human expertise, human improvement upon the natural, and, when negatively inflected, human inauthenticity. The stadiums of the 1970s were “artificial” in each of these ways. To some they were icons of human progress—rational and technologized symbols of modernity. Their contoured plastic seats replaced old wooden ones and looked out upon synthetic-grass fields. The idiosyncrasies of traditional ballparks—for some symbols of backwardness, for others of character—were smoothed over with symmetrical dimensions. A modern stadium experience, marked by showpiece scoreboards, showgirl cheerleaders and ushers, and sideshow stadium clubs and luxury suites, replaced a traditional one. Thus, the natural and the “naturalized”—the sporting traditions long practiced in the old stadiums—were abandoned for artificial materials and practices pitched as those befitting a modern age. The stadium experience and the television experience became more alike—each heavily produced and bursting with entertainment off the field of play. Some lonely commentators anticipated the impact of the over-production of the stadium experience in the 1960s; by the end of the 1970s, observers regularly lamented the artificiality of sport and its spaces, the secularization of games that once seemed mythic. These sporting jeremiads were evidence of a modern stadium discontent and laid the groundwork for a new sort of stadium (or at least a new sort of stadium packaging). I conclude by looking briefly at the anti-modern stadium, the most important of the “retro” ballparks—Baltimore’s Oriole Park at Camden Yards, planned in

the late 1980s—which seemed a return to roots, an authentic replacement to the artificial modern stadium. On closer inspection, however, the postmodern historicist stadiums were much more modern than they at first seemed. Highly rationalized and self-consciously designed, thoroughly comfortable and consumption-oriented, convenient to affluent suburbanites and their private automobiles, and technologized to the hilt, the retro ballparks shared more with their modern predecessors than their promoters seemed to think.

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<sup>1</sup> Jep Cadou, “New Orleans’ Dome Sweet Dome,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 1975, 80. Roy Reed, “Superdome Dedicated Amid Superlatives,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1975. Reed, “Old New Orleans Weighing Future,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1975. Cadou, 80.

<sup>2</sup> Mark D. Naison, “Black Poverty’s Human Face,” *BusinessWeek*, September 19, 2005, [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05\\_38/b3951151.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_38/b3951151.htm) (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Mike Lopresti, “Superdome’s past glory a stark contrast to Katrina’s toil,” *USA Today*, August 21, 2005, [http://www.usatoday.com/sports/columnist/lopresti/2005-08-31-lopresti-superdome\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/sports/columnist/lopresti/2005-08-31-lopresti-superdome_x.htm) (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees, transcript, September 14, 2005, <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0509/14/acd.01.html> (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Melinda Deslatte, “Fate of Superdome Remains Unknown,” *The Spokesman Review*, September 8, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Janice Singleton, a Superdome worker trapped there by Katrina, said before being bussed to Houston, “I don’t want to go to no Astrodome. I’ve been domed almost to death.” “Superdome evacuee: ‘Worst night of my life,’” *Houston Chronicle*, <http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/special/05/katrina/3336787> (accessed September 2, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Reed, “Superdome Dedicated Amid Superlatives.”

<sup>8</sup> Alec Russel, “Shelter at last for the refugees who feel betrayed,” *Telegraph*, September 3, 2005, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1497541/Shelter-at-last-for-the-refugees-who-feel-betrayed.html> (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> “Love Ya Blue” was an enthusiastic movement of professional football’s Houston Oilers in the late 1970s. “WWF” was the World Wrestling Federation, a professional wrestling circuit. “Astrodome goes from marvel to relic to haven,” *NBC Sports*, September 9, 2005, <http://nbcports.msnbc.com/id/9259163/> (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Russel, “Shelter at last for the refugees who feel betrayed.”

<sup>11</sup> *Astrodome: Eighth Wonder of the World* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, 1966), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Most scholarly work on stadiums approaches them from economic and political angles. The work of geographer John Bale is a notable exception, most importantly his *Sport, Space*

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*and the City* (London: Routledge, 1993). Daniel Rosensweig's *Retro Ball Parks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005) is a dynamic and multidisciplinary approach to the late twentieth century baseball parks. David John Kammer's *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), is a baseball-centered cultural history of the ballpark as told through Yankee Stadium, Dodger Stadium, and the Astrodome. My project elaborates on some of the same themes he engages, particularly increasing customer affluence and stadium standardization.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas," *New York Times*, April 8, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> The best counterweight to a top-heavy interpretation would be a catalogue of unmediated user responses. However, it is exceedingly difficult to register these responses unadulterated by the unreliability of memory or the mediation of publishers. Ideally, one would interview users *at that time*, or find collections of such interviews or user responses. Letters to the editor and quotes pulled from other sources are imperfect, being mediated by the publication, and yet provide some useful glimpses into the minds of users. Archives occasionally contain letters from citizens to stadium commissions, providing a less filtered perspective. For this project, I tried to avoid, as much as possible, retrospective commentary. I chose not to interview previous users of these stadiums: the modern stadium has been so thoroughly discussed and discounted since the 1990s that I think it would be impossible for a person to recover memories that aren't colored by the modern stadium backlash of the last two decades.

<sup>15</sup> Subsidy levels varied from stadium to stadium. But even Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles (opened in 1962), celebrated for being privately funded, benefited from public power and largesse, its Chavez Ravine location secured via a land exchange between the city and owner Walter O'Malley.

<sup>16</sup> Notably, the most successful modern stadiums were the ones that weren't multi-purpose. Dodger Stadium is particularly loved as a baseball park. Kansas City's neighboring Arrowhead Stadium (1972) and Royals Stadium (1973), designed specifically for football and baseball respectively, are also well-respected and enduring modern structures.

<sup>17</sup> Peirce F. Lewis, in his incredibly useful guide to reading the landscape, makes two points that are perfectly illustrated through the modern stadium. His "corollary of cultural change" argues that changes in the look of the landscape suggest major changes in a culture, given the incredible amount of time, money, and emotion invested in the landscape. His "corollary of convergence" claims that increasing similarities in different areas suggest a convergence of cultures there. Peirce F. Lewis, "Axioms for reading the landscape: some guides to the American scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. D.W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 15-18.

<sup>18</sup> There are numerous accounts of the mutually beneficial relationship between television and football. See Benjamin G. Rader, *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: Free Press, 1984). Ron Powers, *Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1984). Michael Oriard, *Brand NFL: Making & Selling America's Favorite Sport* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> In his excellent study of professional football up to the NFL-AFL merger, Craig R. Coenen claims that the new stadiums of the 1960s were "mostly for football teams." My

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research suggests otherwise. Craig R. Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl: the National Football League, 1920-1967* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 226.

<sup>20</sup> Mike Lynn, the general manager of the Minnesota Vikings, claimed that the Metrodome (opened in 1982) was the first multipurpose stadium to be oriented more towards football than baseball. He boasted, “We were the lead dog. It was the first football stadium built to be convertible to baseball, and not the other way around. We wanted that. We wanted to reverse the trend around the country.” Jay Weiner, *Stadium Games: Fifty Years of Big League Greed and Bush League Boondoggles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 94.

<sup>21</sup> Football did have its sensitive observers. Frederick Exley and Michael Oriard (professional footballer-turned-historian) both make vital appearances in the chapters that follow. The absence of interpretations from stadium users outside of sport—from, for example, those attending concerts or religious revivals—suggests how important repeated visitation is to cultivating a sense of place.

## Chapter One

### **Relocation and redesign: new landscapes for American sport**

*Collier's* magazine introduced many Americans to a revolutionary new stadium it called “Baseball’s Answer to TV” in 1952. The structure—a ballpark-centered, proto-shopping mall—was designed by Norman Bel Geddes for the Brooklyn Dodgers. The piece began by outlining some of the business challenges that the Dodgers, along with all baseball clubs, faced in the early 1950s as attendance plummeted.

There are signs that the most durable of creatures, the baseball fan, has taken about all the beating he can absorb. Too many baseball fans have been in one too many traffic jams, climbed one too many tiers and sat behind one too many pillars. With a regretful, nostalgic sigh, the baseball fan is ducking the traffic jams, shunning the climb, avoiding the view-obstructing pillar and turning on his television set. For the true fan, of course, television never will be an adequate substitute for viewing the game in person. But there is no denying that it is a heap more comfortable.<sup>1</sup>

The article charged that traffic jams, inconvenience, and physical discomfort were undermining the business, and thus the game. Television watchers could avoid these problems altogether—bad news for baseball club owners.<sup>2</sup>

It seemed obvious to a clear-thinking businessman like Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley that the baseball park had to adapt to changing times. He could see that the traffic jams around Brooklyn’s old Ebbets Field, lodged into the borough’s tight urban quarters, would only get worse as more and more Americans bought automobiles and moved to the suburbs. Suburbanized Dodgers fans would be less and less likely to return if the stadium was difficult to get to and had no parking. Excepting the die-hards, fewer and fewer customers would want to come to an old place with small seats, obstructed viewing, and poor amenities—at a time when Americans were experiencing new, clean, and spacious suburban landscapes.



O'Malley, beginning in the late 1940s, experimented with a range of plans to replace the old park. These plans—developed with celebrity designers like Norman Bel Geddes and Buckminster Fuller, alongside O'Malley's trusted engineer, Emil Praeger—were initial and well-publicized attempts to rethink the baseball stadium after Americans had emerged from a decade and a half of economic depression and world war. Though none of these plans were realized in Brooklyn, the designs set a bar for future projects; they were pretexts for the modern stadiums of the 1960s and 1970s. Social and spatial changes occurring in Brooklyn, at and around the Dodgers' old Ebbets Field—particularly the suburbanization of the white middle class and the in-migration of African Americans and Puerto Ricans—would both add a sense of urgency to the Dodgers' plans and ultimately motivate their departure from the city.

That departure was prefigured by the relocation of the Boston Braves to Milwaukee in 1953. This marked the first franchise relocation of a major-league franchise in fifty years. The Braves' move illustrated the growing instability of baseball as a business—highlighting both its problems and a possible spatial fix. The suburbanization of customers, deterioration of old ballparks, competition from television, and geographical concentration of baseball clubs in the Northeast drove many franchises to begin looking elsewhere, to markets they could call their own, and to stadiums that were newer, publicly subsidized, and more accessible to and comfortable for affluent suburbanites, coveted for their disposable income and more decorous behavior. The rousing success of the Braves in Milwaukee set off a major re-authoring of the American sports landscape, punctuated by the relocation of Brooklyn's Dodgers to Los Angeles in 1957.

These two episodes illustrated what would become the primary responses to postwar problems employed by major-league baseball clubs in the coming years. Some moved away from the deteriorating inner city to its suburban fringes. Some were freshly born in new markets, away from the tired Rustbelt in the young, growing, and business-friendly cities of the Sunbelt. Some moved within the city, from diseased urban areas to once-blighted ones reborn by urban renewal and clean-sweep, stadium-centered redevelopment. These solutions pivoted on the construction of brand new, “modern,” publicly subsidized stadiums that were clean, comfortable, rationalized, consumerist, automobile-oriented, and family friendly. Monumental new stadiums were constructed in city after city throughout the 1960s and 1970s; however, they were being imagined and plotted as early as the 1940s, as baseball owners like Walter O’Malley of the Dodgers and Lou Perini of the Braves reacted to and planned for a new sports entertainment order.

### **Ebbets Field, Norman Bel Geddes, and early plans for a new Dodger Stadium**

Walter O’Malley, part owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, was hunting for a site in Brooklyn in January 1948 to put a new baseball stadium—a replacement for Ebbets Field. At first glance, the old park seemed to be doing just fine. It had just hosted record yearly attendance in consecutive years—1,796,824 in 1946 and 1,807,526 in 1947 (the previous record had been 1,214,910 in 1941, and the club had only surpassed one million three times before 1945).<sup>3</sup> It was home to the reigning National League champion. It was the primary stage for the desegregation of major-league baseball—the Dodgers had employed the dynamic Jackie Robinson the previous season—making it an instant landmark for American civil rights. In spite of these recent successes, however, the park had problems. It was thirty-five years old

and had suffered through years of infrastructural neglect; it required six hundred fifty thousand dollars of repairs due to the corrosion of columns and trusses and the water seepage and freezing that had damaged the park's structural deck system.<sup>4</sup> But beyond these immediate issues, O'Malley was looking at a bigger picture that most of his fellow owners would seem to grasp only as he revealed it to them over the following decade. He thought the club should have a modern stadium befitting a modern era—a new, clean, comfortable, and convenient place to spend their entertainment dollars.

Ebbets Field was a stadium from another time, thirty-five years old when O'Malley was shopping for real estate in downtown Brooklyn. The baseball park had opened on April 5, 1913 on four-and-a-half acres in Brooklyn in an area known as “Pigtown.” It was, as the name suggests, a popular spot for pigs that came to feed on the garbage pit locals had created there. The new Ebbets Field was little more than a block from the western edge of Prospect Park to the east and Empire Boulevard to the south, adjacent Bedford Avenue in a poor Italian neighborhood. To acquire the block, club owner Charles Ebbets formed a dummy company to buy up the lots, trying to maintain some level of secrecy for the overall plan lest owners raise their demands. Over four years, Ebbets quietly pieced together twelve hundred individual lots, owned by fifteen different people, at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars.<sup>5</sup> The high cost of the land rendered Ebbets nearly broke, so he sold half the club's stock to finance the construction of the new baseball stadium. His new co-owners were politically connected contractors, Edward J. and Stephen W. McKeever, sons of Irish immigrants. With their backing, construction began at the site on March 4, 1912. In the end, the cost of the new baseball palace was seven hundred fifty thousand dollars.

The ballpark was on the fringes of the city when originally constructed. Upper-class Bedford was to the north, and suburban Flatbush was just to the south. In spite of its location on the city's periphery, Ebbets Field in 1913 was accessible to most of Brooklyn via trolley lines and Manhattan via elevated train or subway. There was also a parking lot across the street from the field.<sup>6</sup> Finding a parking space was not a problem in the 1910s; by the 1950s, the absence of parking would be one of the stadium's principal flaws.

The main entrance to Ebbets Field was at the intersection of Sullivan and McKeever Places, at the park's southwest corner. The façade was a mishmash of colonial and neoclassical styles. Paned windows topped with fanlights ran along the bottom level, the windows separated by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Paired, framed windows sat symmetrically atop the first row, curving around the corner of the structure; these were then topped with brick panels and, above those, arched windows. Ornamental baseballs protruded from the spandrels, just below the cornice. About a quarter of the way down each flank of the park, columns replaced the windows at the second and third levels, extending all the way to the stadium's corners and connecting the first level of arched windows to the cornice. These tall, arched gaps opened the upper-level concourses to the outside, allowing the interior to breathe, if only barely. Orderly, symmetrical, and formal, in 1913 the main entrance announced the sport's intentions to rival other forms of popular middle-class entertainment. In the late 1940s, it seemed more an artifact of a previous period, as cities looked to rebuild and reinvent themselves in a style more befitting a modern era.

Visitors entered under an awning that rounded the corner into a dramatic rotunda eighty feet in diameter, twenty-seven feet tall, with Italian marble walls and tile floors embellished with faux baseball stitching. From the center dangled a themed chandelier consisting of

twelve baseball light globes dangling from twelve bats. Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, recalling a visit to Ebbets Field as a child, claimed the rotunda was “like a train station in a dream, with dozens of gilded ticket windows scattered around the floor.” Dodgers promotions director Irving Rudd remembered the rotunda as “a huge cavelike opening which on the hottest days was refreshingly cool.”<sup>7</sup> From there, customers walked through tunneled ramps into the stadium, emerging from beneath the stands to find the reddish browns of the diamond, the rich green of the grass, the colorful advertising on the outfield walls, and the intense enclosure of the grandstands.<sup>8</sup>

Ebbets Field was like a misshapen box with one side kicked out. Double-decked, roofed grandstands, propped up with support posts, nearly surrounded the field, coursing alongside the first- and third-base lines and across left field to straightaway center. The bank of seats in straightaway center was slightly taller than the connecting stands along left field, as a few extra rows of seating at the top pushed the roof higher, giving the grandstand an awkward, incongruous accent mark. A low wall and fence separated fans from the field along the base lines; the outfield walls were lined with advertising—men’s deodorant, restaurants, beer, cigarettes, and gasoline—suggesting a masculine audience. Banks of lights sat atop the roofs, their supporting frames angled forward to the roof edge, seeming to press the lights inward, squeezing the air above the field and accentuating the verticality of the stands, one deck poised above the other.

The intensity of enclosure was released in right field, where the proximity of Bedford Avenue barred the erection of a grandstand. Instead, there was just a wall dividing the field from the street. It was fifteen-feet tall, sloping away from the field at the base before straightening out perpendicular to the ground. The wall was covered with colorful

advertising for products like Gem razors, Lucky Strike cigarettes, and Mobil gasoline. Atop this solid wall sat a wire fence, topping out at forty-feet tall, designed to keep batted balls inside the park (the right field wall was a mere 297 feet from home plate at its closest point, before stretching to 397 feet from home in center field). Outfielder Floyd “Babe” Herman claimed that they built the fence because his home runs were “breaking all the windows on the other side of Bedford Avenue.”<sup>9</sup> Balls hitting the wall usually caromed onto the field unpredictably and were best handled by Dodgers outfielders familiar with the screen’s eccentricities. In the middle of the right-field wall was a broad, black scoreboard, (itself nearly thirty-feet tall), which protruded from the main wall, and was topped with a Schaefer beer sign that announced hits and errors (the “h” would light up for a hit, the “e” for an error). At the base of the scoreboard was the famous “HIT SIGN, WIN SUIT” advertisement for clothier Abe Stark. Beyond the fence was Brooklyn: apartment buildings, plastered with advertisements for sani-White shoe polish and Marlboro cigarettes, squatted across Bedford Avenue, and a DeSoto car dealership and gas station, its lots used for parking during games, was beyond the first-base foul pole.<sup>10</sup>

Unique and beloved as it was, Ebbets Field would soon be “obsolete”—a term often applied to old ballparks in the 1950s. O’Malley rightly figured that postwar society would demand a venue that was newer, more comfortable for its occupants, and more convenient to its increasingly automobile-bound customers. In January 1948, he targeted a site in downtown Brooklyn near Borough Hall, at Jay and Tillary Streets, adjacent McLaughlin Park. The area was ideal for baseball in O’Malley’s estimation, for a variety of reasons. It had great access to a range of transportations: subway, bus, trolley, and, significantly, private automobiles via tunnel, bridge, and highway. Traffic problems would be minimized by use

patterns. In a memorandum he noted that the area was “dead as a door nail” on Saturdays, when many people weren’t working. Baseball traffic during the workweek was different than downtown traffic, concentrated in the mid-afternoon for day games and at night, after area workers had gone home. O’Malley noted that a stadium in downtown Brooklyn would be closer to Columbus Circle (at 59<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, the southwest corner of Central Park) than the Polo Grounds (at 155<sup>th</sup> Street) or Yankee Stadium (across the Harlem River from the Polo Grounds in the Bronx). The new stadium would also be “in the shadow of Wall Street!” At that time, the site was slated for a housing development; O’Malley hoped that the development site could be swapped with the Ebbets Field site. If that was untenable, he thought the club could build just south at Jay Street and Myrtle Avenue or directly west at Cadman Plaza. He called the war memorial at Cadman Plaza “a flop,” proposing that they “call [the] new ball park Memorial Stadium or Park or What[ever],” adding, “Put up all the bronze tablets the walls will hold.” The architect for the new stadium would be “a man by the name of Norman Bel Geddes—who is reputed to be terrific.”<sup>11</sup>

The reputation of Bel Geddes—though perhaps unfamiliar to O’Malley—was well established by the late 1940s. He was famous for his design of the General Motors Pavilion, known as “Futurama,” at the 1939 New York World’s Fair—a futuristic, automobile-oriented, streamlined utopia that was the most popular exhibit at the fair. Bel Geddes had initially approached the Dodgers by writing to co-owner Branch Rickey in December 1947, proposing a “new stadium principle” that would increase capacity at the stadium, provide better visibility, and allow expansion at the park’s site. Bel Geddes was cryptic about the solution, but claimed it could be installed section-by-section so as to not interfere with baseball play during the season.<sup>12</sup> He then met with O’Malley in January 1948 to discuss his

plans and hoped to gain an audience with the Dodgers' Board to present his proposals more fully and formally.<sup>13</sup>

Bel Geddes got the chance in March 1948, when he presented a series of proposals to the Dodgers—most of which were to address the deteriorating Ebbets Field. The park would require an estimated six hundred fifty thousand dollars in repairs over the next three years, much of it committed to correcting the structural problems born of water seepage and corrosion. Bel Geddes outlined some possible approaches to the Ebbets Field conditions, including proposals that would rebuild the park on site and one for an entirely new stadium at a new location.

Most of Bel Geddes's plans, or "schemes," as he called them, would reconstruct Ebbets Field at Bedford Avenue, one section of seating at a time, converting the park from a box to an egg-shaped oval. The playing field would be shifted slightly to the east, moving the western boundary westward, from McKeever Place to Franklin Avenue; the club owned the narrow strip of property between the streets. Doing this would allow Bel Geddes to install stands encircling the entire playing field. This seemed a rational and balanced correction to the park's then lopsided shape, whereby it was squeezed up against Bedford Avenue, separated from the street not by stands of seats but only a wall.

The reconstruction schemes were differentiated solely by the amount of seating capacity they would allow in the new, on-site stadium—ranging from sixty thousand to eighty thousand four hundred. Bel Geddes called for the single upper deck at the old park, which hung over the lower deck and was supported by columns, to be broken into a series of smaller stacked and cantilevered decks; the support posts would be moved toward the back of the stands, not completely eliminating obstructing views, but minimizing them. The



scheme for maximum seating would create a stadium of four levels—a thirty-row lower level, a twenty-two-row second level, and thirteen-row third and fourth levels. Bel Geddes claimed that three shallow tiers in place of a single deep upper deck would provide fifty-two percent more capacity in the same area. He also promised that the vertical stacking of shallow tiers would retain “the intimacy of Ebbets Field,” in spite of its greatly increased capacity (a concern that future stadium designers would often either overlook or dismiss, much to the chagrin of many spectators). Another signature feature of his new seating designs was the elimination of the tunnels through seating decks that spectators used to get to and from their seats, also known as “vomitoriums”—a name borrowed from ancient Roman amphitheaters (not to be confused with the rooms in which Romans allegedly vomited deliberately during feasts).<sup>14</sup> Ramps in his new schemes would be buried within the sections of seats, running parallel to the rows of seating, sloping upwards from a channel between the sections. All told, Bel Geddes’s reconstruction of Ebbets Field would yield higher seating capacities, larger and more comfortable seats, more row spacing, wider aisles, fewer columns in sight lines, one-half the average walking distance for customers, and reduced maintenance, making Brooklyn “the world’s most progressive baseball club.”

Bel Geddes emphasized that the club had to move forward, past the old ballpark forms. He told the Dodgers’ board, “Whether the present property is improved—or new property is developed—it is evident that the Brooklyn baseball club should have a modern plant.”<sup>15</sup> Whereas a “conventional design” would be an improvement, the designer was clearly angling for “something entirely new in concept and utility”—a new stadium at a different, less restrictive location. A new modern stadium for the Dodgers could be designed to be more than just a baseball park, drawing new revenue streams from improved concessions, the

rental of space as fireproof record storage, the staging of winter sports in the off-season (skating, tobogganing, and skiing on artificial ice and snow), boxing, and midget auto racing.<sup>16</sup> This new modern stadium would cost an estimated \$3,320,000 or \$55.32 per seat (at sixty-thousand-seat capacity). This was a bare-bones structural estimate that didn't include items like lighting, toilets, concessions, offices, escalators, clubhouses, and field drainage. Bel Geddes hoped to rationalize service by developing mechanical vendors "to improve service" and eliminate "low grade concessionaire labor." He envisioned a "mechanical ticket selling and admission system" to further eliminate human labor from the space. He wanted to create more sophisticated color schemes for the stadium, as well as design "an intelligent uniform" for the players that paid more attention to temperature, absorption, color, cleaning, comfort, style, and "popular appeal." Perhaps most interesting was his claim that the club should, through the facilities, put an "emphasis on developing ideas to attract women"—a strategy that club owners had used in the past to "civilize" male audiences and elevate the game's cultural status (not to mention, boost attendance).<sup>17</sup>

As a salesman, Bel Geddes seemed to have a two-pronged strategy in his dealings with the Dodgers. He got his foot in the door with more modest promises of a redesigned stadium at the Ebbets Field site, but then used this opening to pitch his more radical ideas about a new stadium altogether. He promised the club that he would implement a "public relations program" that would pique interests of those who didn't just read the sports pages, grabbing feature space in general-interest magazines like *Life* and securing a presence in syndicated newspaper feature stories, newsreels, radio, and television. He would reach "a new public," and the attention the extravagant plans attracted would enhance the club's "top prestige."<sup>18</sup>

Bel Geddes's appetite for self-promotion pulled against O'Malley's need, as a buyer of real estate, to keep plans quiet. In late February, O'Malley was busy trying to restrain his partner, Branch Rickey, from publicizing plans after an article in the *New York Journal American* scooped the Dodgers plans for a new stadium.<sup>19</sup> The best strategy, O'Malley told Rickey, was to plant the seeds for a new stadium in the minds of figures like Robert Moses and Brooklyn borough president John Cashmore, allowing them to be "the father of the idea."<sup>20</sup> Otherwise, these powerful men might resist a plan if "they thought it was being shoved down their individual or respective throats." Ironically, O'Malley cited a conversation he had with Bel Geddes regarding this strategy, perhaps not yet appreciating what a self-promotional animal his prospective designer was; O'Malley wrote, "Mr. Geddes, with the modesty that goes with one so talented, is more interested in the consummation of something practicable along the lines we have considered than he is a publicity release that might defeat the idea."<sup>21</sup>

News of stadium plans were published by the press in mid-March, though details of the stadium were various and confused. The *New York Post* reported on March 15 that Bel Geddes was working on a stadium covering ten acres in the Borough Hall area, constructed of concrete and stainless steel, with foam rubber seats, and an eighty-thousand-seat capacity. The following day the *New York Times* reported that Bel Geddes had submitted plans for "a streamlined Ebbets Field" to be built on the Ebbets Field site, quoting O'Malley; he denied that the club was intending to build in downtown Brooklyn. The estimated cost for the reconstructed stadium exceeded six million dollars. O'Malley told the reporter, "We appreciate that the Brooklyn fans are entitled to more seats and in a modern stadium but it just does not seem possible in the near future." The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported yet another

version of the story, claiming that plans would be executed, according to Bel Geddes, within three years. The stadium would be located either at the Ebbets Field site or in the Greenpoint neighborhood on the northern boundary of Brooklyn, adjacent the East River and Queens.<sup>22</sup>

Bel Geddes elaborated on the stadium design for the *Eagle*. He told the paper that the new concrete and stainless steel stadium would retain “the intimacy which is the chief attraction of Ebbets Field.” It would boast “all modern improvements,” including automated ticket collection. The paper reported that owners of small parcels around Ebbets Field had refused to sell to the Dodgers, undermining the possibility of expansion there. O’Malley, however, made it clear that Bel Geddes was no spokesman for the club. Calling him an “an eminent theater designer,” O’Malley told the paper that Bel Geddes had volunteered to study the expansion of Ebbets Field and had “completed his assignment.” His plans would be too costly for the Dodgers. Furthermore, O’Malley clarified, “Any statement that Mr. Bel Geddes has made to the press is on his own behalf. Of course, he is not talking for the Brooklyn Baseball Club.”<sup>23</sup>

O’Malley’s denials certainly didn’t stop the designer’s lips. Bel Geddes called reporters into his Park Avenue office to present them with the stadium schemes he had laid out for the Dodgers. The *New York Herald Tribune* reported that Bel Geddes “articulated on his latest enthusiasm, with presumably the same amount of zeal that produced the Futurama and the Chrysler Airflow design.” The designer discussed his plans for a reconstructed Ebbets Field on the current site, oval and made of steel and aluminum (not “cement,” the reporter noted explicitly). The outside would be “sheathed with gigantic venetian blinds with three-foot

slats” that could be opened and closed to modulate the temperature and wind currents inside the stadium.<sup>24</sup>

Lester Rodney, sports editor for the New York’s communist paper, the *Daily Worker*, also visited Bel Geddes’s vision—and a bit more skeptically than others. He recalled the “entrancingly logical slumless world” of Futurama, echoed in the new stadium plans. He made a distinction between Bel Geddes as a “modernistic” designer, as he referred to himself, and a “futuristic” one, as Rodney branded him. Bel Geddes’s work was futuristic because “this free enterprise system of ours seems to have all kinds of trouble providing mediocre apartments for its veterans, let alone beautiful planned large communities of homes.” The stadium was, by Rodney’s accurate estimation, a thing of the future rather than the modern present. But Rodney also walked through, in enhanced detail, the stadium’s features. He pointed out plans for elevators and escalators, wider aisles, wider seats with cushions built in, no obstructing posts, lighting incorporated into the structure (rather than on trussed frames above it), a sunken field to make for less climbing, lots of rest rooms, and the climate-manipulating Venetian blinds. He mentioned the possibility of a roof atop the whole thing—a rather significant detail that was oddly left out of many other reports.<sup>25</sup>

Stories of Bel Geddes’s futuristic stadium plans for the Dodgers spread well beyond the boundaries of New York, picked up by news syndicates. Such stories called Bel Geddes a “futuristic designer who sees weird but wonderful things through his saucer-sized eyeglasses.” He was cast as a versatile eccentric; his designs had “run the futuristic scale from streamlined yachts to a study that determined milady’s kitchen should be painted white to soothe the nerves.” People across the country read of a new aluminum stadium in Brooklyn that “could be painted just like an automobile” with Venetian blinds that could keep out

some of the wind and rain. It would have wide aisles, wide cushioned seats, mechanical ticket sellers and concessionaires, a sunken field, lighting systems integrated into the structure, elevators, escalators, and new restroom conveniences. A reporter seemed skeptical that such a radical reconfiguration of stadium space would be realized, offering, “Chances are maybe your grandchildren will see a park like it.”<sup>26</sup>

Bel Geddes’s well-publicized plans seemed to suggest his intentions: if the Dodgers weren’t going to employ him to build a futuristic new structure, others could. His penchant for promotion—which he had broadcast to the Dodgers board when presenting them with the plans—pushed his stadium visions into newspapers across the country. He unveiled to sports fans, accustomed to plank bleachers and simple grandstands, what a reporter called “his handbook for the emancipation of America’s baseball fans.”<sup>27</sup>

The Dodgers backed away from Bel Geddes and his stadium schemes for a few years. Attendance sagged in 1950, dropping to 1,185,896 (down nearly thirty percent from the previous season), and recovered just marginally in 1951, at 1,282,628—and this in spite of having one of the best teams in baseball both seasons.<sup>28</sup> Rumors of a new stadium exploded again in 1952. In late February O’Malley announced plans for Emil Praeger and Bel Geddes to visit the Dodgers’ Vero Beach spring training complex to brainstorm a new five-thousand-seat stadium there.<sup>29</sup> After arriving in Florida in early March, Bel Geddes outlandishly suggested a “portable stadium made out of inflated rubber,” which could be constructed more cheaply than one of wood and steel.<sup>30</sup> Needless to say, O’Malley didn’t pursue that design.

Bel Geddes’s trip to Florida rejuvenated rumors of a new stadium in Brooklyn as well—a rearticulation of Bel Geddes’s futuristic plans that promised to reinvent the American

stadium. When the club's deliberations leaked in late February, O'Malley told a reporter for the *Long Island Press*, "This will be a modern plant in every sense of the word. It is no longer good business to build a ball park just as a ball park. My idea is to build a park so that it can be used for many other things when it isn't being utilized for the primary reason—a baseball stadium." On the face of it, O'Malley's statement seems naïve. The notion that the ballpark might be used for things more than baseball was hardly novel; ballparks regularly served other sports events and large gatherings like conventions and religious ceremonies.<sup>31</sup> The revolutionary idea at the heart of this seemingly pedestrian statement was that the stadium would no longer be built as "just" a stadium; it would be something more than that. It would not only be usable for other purposes, but engineered to adapt to them. It wouldn't simply be a place to watch a ball game, but a place to consume a game and more. O'Malley expressed this when he told the reporter, "The prime consideration will be the fan," signaling a new attention to, and promotional rhetoric of, customer service. The modern stadium would be geared towards multiple uses and the consumer experience (and not fixated on the game on the field).<sup>32</sup>

A rash of stories followed in New York newspapers and via syndication across the country. The new stadium wasn't just a reworking of Ebbets Field, but an elaboration of Bel Geddes's "ideal" scheme proposed in 1948—a wholly new stadium on a new site elsewhere in Brooklyn. The structure being proposed in 1952 was of a whole new order, at a scale and vision beyond any stadium previously conceived. Syndicated reports cast the planned stadium as a much-needed corrective to the ballparks of the early 1950s. One reporter called for a new paradigm: "Outdoor stadiums haven't changed much in the last 2000 years—same general layout, same uncomfortable seats, same susceptibility to the inhospitable elements...

It's time we had a change."<sup>33</sup> Another told readers across the country that Bel Geddes "envisions an ultramodern baseball park which would put to shame the shabby, strictly functional parks of the present." The ultramodern would be pricey, however, costing an estimated eight million dollars.<sup>34</sup>

The stadium, which the *New York Times* called "grandiose" and suggested was "probably far in the future," and the *Newark Star-Ledger* branded the "ball park of the future," was highlighted by a retractable roof (an "aluminum umbrella" according to one reporter).<sup>35</sup> A syndicated report told readers: "There is an aluminum roof which slides out from the top of a garage next door which houses 7000 cars. If the weather begins to rain or blow or thunder, the stadium manager simply presses a button, the roof creeps over like a hood, lights come on, and whatever is going on goes right on."<sup>36</sup> Other highlights of the new stadium, which distinguished it from any park in existence, were foam rubber seats that could be heated in cold weather, arm-rest drink holders, a seven-thousand-car garage connected to the stadium, automatic hot dog vending machines placed throughout the grounds, a new lighting system integrated into the stadium structure, and synthetic grass that could be painted any color.<sup>37</sup>

Bel Geddes explained his new structure, which represented a radical reconfiguration of the stadium and its social role:

You have to start with an entirely different concept of a stadium's place in the community. The ballparks today are far behind the times. Now we have to think not only of today, but of what we'll want 30 years from now as we plan for a really modern stadium. It won't be just a ballpark, of course. It will have to be more of a community center, with shopping facilities, playgrounds for children, possibly a couple of small movie houses—all kinds of things. A mother will be able to go to the ball game, leave her children at the playgrounds or at the dentist's or doctor's office, leave a list of foodstuffs to be gathered and wrapped for her, and find everything ready for her when the game's over.<sup>38</sup>



Bel Geddes combined the stadium, a traditionally male preserve, with components of feminized quasi-public spaces. The new stadium-cum-community center echoed other burgeoning ideas that would merge consumption and community spaces. Victor Gruen and Elsie Krummeck had sketched out plans for a postwar shopping center in *Architectural Forum* in 1943; it would include not only a range of retail stores, but also a cafeteria, a bar, a movie theater, a service station, a nursery, a post office, a library, and an auditorium amongst many other features. It would not only be the center for shopping, but also “the center of cultural activities and recreation... the one important meeting place of the community.”<sup>39</sup> Bel Geddes’s feminization and re-orientation of the stadium towards enhanced consumption and auxiliary entertainments channeled the vision of Gruen and Krummeck that would be realized in postwar shopping centers. It would also be expressed, in different ways, in most of the stadiums of the 1960s and 1970s.

An architectural drawing of Bel Geddes’s sliding-roof stadium revealed an ultra-modern structure that united the form and aesthetics of the moment in a way that also seemed futuristic. The entire structure was rectangular, consisting of two separate but linked squares—one a parking garage, the other a stadium. The flat shell of a roof split in two, one portion sliding across elevated rails onto the adjacent garage. The streamlined roof looked like the hood of an automobile; it was supported by (or perhaps decorated with) girders that stretched across the top like chrome accents. Below the displaced roof, the parking garage was boxy and horizontal, with broad openings for automobile traffic on each side—an anticipation of the modern blockhouse design of enclosed suburban shopping centers of the later 1950s.

This visual depiction of the future stadium had remained, through March 1952, a largely private one, known to his draftsmen, the Dodgers, and some reporters, but not the general public. Bel Geddes had once written, “One of the best ways to make a solution understandable to everybody is to make it visual, to dramatize it.”<sup>40</sup> A more public visualization would occur in a September 1952 article in *Collier's*.<sup>41</sup> To this point, the stadium had been constructed out of written descriptions, its visualization left to the imaginations of readers; through *Collier's*, the modern stadium would achieve a unified image, spread widely to a nation of viewers. This more elaborated version of the Bel Geddes scheme—more elaborated both visually and rhetorically—pieced together the fragments of reportage and the overall ideology of the stadium in a more coherent format to a national audience.

#### **A vision of the modern stadium: Bel Geddes's design in *Collier's***

The design for *Collier's* was framed as a collaboration between O'Malley, Bel Geddes, and Praeger.<sup>42</sup> The illustration of the new park was not from Bel Geddes, but a rendering by Rolf Klep drawn from Bel Geddes's blueprints. Klep was an illustrator whose art appeared in magazines like *Fortune*, *Collier's*, and *Life*, often depicting space age or maritime scenes; both were evident in the illustration. Klep's illustration seemed part space station and part ocean liner, and its smooth, gleaming, curving white surfaces and ribbon windows contrasted magnificently with the anonymous, boxy, brown and gray buildings of old Brooklyn around its perimeter. The base of the stadium was a two-story square, consuming the entirety of a large city block. A third level sat atop this base, slightly receded from the base, with rounded corners. Atop that perched a domed roof. Four covered pedestrian walkways protruded from the stadium's second level like huge gangplanks, crossing multiple lanes of traffic. Each

traffic lane was divided by a median that separated private cars, taxis, and busses. At each corner of the base, atop the curved third level, were two American flags—the only splash of color on what was otherwise a pristinely bleached exterior.

More remarkable than this exterior were the curiosities the cutaway revealed inside—a dollhouse of miniature activity. At the center was, of course, a baseball diamond with a symmetrical outfield surrounded by three decks of cantilevered stadium seating. Behind these seating decks were retail stores, a movie theater, storage, and a supermarket. Below the seats were decks of parking and service stations, concealed beneath the stadium and underground, reachable by nearly invisible ramps from the street. All of these features were marked with labels and arrows. In this miniature scene, diners and shoppers milled about wide concourses even as the stadium was full of baseball fans. Cars rested in tidy rows in the stadium's bowels; other vehicles whizzed around the outside of the structure in its segregated, rationalized traffic patterns.

The article explained the philosophy of the design and what O'Malley, Bel Geddes, and Praeger hoped to achieve through it. There were a number of problems the new stadium was intended to address—problems that were already impacting business at ballparks in the early 1950s and that were certain, it seemed to baseball executives like O'Malley, to be exacerbated in the coming years. Fans were increasingly arriving at ballparks via private automobile, many of those fans having moved to the suburbs; they were faced with uncompromising traffic jams and parking problems as they tried to negotiate a dense urban landscape ill equipped for the car. Once they arrived at the park, fans had to climb flights of stairs and travel narrow, dim, often moldy concourses to get to their seats. Seats in old parks were narrow and hard, and many of them had obstructed views due to pillars supporting upper decks.

Fans watching baseball on television, of course, confronted none of this. Baseball owners were terrified of the impact television and the comfort of the living room were having on their attendance and income, and they didn't see prospects improving in the coming years. The article's title, "Baseball's Answer to TV," highlighted this challenge.

O'Malley was ahead of most other owners in trying to confront these challenges. His task for Bel Geddes and Praeger was, according to writer Tom Meany, "the creation of a stadium in Brooklyn embodying the refinements of modern engineering." The planned stadium was remarkable in a variety of ways. Its "most revolutionary feature" was the roof, which enabled weatherproofing and the use of the stadium for other practices that required clement weather, making it an "all-year-round, all-purpose stadium-auditorium." Though plans for the six-hundred-foot-span roof had not yet been finalized, readers must have been mesmerized by the possibilities. It could be solid or transparent, fixed or retractable, depending on the results of later studies. The stadium would seat 55,000 for baseball, compared to the 32,111 who could then attend a game at Ebbets Field, and up to 90,000 for other events.

Transportation was at the front of most sports executives' minds in the early 1950s, particularly in a dense city like Brooklyn where many of their customers had or were planning to move to the suburbs of Long Island. Not only would future customers be arriving more often by car from further distances away, but the increased size of the stadium meant events would inject an additional twenty-to-sixty-thousand people into already heavily congested urban space. Movement to, in, and from the stadium was extremely important, as was the conspicuous discussion of this ease of movement. Fans had to know that going to the stadium of the future wouldn't be an experience like going to the ballpark of the late

1940s. Meany's article (and Rolf's illustration) prominently articulated how rationalized stadium movement was. The segregated traffic lanes outside the park would, Meany claimed, "permit easy loading or unloading of 3,000 taxis, 400 busses, 1,500 private cars and the uninterrupted flow of 6,000 pedestrians in 15 minutes, allowing 30,000 people to arrive or depart in a quarter of an hour." Once inside, fans would have an easy time getting to their seats. Because the field was sunk below ground level, the walking distance to the highest seats would be less than a quarter of the distance it was at any existing stadium, according to O'Malley.

The convenience of movement would be joined to a focus on physical comfort. The Dodgers represented a new type of baseball club, attendant to the shifting needs of postwar fans, not simply providing them with a take-it-or-leave-it baseball product as other clubs seemed to do. O'Malley, Bel Geddes, and Praeger were, according to Meany, "proceeding on the rather novel theory that baseball fans are people. They have been planning a baseball park in which the customers will be comfortable." Once to their seats, no fans would suffer obstructed views, as the decks were cantilevered. Customers would sit in cushioned foam twenty-eight-inch-wide rubber seats, a huge improvement over the "standard" twenty-two-inch hard seats of old parks. When the stadium hosted different events, the seats could be adjusted to three different positions to improve viewing angles. There would be more space between rows and expansive eight-foot-wide aisles.

The convenience and comfort of Brooklyn's new stadium would be joined to, and enabled by, the latest in technological automation. The ticket-takers of Ebbets Field would be replaced by "automatic ticket control." When visitors were hungry, they needed not even leave their chairs, as coin-operated, insulated vending machines, offering hot-and-cold food

and drink items, were planned for the back of every third seat. Or, they could venture into the spacious concourses to find larger mechanical vendors installed throughout the rest of the stadium.

Technology would benefit not only customer service, but also the game on the field and the bottom line for O'Malley and the Dodgers. The article celebrated the use of steel and new materials, emphasizing that those technological advantages would reduce maintenance costs. A prominent example was the use of synthetic grass. Meany wrote, "Turf is the most difficult—and most expensive—feature of keeping a field in condition and its most variable factor for the player. The new material will have equal, unvarying characteristics and will require no seeding or mowing, no watering or rolling." The "variability" of grass seemed a nuisance, perhaps even an impediment to the game's fairness as it sometimes produced unpredictable bounces for fielders. The idea that the playing field should be orderly, fair, and rationalized was echoed in the new stadium's commitment to field symmetry. Bel Geddes, "as many fans before him have believed," claimed that outfields should be "standardized." Meany added, "He deplors the pop fly which becomes a four-bagger merely through the architectural fluke of the proximity of the stands at the foul line." Thus, the walls would be an even ten-feet high and three-hundred-eighty-feet from home plate, all across the outfield—a far cry from the asymmetrical dimensions of the Ebbets Field outfield. Through its new technologies, then, the stadium would be a more rational and modern space, a more just space. This idea—that technological modernization could render a better world—was not only embodied in the material reality of the stadium, but was rhetorically constructed through thinly veiled, pedagogical celebrations of these components. Synthetic grass was not only more cost-efficient (or at least claimed to be), but also had the display value of being

conspicuously more technological and capitalizing on assumptions about the progressiveness of modernization.

Another revolutionary component of the stadium's proposed improvements on the status quo was its ability to diversify the uses of stadium space. Meany noted, "Although baseball is the main concern of the designers of the new stadium, the possibility of revenue from other sources... has not been overlooked." From an economic standpoint, the most prominent of these other uses would be the regular use of the stadium's indoor parking garages and service stations. O'Malley also planned to use the arena for other entertainments—football, as the stadium seats could rotate towards the middle of the stadium for more comfortable viewing; boat shows, by flooding the playing field; and winter sports, by loading the space with artificial ice and snow. There would also be rentable storage space under the banks of seats.

The most interesting and revolutionary of non-baseball functionality was the use of the stadium perimeter as a shopping center. There would be various shops and entertainment, including a supermarket and a movie theater. There would be playgrounds where mothers could, according to Meany, "place their youngsters in the hands of trained young men and women while they shop, or visit the doctor or dentist." This vision for a consumption- and entertainment-oriented civic space was novel indeed, preceding the opening of the first fully enclosed shopping mall, Victor Gruen's Southdale, by four years and Gruen's downtown implementation of the consumerist civic space, Midtown Plaza in Rochester, New York, by a decade. The project reflected the then unrealized visions of planners like Gruen, who would wed together consumption and community as they rewrote the postwar city and its suburbs. The Bel Geddes proposal was different through its ideological fusion of male and female

spaces—the combination of sports entertainment and shopping. Other sports entertainers, O'Malley among them, would attempt to feminize stadium space in the coming years, building non-sporting amenities—restaurants, luxury lounges, shops, and conspicuous displays of service—into new stadiums.

The Dodgers flirted with Bel Geddes's utopian designs, but Ebbets Field remained the club's home. In 1952, the park drew just over one million fans, down forty percent from the 1947 high, in spite of a pennant-winning team. As O'Malley struggled to find a new location in Brooklyn and justify a new stadium outlay, more and more Brooklynites moved to newer areas of the borough or out to the new suburbs of Long Island. The dense urban terrain about the park, difficult to manipulate by private automobile, served as a thorough deterrent for these migrant Dodgers supporters to return, as did the comforts and demands of their new suburban homes. But while the Dodgers faced a certain set of business challenges, increasingly evident by the end of 1952, the Boston Braves had already failed. Fewer than three hundred thousand came to Braves Field to see the team play in 1952. While O'Malley, Bel Geddes, and Emil Praeger theorized the new modern stadium, the Braves would have simply been happy for customers, whatever the stadium.

### **Milwaukee's County Stadium and the new sports geography**

Lou Perini, owner of the Boston Braves, announced that he was moving the baseball club to Milwaukee on March 14, 1953, less than a month before that season's opener.<sup>43</sup> The Braves were a charter member of the National League, which had begun play in 1876, and were the first major-league baseball team to switch cities since 1903. National League owners approved the move within days. Influential sportswriter Leonard Koppett later called the



relocation of the Braves “the crossroads event of 20<sup>th</sup> century baseball.” The lesson of the Braves, according to Koppett, was four-fold: not only could a team move, and not only could it be highly profitable for it to do so, and not only was the tradition of the club in the city expendable, but ultimately new stadiums held the key for cities to either attract major-league sports teams or retain them.<sup>44</sup>

Perini told reporters, “There were many reasons for my decision.” The most immediate factor—and the reason that the move came so abruptly, just weeks before the opener as the unsuspecting players were in Florida for spring training—was pressure from Bill Veeck, owner of the American League’s St. Louis Browns. The Browns were struggling horribly for attendance in St. Louis and, like the Braves, were the second most popular team in a two-team city. Veeck hoped to move the club to Milwaukee, where a publicly financed stadium was being completed, and Milwaukee’s civic leaders welcomed Veeck’s overtures. Perini, by virtue of his ownership of the minor-league Milwaukee Brewers, owned the rights to the city by agreement with the other major-league owners. But by refusing to sell those rights to Veeck, effectively blocking his move there, he risked alienating Milwaukee, becoming the figure who barred it from major-league status. Perini was interested in potentially moving his own club there, though not that season. But Veeck’s interest in Milwaukee, coupled with poor pre-season ticket sales in Boston, pushed Boston native Perini toward making a quick decision.<sup>45</sup>

Other National League owners would have likely encouraged the move, as their share of the gate at Boston’s Braves Field had been collapsing over the previous seasons. The Braves’ attendance peaked in their pennant-winning 1948 season, when 1,455,439 came to Braves Field. That figure would drop precipitously in the following seasons, to 1,081,795 (1949),

944,391 (1950), 487,475 (1951), and then a measly 281,278 (1952) in what would be the club's final season in Boston.<sup>46</sup> Through the late 1940s, the Braves had recorded modest profits of between one hundred fifty and three hundred thousand dollars per season. The club reportedly lost over two hundred thousand dollars in 1951 and between six and seven hundred thousand dollars in the disastrous season of 1952.<sup>47</sup>

Lester Smith of *The Sporting News* reasoned, "There is room for only one major league team in the Hub [Boston]."<sup>48</sup> Perini agreed with this assessment, concluding, "Since the advent of television Boston has become a one-team city."<sup>49</sup> That "one team" was the Red Sox of the American League. Even when the Braves were at their best, they were the second favorite in Boston. They made it to the World Series in 1948, but were out-drawn that season by the Sox. In 1952, the Sox finished nineteen games out of first place, but still drew 1,115,750 (compared to the 281,278 who visited Braves Field).<sup>50</sup> Many agreed with Smith and Perini's assessment: Boston was a one-team city. By 1950, Boston was the tenth largest urban area in the United States, with a population of 801,444; there were 637,392 people in the Milwaukee area.<sup>51</sup> While cities like New York, with nearly eight million residents, and Chicago, with over three-and-a-half million, were able to sustain more than one baseball club at a time when competing games and other entertainments were increasingly televised into people's living rooms, Boston was not. Neither were Philadelphia and St. Louis, each cities from which clubs departed in 1954 and 1955. An expanding leisure market that included televised baseball drove down attendance at ballparks from its postwar highs in the late 1940s. When some clubs like the Braves sold their rights fees to local stations, the payback was a pittance compared to what they received through gate receipts and concessions at the game, which amounted to as much as 90% of a club's income. Perini had sold the Braves'

TV rights in Boston for the 1951 and 1952 seasons for a paltry forty thousand dollars. This was a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated six-to-seven hundred thousand dollars he lost in 1952.<sup>52</sup>

Braves Field did little to encourage attendance. Opened in 1915, the stadium was touted as “the world’s largest ballpark ever” by owner James Gaffney. A single-deck covered grandstand seating eighteen thousand stretched around the diamond infield. The roof towered above the flatly pitched bank of seats, supported by long beams and trusses; the high roof made the stands seem like a barn to some commentators. Uncovered pavilions for ten thousand spectators each flanked the baselines. A small stand of bleachers seating two thousand sat in right-center field; it became known as the “Jury Box” after a reporter once noted that only twelve fans were sitting there during a game. Trees were added beyond the outfield fence in the 1940s in an unsuccessful attempt to shield the sight of smoke from the adjacent rail yard.<sup>53</sup>

Braves Field was located little more than a mile away from Fenway Park, but the character of each was vastly different. The stands at Braves Field were expansive, sloping, and open; Fenway Park was tight, condensed, and enclosed. Lester Smith claimed, “Chummy Fenway Park is ideal for baseball and without question that is one reason why many people preferred to see games there instead of barnlike Braves Field.”<sup>54</sup> Baseball writer Al Hirshberg thought the park was the number one reason the Braves failed in Boston. Braves Field was shoehorned between railroad tracks and industrial buildings. It was just a block away from Commonwealth Avenue, one of Boston’s major streets, but that was the only streetcar line serving the park. The main entrance was on a dead-end street shared by trucks servicing the armory on the other side of that street. Hirshberg argued, “Except for

people who lived in the vicinity, Braves Field was one of the hardest public places in Boston to reach.” But location alone wasn’t the only problem, Hirshberg wrote: “The plant itself was antiquated and barny. There was so much room on the field that fans in some sections of the stands needed field glasses to see what was going on. There was no feeling of intimacy there—no chance for kinship between players and public.”<sup>55</sup>

The absence of intimacy in the park was unfortunately counter-balanced with an excess of intimacy outside it: there simply wasn’t much parking space for a population that was increasingly using private automobiles. Perini owned a club in Boston that fewer and fewer people were coming to see, at a park that was difficult to get in and out of and wasn’t a particularly pleasant place to watch a game. An alternative, as a reporter for the *Boston Herald* pointed out, was “the glowing prospects in Milwaukee with a stadium that will accommodate 31,000 and which can be increased to 37,000, and which has parking space for 10,000 automobiles.”<sup>56</sup>

The Braves were urged to stay in Boston by a resolution from the Massachusetts Senate and pleas from Governor Christian Herter, Mayor John Hynes, the president of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, and “the man on the street,” according to Smith.<sup>57</sup> But many people on the street didn’t care all that much. In a *Herald* article headlined, “Man in Street Sorry, but Most Don’t Blame Owner of Braves,” Daisy Clarke, a resident of nearby Back Bay, ventured, “They’re gone? I think that’s wonderful. I never did like National League. This is definitely an American League town. The park at Braves Field was no good, and the parking problem was even worse. I’ll get along without them.”<sup>58</sup>

## Success in Milwaukee

The Braves were astonishingly successful in Milwaukee, exceeding the expectations of anyone in baseball. The team attracted 1,826,397 fans in their first season there, a record for an American sports club at that time. They broke their own attendance record in 1954 (2,131,388) and topped two million fans every season through 1957.<sup>59</sup> In their first six years, they sold nearly twelve million tickets and won two pennants and a World Series. Milwaukee was fertile soil for Perini and made him the envy of many baseball owners.

While Perini claimed to have been beaten out of Boston by many sticks, there was one primary carrot in Milwaukee: a new stadium at the attractive cost of practically nothing. Milwaukee County Stadium, a thirty-five-thousand-seat, county-owned baseball park two miles west of downtown, was on the brink of completion when the Braves announced their move. The Milwaukee County Board had approved the construction of a new baseball park in the Story Quarry section of Milwaukee on February 24, 1947. After rejecting a 1948 bond issue, voters approved a revised version in 1950 and ground was broken on a new stadium that October. The new stadium replaced Borchert Field, an old baseball park located in a residential neighborhood about two miles north of downtown. The new stadium had no major-league tenant, but was intended to be a magnet for any relocating major-league teams. City leaders planned for the Brewers, of the minor league American Association, to play there until they could attract a major-league franchise.<sup>60</sup>

County Stadium, as it came to be known, was unremarkable as a stadium. Though it was built primarily for baseball, it was adaptable to football and would be used as a secondary home for the National Football League's Green Bay Packers. It had a round, double-decked grandstand stretching from first to third base that seated 28,011. From the outside, the

grandstand looked like a three-tiered cake—each level slightly receding inwards from the one below. There were two banks of rollaway bleachers along the third base line and beyond left center field fence that could house an additional 7900 visitors. The total capacity was 35,911 in 1953. A wire fence outlined the boundary of the playing field, curving symmetrically around the outfield: 320 feet down the foul lines, 376 feet in the power alleys, and 404 feet in center.<sup>61</sup> A scoreboard, fifty-seven-feet tall and sixty-one-feet across, sat beyond the right-field fence. Beyond the bleachers and scoreboard, a permanent green wall defined the ultimate edge of the stadium; beyond that sat an expansive parking lot.<sup>62</sup>

The total cost of the stadium, funded by the county, was five million dollars. County leaders had expected to collect thirty-five thousand dollars per season in rent from the minor-league Brewers, but offered a discounted rental to entice the major-league Braves westward. The contract called for the Braves to pay an annual rent of one thousand dollars for the first two years. For the following three, the county would receive five percent of gate receipts and most of the concessions.<sup>63</sup> The Braves owned the radio and television rights in Milwaukee; however, Perini banned the broadcasting of regular-season games in his new home, believing that television had seriously undermined his attendance in Boston.<sup>64</sup> Boosters expected the club to attract four hundred thousand out-of-town visitors who would spend, on average, six dollars per person in the area—theoretically reimbursing the city en lieu of the paltry rental fees.<sup>65</sup>

The arrival of a big-league team, as a civic status symbol, was important to many of Milwaukee's most powerful men. Fred Miller, owner of Miller Brewing Company, was at the front of this effort to attract a big-league team to the city. He was a force on the Greater Milwaukee Committee for Community Development, which planned a range of

improvements for the city, including airport enhancements, new expressways, a new zoo, a new library, a museum, and a war memorial—all at an estimated cost of over two hundred million dollars. The city had already built a four-million-dollar downtown arena and the new County Stadium.

Major-league baseball wasn't just a status symbol, though; the people of Milwaukee embraced the Braves unabashedly. Magazines like *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* ran articles about the city's response to the new team, painting a portrait of an unaffected Midwestern community showering country charm on a team spurned by Easterners who couldn't be bothered. They included photos of players pulling homemade sausage from gift boxes, players' wives going through piles of donated merchandise and sitting on free furniture, and community groups presenting players with gifts at the dugout steps. Articles noted free groceries and gas, and they described when the crowd regaled pitcher Max Sukront with "Happy Birthday." Manager Charlie Grimm confessed, "I've got to watch out they don't smother us with kindness, beer and sauerbraten."<sup>66</sup> This love-fest wasn't just a media concoction. Braves star Eddie Mathews remembered, "The way the fans treated us—I can't even describe it. We were getting cars loaned to us, free gasoline, free drycleaning, gifts of every kind. This went on throughout the fifties. We were taken into people's homes. It was just like one big happy family."<sup>67</sup>

Milwaukee's successful courting of the Braves became a fixation for baseball owners, for worried fans of their teams, and for civic and business leaders of cities without a major-league team—cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Montreal, Toronto, Dallas, Houston, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Kansas City, and Seattle.<sup>68</sup> An American city wasn't truly significant, in the eyes of many boosters, unless it was "big league," and being big-league in

the 1950s meant having a major-league baseball franchise.<sup>69</sup> An executive for the *Milwaukee Journal* victoriously proclaimed, “Big League Baseball put Milwaukee on the map and brought it into national prominence more quickly and more completely than anything else in the community’s history. That includes our reputation for beer.”<sup>70</sup> He noted the impact on community spirit: even if times were tough on the economic front, residents would be happy “as long as Mathews keeps slugging.” Prominent civic figures in other cities, eager for major-league status, looked to Milwaukee and used that episode to try to spur action in their communities. The proud claims of the *Milwaukee Journal* executive, for example, were re-published as a foreword to a promotional magazine printed by the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce in 1954, titled, “A Prospectus of a metropolitan sports area for the Twin Cities.” The group hoped to motivate support in Minnesota for a publicly funded ballpark there, to attract a major-league club just as Milwaukee had.<sup>71</sup> In 1959, as some Houstonians tried to make their city “big league” by building a new stadium and attracting a team, a columnist for the *Houston Chronicle* celebrated the drive and gall of “the thrifty burghers of Milwaukee County [who] took a \$7.5 million gamble and won.” That “gamble” was building a stadium without a tenant in hopes a club would move there—the same gamble that businessmen in Minneapolis were trying to make with public money.<sup>72</sup> The writer from the *Chronicle*, suggested, not so subtly, that Houston too should have that sort of panache and ambition (and it would, in spades, when it constructed the incredible Astrodome in the early 1960s).

Alongside that Houstonian’s call for community bravado in the *Chronicle* was a photo that revealed what was, fundamentally, at the heart of the success of baseball in Milwaukee and its failure in many old major-league cities. It was an aerial photo of the park and arguably its most distinctive feature—the massive parking lot. The lot’s expanse, while visually clear, was



reiterated by the caption: “Home of the Braves—and Lots of Parking Room. Milwaukee’s County Stadium Surrounded by 11,000 Cars.”<sup>73</sup> This was not the baseball park of most people’s imagination, shoehorned into an old neighborhood, like Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field, New York’s Polo Grounds, Washington’s Griffith Stadium, or Boston’s Braves Field. Nor was it like Milwaukee’s old grounds, Borchert Field.

A postcard promoting the new stadium visually illustrated the striking contrast between the two parks. On one diagonal half was an aerial photo of Borchert Field. The park was pinched into a narrow, rectangular lot surrounded by blocks of houses. An octangular, roofed grandstand wrapped around roughly half the lot, stopping abruptly at second base. The two wings of the grandstand ran parallel to one another, not splayed open as at most baseball grounds. Plank walls, plastered with local advertising, stretched from the end of the grandstand to the far end of the lot, then turned inward to connect to a bank of bleachers and a scoreboard, stranded along the far boundary, seemingly disconnected from the rest of the stadium. Surrounding the park were two-story, single-family homes and duplexes—many in the firing line of home runs hit down the foul lines that met the wall just 266-feet from home plate.<sup>74</sup> It was, baseball historian Bob Buege wrote, “a neighborhood ballpark with no parking, splintered seats, little-league distances down the foul lines, and grandstands that jutted out to the foul lines and obscured flyballs from spectators.”<sup>75</sup>

On the other half of the postcard was an illustration of the new Milwaukee County Municipal Stadium. Its double-decker grandstand curved gently around a baseball diamond. It hugged the field, eliminating the distance between fans and the infield (unlike the vast expanse of foul territory around home plate at Borchert Field). While Borchert was pinched, County Stadium breathed, its grandstand opening out over a ring of trees encircling the

stadium and just beyond to a massive, parking lot filled with orderly rows of cars. The postcard presented a pastoral middle landscape—open and airy, decongested, tree-lined, and conspicuously etched with the technology, the private automobile, that enabled and drove the placement of a stadium outside the city center.<sup>76</sup>

The stadium itself may have been an improvement over Borchert Field, but it was hardly cutting edge; it was a simple, multi-tier ballpark architecturally notable only for its plainness relative to some of the early twentieth century urban baseball parks. Yet, the stadium's situation made it the envy of many owners—Brooklyn's Walter O'Malley in particular. The challenge of parking was particularly acute for the Dodgers at Ebbets Field, and in O'Malley's mind created a competitive imbalance between the Braves and the rest of the league. He told a reporter for *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1960 that one of the reasons he would eventually leave Brooklyn for Los Angeles was that the Braves were drawing twice as many people to their games.<sup>77</sup> O'Malley was unimpressed by County Stadium itself, thinking it little more than a newer Ebbets Field due to the park's vision-obstructing support poles and steep stairs to the upper deck. O'Malley was, however, clearly impressed by Milwaukee's commitment to the private automobile and the advantages gained from easy access to freeways and copious parking. This was the catalyst for the Braves' explosive attendance figures, these automotive veins to the spreading suburbs and its middle-class populations that had more money than ever before and more time to spend it. Perini himself noted, "People here can afford to support baseball."<sup>78</sup>

Milwaukee became a symbol of what might be, of future possibilities, both for owners who craved a new stadium without the heavy personal investment and fans who feared their club's owner might head for greener pastures. Perini, along with most baseball watchers, had

a sense of what the Braves' move west signified for baseball and sport more generally. He predicted, "Baseball in general will benefit. I feel that this is just the start of a realignment in baseball. California may well come into the majors within the next five years. There are going to be great changes."<sup>79</sup> Tim Cohane of *Look* added, "As pioneers in the redrawing of baseball's major-league map, now definitely under way, the Braves will be remembered."<sup>80</sup> Though the stadium was nothing much to speak of, the situation profoundly impacted the sports landscape in every large American city. In the coming years, these cities had to reckon with Milwaukee's example, either by losing a team, gaining one, or building a stadium to keep it there.

The Dodgers, as most teams in baseball, shared many of the problems that motivated the move of the Braves from Boston to Milwaukee. Like the Braves, attendance at Dodgers games was receding from a postwar high point. However, unlike the Braves and their second-class status to the Red Sox in Boston, the Dodgers took a back seat to no one in Brooklyn. A writer for the *Brooklyn Daily* would claim on the day of the final Dodgers game at Ebbets Field in 1957, "Baseball and Brooklyn have always been eponymous."<sup>81</sup> Any knowing baseball fan, and likely many baseball illiterates, would have been aware of the unique relationship between the borough and the ball club so central to its identity. Ebbets Field and its denizens were *sui generis*. And yet, the decline of and departure from Ebbets Field illustrated the state of baseball in the 1950s. The stadium and supporters symbolized an older baseball culture that was more locally specific, more expressive, more ethnically distinct, and more socio-economically diverse—qualities of the old city. Ebbets Field and Brooklyn Dodgers culture represented the apex of this old baseball culture, its extreme manifestation. But a diminished version of it existed in most old major-league cities. Just as

the Houston Astrodome would later be a powerful exemplar of the modern because it expressed it so forcefully, Ebbets Field too was an extreme but telling expression of a pre-war baseball culture.<sup>82</sup>

### **The culture of Ebbets Field**

Ebbets Field, as a built environment, was both peculiar and representative. It was uniquely configured, its contours defined by the existing street patterns and, over the course of the years, seating and other features fused onto the existing structure. It was distinct, like so many other parks of that era, each shaped by the shifting demands of physical contexts, political relationships, and economic imperatives. But its distinctiveness didn't emanate from the structure alone; of course, the place was constructed through the interrelationships of material, behavior, and imagination. Ebbets Field, as a material and ideological entity, extended beyond the limitations set by the streets that hemmed it in, spilling out and into the neighborhood and borough beyond. Overflow crowds not only stood in the aisles, but also perched upon the roofs of the apartment buildings across the street, looking down upon the park below. The noise of the park, according to one historian, "spilled out Bedford Avenue and into the surrounding neighborhood. It was possible five blocks away to tell if the Dodgers were doing well or not in a particular game by the rise and fall of the sounds." When the game ended, as many as half the fans could walk home within twenty minutes to the residential neighborhoods surrounding the park.<sup>83</sup> Though various ballparks anchored neighborhoods and neighborhood identities in different cities, nowhere was the irregularity of built space so closely matched to the irregularity of behavior. The Dodgers were famously essential to the identities of Brooklynites, and Ebbets Field was at the core of the borough's

identity.

Ebbets Field was well known for both its spatial and imaginative intimacy, each contributing to the other. Fans sat not only close to the field, but also quite closely to one another, and the rambunctious expressiveness of the stadium culture made those physical spaces seem even smaller. Brooklyn resident Howard Golden recalled that at Ebbets, “Whether you sat in the box or reserved section, or you sat in the bleachers, you were part of the action.” Broadcaster Red Barber took it a step further, suggesting that if you were in a box seat, “you were practically playing the infield.” The density and expressiveness of fans made for a roiling, boisterous environment. Jim Thomson, stadium supervisor and manager, claimed (with a sort of pride), “You either got along with the fellow sitting next to you, or you fought him. There was no in-between.” Though they may have fought one another occasionally, fans more often antagonized those on the field—both the opposing team and their own squad. To reach the clubhouses, players and managers had to ultimately make their way through a sea of noise and fans separated merely by an iron fence. Insults were sometimes accompanied by hurled tomatoes, raw eggs, half-filled cups of beer, and hot dogs.<sup>84</sup>

Players weren’t even safe from Brooklyn’s notoriously expressive fans once they left the stadium. The Philadelphia Phillies beat the Dodgers at Ebbets Field in the final game of the 1950 season. A Dodgers win would have meant a three-game playoff between the two teams for the league pennant; a Phillies win clinched the pennant for a team with an injured catcher and exhausted pitching staff. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Phillies outfielder Richie Ashburn, not known for his arm strength, threw out a Dodgers runner at home plate, preserving a tied game that the Phillies would win in the ninth. Future Hall-of-Fame pitcher

Robin Roberts, who was on the mound, called the throw “the biggest in Phillies history.” Roberts also remembered that after the game, as he and Ashburn boarded a bus to the train station, “A woman kept calling Richie Ashburn by name. When finally he turned around to look at her, she spat right in his face. I had to grab Whitey [Ashburn] and push him into the bus to keep him from going after her. Some Brooklyn fans had taken that loss personally.”<sup>85</sup>

The vocal cast of characters in the stands was the most peculiar in baseball, “our special type of fan,” according to longtime *Daily News* sportswriter Dick Young.<sup>86</sup> *New York Times* sportswriter Arthur Daley called Ebbets Field a “sanctuary for zaniness” with “a warm and human touch rarely found in the coldly efficient confines of Yankee Stadium.”<sup>87</sup> Red Barber, an everyday observer of Ebbets Field antics, called the park “the rhubarb patch.”<sup>88</sup> The unofficial mascot of the Dodgers and their fans was the “bum,” a figure popularized by cartoonist Willard Mullin of the *World-Telegram*. The bum was a ragged, good-for-nothing, underdog figure expressing both the tragic tradition of the Dodgers on the field and their fans’ status as New York provincials. The Dodgers Sym-Phony Band donned hobo costumes, in deference to the “bum,” and provided a constant soundtrack at the park, harassing umpires and opposing players with tunes like “Three Blind Mice” and “The Worms Crawl In, the Worms Crawl Out.”<sup>89</sup> The eccentric public address announcer, Tex Rickards, added a sense of carnival to the grounds through his frequent misstatements and malapropisms; once when fans draped their coats along an upper deck railing, their colors interfering with the batter’s vision, he publicly requested that “the fans sitting along the rail in left field please remove their clothes.”<sup>90</sup> Gladys Goodding’s organ was an institution through the 1940s and 1950s, as she serenaded players with favorite songs and popularized “Chiapanecas” as standard ballpark fare.<sup>91</sup> Hilda Chester, perhaps more than anyone else,

epitomized the grounds. A sizeable woman with a taste for floral print dresses, Chester led the cheers with her impressive voice and accompanying cowbell. Broadcaster Joe Garagiola claimed her voice “sounded like the 10-second buzzer at Madison Square Garden. When she let out, you heard every word.”<sup>92</sup> Irving Rudd said of Chester: “Hilda was a sensitive, caring lady. Once in a while some people didn’t understand her and would talk to her as if she were some demented asylum inmate. She would tell them to talk nicely. She was a dame who just wanted to ring a cowbell.”<sup>93</sup> Put together, these regulars and many others at Ebbets Field conjured a wholly unique stadium culture. Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, considering the stadium’s oddball elements, once claimed, “This doggone park is like a pinball machine.”<sup>94</sup> Baseball historian Harvey Frommer, tapping another Brooklyn landmark for inspiration, referred to it as the “Coney Island of ballparks.”<sup>95</sup>

This was the Ebbets Field of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the ballpark that Walter O’Malley hoped to replace with a modern stadium.<sup>96</sup> Woven into a dense urban tapestry, the park was intensely local, connected to its neighborhood materially and spiritually. It was a structure that had grown over the years, adding sections of seats, adjusting walls, and repapering them with new advertisements. It was easy to get to by foot, but increasingly difficult to arrive at by automobile. It was dirty and smelled like stale beer, cigars, and occasionally, urine.<sup>97</sup> The fans there were a motley lot, taken from the borough’s range of ethnicities, races, and classes. Black fans came to cheer on Jackie Robinson, who had desegregated baseball in 1947. Women, too, came in larger numbers in the late 1940s.<sup>98</sup> Both groups shifted the park’s traditionally white, masculine bent inside the grounds. Outside the park the borough was changing as well, as the first wave of Brooklynites moved to the suburbs. O’Malley fixed his attention on these changes—the reliance on the car and the

shifting neighborhood demographics—considering them to be both permanent and detrimental to the business of the Dodgers in Brooklyn.

### **Ebbets Field in a new urban landscape**

The use of the private automobile exploded after World War II, both allowing the movement of people to suburban communities and driving the demand for those communities. The material and manufacturing demands of the war had squelched automobile consumption for individuals in the early 1940s; that would change dramatically after the war. While just 70,000 cars were built in 1945, 6,665,000 cars were manufactured in 1950.<sup>99</sup> Americans bought 21.4 million vehicles in the half-decade after the war, practically doubling the number of cars on the road.<sup>100</sup>

The automobile played a central role in the suburbanization of the American landscape. Suburban growth was also driven, however, by a major housing shortage at the end of WWII. After the war, many people were forced to live with families or in very small city apartments. This shortage was met by a massive boost in new housing construction, subsidized by the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, which guaranteed long-term, low-interest mortgages. In 1944, 142,000 housing units were started in the US. In 1946, 1,023,000 housing units were started. In 1950, an incredible 1,952,000 housing units were begun. There would be over 1,200,000 housing starts per year through 1964. Most of these were single-family, owner-occupied suburban homes with private yards.<sup>101</sup> The suburbs promised families something new and spacious, while the mortgage, when underwritten by the government, cost the same as rent.<sup>102</sup>

As largely white, middle-class residents moved out of many of New York's urban spaces,



new working-class residents moved in. During the 1940s and 1950s, 1.2 million whites moved out of the city, mostly to suburban New York or New Jersey. The population of Nassau City on Long Island grew from 407,000 to 1.3 million. Suffolk City grew from 197,000 residents to 667,000. Many manufacturing jobs left the city as well, to the suburbs. New factories were built outside the city, where they were more accessible by car and closer to the suburbanized managerial classes. The departing white middle classes were often replaced by African Americans from the rural South and Puerto Ricans. By November 1957, New York City became the first world city with over one million black residents. The city was also home to six hundred thousand Puerto Ricans.<sup>103</sup>

Brooklyn, and notably the areas around Ebbets Field, exemplified these trends. In 1950, the borough of Brooklyn was largely an assortment of white ethnic groups: Jewish, Italian, Irish, German, Scandinavian, and Slavic. Of the 2.7 million residents, over ninety percent were white, non-Puerto Rican, along with just over two hundred thousand black residents (7.6 percent of the borough population) and forty thousand Puerto Ricans.<sup>104</sup> Fifty thousand white residents left the borough between 1940 and 1950, echoing the citywide trend of white out-migration to suburban New York and New Jersey. Brooklyn's black population nearly doubled from 108,263 to 208,478 over this period. Much of this growth occurred in the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, east of downtown Brooklyn and just a mile north of Ebbets Field. The black population of Bedford-Stuyvesant more than doubled in the 1940s, going from 65,166 to 137,436. Most of the borough's black population, sixty-one percent, then resided there.<sup>105</sup>

Brooklyn's population declined in real numbers between 1950 and 1960. The out-migration consisted of nearly all white residents, 476,000 total. At the same time, the black

population continued to grow, increasing by seventy-eight percent to 371,405 in 1960. By then, Brooklyn's population was approximately fourteen percent black and seven percent Puerto Rican. Throughout the 1950s, Bedford-Stuyvesant was the seat of much of this growth. Many white residents left Bedford-Stuyvesant after World War II, particularly in the 1950s. Some moved directly south to Crown Heights or Flatbush—the neighborhoods that hugged Ebbets Field—while many others moved to suburban housing, often on Long Island. This was almost wholly a racial issue for whites, as those of all socio-economic statuses moved out of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Middle-class blacks left as well, looking for better housing. They typically moved south into Crown Heights, Brownville, or East Flatbush. Brooklyn had once been less racially concentrated than any other major northern city; however, this changed in the 1950s.<sup>106</sup> Bedford-Stuyvesant became almost exclusively black. In spite of white out-migration, the neighborhood grew in both population and racial concentration. It even expanded spatially, as many saw the neighborhood's boundaries as equivalent to the outward spread of black Brooklyn residents beyond the traditional boundaries of the neighborhood. By 1960, black concentration in Bedford-Stuyvesant had expanded south into Crown Heights and southeast into Brownsville. After 1960, most of Crown Heights had been absorbed into the Bedford-Stuyvesant "ghetto." The white population (non-Puerto Rican) of Brooklyn as a whole was just under eighty percent in 1960, a significant majority. However, the increasing racial concentration of black communities, and the spatial expansion of these communities, made a psychological impact disproportionate to the numbers themselves.<sup>107</sup>

Ebbets Field was located in Crown Heights, the neighborhood directly to the south of Bedford-Stuyvesant. The area had originally been settled by free blacks in the 1830s, when it

was known as Weeksville and Carrville. The northern section was developed after the mid-1850s, as limestone row houses replaced farmland; the southern part was developed by 1900 with mansions, one- and two-family row houses, and semidetached houses. Many black immigrants from the Caribbean settled there in the early 1900s. By then, the area was known as “Crow Hill,” in reference to the longtime black residents of the area. Realtors would successfully re-brand the area as “Crown Heights” in an attempt to deracialize its image, and by the mid-1930s it was one of the most populated areas of Brooklyn, a mixture of Germans, Scandinavians, Irish, Italians, and Jews. By the early 1940s, most of the residents were Jewish—often Lubavitch Hasidim from the Soviet Union.<sup>108</sup>

There were a number of middle-class neighborhoods south and southeast of Crown Heights. Prospect-Lefferts Gardens were located just south of Ebbets Field, between the stadium and Prospect Park’s southeast corner. This area was largely middle class in the 1950s and was becoming more racially diverse, a mixture of black, white, Caribbean, and Asian American residents.<sup>109</sup> South of Prospect-Lefferts was Flatbush, whose northern border ran along the southern boundary of Prospect Park. In 1955, a *New York Times* correspondent wrote that Flatbush represented “good, solid, almost suburban living, with many large, prosperous one-family homes still in evidence.” Apartment buildings were increasingly being constructed there, however, altering the makeup of the neighborhood.<sup>110</sup> East of Flatbush and south of Crown Heights was East Flatbush. This area largely consisted of Italian Americans and American-born Jews from the 1920s to the 1960s. The neighborhood was made up of detached and semi-detached wooden frame houses, row houses, and walk-ups that were built from the 1920s to the 1950s.<sup>111</sup> To the east of Crown Heights was Brownsville. African Americans began moving into this area after World War II and faced

discrimination, reduced social services, and negligible job opportunities. High-rise, publicly financed apartments were installed in the 1950s, concentrating black poverty.<sup>112</sup> Puerto Ricans had also moved into the area in considerable numbers after 1940, greatly changing its complexion from a largely Jewish neighborhood. A city councilman, Sam Curtis, felt the need to learn Spanish to remain politically relevant, predicting in 1955, “In five years, ten years at the most, this will be another Harlem.”<sup>113</sup>

Crown Heights and Ebbets Field were amidst all these neighborhoods: the expanding African American neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville to the north and east, the traditionally white ethnic middle-class neighborhoods to the south. In the mid-1950s, a *New York Times* series of articles on the neighborhoods of Brooklyn put Crown Heights closer in spirit to Flatbush than many of the neighborhoods further north, like Bedford-Stuyvesant, Greenpoint, Bushwick, Ridgewood, and Williamsburg. These neighborhoods, particularly Bedford-Stuyvesant, had undergone significant racial changes since the Depression. Crown Heights, though contiguous with some of these neighborhoods, “might just as well be cities apart,” according to the *Times* reporter.<sup>114</sup> And yet, though Crown Heights may have seemed racially stable to the reporter, others didn’t necessarily see it that way.

Regardless of the number of actual new black residents in the neighborhood, many anticipated the influx of African Americans from Bedford-Stuyvesant as an inevitability. Herb Ross grew up in Crown Heights, five blocks from Ebbets Field; his family moved away from Brooklyn in 1950. Ross remembered it as a “predominantly white, Jewish neighborhood... a stable area, for want of better words. Meaning no blacks.” However, when African Americans began moving into the area after the war, the Rosses and many of

their friends moved out. He recalled, “I remember when the houses started to sell. Everyone tried to hold on in the beginning. Then one or two would go, and a couple of people would panic, and everybody was worried about real estate values, and the Jews left. We all left.”

Resident Bill Reddy recalled, “Many of the Jews moved away and gave in to the pressure of the blockbusters and the people trying to get the neighborhood away from them. In ’57 everyone who could was running to Long Island. Long Island, Staten Island, and New Jersey, but mostly Long Island, which built up very, very quickly.”<sup>115</sup>

As the area around the park changed, so to did the customers in the stands. The desegregation of baseball had initially occurred at Ebbets Field in 1947, with the introduction of Jackie Robinson as a Dodger. This attracted black fans to the park, and subsequently drove some white fans away. Ross claimed, “When the blacks started coming to the game, a lot of whites stopped coming.” Brooklyn fan John Belson remembered, “In the ‘40s the crowds had been all white, but by the mid-50s, after Jackie Robinson had been there for a while, you go to a Sunday doubleheader, and the dominant smell in the ballpark was bagged fried chicken. Between games out came the brown paper bags with the fried chicken in it. You had a different crowd. It was no longer a unified crowd.” Reddy linked the shifting races of fans to the changing contexts: “The white families were moving out of Brooklyn, and they were the backbone of Ebbets Field. We didn’t have enough blacks to replace them.”<sup>116</sup>

Walter O’Malley was one of those white Brooklyn residents who saw more black faces in the streets, more black faces in the stands, and was, in the words of Brooklyn historian James Rubin, “among the borough’s fearful, white, middle-class residents.”<sup>117</sup> Sports author Peter Golenbock wrote, “There was another aspect to the Ebbets Field crowd besides its

small size that disturbed O'Malley. He didn't like its racial makeup."<sup>118</sup> Sportswriter Dick Young told Roger Kahn that O'Malley wanted to leave Ebbets Field, "because the area is getting full of blacks and spics."<sup>119</sup> Kahn wrote that while it was "excessive to accuse him of bigotry," O'Malley "did harbor stereotypes" and "certainly... was most comfortable with his Roman Catholic cadre, [Buzzie] Bavasi and Fresco Thompson."<sup>120</sup> O'Malley himself would later say,

I was very much concerned about the future when my mother-in-law and my wife couldn't go to Ebbets Field unescorted because of the hoodlums and purse snatchers. I began to become concerned about a location where women, who at the time made up thirty percent of the audience, were afraid to go to the ball park. Studies informed me that Ebbets Field would soon be an unsuitable place for night games.<sup>121</sup>

Though O'Malley was too diplomatic to cite the area's racial dynamics as a concern, such claims about crime insinuated race without naming it—whether intentionally or not. Ross articulated this white fear of black area residents, confessing, "I don't know what it was about the blacks that was so frightening. Maybe they [white residents] felt that... you used to be able to walk Pitkin Avenue on a Sunday afternoon [east of Ebbets Field in Brownsville]. Some of the best clothing stores. Abe Stark of the 'Hit sign, win suit' had a store there. I guess little by little, people were afraid of getting mugged."<sup>122</sup> Irving Rudd, promotions director for the Dodgers, steered the conversation from fear to economics, claiming,

O'Malley complained about the deteriorating atmosphere at Ebbets Field throughout his tenure as the Dodgers' president. He always worried about the unruliness in the stands, which he viewed as a manifestation of Brooklyn's changing social scene. He was also very concerned that Brooklyn might become a very poor community and that some day the money would not be there to support the ball club. You know, a lot of people call O'Malley racist for leaving Brooklyn in the fifties, but, I say, he was just concerned about turning a profit. He did not care that the blacks were black, just that the blacks were poor.<sup>123</sup>

Whether driven by racist fear or cold-blooded economics, O'Malley was clearly perturbed by the changes in Brooklyn that were occurring, and seemed destined to occur, around Ebbets Field in the postwar years.

One of O'Malley's top lieutenants, "Fresco" Thompson, provided a snapshot of the Dodgers' position after the club left Ebbets Field. He wrote of the situation, "There were close to 400,000 people within walking distance, in addition to two subway lines, bus lines, and half a dozen trolley car lines feeding us—yet they would continue to supply us with the same element of people, a pretty indigestible potpourri at best."<sup>124</sup> Thompson explained,

The loyal and substantial fan, the family man, had moved away. He was now living in Westchester County, out on Long Island, in New Jersey, or in Akron, Ohio. He was replaced by the undesirables. I brand no race, color, or creed as objectionable. They all have their scum. But unfortunately, the scum was now thick in Brooklyn. The element drifting into decaying Ebbets Field and using unprintable language in catcalling to the players or in the stands would shame women to the extent that on Ladies' Day only a handful of the most rugged and probably deafest of the distaff side could weather the string of words.<sup>125</sup>

Though Thompson appeared sensitive to the fact that his proclamation might seem racially biased to some readers, one could easily read his caveat as an acknowledgment of prejudice—particularly considering his distinction between the "potpourri" of 1950s Brooklyn and the substance of the Westchester County family-man emigrant. Regardless of the quality of Thompson and O'Malley's racial prejudice, the Dodgers brass was keenly in tune with changes in and around Ebbets Field. Given those changes, the club continued to explore options for a new stadium in Brooklyn, removed from the site in Crown Heights.

By the time *Collier's* published plans for a domed stadium in Brooklyn in September 1952, O'Malley seemed to be growing weary of Bel Geddes.<sup>126</sup> Although it's unclear how serious the Dodgers ever were about employing him to build a new Brooklyn stadium in the first place, O'Malley clearly liked his ideas. In March 1953, he tried to get sportswriter Roger

Kahn to write a story for the *New York Herald Tribune* publicizing new stadium plans. Kahn recalled O'Malley's pitch:

Did you ever ask yourself why in an electronic age we play our games in a horse-and-buggy park?... The aisles are too narrow. The stairs are too steep. Poles obstruct the views. We can't park enough cars. We need twice as many seats. The bathrooms smell. The girders holding up the whole thing are rusting away... Imagine a new park. Seventy thousand seats just like the Yankees have. No poles. You can cantilever construction now. Escalators take the fans to their seats. Plenty of parking. Restaurants and train stations right in the park. Then, to end worries about rain, we put a dome over everything.<sup>127</sup>

O'Malley's vision of a new stadium keenly resembled the one presented in *Collier's*, though he seemed intent on moving beyond Bel Geddes. If his goal was putting "a dome over everything," it's no surprise that he would next turn to Buckminster Fuller.

### **Buckminster Fuller and a modern Dodgers stadium**

In the 1950s, Buckminster Fuller was largely viewed as an eccentric tinkerer on the fringes of the establishment; a figure whose visions were seductive and certainly revolutionary, but not quite generally accepted and practiced; an engineer of futuristic solutions, but not a legitimate architect.<sup>128</sup> *Time* magazine claimed in 1958, as Fuller's status as an intellectual and designer became more secure and accepted, that he had "been the gadfly, delight and despair of the technological world" for years.<sup>129</sup> In 1955, he would have been best known for his Dymaxion projects of the 1920s and 1930s, which attempted to maximize functionality from a minimal use of materials and energy, and the geodesic dome. In the early 1950s, the geodesic dome was a much talked about, but infrequently executed, building form—one that seemed poised to enjoy wide use, but hadn't yet. Aline B. Louchiem of the *New York Times* wrote, "many serious and informed persons in the field of building and architecture agree with the inventor that such geodesic domes will some day be



accepted as an important solution to housing” given their light weights, relatively low costs, functional flexibility, and mass-production capabilities.<sup>130</sup> Fuller’s most prominent dome, by the mid-1950s, topped the rotunda at the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Michigan, which opened in 1953; ninety-three-feet wide, it consisted of aluminum struts covered with a plastic skin.<sup>131</sup>

Walter O’Malley contacted Buckminster Fuller in late May 1955 regarding the design of a new domed stadium for Brooklyn, voicing his interest in a roofed stadium that would not only abolish the rain check, but also open the structure up to other uses besides baseball. Though a roof might be constructed of concrete or other materials, O’Malley thought that it should be translucent, and had been in contact with representatives from Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation. Previously alarmed by Bel Geddes’s price tags, O’Malley required that Fuller’s dome be more affordable. And yet, O’Malley pledged his intention of building the next generation of stadium, telling Fuller, “I am not interested in building just another baseball park.”<sup>132</sup>

Fuller, who seemed up for any project, set to designing a domed stadium for Brooklyn. The *Washington Post* reported in October 1955, “The Brooklyn Dodgers are taking a whirl at studying the possibilities of playing home baseball games in a dome-covered all-weather stadium instead of at ancient Ebbets Field.” Fuller designed a quarter-sphere dome for Brooklyn that was seven hundred fifty feet in diameter and tall enough to cover a thirty-story office building, as many publications noted. Fuller claimed the dome, an aluminum truss structure with plastic skin, would be the largest clear-span structure in the world and would seat twenty-five thousand.<sup>133</sup>

The driving factor for the stadium was weather; thus, the defining feature of the proposal was the roof. New York only enjoyed, according to the Dodgers, sixty-five usable playing days a year for an outdoor stadium. Adding a roof would not only make weather irrelevant for baseball, but would also expand the stadium's suitability for other events like conventions, prize fights, and the circus. This would add, according to O'Malley, two hundred thousand dollars to his bottom line each year. The stadium would have "natural air conditioning," according to the *New York Times*, whereby "natural currents" of air would circulate under the dome. These currents could be controlled in winter to heat the structure as well. The plastic, translucent roof would diffuse sunlight, cutting down on glare and shadows. Besides diffusion of light, there would also "be diffusion of sound to prevent deafening cheers," as a reporter for the *Washington Post* noted. Another welcome feature of the stadium, according to the *Times*, would be the absence of support posts, thus "making the discomfort of fans seated behind columns a thing of the past." The *Post* agreed: "Every fan knows what a pain those posts are."<sup>134</sup>

Fuller put some students at Princeton's School of Architecture on the job that winter, when he was a visiting lecturer there. In January 1956, they presented their studies to a panel including Fuller, Emil Praeger, and O'Malley. O'Malley particularly liked some of the ideas of Theodore W. Kleinsasser, whose design called for a fifty-five-thousand-seat structure with a plastic dome five hundred and fifty feet in diameter and two hundred fifty feet tall at its highest point (compared to Fuller's design that would be seven hundred fifty feet in diameter, three hundred feet tall). Located at the intersection of Flatbush and Atlantic, it would include seating for two thousand in hanging box seats, a small tramway across the top

for tours, and parking for five thousand cars.<sup>135</sup> The estimated cost of the stadium would be six million dollars, with one-and-a-half million going towards the dome itself.<sup>136</sup>

Published images of Fuller-designed stadiums accentuated their modernity. A November 1955 article in the *Times* included a photo of two men lifting the lid off a large stadium model designed by Fuller, four-feet tall and five-feet wide—an image that would also appear in other publications. The stadium appeared as a white bowl, with five peaks around the top rim where it would meet the roof. The roof was a translucent dome, its base punctuated by extended points that met those of the bowl (resembling the points around the circumference of an umbrella), creating flat, oval-shaped gaps to allow for wind currents. There was no detail on the outside of the model beyond a thin dark line running around the top of the base. Beyond that, the exterior was all smooth white surface, as was the interior (bereft of model seats), stressing the model’s cool, clean, modern look.<sup>137</sup>

The project was lent a sort of architectural imprimatur by its coverage in the trade journal *Progressive Architecture*, which aestheticized the plan, superimposing two architectural drawings of the structure one atop the other. The first perspective was from directly above, a drawing of the playing field situated in the midst of the circular perimeter of the dome; the second perspective was from ground level and illustrated the dome’s height by positioning Lever House, the recently completed and iconic modern office tower, inside it. These drawings elevated the stadium—what many readers might have considered mundane and a problem below the status of “architecture”—not only making it architectural by reminding readers of the design process, but also by affiliating that drawing with a sketch of a noteworthy and influential modern structure that was unquestionably “architectural.”<sup>138</sup>

Another version of the Fuller dome was dispersed through a Dodgers press release in June 1956, titled, “A Dome Grows in Brooklyn.” It informed media that the Dodgers could be playing “under a giant plastic dome” in the future that would replace the “hallowed but decaying Ebbets Field.”<sup>139</sup> Fuller’s newest design for the stadium, published in the July issue of *Mechanix Illustrated Magazine*, featured a circular stadium—not unlike many of those that would be built in the 1960s and 1970s—topped with a smooth white shell. As with many modern stadium illustrations staged in the city, the structure’s curves contrasted notably with the boxy grids of old office buildings and street patterns around it. Its sense of ordered symmetry expressed a rationality at odds with the idiosyncratic ballparks of the 1950s. Clean, monumental, and spacious, it seemed a modern space capsule had landed in the city.

Fuller’s dome—like those of Kleinsasser and Bel Geddes—was never built. Nor were dome proposals in Baltimore, Washington, Houston, Manhattan.<sup>140</sup> It is unknowable how serious O’Malley was about ever constructing any of these projects, although he certainly seemed intent, through the early 1950s at least, on building in Brooklyn. And if he built in Brooklyn, he seemed committed to a roofed, weatherproof facility. His struggles with Robert Moses to find a mutually acceptable location for a modern stadium in Brooklyn have been well documented.<sup>141</sup> O’Malley hoped to have Moses use Title I powers of condemnation to help him acquire a site at either the intersection of Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues or at Fort Greene above the Long Island Railroad terminal, upon which the Dodgers would build a private stadium. Moses was never interested in such a plan, in spite of his liberal use of Title I to clear land throughout the city for development. Instead, he had long envisioned a new publicly owned stadium in Queens, at Flushing Meadows, adjacent the site of the 1939 World’s Fair and easily accessible via automobile to the Long Island suburbs.<sup>142</sup>

Moses wasn't the only one to scoff at O'Malley's plans. Arthur Daley, of the *New York Times*, called his domed stadiums "fanciful," and suggested that O'Malley knew as much, writing, "The Dodger president is realist enough, however, to know that Utopia Stadium was a mote too frothy for anyone but a Space Cadet to consider."<sup>143</sup> And yet, though neither the Bel Geddes nor Fuller designs were executed in Brooklyn, they certainly advanced consideration of what a modern stadium might look like and accomplish. However close O'Malley was to seeing any of these plans realized, their circulation in the public consciousness represented an early and influential attempt to reimagine the stadium. Their influence would be seen in subsequent stadium fantasies as well.

### **Bel Geddes redux: Ford Frick's sports palace**

Baseball commissioner Ford Frick would pitch a stadium proposal in 1958 that fully piggybacked on the visions of Bel Geddes and Praeger, suggesting their purchase on people's imaginations.<sup>144</sup> Al Hirshberg outlined the proposal in "Super-Stadiums Can Save Baseball," an article published in *This Week* magazine.<sup>145</sup> He began, "Major-league baseball is in serious trouble. Few people (including the club owners) realize it, but the game is headed for disaster unless something is done to save it." Many teams were losing money, and others were barely breaking even. Five clubs had moved since 1953, and many more faced the twin problems of, according to Frick, "old ball parks and bad parking facilities." But a constant relocation of baseball clubs wouldn't truly address the problem. Hirshberg claimed, "Changes of location are only stopgaps, the fans have got to be brought back to the parks."

Frick argued that the solution was "the all-year-round, all-weather Sports Palace." Because of the high costs of stadium construction, stadiums had to have roofs—moveable

or translucent—so they could be used year round. Frick’s sports palace could seat sixty thousand for baseball and up to ninety thousand for other events. It could park twenty-five to thirty thousand cars, assisted by parking attendants, “enough so that parking is painless and rapid. It would all be part of the service in the plant.” All seats would have unobstructed views. But, Frick clarified, the new structure would be more than simply a sports palace: “It would be an ultra-modern community center, with stores, offices, a restaurant, a theater and a hotel, among other things.” The structure could host “everything from band concerts to national political conventions, from ball games to curling matches, from fights to winter carnivals.” Unlike existing baseball parks and stadiums, the new sports palace wouldn’t be defined by the event, but by the needs of the consumer. Frick explained that the new stadium should include

Anything anybody can think of to attract customers and encourage them to come back often. All sorts of services ought to be provided—a nursery, a kids’ playground, baby sitters, elevators, special seats for old or handicapped people, errand boys to shop during games. The place has to be so comfortable, so clean, so attractive, so easy to reach that fans would rather go there to see games than stay home and watch them on television.

A two-page illustration animated the article, visually crystallizing its ideas. Lev Zetlin, an engineer who would create the Tent of Tomorrow for the 1964 World’s Fair, designed the stadium. Fred Freeman, a graphic artist who specialized in naval history and space exploration themes, created the illustration, inspired by Zetlin’s plans. The drawing was in many ways similar to Rudolph Klep’s rendering of the Brooklyn stadium. Both were cutaways and both Freeman and Klep, as illustrators, specialized in maritime and space-age drawings. As in the Klep drawing, Freeman’s stadium was conspicuously new and modern, with its smoothed curved lines and gleaming white roof; it also contrasted markedly with its urban contexts—the squat, dark, rectangular structures of the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. The stadium was plopped in the midst of this old cityscape; it looked like a multi-layer, space-age cake sitting in a sunken field, ringed by a massive circle of expressways. A thin band or parking lot sat below ground but exposed to the air, between the bottom of the stadium and the expressways. There were also parking rings on the first two elevated stories. These lots were connected to the expressways by tangled webs of ramp arteries, curving and twisting around the transportation maze. This mesmerizing diagram thus foregrounded the automobile, rationalizing its movement into and out of the stadium in a way that seemed progress indeed from the traffic snafus most fans faced at old ballparks.

The stadium was shaped like a steeply pitched saucer, so that the structure's highest levels hung out over the parking sunken below, extending to the boundaries of the first ring of expressways. Between the outer rings of parked cars and the inner bowl of the stadium—consisting of a massive single deck topped by a very small one at the top—were the stadium's non-sporting functions. A key informed readers of the stadium's components—showrooms, restaurants, movie theaters, the infirmary, grocery and shopping centers. Atop all this rested an enormous, flat roof. It was supported, in part, by massive girders around the circumference of the roof, giant parabolas that seemed to start at the base of the structure, then reached up and curled over the edge of the roof. Steel support cables stretched across the translucent expanse, supporting not only the roof itself but also air-conditioning units and "TV camera 'eyes,'" as noted by the diagram key.

How much would this vision of the future cost? Neither Frick nor Hirshberg said. Frick admitted, "Sure, it would cost a fortune." But then, he argued, so did a one-sport structure. He contended that the new sports palaces should be paid for through cooperative deals between clubs and cities; after all, he reasoned, cities would profit from the stadiums along

with the baseball clubs. Such a stadium “would pay for itself in a few years,” he ventured. Frick hoped that cities would begin making plans for these new palaces, but also issued two warnings. He warned baseball men, who “have no right to demand that taxpayers build a park that won’t bring profit to anyone outside of baseball.” He also warned cities against trying to lure teams with “rash promises” of building stadiums that “they can’t keep.”

Hirshberg seemed convinced, concluding: “Not only do fans deserve better facilities, but the old fair-weather parks are terrific wastes of money. The covered sports palace is a necessity for U.S. cities today.” The exclamation point on the article was a photo of Buckminster Fuller and Walter O’Malley tilting the lid off a geodesic dome model for a baseball stadium, linking the Frick plan to those O’Malley had been concocting for a decade.

The Frick proposal showed that O’Malley’s plans had shifted how people thought about the modern stadium and that figures as prominent as the commissioner of baseball were pushing for public-private alliances to construct consumption-oriented, automobile-centered, quasi-public civic spaces pivoting on sports arenas. No modern stadium would quite look like this—though the Houston Astrodome (opened in 1965) and the New Orleans Superdome (1975) would come closest. But even if the modern stadiums of the 1960s and 1970s didn’t match some of the plans of the 1950s, they did embody their ideological assumptions. They proposed that the stadium should cater to the private automobile above all other forms of transportation. The stadium should appeal to a consumerist, suburban, affluent audience. It should privilege spaciousness and physical comfort. It should conspicuously use new technologies whenever possible and celebrate them as expressions of modern progress and American know-how. It should be a place



where women could dress up, where couples could dine out, and where the social elite could enjoy private luxury.

Even as the Frick plans revealed the influence of the Dodgers' various inventions, O'Malley pursued a more traditional, open-air ballpark to replace Ebbets Field. He moved the Brooklyn club to Los Angeles after the 1957 season, having been thwarted by Robert Moses in New York and enticed by Southern California's untapped television markets and Los Angeles's offer to donate scenic acres in Chavez Ravine, located near downtown and multiple freeways.<sup>146</sup> He also convinced the Dodgers' old rivals, the Giants (formerly of Harlem's Polo Grounds) to come along and set up shop in San Francisco. When he got to Los Angeles, however, the weather was too good for a weatherproof dome. Instead, he assigned the pragmatic Emil Praeger to build him an open-air baseball stadium and surrounded it with gardens and parking lots.

The Dodgers' move to Los Angeles proved a boon to Praeger. As he designed the new Dodger Stadium, his firm, Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury, planned a new municipal stadium for New York City. New Yorkers, stung by the departure of the Dodgers and Giants, hoped a new multipurpose stadium in Queens' Flushing Meadows—the spot in which Moses had long envisioned a modern stadium—would anchor a new professional baseball franchise there. It would, and the stadium there, in the country's largest entertainment market, would play a vital role in the recasting of the stadium from an urban icon to an expression of suburban ideals.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Meany, "Baseball's Answer to TV," *Collier's*, September 27, 1952, 60-62.

<sup>2</sup> Television would later, of course, become a major source of revenue. But in the early 1950s, gate receipts were by far the primary source of club incomes, and television rights

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attracted little pecuniary recompense. Benjamin G. Rader, *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: Free Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> “Los Angeles Dodgers year-by-year results,” *The Official Site of the Los Angeles Dodgers*, [http://mlb.mlb.com/la/history/year\\_by\\_year\\_results.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/la/history/year_by_year_results.jsp) (accessed Feb 13, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Norman Bel Geddes, “Presentation to Brooklyn Dodgers,” 1948, Flat file, folder 577.5, Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Benson, *Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Baseball Grounds, Yards and Stadiums, 1845 to Present* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1989), 63.

<sup>6</sup> Benson, *Ballparks of North America*, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Bob McGee, *The Greatest Ballpark Ever: Ebbets Field and the Story of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New Brunswick: Rivergate Books, 2005), 285.

<sup>8</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 46-48. The rotunda was, in a sense, an architectural mistake; when the stadium opened, it was one of only two entrances and funneled both ticket holders and ticket buyers into the same space, creating intractable bottlenecks. The club would soon install additional entrances to relieve the pressure. “Ebbets Field Opening Victory for Superbas,” *New York Times*, April 6, 1913. Years later, when New York Mets owner Fred Wilpon proposed constructing a replica Ebbets Field for his club, sportswriter and historian Robert Creamer disparaged the idea: “The rotunda that Fred Wilpon remembers so fondly was a small crowded area that looked more like the peanut concession at an amusement park than the entrance to a ball park.” Creamer, as we’ll see in the following chapter, had no tolerance for Ebbets Field or the Polo Grounds. Robert W. Creamer, “The Brooklyn Myth: Why Do You Think They Were Called the Bums?,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Gershman, *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), 111.

<sup>10</sup> Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of All 271 Major League and Negro League Ballparks Past and Present* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1992), 117-120.

<sup>11</sup> Walter O’Malley, “Concord Village,” January 26, 1948, Box 45, folder 577.4, “Memos, correspondence, ms. notes, clipping, brochure 1948-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Bel Geddes to Branch Rickey, December 17, 1947, Box 45, folder 577.1, “Correspondence 1947-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Bel Geddes to Walter O’Malley, January 12, 1948, Box 45, folder 577.1, “Correspondence 1947-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>14</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “vomitorium,” [http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/cgi/entry/50279112?query\\_type=word&queryword=vomitory&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1](http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/cgi/entry/50279112?query_type=word&queryword=vomitory&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1) (accessed April 27, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Bel Geddes seemed committed to rethinking the ballpark, at least aesthetically. He highlighted a quote from Dodgers’ co-owner John L. Smith at the end of a newspaper profile: “Ballparks don’t have to look like they did 30 years ago any more than an automobile or a chemical plant.” See Michael Gaven, “Who Owns the Dodgers?” *New York Journal*

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*American*, February 25, 1948. Box 45, folder 577.9, “Clippings 1948-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>16</sup> Midget auto races feature smaller cars over shorter distances than conventional races.

<sup>17</sup> There is a longer tradition of baseball owners trying to attract women to parks. Guttman writes of women as civilizing agents in nineteenth-century parks. Owner and league president A.G. Spaulding tried to attract women to elevate the National League’s status in the 1800s. Allen Guttman, *Sports Spectators*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 114-15. Peter Levine, *A.G. Spaulding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Bel Geddes’s interest in attracting women prefigured Boone Arledge’s, stated in his famous 1960 manifesto to ABC’s Ed Sherik. In that often-cited document (“We are going to add show business to sports!”), Arledge identified the need to appeal to the casual fan through broadcast elements peripheral to the game on the field; he cast the casual fan as woman. I address this point more fully in the final chapter. Ron Powers, *Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1984), 145-46.

<sup>18</sup> Bel Geddes, “Presentation to Brooklyn Dodgers.”

<sup>19</sup> Gaven, “Who Owns the Dodgers?”

<sup>20</sup> Moses was a figure with too many titles to list, and the names of those titles—City Parks Commissioner, head of State Parks Council, head of State Power Commission, chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority—didn’t do justice to the amount of power he held in dictating the physical landscape of New York City. Any plans for a new stadium without Moses’s blessing wouldn’t be realized.

<sup>21</sup> Walter O’Malley, “Memorandum,” February 26, 1948, Box 45, folder 577.4, “Memos, correspondence, ms. notes, clipping, brochure 1948-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Lyons, “The Lyons Dead,” *New York Post*, March 15, 1948. “Dodgers Deny Field Plan,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1948. “Dodgers Plan Park to Seat 80,400 Fans,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 16, 1948. Though not reported, the Dodgers were also considering—at the suggestion of Emil Praeger—a site near Brooklyn’s Fort Greene Park that would allow for a fifty-eight-thousand-seat stadium and cost \$1.3m. Michael D’Antonio, *Forever Blue: The True Story of Walter O’Malley, Baseball’s Most Controversial Owner, and the Dodgers of Brooklyn and Los Angeles* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 111.

<sup>23</sup> “Dodgers Plan Park to Seat 80,400 Fans.”

<sup>24</sup> Doug Kennedy, “Geddes Still Intent on Selling Dodgers on ‘New Look’ for Park,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 17, 1948.

<sup>25</sup> Lester Rodney, “On the ScoreBoard,” *Daily Worker*, March 18, 1948.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Snider, “Something New in Ballparks,” *Portland Press Herald*, March 18, 1948. Snider was syndicated.

<sup>27</sup> Snider, “Something New in Ballparks.”

<sup>28</sup> “Los Angeles Dodgers year-by-year results.”

<sup>29</sup> Roscoe McGowen, “Dressen Receives O’Malley Support: Dodgers’ Chief Denies Report That Frisch Will Be Pilot—Stadium at Camp Planned,” *New York Times*, February 25, 1952.

<sup>30</sup> “Geddes Ball Park Has Portable Roof,” *New York Journal American*, March 6, 1952.

<sup>31</sup> The Brooklyn Dodgers football team of the All-American Football Conference, owned by the Dodgers baseball club, lost \$399,000 during the 1948 season. It was sold after one

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season. Craig R. Coenen, *From Sandlots to the Super Bowl: the National Football League, 1920-1967* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 132-33.

<sup>32</sup> Mike Lee, "Dodgers New Home to Cost Six Million Plus," *Long Island Press*, March 2, 1952.

<sup>33</sup> "The New Stadium," *Providence Rhode Island Journal*, March 9, 1952.

<sup>34</sup> "Brooklyn Selected for Experimental Ultra-Modern Baseball Park," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 9, 1952.

<sup>35</sup> "Dream Park Concocted for Flock," *Newark Star-Ledger*, March 7, 1952.

<sup>36</sup> "The New Stadium."

<sup>37</sup> "New Ebbets Field to Have Hot Dogs and Hot Seats," *New York Times*, March 6, 1952. "Geddes Ball Park Has Portable Roof."

<sup>38</sup> Bill Dougherty, "Bel Geddes Has Big Plans for Brooks," *Newark News*, March 6, 1952.

<sup>39</sup> M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 79-80.

<sup>40</sup> Francis V. O'Connor, "The Usable Future: the Role of Fantasy in the Promotion of a Consumer Society for Art," in *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World's Fair 1939/40* ed. Helen A. Harrison (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 57.

<sup>41</sup> Meany, "Baseball's Answer to TV."

<sup>42</sup> Praeger had been chief of the Bureau of Design for the Navy in World War II; Moses sometimes used him on city projects. D'Antonio, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Henry McKenna, "Braves Move to Milwaukee; Perini Confident of Approval," *Boston Herald*, March 15, 1953. "Perini Decides to Transfer Boston Braves to Milwaukee," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1953.

<sup>44</sup> Leonard Koppett and David Koppett, *Koppett's Concise History of Major League Baseball* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004), 236.

<sup>45</sup> Henry McKenna, "Braves Move to Milwaukee; Perini Confident of Approval," *Boston Herald*, March 15, 1953.

<sup>46</sup> "Atlanta Braves year-by-year results," *The Official Site of the Atlanta Braves*, [http://mlb.mlb.com/atl/history/year\\_by\\_year\\_results.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/atl/history/year_by_year_results.jsp) (accessed February 16, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Lester Smith, "Braves Set Sail on Sea of Red Ink," *The Sporting News*, March 25, 1953. Louis Effrat, "Braves Move to Milwaukee; Majors' First Shift Since '03," *New York Times*, March 19, 1953.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, "Braves Set Sail on Sea of Red Ink."

<sup>49</sup> Effrat, "Braves Move to Milwaukee; Majors' First Shift Since '03."

<sup>50</sup> "Boston Red Sox year-by-year results," *The Official Site of the Boston Red Sox*, [http://boston.redsox.mlb.com/bos/history/year\\_by\\_year\\_results.jsp](http://boston.redsox.mlb.com/bos/history/year_by_year_results.jsp) (accessed February 16, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> By 1960, Milwaukee's urban population was 741,324; Boston's was 697,197.

<sup>52</sup> Perini, wary of the medium, would ban regular-season telecasts in Milwaukee.

<sup>53</sup> Gaffney was a member of Tammany Hall. After he purchased the club in 1911, people began calling them the "braves" in deference to Tammany's Indian logo. Gershman, 126-129, 224.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, "Braves Set Sail on Sea of Red Ink."

<sup>55</sup> Al Hirshberg, "Mistakes Helped Lose Braves for Hub, Says Scribe," *The Sporting News*, March 23, 1953.

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- <sup>56</sup> McKenna, “Braves Move to Milwaukee; Perini Confident of Approval.”
- <sup>57</sup> Smith, “Braves Set Sail on Sea of Red Ink.”
- <sup>58</sup> Jack McCarthy, “Man in Street Sorry, but Most Don’t Blame Owner of Braves,” *Boston Herald*, March 19, 1953.
- <sup>59</sup> “Atlanta Braves year-by-year results.”
- <sup>60</sup> Bob Buege, *The Milwaukee Braves: A Baseball Eulogy* (Milwaukee: Douglas American Sports Publications, 1988), 12.
- <sup>61</sup> The “power alleys” are where hitters generally drive the ball most powerfully, about halfway between the foul poles and center field. They are also referred to as “left-center” and right-center.”
- <sup>62</sup> Effrat, “Braves Move to Milwaukee; Majors’ First Shift Since ’03.” Sec Taylor, “Fine New Home of the Braves,” *Baseball Digest*, June 1953, 63-64.
- <sup>63</sup> The Braves voluntarily tore up this contract on June 27, upping their contribution to the county to \$25,000. The club had been overwhelmed by their positive reception and attendance. See “Braves Increase Their Stadium Rent,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1953. Perini again upped his rent in 1954, voluntarily giving the Milwaukee County Park Commission a check for \$225,000 before a meeting to discuss enlarging the stadium. See “Braves Raise Their Rent,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1954.
- <sup>64</sup> “Happy Milwaukee Flocks For Seats,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1953.
- <sup>65</sup> Taylor, “Fine New Home of the Braves.”
- <sup>66</sup> “Sausages, Sauerbraten and Sympathy,” *Life*, July 6, 1953, 39-42. Tim Cohane, “None But the Braves,” *Look*, August 25, 1953, 86-89. Al Hirshberg, “Home-Run Mathews—the Idol of Milwaukee,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 1, 1953, 32-45.
- <sup>67</sup> Buege, *The Milwaukee Braves*, 5.
- <sup>68</sup> Cohane, “None But the Braves.”
- <sup>69</sup> As football rose in attention and prestige, it too would be a signifier of “big-league” status by the late 1960s.
- <sup>70</sup> Milwaukee had been a “major-league” city four separate times, in four different leagues, but only for one year each time: the National League (1878), the Union Association (1884), the American Association (1891), and the American League (1901).
- <sup>71</sup> “A Prospectus of a metropolitan sports area for the Twin Cities” (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, Major League Baseball Committee, 1954).
- <sup>72</sup> “New Stadium Lured Team to Milwaukee,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 6, 1959.
- <sup>73</sup> “New Stadium Lured Team to Milwaukee.”
- <sup>74</sup> Borchert Field was a ground so flawed that no location in the stands provided a view of the entire field.
- <sup>75</sup> Buege, *The Milwaukee Braves*, 10.
- <sup>76</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 172.
- <sup>77</sup> Melvin Durslag, “A Visit with Walter O’Malley,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 14, 1960, 31, 104-106.
- <sup>78</sup> Cohane, “None But the Braves,” 10.
- <sup>79</sup> McKenna, “Braves Move to Milwaukee; Perini Confident of Approval.”
- <sup>80</sup> Cohane, “None But the Braves,” 86.
- <sup>81</sup> Stan Wyman, “Dodgers in Final Brooklyn Game at Ebbets Field,” *Brooklyn Daily*, September 24, 1957.

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<sup>82</sup> I should note that pre-war baseball culture was also segregated baseball culture; Jackie Robinson's debut would come in 1947. Ebbets Field would become a sort of civil rights beacon in its final decade, and a correction to this fundamental moral problem with pre-war baseball culture. On the other hand, the growing attendance of African Americans at Ebbets Field after the war—and the growing population of African Americans in Brooklyn—would become a point of contention for many old Dodgers fans, driving many away from the park and the borough. See Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984).

<sup>83</sup> Harvey Frommer, *New York City Baseball: The Last Golden Age, 1947-1957* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1980), 97-99.

<sup>84</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 98-100. Murray Robinson, "The Death of Ebbets Field," in *From Cobb to "Catfish": 128 Illustrated Stories from Baseball Digest*, ed. John Kunester (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1975), 205.

<sup>85</sup> Robin Roberts and C. Paul Rogers III, from *My Life in Baseball*, in *A Brooklyn Dodgers Reader*, ed. Andrew Paul Mele (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 136-37.

<sup>86</sup> Dick Young, "Hodges Erupts," in *A Brooklyn Dodgers Reader*, 133.

<sup>87</sup> Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: Digging Up Dirt," *New York Times*, October 31, 1961.

<sup>88</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 99.

<sup>89</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 49.

<sup>90</sup> McGee, *The Greatest Ballpark Ever*, 13.

<sup>91</sup> "Gladys Goodding, Organist, Is Dead," *New York Times*, November 20, 1963.

<sup>92</sup> Robinson, "The Death of Ebbets Field," 207.

<sup>93</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 102.

<sup>94</sup> Robinson, "The Death of Ebbets Field," 206.

<sup>95</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 100.

<sup>96</sup> By the mid-1950s, some of the faces had changed, but Ebbets Field remained a collection of oddities. Hilda Chester no longer came to all the games, and when she did, she sat closer to the field. Shorty Laurice, long-time leader of the Sym-Phony, had died, and his brother had moved to Long Island. The Sym-Phony remained however, as did a woman named Letty Allen who would wait by the clubhouse door after every game for kisses from players. Michael Shapiro, *The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers, and Their Final Pennant Race Together* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 253-54.

<sup>97</sup> Shapiro, *The Last Good Season*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Ira Henry Freeman, "Out Where the Boo Begins – the Bleachers," *New York Times*, July 18, 1948.

<sup>99</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 134.

<sup>100</sup> Christopher W. Wells "Automotive Industry," *The Oxford Companion to United States History*. Paul S. Boyer, ed. Oxford University Press 2001. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. University of Texas - Austin. 26 August 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 100.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Johns, *Moment of Grace: The American City in the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 92.

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- <sup>103</sup> Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997), 15.
- <sup>104</sup> Ron Miller, Rita Seiden Miller, and Stephen J. Karp, “The Fourth Largest City in America: A Sociological History of Brooklyn,” in *Brooklyn USA: The Fourth Largest City in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 27.
- <sup>105</sup> Harold X. Connelly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 130.
- <sup>106</sup> Miller et al, “The Fourth Largest City in America,” 32.
- <sup>107</sup> Connelly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, 130-32.
- <sup>108</sup> Ellen Marie Snyder-Grenier, “Crown Heights” in *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 301. Kenneth T. Jackson and John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 78-82. Shapiro, 99.
- <sup>109</sup> Jackson and Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*, 180-83.
- <sup>110</sup> Charles G. Bennett, “Our Changing City: Flatbush-Coney Island,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1955.
- <sup>111</sup> Jackson and Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*, 103-09.
- <sup>112</sup> Jackson and Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*, 40-43.
- <sup>113</sup> Murray Schumach, “Our Changing City: Southeastern Brooklyn Area,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1955.
- <sup>114</sup> Emanuel Perlmutter, “Our Changing City: Northern Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1955.
- <sup>115</sup> Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1984), 430-32.
- <sup>116</sup> Golenbock, 432-34.
- <sup>117</sup> James Rubin, “The Brooklyn Dodgers and Ebbets Field--Their Departure,” in *Brooklyn USA: The Fourth Largest City in America*, 167.
- <sup>118</sup> Golenbock, *Bums*, 432.
- <sup>119</sup> Roger Kahn, *The Era, 1947-1957: When the Yankees, the Giants, and the Dodgers Ruled the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 327. O’Malley denied this to Kahn. When Kahn mentioned it to Young again, Young reiterated, “O’Malley also said the trouble with Brooklyn was that the place had too many blacks and spics *and Jews*.”
- <sup>120</sup> Kahn, *The Era*, 327. Buzzie Bavasi was the Dodgers General Manager; Fresco Thompson was director of the Dodgers’ minor-league system. Kahn and others have noted that O’Malley was uncomfortable around Jackie Robinson because, in Kahn’s words, “he was a challenging, defiant black. Walter liked blacks docile. He preferred Pullman porters to Jackie Robinson.”
- <sup>121</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 2-3.
- <sup>122</sup> Golenbock, *Bums*, 430.
- <sup>123</sup> Rubin, “The Brooklyn Dodgers and Ebbets Field--Their Departure,” 168.
- <sup>124</sup> Fresco Thompson and Cy Rice, *Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964), 147.
- <sup>125</sup> Thompson, *Every Diamond Doesn’t Sparkle*, 144-45.

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<sup>126</sup> O'Malley told Bel Geddes in January 1954 that it was "quite unlikely that there will be a chance for you to collaborate on any phase of the proposed new stadium." Bel Geddes continued to contact O'Malley, however, writing to him in September 1955 about the possibility of a wide-span roof and insisting that he would keep his plans under wraps in deference to their friendship. O'Malley responded, "Feel perfectly free to submit your idea to any other club. We are still far from doing anything definite. I know that Capt. Praeger has had ideas about a covered stadium and he, Buckminster Fuller and I have had several conferences." Walter F. O'Malley to Norman Bel Geddes, January 8, 1954, Box 45, folder 577.2, "Dodger Stadium -- Data and Correspondence 1953-1957," Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Norman Bel Geddes to Walter F. O'Malley, September 30, 1955, Box 45, folder 577.2, "Dodger Stadium -- Data and Correspondence 1953-1957," Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Walter F. O'Malley to Norman Bel Geddes, October 13, 1955, Box 45, folder 577.2, "Dodger Stadium -- Data and Correspondence 1953-1957," Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>127</sup> Kahn, *The Era*, 311. Kahn wrote up a piece, but it was rejected by Bob Cooke, his sports editor: "You're supposed to be writing baseball, not Walter's fantasies." Kahn, *The Era*, 312.

<sup>128</sup> Aline B. Louchheim, "New Ways of Building," *New York Times*, August 31, 1952. Leigh White, "Buck Fuller and the Dymaxion World," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 14, 1944.

<sup>129</sup> "Art: Fuller Future," *Time*, October 20, 1958.

<sup>130</sup> Louchheim thought that Fuller would need to pay more attention to appearances and "woo beauty" for his structures to pass from "building" to "architecture."

<sup>131</sup> Elie Abel, "Atom Lights Mark Ford's 50th Year," *New York Times*, June 17, 1953.

<sup>132</sup> Mark Langill, *Dodger Stadium* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 9.

<sup>133</sup> "Dodgers Study Possibility of Dome-Covered Stadium," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1955.

<sup>134</sup> "A Geodesic Dome For Brooklyn Dodgers," *Progressive Architecture* XXXVI No. 11 (1955): 95. "Stadium With Dome Studied by Dodgers," *New York Times*, October 1, 1955. "Dodger Head Hails Studies Made for Domed Stadium," *New York Times*, November 23, 1955.

"Dodgers Study Possibility of Dome-Covered Stadium," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1955.

<sup>135</sup> "Student Designs a Stadium for Dodgers; Princetonian's Idea May Affect Blueprint," *New York Times*, January 22, 1956.

<sup>136</sup> "Indoor Park Plans Studied," *Washington Post*, January 22, 1956.

<sup>137</sup> "Dodger Head Hails Studies Made for Domed Stadium," *New York Times*, November 23, 1955. The image would be used elsewhere as well, including "Plastic Dome for Stadium," *Popular Mechanics*, July 1956, 104.

<sup>138</sup> "A Geodesic Dome For Brooklyn Dodgers," 95.

<sup>139</sup> Langill, *Dodger Stadium*, 11.

<sup>140</sup> "Air-Supported Roofs," *New York Times*, May 16, 1948. Herbert H. Stevens, Jr., "Roofs Supported By Air Pressure," *Nature* vol. 161 no. 4094 (April 17, 1948): 613-14. "A Stadium for Washington," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1956. "That Man McCarthy Plans 180,000-Seat Covered Stadium," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1950. "Jack Gives Plans For New Stadium," *New York Times*, April 5, 1956. Charles G. Bennett, "Stadium Project Interests Giants," *New York Times*, April 11, 1956. "110,000 Capacity Stadium Proposed For Manhattan," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1956.



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<sup>141</sup> The debate over why the Dodgers left Brooklyn and “blame” for the club’s ultimate departure for Los Angeles previously centered on O’Malley’s avarice, but more recent accounts of the franchise relocation focus more on O’Malley’s failed entreaties towards Robert Moses. How serious O’Malley was about staying in Brooklyn and constructing a new stadium and his intentions to build certain stadiums (like the Bel Geddes design) are different but related questions. Kleinsasser, for his part, didn’t think O’Malley was seriously committed to the design he and Fuller produced at Princeton, speculating instead that it was more a public relations ploy. See Shapiro, *The Last Good Season*, 20.

<sup>142</sup> For just a few of the innumerable accounts of O’Malley sparring with Moses, see Neil J. Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Shapiro, *The Last Good Season*. D’Antonio, *Forever Blue*. Kahn, *The Era*.

<sup>143</sup> Arthur Daley, “Sports of the Times: Men in Motion,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1955.

<sup>144</sup> O’Malley had reported to Bel Geddes in 1952 that “there was considerable interest shown” in the *Collier’s* designs at the annual major-league baseball meetings in Phoenix. Walter O’Malley to Norman Bel Geddes, December 11, 1952, Box 45, folder 577.1, “Correspondence 1947-1954,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>145</sup> Al Hirshberg, “Super-Stadiums Can Save Baseball,” *This Week*, May 4, 1958, I8-9, 34.

<sup>146</sup> By the late 1950s, prospects for televising baseball seemed more lucrative, particularly in California. O’Malley estimated that he could double his income in Los Angeles thanks in large part to television income via Skiatron, a pay-cable company. Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 61.

Chapter Two  
**Shea Stadium and suburban virtues**

Frederick Exley, in the autobiographical *A Fan's Notes*, described a season of visits to the Polo Grounds in Harlem in the mid-1950s to see the New York Giants football club. This was a few years before football became explosively popular nationwide, before the Giants moved across the Harlem River to the imposing Yankee Stadium, before the team adopted a “formal navy blue” jersey and added “a snooty N.Y. emblem” to their helmets, before the team played in front of “sell-out crowds of Chesterfield-coated corporation executives and their elegant-legged, mink-draped wives.” “The Polo Grounds,” he wrote, “was never sold out.” Exley got into the stadium by purchasing a one-dollar bleacher seat, then bribing ushers to place him in seats between the forty-yards lines. He waited at the backs of the stands through the first quarter, as the ushers identified the unused seats, with a group of other men doing the same thing. His compatriots were

an Italian bread-truck driver, an Irish patrolman, a fat garage mechanic, two or three burly longshoremen, and some others whose occupations I forget—we were a motley, a memorable picture. Dressed as often as not in skimpy jackets, without gloves, we were never dressed warmly enough. Our noses ran. To keep warm we smoked one cigarette after another, drank much beer, and jogged up and down on the concrete. The Brooklyn guys talked all during the game, as much as Brooklyn guys ever talk, which is to say hardly at all. Brooklyn guys issue statements. There is a unity of tone that forbids disagreement. “Take duh fucking bum outa deah!” or “Dat guy is a *pro*”—that designation being the highest accolade they allowed a player for making some superb play. Hollow-chested, their frigid hands stuffed deep into their pockets, their eyes and noses running, they looked about as fit to judge the relative merits of athletes as Ronald Firbank. Still, because of their cocksure, irrefutable tones in which they issued their judgments, I was certain they knew everything about football, and I enjoyed being with them immensely.

As the season progressed, the men tacitly agreed to stop moving to seats, lest they have to split up, choosing instead to stand together at the back of the stands. “We were,” Exley

wrote, “Wops and Polacks and Irishmen out of Flatbush.” They banded together each week, first as strangers, then as something more, in the “murderously damp, biting cold stadium”—a self-selected assemblage of city men in a masculine space at a time when more and more men were leaving the city for its suburbs and more and more women were spending leisure time with men.<sup>1</sup> Urban stadiums and ballparks like the Polo Grounds in Harlem or Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, which at times seemed like masculine preserves, were on their last legs, soon to be replaced by new modern structures like Shea Stadium in Queens, at the gateway to the suburbs, which would be populated by crowds that were sexually more heterogeneous and socio-economically and ethnically more homogenous than those at the old Polo Grounds.

This chapter argues that modern stadiums like Shea Stadium expressed postwar suburban ideologies regarding racial escape from the city, private mobility and spaciousness, and domesticated comfort and consumption. This expression was delivered both materially, through the physical site of the stadiums themselves, and representationally, through a stadium discourse constituted rhetorically and visually by city officials, sports executives, and the media. These stadiums weren’t original fountains of postwar suburban ideals by the time they were actually being constructed in the early 1960s; however, they were prominent quasi-public sites where suburban ideals—mobility, spaciousness, comfort, consumption, and domestication to name a few—were ratified and affirmed. Old city ballparks were primary sites of inter-class, inter-race, intra-gender consort; modern stadiums replaced them, eliminating traditional and iconic sites of urban diversity and reconstituting them with a suburban ideological tilt.

This examination is centered in New York City, where the modern Shea Stadium was opened in 1964. Shea Stadium was built primarily to house the New York Mets, a major-league baseball expansion club that stepped into the National League void left when the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants left the city for California in 1957. Its other major tenant was the Jets (called the Titans from 1960-62) of the expansion American Football League, an upstart challenger to the National Football League. The stadium also hosted other large one-off events, most famously the opening date of the Beatles' 1965 tour which attracted fifty-five thousand, the largest concert crowd to date—a landmark moment for large-format stadium rock-and-roll.<sup>2</sup> This hierarchy of uses made Shea similar to many other modern stadiums constructed in the 1960s. Its primary use was major-league baseball, site of at least eighty-one games per season. Professional football played a second (but increasingly important) fiddle, evidenced in the structural accommodations many modern stadiums made to football field dimensions. Finally, the modern stadium hosted other large-scale events like rock concerts, conventions, non-professional sporting events, and religious meetings.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter examines Shea Stadium not only as a material entity, but as a representational one as well. It considers how people moved to, in, and around the stadium, what they experienced there, and how those practices were different than the ones they were accustomed to at older stadiums. It also considers how these experiences and practices were written about, illustrated, and photographed. Shea Stadium was indicative of both local and national changes to landscapes and attitudes. In many ways it shared defining characteristics with modern stadiums across the nation, opened before and after April 1964; in other ways, it reflected concerns and preferences more particular to New York City.<sup>4</sup> I will try to distinguish between the two throughout, both by making connections to other modern

stadiums and grounding the discussion in local specificities.

I begin with a physical description of Shea Stadium itself, in order to make the contrast with its urban predecessor, the Polo Grounds, more evident. The chapter then explores the history of the Polo Grounds and Harlem, outlining changes inside and outside the stadium, including the racial dynamics of the neighborhood and the urban congestion of Harlem that compelled the New York Giants baseball club to leave. It then looks at the resuscitation of the stadium for use by the American Football League's Titans and the new National League baseball club, the Mets. A distinct fan culture, known as "the New Breed," coalesced around the Mets in their brief two years at the Polo Grounds; it was a group whose eccentric identity seemed indelibly linked to the eccentricities of the stadium, echoing the relationship between Brooklyn Dodgers fans and Ebbets Field in the 1940s and 1950s. The chapter then looks at planning for a new Shea Stadium and the move of the Mets there. It analyzes stadium discourse at that time, which employed urban and suburban domestic metonyms to interpret the old and new stadiums—for example, the Polo Grounds were often referred to as tenements, Shea as a split-level suburban home. These shared rhetorical clichés expressed how writers understood the spaces and their broader significance. Through them, the move from old ballpark to modern stadium became a referendum on urban change—a formulation that certainly predisposed many readers to understand these spaces in the same way. Finally, the chapter examines the spatial and material character of the stadium more fully and how this character was advertised and interpreted. Mobility, spaciousness, and socioeconomic stratification were privileged at the new Shea Stadium; I argue that these were expressions of suburban virtues of individual autonomy, privacy, and status. Finally, I look at how the new stadium approximated a suburban home through its use of color, comfort,

gadgetry, and an enhanced domesticity.

Though at first glance the stadium—massive, modern, engineered—would seem to have little in common with the ranch homes and suburban communities of Long Island, Westchester County, and northern New Jersey, it was in fact an ideological sibling to these suburban spaces. Shea Stadium expanded suburban values and imagination into yet another postwar space, rejecting the unpredictably heterogeneous city, both physically and imaginatively. In sporting terms, the ideological suburbanization of the stadium worked with television to fundamentally alter the nature of professional sport, which became decreasingly about the game on the field and increasingly about constructing a consumption-oriented, salable entertainment package around it, privileging the casual consumer over the committed sports supporter. In broader cultural terms, the physical and ideological suburbanization of the stadium severed yet another tie between the inner city and its orbiting communities, eliminating what for many suburbanites was one of the last reasons to return to and experience the urban landscape and sealing those people even more fully in their suburban universe.

### **Shea Stadium: “a beautifully functional thing”**

Shea Stadium opened in April 1964 to a buffet of boilerplate compliments. New York City mayor Robert Wagner called the stadium “one of the most modern and beautiful sports facilities in the world.” Commissioner of the Department of Parks Newbold Morris noted the “symmetrical beauty and color of the facade and the interior” and the “beauty, the efficiency and the comfort” of the structure. Stan Isaacs of *Newsday* branded it “beautiful,” as did Leonard Shecter of the *Post*, who added, “It’s the nicest thing you can say about a

woman or a ball park.” A reporter for the *Long Island Star Journal* called it “beauteous.” Leonard Koppett of the *New York Times* termed it “sturdy and beautiful.” Jack Mann of the *New York Herald Tribune* called it “a beautifully functional thing.” “Shea Stadium is beautiful,” the *Washington Post*’s Bob Addie informed his readers, “and, as we sidewalk architects are fond of saying, it is also functional.” All this “beauty” seemed to emanate not only from the stadium’s presumed functionality, but also its color and scale. Milton Gross of the *Post* noted its “colorful, modernistic opulence.” Isaacs was impressed by its “sweep, grandeur, color.”<sup>5</sup>

Those who witnessed the stadium through the many aerial photographs in city newspapers would have certainly been struck by its symmetrical sense of order and monumental size. The stadium was shaped like a massive C—a perfect, rimmed circle with one-third removed. It was framed by a parking lot, pinched on one side by the elevated Interborough Transit Line (IRT), on the other by freeways. To the south of the elevated train ran the Long Island Railroad, and to the south of that was Flushing Meadows, site of the 1964-65 World’s Fair.<sup>6</sup> To the north of the stadium, just across the intersecting freeways, was Willets Bay and LaGuardia Airport.

Shea Stadium seemed a fortress, with a soaring one-hundred-forty-foot-tall frame; the squishy soil of the meadow prevented the field from being built below grade.<sup>7</sup> Slightly protruded banks of stacked pedestrian ramps defined the exterior, some banks slanting one way, some the other. Thin wires ran perpendicular to the ground around the outside; upon them were hung ornamental aluminum squares colored blue or orange. The ground level, below the banks, was faced with brick, the wall punched through with both single doorways and garage-door openings that were opened as entrances and exits for the crowds. A rim

rounded the top, the back end of a small roof that would protect the very highest seats from the weather.

The stadium innards were largely given over to pedestrian movement to and from seats, consisting of gradually sloping ramps, steeply climbing escalators, elevators, and concourses at the various seating levels. Concessions stands ringed the concourses, occupying the spaces below the seating deck. Once beyond this network of passageways, visitors entered the stadium interior itself—the smooth, sweeping, symmetrical decks of seats, each colored differently (shades of yellow, orange, brown, and green) to signify their differential in price from the others. Spectators could look out through the huge gap in the stadium, opening to the northwest—beyond an enormous scoreboard, over row-upon-row of parked automobile, junkyards, more freeways and a tidal bay, the sign atop the old Serval Zippers building, and into downtown Flushing in the distance, a middle-class enclave largely consisting of Irish, Italian, and Jewish Americans.<sup>8</sup>

The stadium's newness and color made a favorable impression on most commentators. Maury Allen of the *New York Post* called it “magnificent” and a “huge, modern, exciting stadium.”<sup>9</sup> Mets Manager Casey Stengel admitted, “It’s lovely. Lovelier than my team.”<sup>10</sup> Others were less openly celebratory. Red Smith, the influential syndicated columnist and writer for the *New York Herald Tribune*, called it “a great, gaudy layer cake over a swamp.”<sup>11</sup> *The New Yorker’s* Roger Angell, noting the explosion of color inside and out, wrote, “To one nurtured in the gray fortress of Yankee Stadium and the green barn of the Polo Grounds (O lost!), the place came as a shock.”<sup>12</sup> George Vecsey of the *Times* panned Shea:

From the outside, there was very little beauty in the \$25,500,000 stadium. Its alternating blue and orange steel plates glittered in the sun but they did not hide the asymmetrical ugliness of the outside.<sup>13</sup> The stadium had been built from the inside out, with no solid façade. The exterior was really its interior, with steel beams and



juts of concrete and cable soaring at odd angles. With a breeze blowing off the bay, you might have been standing outside a Siberian power station.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Polo Grounds, the Giants, and Harlem: 1911-1957**

The Mets, Shea Stadium's featured tenant and reason for being, had played their first two seasons in 1962 and '63 at the Polo Grounds, a fifty-year-old Harlem park, while the new Shea Stadium was being constructed in Queens. The Polo Grounds was, according to a *New York Times* editorial, "unconventional, illogical, absurd, and a lovely place to watch a ball game."<sup>15</sup> The park was certainly distinctive, for better or worse, with its peculiar pinched horseshoe shape and memorable location, wedged between the Harlem River and an escarpment known as "Coogan's Bluff." Left for dead after the New York Giants baseball club departed for San Francisco in 1957, the park had been resuscitated to host the Mets, a club that quickly became remarkable for its ineptitude. Given their many flaws, the Mets and the Polo Grounds were, as many commentators noted, an appropriate match.

On September 28, 1957, the day before the New York Giants' final game at the Polo Grounds, the *New York Times* ran a eulogy of the old park, vividly capturing the physical and expressive properties of the old stadium that had endured at the site since 1911.<sup>16</sup>

To the Sunday afternoon walker whose wanderings have ever brought him, on a day when the Giants were not playing, to the high bridge at 155th Street, the Polo Grounds, standing behind its macadamed parking lot, looks for all the world like a deserted amusement park. Its long flank of peeling white paint, the tall, forlorn light standards, the zig-zagging bank of ramps which somehow suggest a roller-coaster, and the empty rows of seats seen beyond, all create an impression of summertime pleasures past and now forgotten.<sup>17</sup>

The Polo Grounds were located in Manhattan at 155<sup>th</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, along the northern edge of Harlem. The name, "Polo Grounds," has a complicated history in New York, as it has been used to refer to four separate, but related, sporting grounds.<sup>18</sup> In April

1911, the third iteration of the Polo Grounds, located at the same site as the final stadium of that name, burned to the ground. Giants owner John T. Brush promised to erect a massive steel-and-concrete structure in its place. The Giants began using the field again on June 28 and played the rest of the season there, as the new stadium was built around them. It could host 38,281 by October, when the Giants played in the 1911 World Series against the Athletics.

The first game of that series was a phenomenon, as people lined up as early as seven hours before the game to get in. *New York Times* commentator W. J. Lampton joked, “Among those present were—see City directory for list of names. Also several from Philadelphia, our quiet neighboring suburb.” By that time, Brush had spent seven hundred thousand dollars on his new stadium, with four hundred thousand more to be invested before its completion. Although the stadium was incomplete, Lampton heaped praise on it: “It is easy to get in and out of, and filled to the brim as it was yesterday it presented a scene of dazzling color and grandstand glory which beggars description and then some.” He noted the variety of transportation available for visitors: subway, elevated train, surface cars, horses, and, a harbinger of things to come, automobiles. Lampton hyperbolized, “Something like 47,777 automobiles were lined up and stacked up and piled up and tied up and hung up and pulled up and laid up and held up on all the unoccupied territory about the grounds.” Although there was a rumor before the game that several thousand women would attend, Lampton estimated the actual number at around one thousand. Instead, “there was forty times as much color and decoration and paint and fluttering flounces in the make-up of the stadium as in the make-up of the audience. Scattered about through the vast assemblage were bits of color and flashes of hats, but the general tone was sombre, and the trousers far

outnumbered the petticoats.” Although the crowd was mostly men, they came from various economic slices of society, as evidenced in their dress. Those who couldn’t get inside tried to make due outside, lining Coogan’s Bluff (though the stadium largely blocked their view of the field), the Viaduct, and all other “adjacent points of elevation.” Lampton dismissed any doubters of his story; they simply “don’t know just how crazy a crazy fan can be. Dementia baseballibus is about the worst there is.”<sup>19</sup>

New York City architect Henry B. Herts designed the stadium. He called the newest Polo Grounds “utilitarian,” though his objects of comparison were probably the many theaters he had designed around Times Square in the preceding years.<sup>20</sup> Herts’s comment aside, the Polo Grounds was not without ornamental touches, including a decorative frieze lining both the top and bottom of the second deck and scrolled ironwork “NY” logos at the ends of seat aisles. A writer for *Baseball Magazine* called the new stadium “the mightiest temple ever erected to the goddess of sport and the crowning achievement among notable structures devoted to baseball.” Another claimed, “Indeed there is everything at the Polo Grounds that may be found at a first-class theatre” and compared the achievement to “the pyramids built in all their silent grandeur on the shifting sands of the desert.” Brush himself proclaimed, “Upon the ruins of the old historic stand... there rises majestic, 100 feet above the ground and more than a thousand feet in length, the latest contribution to the comfort and convenience of the baseball fan.”<sup>21</sup>

The construction firm for the stadium was Osborn Engineering Company of Cleveland, Ohio, a company that had largely made its name through its work in structural steel engineering, bridge work (including a nearby Harlem River swing bridge), and industrial plants.<sup>22</sup> Osborn became actively involved in baseball stadium construction with Pittsburgh’s

Forbes Field, which opened in 1909. In the few years preceding the reconstruction of the Polo Grounds, the company worked on Cleveland's League Park (1910), Chicago's Comiskey Park (1910), and Washington D.C.'s Griffith Stadium (1911). In the coming years, Osborn was also hired to build Boston's Fenway Park (1912), Detroit's Navin Field (1912), Boston's Braves Field (1915), Cleveland's mammoth Memorial Stadium (1923), and most famously the stadium that would later loom directly across the Harlem River, Yankee Stadium, which opened in 1923. The company also built many college football stadiums and tracks across the country. Though their stadiums incorporated some decorative accents, they were dominated by a functional, engineered aesthetic, not unlike the bridges and factories Osborn had previously specialized in, consisting largely of ramps, structural supports, fences, and broad warehouse doors. The Polo Grounds, for the most part, was a utilitarian stadium, wedged into a context of utilitarian structures: the elevated train on Eighth Avenue, the bridges along the Harlem River, and the rail yard adjacent its northern walls.

The new stadium had the same elongated configuration as the older versions of the park, though its capacity was much greater. While there was plenty of space for the stadium to stretch from the bluff eastward, the lot was quite narrow from north to south. This long, narrow shape worked fine for a sport like football; the New York Giants of the National Football League played there from 1925 to 1955. A standard baseball field configuration, however, resembled an open fan, and the tight flanks of the Polo Grounds made the baseball dimensions there remarkable even in a period when field configurations were often asymmetrical. Center field was very far from home plate: 475 feet (and even 483 at one point). And yet, the left field and right field fences were just 280 feet and 258 feet from home plate, respectively, making the stadium famous for its fluky home runs down the foul

lines—referred to as “Chinese” home runs by sportswriters.<sup>23</sup> In its early years, the grandstand didn’t fully frame the field, but was hook-shaped, extending further into right field than it did into left.

When the Giants first moved north to Manhattan Field and the Polo Grounds, upper Harlem and Washington Heights were suburban areas. By World War I, they weren’t. However, unlike ballparks that became deeply embedded in residential neighborhoods, like Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field, the Polo Grounds sat in a somewhat marginal space, squeezed up against the Harlem River and the edge of Manhattan. Coogan’s Bluff loomed over the west side, physically separating the stadium from the apartment buildings of Washington Heights to the east. Across 155<sup>th</sup> Street to the south was Harlem, most immediately the Sugar Hill district, which by 1919 was so named for the “sweet” existence enjoyed by its relatively wealthy residents.<sup>24</sup>

The area was, at that time, predominantly Jewish: eighty thousand Jewish residents lived in Harlem and ninety thousand in adjacent East Harlem, making it the most populous Jewish neighborhood in the city outside of the Lower East Side. Severe overcrowding during World War I resulted in social problems and some physical deterioration, and many Jews moved to newer neighborhoods on the West Side of Manhattan and in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. By 1930, there were only about five thousand Jewish residents remaining and all the large synagogue buildings had been sold to churches—many of them African American.

African Americans began moving into Harlem in the early 1900s in search of better housing and less racism than they had encountered elsewhere in the city. Most settled near 135th Street. Several black churches moved to or were formed in Harlem in the 1910s and 1920s, as did many powerful black fraternal lodges and social clubs. Between 1920 and 1930,

the number of blacks in Harlem increased from around eighty thousand to over two hundred thousand. This increase was matched by a comparable decline in white residents. Most of these new residents were migrants from the American South, while many also moved there from other parts of the city (like San Juan Hill on Manhattan's West Side) and the Caribbean. Jobs and an exuberant cultural life attracted many more. The area became the center of black literary culture during the Harlem Renaissance and a center for jazz in the succeeding decades. White customers flocked to nightclubs both segregated (like the Cotton Club and Connie's Inn) and integrated (Apollo Theatre, Small's Paradise, Savoy Ballroom). During the 1920s and '30s, Harlem became a geographical icon, a national symbol for black culture.<sup>25</sup>

The Polo Grounds grew along with Harlem. The stadium was expanded in 1923, raising overall capacity to over 55,000. Both grandstands were extended; the left field more than the right, creating a structural symmetry. The double-decked grandstand, previously a hook, then resembled a flat horseshoe, stretched across the rectangular lot. A new clubhouse, a multi-story brick tower, was installed in centerfield, almost appearing a separate structure altogether, nearly as tall as the grandstands themselves. The team wedged uncovered bleachers into the gap between the clubhouse and the flanking grandstands that extended beyond the clubhouse itself, creating a distinctive niche in straightaway centerfield, a small yard. The outfield fence height, with these changes, ranged from just 10.5 feet in right field to a full 60 feet in center (the height of the clubhouse) before dropping back to 17 feet in left. This was not a uniform boundary: the peculiar playing dimensions were framed by a fence wandering up-and-down along the stands.

The 1923 expansion established the fundamental shape and layout of the Polo Grounds for the remainder of its existence. Over the years, a series of additions and alterations were made to the stadium. The most significant was the installation of lights at the end of the 1939 season. Eight steel towers, one-hundred-fifty-feet tall, were supported by the roof and connected to the grandstand columns.<sup>26</sup> These spare towers, perched atop the roof, resonated with the Spartan functionality of the adjacent elevated train tracks and the many bridges crossing the Harlem River just beyond the Polo Grounds' outfield.

The area around the Polo Grounds changed more than the stadium in the years between the World Wars. Jewish, Italian, German, and Greek Americans moved out and African Americans moved in. As the area became increasingly black through the 1930s, it also became increasingly poor and congested, as the Depression wreaked particular havoc in Harlem. Though the number of jobs dissipated, black migrants continued to move there. Rents were extortionately high, as landlords took advantage of the residential limitations imposed on African Americans by discriminatory real estate practices, and apartments were further divided and subdivided. Harlem became a racial ghetto. A *New York Times* reporter wrote in 1955 that in the two decades preceding World War II, Harlem “became a turbulent area of decaying tenements, chronic unemployment, dirty streets, racial clashes, poor schools, high rents, jazz music and noisy politics.” The reporter optimistically suggested that there had been many improvements since 1945, and particularly in the early 1950s, evidenced in increased employment, “large-scale slum clearance,” new schools, new banks, new churches, new businesses, and growing political power. In spite of the positive changes, Harlem was still “burdened with serious problems,” including housing shortages and high crime rates (particularly among juveniles). The article estimated that 1955 Harlem housed

about four hundred fifty thousand total residents, including two hundred eighty thousand African Americans (62% of the area population), eighty thousand Italian Americans (18%), and seventy-five thousand Puerto Ricans (17%, many having migrated there in the previous ten years); however, due to the considerable mobility of people there, it was difficult to nail down the exact breakdown by race and ethnicity.<sup>27</sup>

Problems of housing—shortages and quality—were met by planning strategies that wiped out mixed-use areas and replaced them with single-use, high-rise residential towers.<sup>28</sup> The first of these developments in Harlem were the Harlem River Houses, located just south of the Polo Grounds between 153<sup>rd</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup>, which were completed in 1937. The Colonial Park Houses—eight 14-story middle-income apartment buildings constructed in the rail yards on the north side of the Polo Grounds—opened in May 1951. By the late 1950s, both of these complexes were concentrating black residents—many of them poor and increasingly so—on single sites, and Harlem residents protested future housing projects that would further ghettoize Harlem.<sup>29</sup>

The Giants, like most baseball clubs, enjoyed an attendance boom in the immediate postwar years—in spite of its proximity to Harlem’s well-publicized problems—followed by a 1950s decline. Attendance peaked at just over 1.6 million in 1947, but by 1952 it had dropped to below one million.<sup>30</sup> Talk of a Giants departure began to circulate in the early 1950s. In a September 1953 article in *Sport* magazine, Jack Orr noted rumors that the Giants would leave the Polo Grounds, after their 1962 lease was up, to become tenants across the Harlem River at Yankee Stadium. Robert Moses suggested that the Giants abandon the Polo Grounds before then so that the stadium could be torn down and replaced with public housing.<sup>31</sup> The opinions of Moses—the New York City Parks commissioner, head of the



Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, gatekeeper for Title I funds in New York City, and most influential figure in shaping the postwar landscape in and around the city—carried with them a particular weight.

In April 1956, Manhattan Borough President Hulan E. Jack—the first black borough president of Manhattan—proposed a triple-decker, roofed stadium seating one hundred ten thousand people to be built on the Upper West Side, not far from the African-American neighborhood of San Juan Hill. Jack delivered the proposal to a luncheon of the Sports Broadcasters Association—certainly a key ally he was hoping to enlist to publicize his project. Jack’s extravagant stadium was to be built on stilts over the rail tracks used by the New York Central Railroad, at a site bounded by the West End Highway, 60th Street, West End Avenue, and 72nd Street. The stadium, estimated to cost \$20 million, but financed by private capital, would be home to the baseball Giants after their lease at the Polo Grounds ran out in 1962. It would also accommodate future Olympic Games and large events like Army-Navy football contests. Baseball commissioner Ford Frick and National League president Warren Giles had attended preliminary planning meetings for the extravagant stadium, indicating baseball’s official interest.<sup>32</sup>

Jack said he was motivated by reports that baseball’s Giants were unhappy with the parking situation at the Polo Grounds. The new stadium would have parking for twenty thousand cars, with entrances and exits onto the West Side Highway. Escalators would take people from their cars up to their seats, and a helicopter landing pad could service some high-end visitors who chose to eschew the cramped roadways altogether. Giants owner Horace Stoneham claimed he was “deeply interested” in Jack’s plan, though ultimately nothing came of it. Jack’s scheme turned out to be more an attention-grabber than a serious

proposition.<sup>33</sup>

In May 1957, Stoneham and Walter O'Malley, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, were given permission by the National League owners to move their clubs to California (the Giants to San Francisco, the Dodgers to Los Angeles), provided they do so together to consolidate west-coast travel costs for visiting teams. The clubs were, according to *New York Times* reporter Joseph Sheehan, "Backed against the wall... because of declining attendance, which is a result of obsolete facilities and metropolitan New York's saturation with televised baseball."<sup>34</sup> Stoneham continued to insist that his major problem was parking, telling Mayor Wagner in June 1957 that the Giants would stay in Manhattan if they could find a suitable stadium to replace what the reporter termed the "aging" Polo Grounds.<sup>35</sup> He would testify before a congressional subcommittee in July 1957 that the drop in Giants' attendance was largely due to a dearth of "parking facilities and lack of suitable transportation."<sup>36</sup> The club was also hurt by television and the loss of the football Giants as a tenant. The NFL's Giants moved to Yankee Stadium in 1955 after thirty years at the Polo Grounds, worried about the future of the Polo Grounds given the rumors about the baseball team's possible departure and attracted by the larger seating capacity, better parking facilities, and better transit service across the Harlem River. The departure of the football Giants cost the baseball business approximately seventy-five thousand dollars per season in rental and concessions revenue.<sup>37</sup>

In a July 1957 article titled, "San Francisco or Bust," John Drebing of the *Times* argued that the Giants were as good as gone. The only two lifelines for the Giants were if the city built them a stadium (which Stoneham never asked for) or the Yankees leased them their stadium (though at a fee that would have certainly been prohibitive). Drebing pointed out that the drop in attendance didn't exactly correlate to quality on the field, as the 1951 and

1954 versions of the club were pennant winners. He wrote, “When, in the thick of a sizzling pennant race, the top contenders pass in review and draw 3,000 in the afternoon and 9,000 at night, brother, you’ve had it. Only Chuck Dressen could express it better. The Polo Grounds is dead.”<sup>38</sup>

While Stoneham continued to insist that the primary challenge the Giants faced was parking, the stadium’s location atop Harlem undoubtedly played a role in the club’s dwindling attendance and weighed on the owner’s mind (though he didn’t acknowledge it publicly). Stoneham told Congress in 1957, “The baseball population in Manhattan... has become suburban... the baseball population has moved to the suburbs.”<sup>39</sup> The “baseball population” he referred to—the one that had freshly turned suburban—was clearly a white one. Parking was likely not the only concern for potential suburban visitors. Sportswriter Lee Allen would later say, “There were times when the Giants couldn’t guarantee their box-seat customers safety from armed robberies during night games.”<sup>40</sup> Giants executive Chub Feeney, Stoneham’s nephew, would recall: “By 1957 we had a terrible situation at the Polo Grounds. The park was deteriorating. People were afraid of the neighborhood.”<sup>41</sup>

Many were, no doubt, afraid of the neighborhood, though the Polo Grounds occupied an odd space there—adjacent public housing, but also abreast Sugar Hill and literally across 155<sup>th</sup> Street from the famed 409 Edgecombe address that had been home to Roy Wilkins in the 1930s, W.E.B. DuBois in the 1940s and Thurgood Marshall in the 1950s.<sup>42</sup> It was blocks away from the publicly supported Harlem River Houses, but also Smalls’ Paradise, the famous upscale and racially integrated club at 151<sup>st</sup> Street and 7th Avenue.<sup>43</sup> The geographical subtleties of Harlem, however, were likely lost on many baseball and football fans who entered the area only for sports events and understood Harlem through the lens of

newspapers and television.

The departure of the baseball Giants from New York in 1957 was believed to be the death of the old Polo Grounds. A reporter wrote on September 30: “As the clock atop the ancient, weather-beaten clubhouse in center field read 4:30 P.M. yesterday New York’s oldest baseball institution came to an end. For this was the last game to be played in the historic Polo Grounds, the home of the Giants since 1891.”<sup>44</sup> Others described the day with a funeral tone. A *New York Times* headline was a virtual epitaph: “The New York Giants: 1883-1957.”<sup>45</sup> There were 11,606 at the last game, a 9-1 loss to the Pittsburgh Pirates. As the final out was being recorded, many of these fans were already pouring over the walls and onto the playing field. The players, expecting this, began running across the field towards the centerfield clubhouse. The fans chased them there, a “mass pursuit... touched off by affection, excitement, nostalgia, curiosity and annoyance at the fact the team next year will represent San Francisco,” according to *New York Times* reporter Milton Bracker. Most of the players and coaches made it safely to their clubhouse; Bracker noted, “The players having eluded them, the fans went to work on the field...”<sup>46</sup>

Over the next thirty minutes, many of the crowd unharnessed a fit of destruction. They tore out the regular and warm-up home plates, the wooden base beneath the main plate, two other bases, and the foam rubber protection for outfielders on the center field fences. They broke the bullpen sun-shelter. They stole signs and telephones. Some even ripped a memorial plaque off the centerfield wall. Most looking for a souvenir turned to the field itself. Bracker observed:

The wholesale pulling up of pieces of the turf gave rise to a number of whooping young Indians (not from Cleveland) running around with what looked like the scalps of victims with green hair. Others were content to scrape up handfuls of earth from the infield. Some had brought bags or cans to carry it lovingly away.

Four boys who took the pitcher's rubber onto the subway "acknowledged on the way down town they had no idea what to do with it." Home plate was dragged away "by a young woman who staggered under its weight"; the woman claimed to be a teacher at the St. Andrew School of Greek American Culture at Beechurst, Queens. She embodied the pervasive sense of abandon, as people seemed to momentarily lose their minds in a baseball riot.<sup>47</sup>

Onlookers were variously somber, bitter, and angry at the Giants' departure. One reporter gauged fan responses to a trio of horn players playing the "Giant Victory March," which had historically been played at special events and after wins. The interviewees—a barber from the Bronx, a steam-fitter from Brooklyn, a cab driver from Manhattan, and a 74-year-old housewife from Staten Island—weren't pleased. One suggested that they should have played a funeral march. Another said, "I came here to attend a wake."<sup>48</sup> As some silently mourned and some pillaged, others congregated outside the centerfield clubhouse. They called for their idol, Willie Mays, hoping that he would step out on the steps as so many Giants had over the years, to receive the fans. He didn't. They called for the head of Giants owner Stoneham, chanting, "We want Stoneham! We want Stoneham! We want Stoneham—with a rope around his neck."<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the spirit of the day, the mixture of nostalgia, of anger, of attachment, of resentment that seemed to overwhelm the fans, was best captured in one of the group's final songs as the stadium darkened. To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell," they sang:

We hate to see you go,  
We hate to see you go,  
We hope to hell you never come back—  
We hate to see you go.<sup>50</sup>

An editorial cast the death of the Polo Grounds as a final acquiescence to the inevitable.

Gradually, destiny descended on the shadows of Coogan's Bluff. A new stadium [Yankee Stadium], with more seats, opened across the river, and promoters decided it was a healthier setting for their endeavors. The Polo Grounds was discovered to be inaccessible, one subway wasn't enough for big crowds. Upper Harlem was a poor habitat for the automobile. Congested streets, bottlenecks, and bad parking facilities dimmed the car-driving public's enthusiasm; it took forever to get to and get away from the old park. And, slowly, the city moved in. Apartment houses grew in what space had been available. Finally, even the Giants, the last survivors, surrendered to the tide and moved their home to a new castle.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Polo Grounds after the Giants, 1957-1963**

Though the Giants had left New York and the Polo Grounds, the National Exhibition Company, the corporate face of the Giants, had not. The company owned the stadium, but not the land itself. It leased the plot from the Coogan family in a deal that stretched through April 1962. It thus had the right of occupancy and to sublet, which it did to various groups and events after the Giants moved to San Francisco. Between 1957 and 1961, the stadium hosted sundry entertainments and gatherings, including Catholic masses, a ten-year anniversary of Israel's existence, hurling and gaelic football, a Billy Graham revival, a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses, soccer, ice skating, and rodeo.

The Titans, a new club in the upstart American Football League—a challenger to the National Football League—gave the Polo Grounds a new permanent tenant. The team's formation was announced in August 1959. The Titans signed a two-year lease to play at the Polo Grounds, a deal announced on September 2; the club would pay rent equal to thirteen percent of the club's gross revenue, at a minimum of \$7,500 per game. It also would receive no revenue from parking or concessions.<sup>52</sup>

The Titans arrived to a structure that seemed a cross between an abandoned factory, a run-down apartment building, an untrustworthy ocean liner, and a vacant railroad

roundhouse. On its east end, facing the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue elevated train, white paint flaked off the boxy wall, some portions solid and punched with windows, some screened. The tall centerfield clubhouse centered this end of the stadium; its windowed offices looked like apartments wedged into the scene, or even a guardhouse. The long south side of the structure was coursed with grills, crossing cables, and slanting ramps and railings like low-pitched, stretched-out fire escapes. The north side, facing the housing blocs across the street, seemed a prison, its structural bars crossing vertically and horizontally—a rigid and uninviting geometry. The west end, burrowed up against the Harlem River Speedway and the bluff behind it, connected the parallel flanks with a half circle of dark, gradually pitched roof.

The interior of the stadium was in shocking condition. Seats were broken and covered with grime. Titans coach Sammy Baugh recalled, “It was the dirtiest damn place you ever stepped in.” Reporters found the press box full of pigeon feces. Upon moving in, players claimed that rats had gnawed off the edges of their shoulder pads in the locker room. The playing field was equally inadequate, beset by poor drainage. The water table was only two-to-six feet below the surface, making the turf swampy after heavy rains. Water drained down from Coogan’s Bluff as well, exacerbating the problem.<sup>53</sup>

Trouble with the turf was amplified in 1960, as the facility was used more often. Floyd Patterson defeated Ingemar Johansson there for the heavyweight championship in June. The International Soccer League staged games there throughout the summer, on Sundays. Though use picked up, the National Exhibition Company performed little maintenance on the stands or the field itself. Titans player Don Maynard compared it to “playing in a vacant lot.” The grass was uneven—barren in some places, overgrown in others. There were holes and divots throughout, and even a ravine between the 40-yard lines, which Maynard called

“Wisner’s Gully,” after the Titans’ blowhard owner Harry Wisner.<sup>54</sup>

The Titans drew just 9607 to the regular-season opener, 5727 paid, to a stadium seating over 55,000. Meanwhile, the football Giants attracted 50,000 to a mere exhibition game at the Yale Bowl in New Haven, Connecticut—a suggestion of things to come for the second-class Titans.<sup>55</sup> The Titans avoided staging home games at the same time the Giants played across the river at Yankee Stadium. The strategy of avoiding direct competition with the Giants was ineffective, as fans seemed to prefer watching the televised Giants road games in their homes to schlepping out to the Polo Grounds to watch the Titans.

The club lost almost half a million dollars in its inaugural 1960 season. The official attendance was 114,628, but writer William Ryczek estimated that the actual number of paying customers likely was no more than half that. Wisner’s extravagantly incorrect predictions and proclamations became fodder for newspapers. Reporters sarcastically referred to his announced attendance numbers: one wrote, “The announced attendance of 20,000 refers to arms and legs, or else 15,000 of the 20,000 people came disguised as empty seats.”<sup>56</sup> The Titans’ failure to draw paying fans quickly became part of the club’s identity. Bill Baird, who joined the team in 1963, recalled, “They used to get all the players’ wives and popcorn vendors together so there would be some cheering when we were introduced.”<sup>57</sup> Baugh remembered, “We never had to worry about hostile fans because we always had ‘em outnumbered.”<sup>58</sup>

When the Titans were forced to compete with the Giants directly for attendance, the result was laughable. This occurred in a late October 1962 game in which the two teams played across the river from one another in the same time slot—a choice made not by the Titans, but the AFL, which needed a game for its national television broadcast. In an article



headlined, “Titans Park Cars for Giants’ fans,” Gordon S. White Jr. of the *New York Times*, wrote

There were nearly 2,000 cars at the Polo Grounds parking lot yesterday—a sign of good attendance. Trouble was, it wasn’t a sign of good attendance at the Polo Grounds, where the New York Titans whipped the San Diego Chargers... Most of the persons who drove to the parking lot paid the \$1 parking fee and then walked over the 155<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to the Yankee Stadium, where a crowd of 62,844 watched a rather interesting affair between the Giants and Washington Redskins.

Though the Titans announced a crowd of 21,467, “this was more for local consumption than for Internal Revenue consumption,” White noted. He and others estimated the attendance to be around 7500. The club expressed its marginal status as a serious business entity when it didn’t even turn on the lights as the stadium darkened, though the Chargers had requested it. The Titans’ twenty points in the third quarter finished off the Chargers in the “gloom of the old ball park.”<sup>59</sup>

There were three primary explanations for the Titans’ dismal performance as a business. Reporters pointed to Wismer’s antagonistic personality, which alienated other owners, the league commissioner, and the newspapers alike. They also marveled at his pre-modern method of operation. He ran the team out of his hotel room; reporter Gordon White recalled once seeing all the club’s tickets spread out on a hotel double bed. A third problem for the Titans was the decomposing stadium. Player Gene Heeter claimed, “It was like the Marines in Guadalcanal. You felt, ‘I served my time in hell.’” Weeb Ewbank, who took over as coach of the club in 1963, its final season at the Polo Grounds, judged of the stadium, “It was simply the world’s worst.”<sup>60</sup> Sportswriter Dick Young wrote of one game, “The day was brisk and bright, fine football weather, but the Polo Grounds is still the Polo Grounds, and even a super attraction like the [San Diego] Chargers won’t get the public to knock down the shabby walls.”<sup>61</sup>

The “shabby walls” of the Polo Grounds were destined for demolition. The New York City Board of Estimate decided, in March 1961, to raze the stadium and replace it with low-rent housing. The federally subsidized project would erect four thirty-story towers for more than sixteen hundred families and cost nearly thirty million dollars. The Titans’ lease only ran through 1961. However, the needs of New York’s new National League baseball franchise, the Metropolitan, would stay the stadium’s execution.<sup>62</sup>

The National League gave an investment group from New York a new franchise on October 17, 1960. The club was set to begin play in 1962. Plans called for the club to play at either the Polo Grounds or Yankee Stadium until a new fifty-five-thousand-seat municipal stadium could be constructed in Flushing Meadows, Queens.<sup>63</sup> The Yankees had no interest in helping a competing business get a foothold in its market, and so the Metropolitan Baseball Club, as it would be called, turned to the old baseball grounds in Harlem.

The Mets took up residence with the Titans at the Polo Grounds in 1962, and both clubs would play there through 1963, as delays in the construction of the new Shea Stadium pushed its opening back a year. While the arrival of the Titans at the Polo Grounds hardly registered for most New Yorkers—after all, the able and beloved football Giants played just across the river—the birth of the Mets stirred the emotions of many who had spent many hours in the old park as National League baseball fans and had mournfully witnessed the departure of the baseball Giants and Dodgers years before. Though still the same old stadium, the Polo Grounds was given what a writer called a “herculean” three-hundred-thousand-dollar facelift by the Mets—improvements a new and sparsely funded sports club like the Titans couldn’t afford, but certainly benefited from—including a comprehensive repainting, the regrading and resodding of the playing field, the installation of new reflectors

and lamps in the lighting towers, the unveiling of a new electronic scoreboard in center field, and the creation of the “Met Lounge,” an exclusive cocktail lounge for box seat holders.<sup>64</sup> Though the Polo Grounds hadn’t conjured up much sentiment for old football fans when the Titans moved in—after all, the Giants were still playing just across the river and professional football spectators seemed less sensitive to, sentimental about, or contemplative regarding stadium culture. But for many New York baseball fans, the Polo Grounds was “an old friend, so long unvisited you’d almost forgotten its once familiar, comfortable old face,” according to sportswriter Leonard Shecter—“a place uncounted thousands of us remember going to as boys.”<sup>65</sup>

The Polo Grounds experience, for old-timers, began across the river in the Bronx, as they piled out of the subway or automobiles they had parked near Yankee Stadium, and walked past “the monolithic Yankee Stadium, which never seemed so warm, so friendly, and so comfortably dilapidated as the Polo Grounds,” as Shecter put it. As they crossed the bridge, the stadium came into view, “green and ugly, scrunched into Coogan’s Bluff as though trying to hide its ugliness.” When one neared the park, “there was the delicious odor of roasting peanuts and the cheerful whistling of the vendors’ ovens.”<sup>66</sup> Shecter painted a vivid portrait of the stadium itself, as an icon of a previous age and a perfectly imperfect vessel full of people’s experiences.

It was a ball park of an old and vanishing school, the Polo Grounds, wood rather than concrete, a fortune wasted in obstructed views, yet there was an unmatched intimacy with the game on the field for all of that. Ebbets Field in Brooklyn had it and Griffith Stadium in Washington and the St. Louis ball park before it was torn down... The Polo Grounds was a lovable freak... The charm of the Polo Grounds, as it was for all the old, angular, billboard-decorated baseball parks, was that its shape was a factor in baseball games... It had been five years since a baseball was hit in anger at the Polo Grounds when the Mets got there. It was old and crumbling. Yet there was a style to the old place, and a feeling. This feeling was a mixture of joy and despair, just the ingredients that made up the new team that had come to give the

Polo Grounds its brief respite from inevitable doom. From the very first day the Mets got there till they left it forever after two seasons, that was the emotional mixture at the Polo Grounds, joy and despair.<sup>67</sup>

Like Shecter, sportswriter George Vecsey noted the re-opening of the Polo Grounds for baseball as a rebirth for many old New Yorkers—men in particular. As they crossed the bridge from the Bronx, strangers chatted as they walked to the grounds, embodying “a feeling of community... the kind of closeness that New Yorkers usually permit themselves only in a severe snowstorm or a blackout.” He expanded,

There was an air of surprise, of unexpected good fortune, as if something precious from the past had been born again. It was as if all these men in their heavy early-spring jackets had suddenly grown five years younger. Or it was as if a married man, now living in the suburbs, had visited his favorite old tavern in the old neighborhood and found all his buddies still drinking there.<sup>68</sup>

Writers like Shecter and Vecsey, it should be said, were squarely among the Polo Grounds’ sympathizers—though they weren’t simple nostalgists. They and others like them understood the structural problems the stadium faced, but also embraced it as cultural treasure—a place invested with considerable human feeling not to simply be cast away in the postwar modern spirit of starting new and charging forward. But others were less moved by the stadium’s idiosyncrasies and its historical and place-making import. Bobby Bragan of the Milwaukee Braves had famously called the Polo Grounds “a chamber of horrors.”<sup>69</sup> Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* rated it a “diamond slum,” just a way station before the Mets moved into “a glittering new palace.”<sup>70</sup> Among sportswriters, Robert Creamer was one of the most aggressively antagonistic toward the old stadium.

In the national platform of *Sports Illustrated*, Creamer called the Polo Grounds “ancient,” without a hint of sympathy or feeling. He marveled at the number of people actually attending games there, given the stadium. Among its many vices: the top row of bleachers

were almost six hundred feet from home plate, people in the upper right or upper left stands couldn't see their respective outfielders because of the peculiar shape of the stands, and the view-obstructing support posts, "of which the Polo Grounds has a splendid supply." Creamer complained, "Some seats in the Polo Grounds are behind several posts simultaneously... Watching a game there is like watching it through a picket fence, and the people who sit there sway back and forth continuously during a game, first one way to get a glimpse of the pitcher winding up—as the batter disappears behind the post—and then the other way, abruptly dismissing the pitcher, to watch the batter swing." As a sports theater, Creamer summarized, "The Polo Grounds is a terrible place to watch a ball game." Its failure as a stage was matched by the difficulties in arrival: "The Polo Grounds is also a terrible place to get to." The stadium was "stuck in between a cliff... and a river." It had only one parking lot with one gate, meaning that fans would have to arrive hours before a popular game to get a spot there, while taking nearly an hour to get the car out of the lot at the game's conclusion.<sup>71</sup>

Creamer attributed the early popularity of the Mets, in part, to the Polo Grounds and its idiosyncrasies that had engendered deep identification with fans over the years. As "wretched" as the park was, it was equally "beloved." Creamer argued,

Grown men brainwash their children with its legends; generations of stale cigar smoke linger in the memory like a lovely, elusive perfume; realization that the new Shea Stadium out in Queens will soon be ready for the Mets and that the Polo Grounds will then be torn down and laid waste to make room for a housing project brings tears to the eyes of men sitting behind posts, or those in the upper right-field stands who are wondering what the right fielder is doing. Perversity is a form of love.<sup>72</sup>

This "perversity," as Creamer argued, had its roots in the long traditions of baseball in New York, which had formed distinct fan identities for each club, ballpark, and borough.

The Giants were the city's oldest major-league club, having joined the National League as the "Gothams" in 1883. A juggernaut in the early 1900s, winning ten NL pennants from 1904 to 1924, the club was then associated with "the glamour of Broadway and Wall Street," as Koppett put it. By the 1950s, however, the club had settled into less successful times and was seen as the team of the middle classes, the small businessmen, who wore shirts and ties to the game and passed their box seat season tickets down from father to son.<sup>73</sup> The Yankees, once the upstarts to John McGraw's great Giants teams, had usurped the throne by the late 1920s, becoming the most successful franchise in American sports. They soon were the team of Wall Street, of the tourist, of the casual fan—too successful to be charismatic, their pin stripes signified their aloof and conservative single-mindedness, reflected in their predictable successes on the field. At the bottom of this socio-economic trope were the Brooklynites. The unofficial mascot of the Dodgers was the "bum"—an image crystallized in the cartoons of Willard Mullin of the *New York World-Telegram*. Dodgers fans were loud, antagonistic and famously eccentric. Ebbets Field was the "Coney Island of ballparks" and "the rhubarb patch."<sup>74</sup> Dodgers fans were relentlessly loyal, but continually stymied by their teams—seemingly underdogs even when successful in the 1950s.<sup>75</sup> Giants outfielder Monte Irvin described the difference between Giants and Dodgers supporters, and in the telling revealed the sort of class consciousness that located the Giants in relation to the Dodgers: "We had good fans and the fans the Dodgers had we didn't want anyway. They might have been loyal, but they were not that classy. Around the league, the borough of Brooklyn and its fans were looked down upon—they were considered second-class fans."<sup>76</sup>

Koppett speculated that the different fan identities played a significant role in the racial composition of the clubs. The desegregation of major-league baseball in the late 1940s was

rooted in Brooklyn through the introduction of Jackie Robinson and was quickly adopted by the Giants as well, with players like Irvin, while the Yankees would not field a black player until the mid-1950s. Koppett wrote,

It was fitting in a way that this sociological advance (disgraceful as it was that there existed a position to advance from) take place in Brooklyn; it certainly fit the mood of the existing Dodger fans. Soon there were several outstanding Negro players (only the outstanding need apply, then) in the major leagues, but liberal loyalties were wedded to the Dodgers forever. The Giants followed suit as quickly as they could, and soon boasted Monte Irvin and [Willie] Mays. But the Yankees, from their pinnacle of nobility, moved cautiously and reluctantly and—since they were winning—without urgency. They acquired, quickly, a patina of conservatism that actually helped them with some of their immediate customers but cut them off permanently from any universally warm acceptance by a city of New York's outlook.<sup>77</sup>

George Weiss, general manager of the Yankees, explained the Yankees' position to sportswriter Roger Kahn in 1954. The club feared that signing African-American players would attract an African-American audience, and, according to Weiss, "The truth is that our box seat customers from Westchester County don't want to sit with a lot of colored fans from Harlem." According to Kahn, Yankee owners Dan Topping and Del Webb "had no discernible social conscience" and Weiss, who would become president of the Mets at their inception, simply didn't like blacks.<sup>78</sup>

The image of the Yankees as lily-white, privileged, pin-striped automatons contributed to the hatred many New Yorkers felt for the team in the Bronx. Robert Lipsyte observed, "Yankee-hating was always a kind of perverse pleasure in New York." The Yankees were the team "for the tourists," the Giants were "for the sophisticated fan," and the Dodgers were "for the rabble." Then, noted Lipsyte, "In came the Mets, and Mrs. Joan Payson became a Statue of Liberty for all the huddled masses yearning to see National League baseball again."<sup>79</sup>

Joan Payson was the primary owner of the new club, leading the ownership group and putting up most of the money for the club's entry fee in the National League. A life-long Giants fan, she had been a regular at the Polo Grounds over the years and attempted to purchase the club from Horace Stoneham to prevent its move to San Francisco. Payson had inherited one hundred million dollars in the 1920s, on the death of her father Payne Whitney, and was sister of John Hay "Jock" Whitney, ambassador to Britain and the publisher of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Together they co-owned the Greentree Stable, a major horseracing establishment.<sup>80</sup>

Some commentators treated Payson with some curiosity, not quite sure what to make of a female owner in a man's game—albeit an incredibly wealthy one. Vecsey joked, "People wanted to know if she had bought the team with Green Stamps or scrimped on the family budget or what."<sup>81</sup> An article in *Sports Illustrated* by Alfred Wright suggested the sort of confusion some male sportswriters, fans, and executives felt regarding a female owner.

Wright began

The beautiful Lena Horne sings a song in which the lyrics go, 'Can't stand baseball. The game's insane.' Therein she speaks for virtually her entire gender. Women go to baseball games with their men rather than stay home alone, and some even follow the results in the press so they can appear interested. But few really enjoy the game for its own sake.

Having established that women didn't like baseball, Wright curiously followed with an account of Payson's "addiction" to baseball since childhood, an addiction cultivated by a mother who used to take her to the Polo Grounds. Her mother had been an obsessive fan, having once been a player herself. Seemingly untroubled by the contradictions between these facts and his framing, Wright then regendered Payson appropriate to postwar norms, calling her a "grandmother" with the "approximate proportions of a Wagnerian soprano" who was



“not athletic in her own right.” He noted that many of her memories of sports events were “mingled with the usual milestones in a woman’s life”—a reference to her being a pregnant but present onlooker of the first and famous Jack Dempsey versus Gene Tunney heavyweight boxing fight. Payson’s voice re-entered the text at that point, again seeming to confound Wright’s portrait, noting, “I’ve seen just about every heavyweight championship fight...”<sup>82</sup>

Portrayals of Payson in local media were generally much less concerned with Payson’s status as a woman (and what kind of woman she was). They were perhaps more in tune with the popularity of baseball among many women; after all, the Dodgers, like most major-league clubs, had attracted plenty of female fans in the postwar years. New York media thus didn’t have to perform the rationalizing and rhetorical calisthenics of Wright’s *Sports Illustrated* piece. Yet Payson’s gender remained a subject of curiosity for many—just another feature of the Mets that pushed the club slightly off-center and distinguished it from the straight-laced and traditional Yankees. Payson sometimes appeared as a sort of compatriot to the most iconic Met—Casey Stengel, the “Old Perfessor”—who was in his seventies by the time he took over as field manager of the Mets and whose ballpark philosophizing and clowning provided a perfect voice-over to the tragic performances on the field. The cover of the Mets’ 1964 *Revised Year Book* illustrated the role the two played as a couple, the eccentric heads of state. A broad-chested opposing player, about to step on a “welcome” mat, is distracted by an image of the new Shea Stadium. Hiding behind the image, cartoon versions of Stengel and Payson, outfitted in Mets uniforms, wait with string in hand, attached to the mat, poised to pull it out from under the player.<sup>83</sup>

Lipsyte’s “huddled masses,” those drawn together by the figure of Payson as Statue of

Liberty, quickly became known as the “New Breed.” The identification of a peculiar Mets fan began almost instantly. Robert Teague of the *Times* wrote an article in June 1962 (just three months into the club’s inaugural season) unpacking the figure, which he described as a “warm-hearted mixed-breed... His natural habitat is the Polo Grounds, where he cheerfully and regularly pays from 75 cents to \$3.50 to suffer the exquisite tortures involved in watching the objects of his unbounded affection battle valiantly but vainly against clearly superior forces.”<sup>84</sup> Leonard Shecter observed that the Mets fans, from the start, were not another “collection of bankers on a day off who didn’t know or care about the game. This crowd made noise on every pitch, cheered called balls when the Mets were up, booed strikes.”<sup>85</sup> Mets fans at the Polo Grounds were so loud that some Yankee fans incorrectly thought the club was using canned noise when they broadcast the games over the radio.<sup>86</sup> Mets pitcher Jay Hook claimed,

These people are the real fans. They can’t afford a big night out but they’ll pay to get into the park and have their fun cheering. They enjoy themselves. They aren’t tourists, like you see in some ball parks. I’ve never seen fans like this. When I get knocked out early, I sit in the stands and listen to them. We can be down, 9-0, but they’ll be cheering for a rally. They know the game, too. We’ve really got the best of the old Bums and Giants, don’t we?<sup>87</sup>

Many observers echoed Hook’s observation—that the Mets fused the old fan traditions of the Dodgers and the Giants, seemingly in a quirky alliance against the hyper-achieving Yankees. Mets supporters came from all over the city, taking subways and buses from Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, or walking to the park from Harlem and Washington Heights. White suburban fans stayed away at first, discouraged by the lack of parking, fearful of Harlem and, as Vecsey put it, “whatever it was that had driven them out of the city in the first place.” But even some of these white, middle-class suburban fans began coming to the stadium over the course of the Mets’ two years at the Polo Grounds. The stadium itself

worked to fuse its visitors together, creating a distinct and shared identity. While the uncomfortable and aged stadium didn't "encourage new fans, particularly women," as Vecsey noted, it did bring together New York's refugee baseball supporters who had been rejected by the relocation of the Dodgers and Giants in 1957. The old stadium had been made the "private Guernica" of Harlem's pigeons, the seats were too small, and irrational, tight corridors often led into dead-ends; however, the intimacy and history of the Polo Grounds sprouted a distinct fan culture.<sup>88</sup>

Leonard Koppett theorized that the New Breed shared a spirit with the Kennedy Era, "hopeful, forward-looking, sophisticated, humorous, and exciting." Both Kennedy and the Mets appealed to the young—something that not only irked Weiss, but the Yankees as well. Koppett constructed a New Breed taxonomy, sketching various branches of the fan base. First, there were the rebellious teenagers, whose older siblings or fathers had supported the Dodgers, Giants, or Yankees. Second, there were the intellectuals, who being "more enlightened, better educated, more serious," fashionably avoided spectator sports. Many, Koppett theorized, had grown up with an attachment for sports that they had abandoned in their later sophistication. For them, the Mets could be an escape that they could pass off "as camp, as parody of the less sophisticated" or a team they could embrace as a gesture of solidarity with the have-nots because "support for any underdog was an acceptable stand for any intellectual." Last, there were the true underdogs, those that the intellectuals sympathized with. It was clear to all that the Mets were victims of a system that set them up for failure—the distribution system of players for the expansion clubs essentially had forced the Mets and Houston Colt .45s, who also joined the league in 1962, to buy the other clubs' worst contracts and marginal players, thus equipping their rosters with players that not only

weren't very good, but were relatively expensive (simultaneously unburdening the older clubs of those players). Koppett concluded, "For the black, the poor, the henpecked, and the underage, this was strong material for identification."<sup>89</sup>

The New Breed was, at least in the minds of writers, a cross-class, cross-race, cross-age democratic ideal, and the Polo Grounds was the home of this motley assembly. Vecsey wrote,

People who would sneer at each other in the subways or in a bar began talking to each other in the Polo Grounds. They had something wonderful in common—they loved the Mets. They were the 'New Breed,' whether they were whites buying the standard rubber hot dog or youngsters carrying sandwiches or Negroes wisely bringing in their own fried chicken. I have been in every ball park in the major leagues but have never seen as many chicken bones as there were in those first seasons in the Polo Grounds.<sup>90</sup>

The symbolic weight that the Mets fans were asked to bear, or willingly celebrated, made them cause for regular armchair psychoanalysis. A New York psychologist argued that Mets fans were the types of people who couldn't bear success because of their unconscious fears of displacing their fathers.<sup>91</sup> Another drew the distinction with the Yankees as the Establishment, whose symbol was a top hat and whose name conjured images of "founding fathers and New England aristocracy." Contrasted with this, the Mets' symbol, Mr. Met, a baseball with a face, was a "kind of John Q. Public caricature" and the club's name signified a "polyglot melting pot." Others simply viewed the Mets craze as the "defiance of authority."<sup>92</sup> Cynical Robert Creamer called the Mets fans a "quaint cult," writing,

In New York there is no question but that rooting for the Mets is the right thing to do; it is smart, it is right, it is In. The boys in the advertising dodge, always alert to trends (narrow brims, vodka Martinis, pro football), are Met fans almost to a man and are up on all the latest deprecatory gags. Intellectuals who still confess an ignorance of TV ("I really don't get a chance to watch it") rally around the Mets.<sup>93</sup>

Others too seemed to resent what Creamer called "the carnival." For player Richie Ashburn,

“a Goldwater Republican from Nebraska,” as described by Vecsey, “the Met mystique sounded like a creeping socialism.” Ashburn offered, “I don’t think it’s a moral victory to get the tying run to second base against the Dodgers. What good is that. Winning is the only thing. They shouldn’t settle for losing good.”<sup>94</sup>

Within this broader category of the New Breed, Robert Lipsyte identified a sub-genre that he called the “Metophile.”<sup>95</sup> The Mets and their Metophiles together, according to a “shabby-eyed old man” Lipsyte found in the Polo Grounds bleachers, were “just folks, like me. They go out every day, they get knocked around, pushed down. They have to get up and come back for more.” Lipsyte painted a fuller portrait. The Metophile was “5 feet 8 inches tall, weighs 166 pounds, was 43 years old on his last birthday and has lost considerable hair.” A skilled laborer with a family, he lived in a small apartment and owned one good suit. On hot August days at the park, “he is likely to take his shirt off in the bleachers.” The Metophile was the dreamer, the underdog, the man who hoped that “one day he will punch that arrogant foreman at the plant square on his fat nose; that he will get in the last word with his wife; that he will win the Irish Sweepstakes; that the Mets will start a winning streak.” Yankee fans, of course, looked down on the Mets as “laughable, disgraceful—an essence of rabble.” To the Metophile, these Yankee fans were “that stuffed-shirt at the bank who refused his loan application, the haughty maitre d’ who seemed to sneer at everything he ordered: all those men who seem to be winners, to be in complete and supercilious control, who make people feel inferior and less intelligent.” Lipsyte figured that the “pure Metophile” would be gone from the stadium in a few years, replaced by “more ordinary people” as the Mets progressed from “incompetency to mediocrity,” success became more important, and the “psychological pull” of the ragtag underdogs dissipated.

Lipsyte's *New York Times* story was accompanied by cartoon illustrations of the fans. The Yankee fan wore a bow tie and coat, a narrow-brimmed hat, and sat stoically twiddling his thumbs as a baseball flew overhead. The Metophile, sobbing, wore an undone straight tie, no coat, and a rumpled hat, his shirtsleeves rolled up to expose hairy forearms, his hands contorted and shaking, as a paper airplane flying overhead. Another illustration featured a slim and modern Yankee fan in a trim suit and hat carrying a newspaper, frowning, unimpressed at the headline, "Yanks win again." A Met fan glowered at him, wearing baggy, rumpled clothes, sleeves rolled, an undone tie, and a flat cap on sideways. His big flat nose, heavy brow, and neck-less frame distinguished him fully from the sharp Anglo-Saxon features of the Yankee. He held a Mets pennant that dropped and dragged on the ground, signifying the club's routine impotence.

Lipsyte pegged these contrasting personalities to their built environments. He asserted, "The Stadium is large, well-groomed, handsome and forbidding. It has the intimacy of a bank. The Polo Grounds is warm, ramshackle and as clubby as a tenement stoop." Policemen who had worked at both stadiums called the Yankee Stadium crowd "quiet, orderly and inoffensive," whereas the "Polo Grounders are loud, often rowdy, more hostile to the authority of a uniform, and are seemingly perched along the edges of hysteria." A middle-aged woman who collected for charity at the games said that crowds at Yankee Stadium gave her dimes and quarters, while she was "grateful for nickels at the Polo Grounds." Illustrations of the stadiums accompanying the article reinforced these distinctive images. Yankee Stadium was cast as a tidy, decked box, with flags on each corner, and a baseball flying out. Two birds hovered undisturbed overhead, and a slim fir tree accented the outside. The Polo Grounds looked like a box about to explode—its walls bulging

outward and shaking. Garbage, dust, and curses flew out of grounds that were decorated outside with a dead tree, weeds, and rocks.<sup>96</sup>

Lipsyte granted that he was painting with broad brushstrokes, noting that most people who went to games weren't self-consciously aligning themselves with the Establishment or rebellion. Many who followed the Yankees, he wrote, were born in the Bronx, or had fathers who were fans, or were attached to a certain player. Many who went to the Polo Grounds liked to just sit in the sun, or watch National League baseball, or "bask in the publicized sentimentality of Coogan's Bluff." But these majorities were just people who liked baseball; they would never "feel the serene contentment of the Yankee fan when the ledger-neat patterns of order and regularity emerge victorious." Nor would they "ever feel the unbounded joy of the Metophile on the days when the underdog leaps up to bite the hand that oppresses it."

Whether timidly settling for losing, expressing their underdog identity and solidarity, caring deeply in baseball's intricacies, enjoying the last go-round at the Polo Grounds, simply taking pleasure in a summer night out, or some combination of all these, the New Breed was a vessel full of meaning, attention, and self-awareness. In its short time at the Polo Grounds, the New Breed quickly developed its own tics, habits, and symbols like Brooklyn's old Ebbets Field. Whereas Ebbets had the rotund, cowbell-wielding icon, Hilda Chester, the Polo Grounds had the "Mother of the Mets," described by Vecsey as a "big-boned Negro woman who had spent her years working for a wealthy family."<sup>97</sup> First baseman Marv Throneberry, or "Marvelous Marv," became an ironic icon for the club, symbolic of the team's broader ineptitude.<sup>98</sup> After games, fans at the Polo Grounds would walk across the field to the clubhouse in center field, stand at the bottom of the stairs, and call for one of the

day's heroes (mostly tragic heroes in losses), and the player would have to dress and come back out to the top of the stairs to wave, as Shecter put it, "like Il Duce from a Roman balcony."<sup>99</sup> But certainly the most visible accent of New Breed culture—both visually evident and widely discussed—was the banner.

The homemade banners initially displayed by Mets fans at the Polo Grounds were, in the words of Koppett, "to become the life blood of Metdom." They were first witnessed in the first home series against the Giants and Dodgers in late May 1962. Initially park police and ushers tried to stop the use of banners; Mets president George Weiss thought them undignified, or as Vecsey put it, "unbecoming in such a holy place as a ball park," as well as an obstruction to other spectators' views. Fans were ejected, but newspapermen treated their plight sympathetically, particularly the influential Dick Young. As the press objected, fans returned with more banners, and Weiss was forced to either take a stand or relax his standards. Met management relented, and fans became more inventive. Weiss was slow to realize how effective the banners were in creating a sense of atmosphere and franchise identity, but even he began to catch on.<sup>100</sup> By the next year, the Mets were hosting an official "Banner Day." Even then, Weiss, ever the traditionalist of the Yankee Stadium pedigree, was reported to survey the scene and mutter, "These people... these noisy people with their bedsheets... Where do they come from?... Why don't they keep quiet?"<sup>101</sup> In the two years at the Polo Grounds, these banners were informal inventions, made of old sheets or towels, handwritten and often misspelled.<sup>102</sup> The banners of the New Breed were sometimes self-deprecating ("We Love Our Mets—Run Sheep Run"), intellectual ("Eamus Metropoli," or "Let's Go Mets" in Latin), and almost always playful ("METS SI, YANKEES NO").<sup>103</sup>

While the Polo Grounds became a temporary reincarnation of Ebbets Field—ironic



given the long history of antagonism between the Dodgers and the stadium's long-time occupants, the Giants—the park was always just a way station as the new municipal stadium was constructed, with ample delay, in Queens. Those who thumbed through the club's 1962 *Year Book* at the ballpark were largely regaled with visions of the new stadium being built in Flushing Meadows, the “most convenient, comfortable and attractive public arena on the eastern seaboard,” promised to open in April 1963. The program included a brief note on the Polo Grounds, where the reader likely sat as he or she read, framing it as “the scene of many an historic moment” in baseball, football, and boxing over the previous half century. It was “fitting,” the club claimed, that the Mets should “pause here before moving on the fabulous new Flushing Meadows Stadium, for a great deal of National League history was made in this very park.” Toward the end of the volume was a dedication to another of New York's historic stadiums, Ebbets Field. It was a place constant with “moments of greatness and... moments of zaniness. It well could be that the latter outbalanced the former but all were equally enjoyable to the Dodger fan.” This gesture towards the history of Brooklyn, and attempt to unite the existing (and antagonistic) fan traditions of the Giants and Dodgers (as signified by the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field), was characteristic of broader narratives of the Mets that had and would continue to develop over the years, through which the Mets fans were psychoanalyzed as successors to an eccentric, heterogeneous, and urban identity to be contrasted not only with the staid, conservative success of the Yankees but also the clean-cut affluence of the new suburban classes.<sup>104</sup>

### **Plans for a modern stadium**

The “fabulous new Flushing Meadows Stadium,” as it was called before being renamed after

William Shea—a figure instrumental in the acquisition of the new major-league team and construction of the stadium to house it—was located approximately six-and-a-half miles due east of Central Park, seven miles southeast of the Polo Grounds, and eight-and-a-half miles northeast of Ebbets Field. It was in Queens, the easternmost of the city’s five boroughs, and bordered by the neighborhood of Flushing to the east, the World’s Fair site to the south, Flushing Bay to the north, and the neighborhood of Corona to the west. Flushing was the oldest continuously settled community in the area, originally established in the mid-1600s. In the early 1960s, downtown Flushing—just east of the stadium—was home to Jewish, Irish, Italian, and German American communities.<sup>105</sup> The area had become a destination for many from Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx in the postwar years and had acquired a distinctively middle-class image. The subway connected downtown Flushing to Grand Central Station in just forty-five minutes. Its tree-lined streets, private homes, and new apartment buildings were joined with local shopping and “respectable” schools.<sup>106</sup> Corona, to the west of the stadium, was an African-American community of middle- and lower-middle-income residents, made up of two- and four-family dwellings. Its most famous resident was Louis Armstrong, who had moved there in 1943 and whose home was less than a half-mile from the stadium site.<sup>107</sup> This neighborhood was largely disconnected from the stadium however; Shea Stadium turned its back to Corona—opening, instead, towards downtown Flushing—and was physically separated from the neighborhood by a multi-lane freeway.

Flushing Meadows was a salt meadow, connected via Flushing Creek to Flushing Bay, north of the stadium site. Contractor Michael Degnon had begun buying land along the creek in 1907, in hopes of eventually constructing a port for large cargo ships facing

Flushing Bay. Degnon bought garbage and ashes, heaping it in the meadow, to provide a foundation for his construction—made famous by F. Scott Fitzgerald’s reference to the area as the “Valley of the Ashes” in *The Great Gatsby*. Flushing Meadows remained little more than a dump until 1937, when Robert Moses began to prepare the site to host the 1939 World’s Fair. The first proposal for a stadium there was made in November 1940, when the Chamber of Commerce of the Rockaways in Queens and Chamber president Andrew J. Kenny began to petition the City of New York to build a stadium for sports and entertainment.<sup>108</sup> Another was proposed in 1956, when Moses suggested the city build a stadium there for use by O’Malley’s Dodgers—a prospect O’Malley was as opposed to as Moses was to a new stadium in downtown Brooklyn.

Plans for a new stadium were advanced in late 1959, the Dodgers and Giants having departed the city in 1957. In a letter to the Board of Estimate, Moses laid out plans for a fifty-five-thousand-seat stadium “designed to support a movable roof” at some future point after initial construction.<sup>109</sup> The new stadium would be used for “public exhibitions and particularly by the proposed third big league baseball association,” a reference to the planned Continental League being organized by former Dodgers co-owner Branch Rickey and William Shea to compete with the existing major leagues. The cost of the new stadium would be fifteen million dollars, with an additional one-hundred-fifty-thousand-dollar fee for the architectural-engineering firm, Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury, and the cost of borings at twenty thousand dollars.<sup>110</sup> A month later, the Board of Estimate appropriated one hundred seventy thousand dollars for preliminary engineering plans for a Flushing Meadows Park stadium. The contract called for a fifty-five-thousand-seat stadium (that could later be expanded to eighty thousand) and a seven-thousand-car parking lot. It requested cost

estimates for the construction of a movable dome atop the stadium. The Board anticipated a “possible” completion date of April 1, 1961—to meet, as Moses requested, the opening day of the Continental League’s inaugural season in 1961.<sup>111</sup>

The only objections to the proposal for the Flushing Meadows site came from City Council President Abe Stark (whose name recognition had been amplified over the years thanks to his famous “Hit Sign, Win Suit” sign at Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field) and Brooklyn Borough President, John Cashmore, who, according to the *New York Times*, “clung to the hope that major league baseball might be brought back to that borough with an enlarged and modernized Ebbets Field.”<sup>112</sup> Shelving his dissent, Cashmore defended the plans for the new stadium the following day. He claimed that the city “must be prepared to build a large, modern stadium with extensive parking facilities... We must be prepared to build on a scale that surpasses anything we have seen in the city heretofore. We must match and surpass the standards set by other cities if New York is to maintain its position among the cities of the nation.”<sup>113</sup> Cashmore’s call to arms revealed the priorities and goals of the modern stadium more generally: it should be large and modern, it should be automobile oriented, and it should be a civic status symbol, outstripping other cities’ facilities.

Shea made his dreams of a retractable roof public in November 1959, a feature that would make the stadium useful during inclement weather and during the winter months. The cost of the roof, according to Shea, would be around \$1.75 million. This price, “less than half” of any other retractable roof schemes, was possible due to what Shea called the “advantage of modern engineering methods.”<sup>114</sup> He claimed, “I’m sure that everyone, particularly the fans, will agree with me that this roof, or one similar in principle, as well as elevators, moving stairs and a convertible seating arrangement, should be included in the

final plans for making the Flushing Meadows stadium the finest and most modern stadium in the country.” To be “modern” was to be fully technologized and adaptable to the needs of any type event. Shea’s articulation of the modern in the *Times* report was accompanied by an illustration of a possible retractable roof arrangement. In it the stadium was expressively modern: a smooth-faced oval structure sat precisely in the center of a circular, symmetrical parking lot bordered by trees. A smooth arch—resembling Eero Saarinen’s Gateway Arch design for St. Louis—soared two hundred ten feet over the stadium’s outfield. A series of evenly spaced cables, which would support a retractable plastic covering, stretched down connecting to the roof below. With the cityscape in the background, it looked like a clean, modern oasis, in the midst of a forest, far from the city.<sup>115</sup>

In April 1960, Mayor Robert Wagner announced that the stadium, then priced at fifteen million dollars, would definitely be built. Plans called for the possibility that twenty-five thousand seats could be added at a cost of \$5 million, along with a \$3.5 million roof. The project would include parking for fifty-five hundred cars. At a press conference, Parks Department official Stuart Constable emphasized the stadium’s accessibility thanks to the one hundred million dollars in new highways servicing the area.<sup>116</sup> The following day, Shea elaborated on the plans, claiming it was “increasingly likely” that the stadium would have a dome for its opening, which had been pushed back to 1962. This roof would be financed by private capital, outside of the city’s bond financing. He introduced a “new feature” of the stadium as well: movable seating sections at the bottom, eleven thousand seats in all, which would pivot on tracks to accommodate football games. Shea hoped for the eventual addition of a five-million-dollar bleacher section in the stadium’s open end that would increase capacity by about twenty-five thousand. Until then, Shea promised, some seats would be

sold at the cheaper, bleacher-seat rate.<sup>117</sup>

Plans for a new stadium met some objections and resistance. Soon-to-be Mets president George Weiss, then general manager of the Yankees, told *The Saturday Evening Post*,

It's damned unfair for a stadium financed by public funds to operate against a private corporation that pays the city \$200,000 in taxes. Anyone who says the park will pay for itself is crazy. Every municipal stadium in the country is a white elephant. The bidding for big attractions is so intense the plant has to be given away practically rent-free. The city won't lift a finger to help us get the parking space we need desperately at Yankee Stadium, but it's ready to pour money down the drain to accommodate the Continental League.<sup>118</sup>

Bronx president James J. Lyons lined up with his borough's team, criticizing the plan as an improper use of park land and expenditure of public funds. Abe Stark said he would insist on a clause in the lease requiring that games never be broadcast on pay-television. One letter to the editor complained, "It is inconceivable for me to understand the morality or logic of our city being prepared to 'absorb' the additional cost of a new municipal stadium while failing to maintain minimal hospital care. In particular I refer to the situation at Harlem Hospital."<sup>119</sup>

Over the force of these objections, the Board of Estimate formally approved contracts and financing for the stadium on March 22, 1961, by which point the stadium had become an \$18,327,140 project. Parks Commissioner Newbold Morris hoped that it might still be ready for the 1962 season. The low bid on the stadium had come from engineer-architect Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury, for \$16,765,578, with \$335,311 planned for contingencies and \$1,062,500 set aside for design and supervising fees and other minor charges. The Board planned to authorize Controller Lawrence E. Gerosa to issue \$15,538,750 of thirty-year bonds to finance the construction. The remainder would come from other sources that would be reimbursed in later capital budgets.

The Parks Department estimated that stadium revenue over the course of the thirty-year period would be just over thirty-seven million dollars. With expenses of \$36.8 million the stadium would generate a surplus of \$284,681. The department estimated income of \$9.6 million from the baseball club's rentals over thirty years, \$6 million in rentals for other events, \$8.4 million from parking fees for commuters using the adjacent IRT train station, and \$12 million from stadium event parking.

Controller Gerosa was bothered by the plans and estimates, calling for a referendum on the stadium proposal. He estimated that revenues over the thirty-year period would be ten million dollars less than the cost. He told a Bronx Lions Club, "Nothing in the proposed lease favors the city. Everything favors the club: the rentals, the concessions, the parking fees and the radio and television rights." He suggested expanding the capacity to 100,000 for the stadium to pay for itself and that the city operate the structure as opposed to leasing it out to the baseball club.<sup>120</sup>

The Metropolitan Baseball Club—which had shifted its allegiance from the planned but unrealized Continental League to the established National League in late 1960—signed a thirty-year lease with the city on October 6, 1961.<sup>121</sup> The lease called for a minimum rent of \$450,000 in the first season, with an annual reduction of \$20,000 per season thereafter until reaching \$300,000, which would be the annual rate for the remainder of the thirty-year term. The club had an option at the end of the contract for a ten-year renewal at renegotiated rates. It would exercise exclusive control over concessions, except for particular aspects of parking. The city could, however, demand a percentage payment applicable to concessions receipts instead of flat yearly rates.

Gerosa cast the only dissenting votes at a special meeting of the Board of Estimates. He

estimated that the city would receive \$9.6 million in rentals from the club, which would not cover the \$10.8 million of debt service costs and \$5.2 million in maintenance. Newbold Morris reasserted claims approximate to earlier estimates, suggesting that the city would bring in \$39.5 million in revenues to offset the \$38.4 million in expenses (which included debt service and maintenance).<sup>122</sup>

In spite of Gerosa's objections, stadium plans went forward. Ground was broken on October 28, 1961, marked by speeches from John T. Clancy, borough president of Queens, Mayor Robert Wagner, and Robert Moses, as president of the World's Fair. Moses's remarkably bloviating speech began by citing Titus's opening of the Colosseum; invoked Rabelaisian taverns, the Rape of the Sabines, and *The Great Gatsby*; took sportswriters to task, gored Walter O'Malley, and concluded that through the stadium's groundbreaking, "My faith in the ultimate triumph of the democratic process has been restored." Shea would be like the "playing fields of Eton" that had, according to the Duke of Wellington, prepared the British to win the Battle of Waterloo; Moses promised, "Many a future American triumph will have its origin in the Flushing Meadow Stadium."<sup>123</sup> Guy Lombardo, a popular bandleader whose sound evoked a previous era, played at the event; Moses was a committed Lombardo supporter. A program for the groundbreaking was enhanced with architectural renderings of the stadium and its exterior, advertised the stadium's accessibility via private automobile, subway, or railroad, the rotatable seating banks, the column-less views of fans, and the ease of movement inside via ramps, escalators, and elevators. "Every consideration," writers from the Parks Department assured officials, "has been given to the safety, convenience, comfort and pleasure of visitors."<sup>124</sup> Though considered and often trumpeted, a costly roof was not included in the stadium plans; many hoped it would be added to the stadium after its



opening.

Most writers seemed to accept the stadium as a necessary replacement for the out-of-date Polo Grounds, while others advocated openly for it and some loudly opposed it. A major proponent was Dick Young of the *Daily News*.<sup>125</sup> Other writers critiqued the plans. Joe Williams of the *World Telegram & Sun* looked at the rising costs of the stadium and the lack of transparency from Moses and the city and feared New Yorkers would “wind up with the biggest white elephant this side of the Caspian Sea... and traditionally, the big town has always cherished the biggest in all things.” He cited councilman Stanley Isaacs, another vocal opponent, who said, “If there were even a remote chance that the stadium would pay off, private capital would have financed it.” Williams and others weren’t necessarily opposed to any stadium—many thought, like Controller Gerosa, that a larger stadium would be more likely to be self-sustaining—but they were opposed to the stadium as it was being designed and executed, materially and politically.<sup>126</sup>

Opponents of the project may have watched with some disgust (or satisfaction) as the stadium’s opening date was continually pushed back and the cost of the project climbed over twenty-five million dollars. Originally pegged for 1961, the opening of Shea Stadium—named for William Shea, who had played such a central role in securing a major-league club for the city—was re-scheduled for 1962, then 1963, and finally April 1964. As the stadium neared completion, many began to contemplate what it would mean for the Mets as they moved from the old Polo Grounds to the new Shea.

### **From tenement to suburb: stadium discourse**

A close analysis of stadium discourse reveals the emergence of certain ways of writing

and thinking about the move. Because of the platforms the city's sportswriters enjoyed, speaking to hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of people in New York, their interpretations of the new and old stadiums were particularly influential. This influence would have been compounded in the run-up to the actual opening, before area residents had the chance to visit the stadium itself. Their writing acted as a "threshold" to the stadium, framing it for many and steering their interpretation of the space.<sup>127</sup>

Many of New York's most prominent sportswriters shared an imaginary of the Polo Grounds and Shea Stadium and engaged, some more actively than others, urban and suburban tropes (such as comparing them to tenements and suburban homes) to describe and narrate these spaces. In doing so, they crystallized and advanced an interpretation of these stadiums that dramatized a major issue of the time: the modernization of the city and the suburbanization of its population. These discursive formulations pre-coded these stadiums for future visitors, constructing meanings for these spaces before consumers physically experienced them. Commanding large audiences as they did, these writers predisposed readers to also interpret these stadiums, at least in part, as referenda on urban and suburban landscapes and their underlying value systems. As such, the stadium became something much more meaningful than just a container for sports entertainment: stadiums metonymically signified the city broadly and validated the urban and suburban changes occurring in the early 1960s.

It was common to refer to a ballpark as a club's "home," before and after this period when the meaning of "home" was changing dramatically. The simple use of the home as metaphor for a stadium is not a historically particular turn of phrase. However, the residential trope was employed more substantially in the case of the Polo Grounds and Shea

Stadium, particularly in the months leading up to, and shortly after, the stadium's opening. This rhetorical figure was particularly weighty and meaningful at a time when the private home had become the iconic signifier of identity and status, the ultimate consumer possession, a symbol of postwar security, and the jewel of the "American Dream."<sup>128</sup>

Many New York writers used a housing trope when the new stadium was debuted in the spring of 1964. Maury Allen called it the "house that patience built" in the *New York Post*.<sup>129</sup> Larry Van Gelder of the *New York World-Telegram* claimed that the Mets "took up residence" at Shea, being "the only team in the world to parlay cellar occupancy into penthouse profits."<sup>130</sup> Milton Gross, of the *New York Post*, wrote of the relocation from the Polo Grounds to Shea Stadium as though it embodied the aspiring spirit that might accompany one's move from urban borough to suburb. Though he confessed some affection for the old stadium, Gross referred variously to "the slum of the Polo Grounds, "the tenement atmosphere of the Polo Grounds," and "the slum on the Harlem." He also called it a "shanty" and a "junk heap." On the other hand, Shea Stadium was a "palace" and "the Versailles on the Meadow."<sup>131</sup> *Newsday's* Stan Isaacs claimed he would miss the Polo Grounds, where he had as much fun as he had ever had watching baseball, although it was, in his words, "outmoded, oversized, dilapidated, dirty, [and] old." He likened the new Shea to a "split-level palace," gesturing towards the popular suburban split-level ranch houses of the time.<sup>132</sup> Writing in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Jimmy Breslin called Ebbets Field, Brooklyn's old park and contemporary of the Polo Grounds, "a broken-down place that seemed like a small apartment with the in-laws staying over." On the other hand, Shea Stadium "climbs out of a parking lot... in Flushing Meadow, which always was considered the start of the suburbs. It climbs five levels high and is spread out like a big split-level."<sup>133</sup> While people

wrote about the Polo Grounds and Shea Stadium in many different ways, employing a range of descriptions and fixating on various characteristics, the primary recurring rhetorical trope was that of urban and suburban living.

It is no wonder that tenements and split-level suburban houses were on people's minds. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, many New Yorkers left the central city, with its aging and scarce housing stock, to occupy split-level suburban houses in the rapidly growing, governmentally subsidized suburbs outside the city's five boroughs. The suburban counties of Westchester (NY), Nassau (NY), Suffolk (NY), Bergen (NJ), and Fairfield (CT) exploded from 2.6 million people in 1950 to 4.2 million just ten years later. While the total population of New York City didn't change drastically over the decade, dropping from 7.9 to 7.8 million, the makeup of that population shifted dramatically. There were nearly five hundred thousand fewer white residents in the five boroughs in 1960 than there were in 1950, replaced by three hundred and forty thousand African-American residents.<sup>134</sup> Much of the black population growth was concentrated in areas like Harlem and Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant. Coincidentally, New York's two national league baseball parks, the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field, were proximate to these areas of black population growth. Not so coincidentally, these two parks were regularly branded as "obsolete" throughout the 1950s as many fretted over changes in the neighborhoods (changes that were both actual and anticipated). If the term "split-level" called to mind the burgeoning suburban landscape outside the city, the term "tenement," when used in the New York City newspapers in 1963 and '64, usually signified old and run-down buildings, often located in the city's poorer areas like Bedford-Stuyvesant and Harlem. These newspaper articles often recounted fires, rat bites, and maliciously negligent landlords. As such, the rhetorical connection of the Polo

Grounds to tenements likely scored an unfavorable impression of the old ballpark on reader minds.

New York City confronted the physical decline of urban neighborhoods with plans to modernize the city, making it cleaner, more functional, and more car friendly. One approach would convert it from a “mass positive” to “space positive” built environment.<sup>135</sup> Under the city’s 1916 zoning ordinance, city blocks were filled with buildings; streets and avenues provided space in a traditional urban arrangement. New zoning regulations enlisted in 1960 encouraged independent skyscraper slabs in plazas or public housing towers in the midst of green spaces. Such developments were geared both towards arresting urban blight and making the city more amenable to private automobile traffic. The powerful and effective Robert Moses was particularly concerned with reworking the city to the needs of the car; his projects profoundly shaped urban renewal there and literally paved the way for suburbanization via his bridges and expressways to and from the city.

Modern urban planning ideology in the 1950s fundamentally undermined traditional neighborhoods, either by literally leveling them to make way for new roadways, public housing, or private developments, or by so altering their situation within the city as to thoroughly change the neighborhood’s character. The most visible critic of clean-sweep modern planning was Jane Jacobs. Jacobs publicly and regularly attacked Le Corbusier’s vision of a so-called “Radiant City” of towering slabs, motorways, and green spaces. In her much-discussed book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, Jacobs promoted the traditional, mixed-use neighborhood that was messy and diverse but functional at a level overlooked by top-down urban planners. Jacobs’s contemporary nemesis was, of course, Robert Moses. Battles over the direction of postwar New York

raged in the early 1960s, most prominently visible in Moses's attempts to take a "meat-axe" to existing neighborhoods to make room for new expressways and developments versus Jacobs's vocal and well-publicized resistance to such schemes. It should come as no surprise that Shea Stadium was a Moses project, as it fully embodied his modern planning ideology. Like the "space positive" modern urban landscape, Shea Stadium sat alone, distinct, in the midst of a massive parking lot, at the intersections of roadways. It was separate and individualized, like so many glass office slabs in plazas, towering public housing buildings arranged around courtyards, and independent suburban houses in Nassau County. This distinguished it from old stadiums like the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field, so implicated in their physical environments.

It's understandable that a highly visible, publicly funded stadium project like Shea Stadium might have become a metonym for the modernization of the city and the suburbanization of its countryside in the hands of New York's writers. Two commentators who plumbed this urban-suburban figure more deeply than others were Robert Lipsyte of the *New York Times* and Roger Angell of *The New Yorker*. Each considered the move from the Polo Grounds to Shea Stadium more philosophically than other writers, Lipsyte more antagonistically, Angell more elegiacally. Lipsyte introduced the housing metaphor in April 1963, a full year before Shea opened (and thus, a year before anyone started actually using the facility). Lipsyte claimed the Polo Grounds to be "warm, ramshackle and as clubby as a tenement stoop."<sup>136</sup> Two months later, he wrote again of "the rickety, six-to-a-bedroom, tenement-stoop clubbiness" of the Polo Grounds. It was a place where, Lipsyte argued, "a man can relax, strip down to his mental undershirt and let his stomach sag... After all, man, you've got family around." He glumly anticipated the move of the Mets into Shea Stadium,

with its modern comforts and conveniences, worrying, “It will be different in Queens, that smug borough of bourgeois achievement with its nouveau riche stadium.”<sup>137</sup>

In a full-throated rant published just days after Shea’s opening in April 1964, Lipsyte continued to sound the warning he had prefigured the previous year: that the move to Shea Stadium would fundamentally alter the nature (and meaning) of the Mets, in fact ending what he called “the Era of the Mets.” Shea would be an oasis for suburban values, with the New Breed giving way to the “antiseptic suburban Met fans.” Lipsyte claimed that Shea Stadium was built in Queens “because it’s the gateway to the suburbs, to all the neatness and conformity and togetherness and bourgeois values.” He predicted that the team on the field would improve, “as befitting their clean, modern, character-less new home.” The crowds would grow and Shea would be “THE PLACE” to be. The Polo Grounds-era Met fans, Lipsyte wrote, would have to “crawl back into the rooming houses and doorways and lofts and tenaments [sic] whence they came.” Those fans, the men who liked to take off their shirts and “loose the aggressions and invective,” would have no other option than to go to the Bronx and, according to Lipsyte, “join 2,000 other members of the Old New Breed at old, clubby, friendly, urban Yankee Stadium.”<sup>138</sup> This is, of course, the same Yankee Stadium that Lipsyte had claimed, just one year earlier, had all the intimacy of a bank: to call Yankee Stadium “clubby” in relation to Shea Stadium was an insult of considerable order.

Lipsyte’s imaginary proposed the Polo Grounds as an expression of “tenement” culture—ramshackle, rickety, and crowded. “Clubby” was a key term, seeming to signify an explicitly expressive, implicitly masculine subculture of hollering, shirtless men unburdened by self-consciousness. He claimed this liberation existed because one had “family around,” though he clearly wasn’t talking about the idealized postwar nuclear family—rather, an

extended family of fellow sagging stomachs. Shea Stadium, on the other hand, was less tangibly rendered, an ideological straw man, a collection of “bourgeois values” like neatness, smugness, togetherness, achievement, and, implicitly, feminized domesticity. In short, it was a vesicle for all Lipsyte loathed about a generic suburban value system.

Roger Angell’s approach to the stadiums was more circumspect. In a May 1963 edition of *The New Yorker*, Roger Angell described the Polo Grounds, painting a characteristically rich portrait that resonated with Lipsyte’s truncated descriptions:

The dirt, the noise, the chatter, the bursting life of the Met grandstands are as rich and deplorable and heartwarming as Rivington Street. The Polo Grounds, which is in the last few months of its disreputable life, is a vast assemblage of front stoops and fire escapes. On a hot summer evening, everyone here is touching someone else; there are no strangers, no one is private. The air is alive with shouts, gossip, flying rubbish. Old-timers know and love every corner of the crazy, crowded, proud old neighborhood: the last-row walkup flats in the outermost lower grandstands... the outfield bullpens, each with its slanting shanty roof... the good box seats just on the curve of the upper deck in short right and short left—front windows on the street, where one can watch the arching fall of a weak fly ball and know in advance, like one who sees a street accident in the making, that it will collide with that ridiculous, dangerous upper tier for another home run.<sup>139</sup>

More than just Lipsyte’s tenement stoop, Angell’s Polo Grounds is a neighborhood, with the anatomy and ecology of a neighborhood. It has stoops, fire escapes, shanty roofs, and windows on the street. It has dirt and flying rubbish, shouting and gossip. It has familiarity, but no privacy. It is bursting and heartwarming, yet also disreputable and deplorable. Angell walks a thin line between celebrating urban vitality and nostalgizing urban disorder, romanticizing a vision of the neighborhood already receding in the rear-view mirror.

Angell, like Lipsyte, anticipated that the move from the Polo Grounds would initiate broad changes in the consumption and meaning of the Mets.

Next year, or perhaps late this summer, all this will vanish. The Mets are moving up in the world, heading towards the suburbs. Their new home, Shea Stadium, in Flushing Meadow Park, will be cleaner and airier—a better place for the children.



Most of the people there will travel by car rather than by subway; the commute will be long, but the residents will be more respectable. There will be broad ramps, no crowding, more privacy. All the accommodations will be desirable—close to the shopping centers, and set in perfect, identical curves, with equally good views of the neat lawns. Indeed, a man who leaves his place will have to make an effort to remember exactly where it is, so he won't get mixed up on his way back and forget where he lives. It will be several years, probably, before the members of the family, older and heavier and at last sure of their place in the world, indulge themselves in some moments of foolish reminiscence: "Funny, I was thinking of the old place today. Remember how jammed we used to be back there? Remember how hot and noisy it was? I wouldn't move back there for anything, and anyway it's all torn down now, but, you know, we sure were happy in those days."<sup>140</sup>

Angell's laundry list of suburban characteristics—cleanliness, airiness, consumerism, privacy, spaciousness, symmetry, and respectability—is not so different than Lipsyte's. But unlike Lipsyte, Angell's judgment is less severe; he seems to accept the move to Shea as a necessary accommodation to the times. And as much as he loves the Polo Grounds and the memories forged there over the course of time, he acknowledges that no place is timeless, even tentatively allowing that the Mets' suburban move, like that of other New Yorkers, might be best given the circumstances.

Angell revisited the Polo Grounds a year later, as the Mets moved into Shea Stadium. He listed the small things he would miss about the old park: the flights of pigeons; the "plock" of a line drive against the wooden wall in deep left field; the rusty chains, warmed by the sun, that cradled one's arm in the boxed seats. On the brink of departure, Angell was less comfortable with the physical destruction of urban landscapes—that mnemonically construct and maintain identity—than he had previously been. He concluded,

All these I mourn, for their loss constitutes the death of still another neighborhood—a small landscape of distinctive and reassuring familiarity. Demolition and alteration is a painful city commonplace, but as our surroundings become more undistinguished and indistinguishable, we sense, at last, that we may not possess the scorecards and record books to help us remember who we are and what we have seen and loved.<sup>141</sup>

Angell's departing words anticipated the most common complaint of the modern stadium—"undistinguished and indistinguishable"—that would become fixed on its image over the succeeding decades (though not in earnest until the 1970s). In 1964, Shea Stadium was not just another example of an engineered behemoth in a parking lot on the highway—it was one of the first of this type, with this look. Yet, the ethos of the modern stadium—as framed by Lipsyte and Angell—was that of a clean-sweep modernist planning gone awry, which would substitute the big for the small, the new for the old. For both Angell and Lipsyte, this move from the Polo Grounds to Shea more than just aped the move that many had made from Brooklyn or Manhattan to Long Island, from tenement apartments and dense neighborhoods to modern suburban installations. For Lipsyte it was the marginalization of an urban, largely masculine, subculture of the shirtless and expressive that existed prior to and in opposition of the “antiseptic” world of suburbia. For Angell, it revealed the rush to move forward without fully considering the consequences of severance from landscapes that constructed identities in the first place.

Many of New York's prominent sportswriters—Maury Allen, Arthur Daley, Jimmy Breslin, Robert Lipsyte, and Roger Angell—dipped into urban and suburban imagery and projected it onto the sports landscape. In doing this, they invested these stadiums with a symbolic power. These interpretations—the Polo Grounds as urban neighborhood and Shea Stadium as suburban landscape—would have framed readers' expectations of the new stadium, pre-disposing them to understand the move to Shea as an articulation of suburban and modern values, as an expression of urban modernization and suburban development (for better or worse). Most writers quickly tapped these metonyms, not addressing the ethics or ramifications of this shift. Casual participation in this urban-suburban discourse seemed

to tacitly accept the types of urban change occurring, reinforcing them simply by repeating them. More measured and analytical uses of this rhetorical device, from Lipsyte and Angell, accepted the changes as inevitable by marking the loss of old urban forms without proposing alternative paths. The move from Polo Grounds to Shea thus embodied the inevitability of urban modernization and suburban development—even at a time when high-profile resistance to modern urban planning was increasingly successful and Robert Moses’s power was waning.

This discursive formulation encouraged readers to interpret Shea Stadium through a binary lens proposing the urban and obsolete on one hand and the suburban and modern on the other. These writers suggested, explicitly or implicitly, that the visitor to Shea should be suburban and more “modern.” To be a modern stadium was to be spacious, predictable, technologized, and physically comfortable—in essence, like the suburban home. To be a modern fan was to be suburban—more affluent; more consumerist; a spectator watching the scoreboard, not a loudmouth hurling invective or rubbish onto the field; a respectable, nuclear family arriving via expressway, not a solitary, bare-chested tenement dweller or one of what Angell called the Polo Grounds’ “screaming sans-culottes.”<sup>142</sup> The rhetorical configuration of the Polo Grounds and Shea Stadium coded these stadiums for visitors, constructing meanings for these spaces—and in the case of Shea, before consumers physically experienced it. These writers predisposed their broad readership to interpret these stadiums, at least in part, as referenda on urban and suburban landscapes, both as physical environments and ideological symbols. As such, stadiums were no mere containers for sports: rather, they were metonyms for the city itself that validated urban and suburban change in early 1960s New York. Yet, these rhetorical figures were not just imaginative tricks

that seemed handy for sportswriters at work. As readers moved from page to place, to experience the stadium first hand, they found a stadium that was genetically cousin to postwar suburbia.

### **Suburban virtues of mobility and spaciousness**

The modern stadium was, in many ways, like the suburban home. The construction of the first modern stadiums in the early 1960s followed the explosion of the suburbs of the 1950s. The housing stock of cities was full in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. Many people were forced to live with families in cramped city apartments. The new suburbs promised people something new, spacious, modern, and private. The mortgage, underwritten by government programs, often cost the same as, or less than, rent. New freeways paved the way to and from the city for private automobiles.<sup>143</sup> As people moved out of cities for the suburbs, sports clubs hoped to follow them out of urban areas to play at stadiums that were geared towards automobile traffic. This required that the new structures be located alongside highway arteries and adjacent to plenty of parking. In a society that was transitioning from the urban to the suburban, from the congested to the open, mobility and spaciousness were qualities of the highest order.

A promotional brochure published in 1962 by New York City's Department of Parks and circulated to sports media boasted that the new stadium at Flushing Meadows was "at the geographical and population center of New York City," verifying that claim with a map of the area centered on the stadium.<sup>144</sup> The new structure would sit in more than forty-five acres of parking, be connected to a one-hundred-ten-million-dollar expressway program, be approachable via a "highway-wide pedestrian overpass" from the adjacent subway line, sit

next to a Long Island commuter rail station, and even be accessible by boat at a nearby marina. This combination would make it “the most convenient-to-reach stadium in history.”

As the stadium neared completion and opened, Mets publications repeated the claim that the stadium was at the “geographic and population center of New York City.”<sup>145</sup> They boasted that the stadium was reachable by car, subway, train, bus, taxi, and boat. The “best way” to get there from Manhattan, according to the stadium *Dedication* magazine, was via the Long Island Railroad; express trains from Penn Station to the stadium “cut this normally congested trip to and from the heart of the city to a relaxing 12 minutes.” A more popular route seemed to be the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) to Willets Point Station, the tracks located a mere two hundred feet from the stadium and the exit ramp just steps from right field. The IRT reported that thirty-four thousand visitors took the elevated train to the game on opening day in 1964.<sup>146</sup> But the most obvious form of transportation to the game was private automobile. This was the stadium’s primary reason for being, why Robert Moses blocked Walter O’Malley’s overtures to build in downtown Brooklyn in order to put a new modern stadium at the “gateway to the suburbs.” As sportswriter Leonard Koppett put it, “The right way to go to Shea Stadium would be by car.”<sup>147</sup>

The 1964 *Dedication* magazine justified the existence of Shea Stadium as a function of what it replaced. The Giants and Dodgers had left the city, it explained, “because they considered the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field inadequate and obsolete. The ball parks were not centrally located, had almost no parking space and poor public transportation facilities... New York needed a modern sports stadium.”<sup>148</sup> The problems with these old parks were locational and transportational. They were not “centrally located” (though, of course, in many ways they were—just not “central” to a projected city that spilled across New Jersey,

Connecticut, and Long Island). There was no parking and poor public transportation (though the public transportation that was poor was the train from the suburbs, not the subway line within the city). The problem was framed not as the new suburban development that was in the process of redefining what the “center” was; instead, the problem as conceived was the established geographies of the city. So, the old stadiums were obsolete not for city dwellers, but for suburbanites.<sup>149</sup>

The problems of the Polo Grounds, where the Mets had played temporarily as their new stadium was being built, were stated explicitly through the lens of automobility in the Mets’ 1964 ticket application. The brochure claimed,

Through thick and thin, and in an arena inadequate for complete enjoyment of the modern game, their fans have endured through two seasons... Now these fans prepare—as the team itself prepares—for a new season in a new baseball cathedral. These pioneer Mets fans are certain to be joined by new ones who formerly did not choose to grapple with the middle-of-the-city traffic and the ensuing, often-fruitless search for parking space... These problems now are largely erased by subway, railway and multi-million dollar highway arteries which converge from all directions on the heart of the stadium and its vast surrounding parking acreage... The dawn of a new era certainly has arrived for the team and its fans.

Parking and traffic, then, seemed the criteria for fandom. Their availability was the launching pad for a “new era.” The traffic and parking problems of the old city would seemingly be a thing of the past at the new modern stadium.

An illustration that was commonly used in club publications helped readers visualize precisely what this transportational utopia looked like, painting an idyllic scene at one of the entrances northeast of the stadium, for those coming in from the east on Whitestone Expressway or Northern Boulevard. It featured a row of nine small ticket booths, framed at the ends by trees. Cars approached the booths; there was plenty of space between each one, suggesting just how easy and undemanding it could be to park. The stadium was in the near

distance—from this perspective one could see right into the gap of the curving stands. Between the reader and the stadium was a huge parking lot, with plenty of space to spare, offset from the stadium by another row of trees. It was an orderly setting—a far cry from the condensed streets and packed lot of the Polo Grounds. Unlike Harlem, there were no other buildings in sight here. Instead, there were cars, but without competition—a harmonious automobile utopia.<sup>150</sup>

The transportational ease and geographical centrality were characteristics that circulated not only in local discourse, but national discourse as well. *Popular Science* magazine informed readers that Shea would be “one of the most convenient sports arenas in the world,” as it was “only minutes away from midtown Manhattan by road, subway, or railroad” and “acres of parking and direct ramps from train stations make getting into the stadium easy.”<sup>151</sup> Vincent Butler of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote of its geographical centeredness and echoed the architects’ claims that the stadium would be “the most convenient” in the country.<sup>152</sup> Bob Addie of the *Washington Post* located Shea at the center of a whirl of transportational activity: “La Guardia Airport is nearby and planes and helicopters are forever circling the stadium... There is an elevated track next to the ball park and a maze of new freeways... The effect sometimes is startling with planes, trains and cars buzzing, chugging and whizzing by.”<sup>153</sup>

Maps abounded in club and city publications and city newspapers as the stadium was planned, constructed, and opened. Maps of New York City centered on the stadium, connecting it to a swarm of expressways and parkways, as well as train lines running out from Manhattan and in from Long Island. A newspaper map headline promised readers, “All Roads Lead to Shea Stadium.”<sup>154</sup> Traffic plan maps, marked with directional arrows, steered would-be drivers into the parking lot’s three entrances as drivers arrived from the network of

road and highways that coursed past the stadium site. Accompanying articles informed readers that games would be monitored by Traffic Commissioner Henry A. Barnes from a helicopter; from there he would use a two-way radio to direct “engineers” on the ground.<sup>155</sup> And yet, in spite of all the promises that Flushing’s Shea Stadium, with its engineered traffic patterns and accessible new freeways, would be a modern corrective to Harlem’s Polo Grounds, one of the dominant stories of the stadium’s opening was the horrific traffic jams. The *New York Times* cover page aerial photo of the stadium’s pregnant parking lots was topped with the headline, “Shea Stadium Opens With Big Traffic Jam,” and included the subheader, “Motorists and Mets Are the Losers.”<sup>156</sup>

The infatuation with transportation and movement didn’t end at the stadium gates. The 1964 *Dedication* magazine boasted,

You are now sitting in a sports stadium which has been designed specifically for your comfort and pleasure. William A. Shea is unique in the rapidity with which spectators may reach their seats, regardless of the level on which they are located. No other sports arena approaches Shea Stadium in vertical circulation. By means of ramps, elevators and escalators you can go from one level to another in a matter of seconds.<sup>157</sup>

Movement within the stadium was structurally achieved through twenty-four pedestrian ramps (which the Department of Parks called “wide, gently sloped ramps”), twenty-one escalators, and two elevators.<sup>158</sup>

The ramps themselves were arguably the most visually conspicuous feature of the stadium. Six banks of sloping ramps, layered six high, encircled the exterior of the structure. Shea Stadium wore its sense of movement on its sleeve as the ramps animated the outside, calling attention to the easy, airy slopes and demanding comparison to the dark and narrow concourses and banks of steps in old parks. They seemed cousins of the expressway



ramps—miniature, engineered, ferro-concrete freeways for people. But while the ramps were visually privileged, much written attention was paid to the escalators.

There were plans for escalators early on; lead designer Richard Praeger didn't want people having to climb flights of stairs to get to their seats.<sup>159</sup> There would have been plenty of climbing without the escalators, as the stadium peaked out at one hundred forty feet tall. Print coverage of Shea, both local and national, rarely failed to mention the escalators.<sup>160</sup> The Mets 1963 *Year Book* boasted that the escalators meant there would be “no more Alpine climb, no jamming before or after ball games.”<sup>161</sup> A reporter wrote that it would “take the toil out of grandstand climbing if not out of grandstand living.”<sup>162</sup> Mets manager Casey Stengel suggested the elevators were there “so you won't get heart attacks going to your seats.”<sup>163</sup> At the dedication ceremony, Stengel repeated the message to the Mets' older supporters: “You can have your health for many years by following my Mets. Just see the escalators and elevators they put in for the old folks.”<sup>164</sup> Robert Lipsyte's humor was a bit drier than Stengel's; he predicted, “Its 21 escalators will make leg muscles obsolete.”<sup>165</sup>

The *New York Times* branded it “the largest escalator installation in any stadium in the world... a system of 21 local and express color-coded stairways to the stars.” Otis Elevator designed the system arranged in seven banks of three each. Two of the banks serviced the field entrance, first, second, and press levels. The other five banks serviced the second, third, and fourth levels, the final topping out at ninety-one feet above the field entrance level; these skipped the first and press levels. The escalators were color-coded according to the five separate tiers of seats they served. Each escalator was four-feet wide and could carry eight thousand people per hour. At the end of each game, the direction was reversed so fans could leave.<sup>166</sup>

After riding effortlessly up the banks of escalators and making the short walk to their seating sections, visitors found seats that were “contoured” and “extra-wide” according to the Parks Department.<sup>167</sup> The Mets proclaimed, “Never before had a baseball fan been offered the conveniences such as those offered by Shea Stadium. You may reach your seat by escalator or elevator. In your seat you will find more room than in any seat at any sporting event you ever attended.”<sup>168</sup> Stadium visitors enjoyed seats, rows, and aisles that were broader than they had been accustomed to at the old parks. But not only did they enjoy more personal space, the stadium itself seemed much more spacious and open than its predecessors—both materially and psychologically.

Unlike Ebbets Field, the Polo Grounds, and Yankee Stadium, Shea Stadium had no obstructing support pillars. The decks were cantilevered, thus assuring that no visitors would have to crane their necks around posts to see the action on the field—a major concern for stadium designers and sports executives accustomed to the stacked-deck stadiums of the previous generation. Club publications boasted of this feature and reporters celebrated it. While cantilevering removed the need for posts, it also pushed the upper decks further from the field than at pre-war stadiums, where they crowded over the lower level, drawing inhabitants closer to the field and vertically enclosing the space more tightly.

Some claimed that cantilevered decks were doubly useful. Not only did they remove obstructing posts, but they also opened the stadium up spatially. As he designed the stadium, Richard Praeger promised “a clean and airy stadium” with an “open feeling.”<sup>169</sup> Overseeing construction, the project’s resident engineer, Robert Schoenfeld, claimed: “This should be a lovely structure. It will stand about 130 feet high. It will cover about eight city blocks. It will be airy. It will breathe.”<sup>170</sup> Both of these men, who played such prominent roles in the

stadium's conceptualization and realization, envisioned a space that was open and expansive, a correction to the tight enclosures of traditional parks, with their stacked decks. The openness of the modern stadium was more than just structural, but psychological as well, contrasting considerably with the compact intimacy of the old grounds—a spatial and ideological analogue to the plazas fronting setback modern corporate office towers, the Corbusian green spaces between new public housing slabs, and the private lawns and yards distinguishing split-level suburban homes. This appearance of spaciousness, if not spaciousness itself, was echoed across the suburban landscape of the 1950s and 1960s. Open plans and picture windows gave homes a sense of spaciousness—particularly in comparison to old city apartments. Patios outside sliding glass doors seemed to extend living space beyond a home's walls.<sup>171</sup> Just as city-dwellers evacuated the dense residential spaces of the city for the openness of suburban developments, the sports fan moved from physically and visually constricted stadiums to modern and expansive ones.

Many noted explicitly how enhanced cantilevering impacted the experience of watching games—and almost always compared it to the fan experience at the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field. Acknowledging the advantages of extra legroom and unobstructed views, Isaacs countered, “But the upper-deck spectator is far away from the field. There isn't that closeness to the action that made the Polo Grounds—and Ebbets Field particularly—intimate areas.”<sup>172</sup> Vescey claimed, “The \$1.50 seats in the top of the upper deck might as well have been in Connecticut or New Jersey because nobody up there would ever see the twinkle in Casey's eye. In the Polo Grounds, the overhanging grandstands had produced an intimacy between player and fan. The roundness of Shea Stadium discouraged that

intimacy.”<sup>173</sup> Angell too wrote of the loss of “intimacy” at the new stadium, as compared to the old grounds. The banked seats, he wrote,

sweep around in a lovely circle, offering everyone a splendid and unobstructed view of the action. Unobstructed and, I should add, too distant. Only in the field-level seats—those two scooped sections that roughly parallel the infield foul lines—does one feel close to the action; the loge, mezzanine, and upper levels are all circular, and this imposed geometry keeps the elevated fan forever distant from the doings within the contained square of the infield.

Angell blamed this arrangement on the need for the stadium to double as a home equally adaptable to football—not a baseball-first orientation, as was the case in the old parks that hosted football games secondarily. Though impressed by the engineering that would automatically shift seats from one place to the other, Angell lamented the need regardless, claiming

It has been achieved at the expense of the baseball fan, for the best ballparks—Ebbets Field, say, or Comiskey Park—have all been boxes. Many of the games I saw this spring were thickly attended, but again and again I had the impression that I had lost company with the audience. In the broad, sky-filled circle of the new stadium, the shouts, the clapping, the trumpet blasts, and the brave old cries of ‘Let’s go, Mets!’ climbed thinly into the air and vanished; the place seemed without echoes, angles, and reassurance. No longer snug in a shoebox, my companions and I were ants perched on the sloping lip of a vast, shiny soup plate, and we were lonelier than we liked.<sup>174</sup>

Like Isaacs, Vecsey, and many other sensitive witnesses, Angell sensed the fundamental changes in the game wrought by its new environment.

The attention paid to personal mobility and spaciousness had a foundational affect on postwar stadium design.<sup>175</sup> The attention to convenient mobility reflected the contemporary tensions between the potential for individual mobility and the realities of traffic and old urban transportation networks. Catering to private transportation meant moving stadiums from dense urban areas to more open spaces, readily accessible to freeways. The movement

of the individual from home to parking lot, from parking lot to spacious seat, was a central concern for stadium designers, to the point that consciously or not, the revealed pedestrian ramp, an expression of easy mobility, became a visual cliché of the modern stadium—Shea Stadium, D.C. Stadium in Washington, Busch Stadium in St. Louis, and Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati among the best examples. The fascination with personal movement and space, however, was not the only way that the stadium overlapped with a postwar suburban ethos. The socio-economic self-selection of the suburbs was echoed in the economic stratification and spatial exclusions of Shea Stadium.

### **Classlessness and class distinction**

In his 1959 polemic, *The Status Seekers*, Vance Packard said of Americans of that time, “whatever else we are, we certainly are the world’s most self-proclaimed equalitarian people.” Those proclamations, Packard asserted, papered over social stratification that was becoming more pronounced and permanent. He wrote, “All in all, we are in the process of becoming a many-layered society. Status is crystallizing. The boundaries between the various layers are becoming more rigid.” Indeed, Packard wrote at a time when suburbs were becoming increasingly stratified socio-economically.<sup>176</sup>

Historian Lizabeth Cohen argued that this stratification was driven in large part by the postwar belief that the home was a consumer product—a commodity that could be traded in for an upgrade as one ascended the various hierarchical rungs of suburban communities. Homogeneity became a privileged quality in a neighborhood—it made the market values of homes and attached status predictable, thus protecting residents’ investments and image. Philadelphia-area developer Ralph Bodek and University of Pennsylvania marketing

professor William T. Kelley argued in a 1955 study, “It is interesting to note that people prefer to live near others as much like themselves as possible—they do not seem interested in the possibility of new stimulating associations with people different than themselves.”<sup>177</sup> Homogeneity was predictable; it was also conflict-free. Peaceful consensus was a virtue in and of itself in the suburbs of the 1950s.<sup>178</sup>

Postwar America was site of these two practices at cross-currents: on the one hand the continual invocation of a classless society born on the wave of democratic abundance and consumption, on the other, the reality of socio-economic stratification and homogeneous segmentation. Shea Stadium embodied both. Class difference was denied, or overlooked, through the stadium’s conspicuous absence of bleacher seats and inscribed through the stadium clubs and restaurants.

A major difference between Shea Stadium and the old grounds was the absence of bleachers. An often-made claim of stadium promoters was that ninety-six percent of the seats were between the foul lines, thus eliminating the traditional site of the bleachers in the outfield.<sup>179</sup> Bleacher seats were typically the cheapest, seventy-five cents at the Polo Grounds, and thus historically the home of the working class and the young. For many writers, these were the places occupied by the purists. George Vescey called them “the traditional 75-cent haven for the tired, the hungry, the poor,” noting that in 1964, “even Yankee Stadium still had its 75-cent bleachers where fans could drink a beer and take a nap in the sun.”<sup>180</sup>

The elimination of bleacher seats expressed, on the face of it, the common canard that the United States had become a classless society in the lap of postwar prosperity. In this formulation, every Mets fan deserved a comfortable, spacious, contoured seat and no one

deserved to sit on the primitive bleacher bench.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, the absence of bleacher seats materially crowded out the working class, an elision of not only the less moneyed, but also the storied tradition of New York's eccentric fanatics that had once populated Ebbets Field and then the Polo Grounds as early Mets supporters.

Stan Isaacs of *Newsday* lamented the omission, writing of the bleachers: "It's baseball's open-air forum. The bleachers stand for cheap seats and the masses." He interpreted the move away from bleachers as a symbol of baseball's reorientation towards the more affluent, writing, "Maybe that's one of the things wrong with baseball, the so-called national pastime. Owners are too interested in the carriage trade and the television revenue. They put down the fan who would like to be able to come to a game on the spur of the moment and still have a chance to get within breathing distance of the field." Like Vecsey, Isaacs pointed out the irony of the blue-blood Yankees still offering 75-cent bleacher seats: "Puerto Rican fans flock to the Yankee Stadium bleachers, so there must be some people left who like to get the cheap seats. The Yankees are supposedly the rich man's team, yet they have bleachers. The Mets are the underdogs' team and they don't have bleachers."<sup>182</sup>

Roger Angell also noted the impact of the new stadium on seating for the traditional bleacher-seat patrons. He pointed to the "acres of box seats" throughout the field level, loge circle, and at the fronts of the mezzanine and upper stands, which he reckoned were "probably a valid tribute to our affluent times," though he wished "that unmoneyed fans, who usually make up a team's true loyalists, didn't have to climb to the top ten rows of the upper level to find an unreserved seat."<sup>183</sup> The box seats at Shea cost the same as those at the Polo Grounds: \$3.50; however, there were over 21,000 box seats at the new stadium, compared to just 3,814 at the old park. General admission seats remained \$1.30, but whereas

there were over 34,000 general admission seats at the Polo Grounds (including the bleachers), there was a mere fraction of them at Shea, whose highest deck combined 4020 upper box seats with 16,356 reserved and general admission seats.<sup>184</sup> Bleacher seats were, of course, non-existent.

Seating segregation thus articulated the stadium's inherent commitment to class distinction—a distinction that had been made ever since sporting contests were enclosed and spectators were charged fees to watch. In Shea Stadium and the modern stadium more generally, the difference was in the target audience, which was ideally (in the minds of promoters) more affluent than those of previous decades. By the mid-1960s, when the suburbs had replaced urban areas as home to most Americans, they had also become home to a disproportionate amount of prosperity. Sixty percent of families with annual incomes under three thousand dollars lived in core cities at that time; fifty-five percent of families with incomes over ten thousand dollars lived in suburbs. These suburbs maintained their exclusivity via a range of factors, like home prices, house types, and zoning laws.<sup>185</sup> The internal rules and regulations of the stadium manipulated the space in the image of the suburbs: the elimination of bleacher seats and limitation of general admission tickets squeezed many of sports' more traditional working-class rooters out of the space, and private stadium clubs provided room for the privileged to retreat from the crowd altogether.

The private club was, in the postwar years, an increasingly popular way for the privileged to reassert class difference in the face of democratic consumption. Vance Packard asserted, “With the rise of national opulence permitting plumbers to drive limousines and foot doctors to buy mansions, the private club has looked more and more attractive to status-minded people as a place to draw lines. In the private club, you can sit, as in a fortress, in



judgment of pretender-applicants.”<sup>186</sup> Shea Stadium featured two such private subscription clubs—the Combo Room and the more exclusive and suggestively named Diamond Club. Fans who purchased the “Combination” ticket plan—a set of forty-four games in the box or reserved sections at regular game prices—could also apply to be a member of the Combo Room at the cost of ten dollars per seat per year. Those buying season box tickets (which came in groups of four, six, and eight) for all eighty-one home games could apply for the Diamond Club at the cost of twenty dollars per seat per season. Though print media occasionally referenced these clubs in the coverage of the new stadium, they didn’t receive nearly as much attention as many of the stadium’s other features—and certainly wouldn’t be celebrated as were the restaurants and clubs of Houston’s Astrodome, which opened in 1965.<sup>187</sup> The 1964 ticket application, however, was not bashful, as the stadium’s private spaces were geared particularly towards this more invested and affluent fan, the one who would buy season tickets.

The baseball club called the stadium’s most exclusive space, the Diamond Club, “the ultimate in elegant dining.” The application included a full page of eight illustrations and descriptions of these spaces. The Diamond Club received the most attention, as a series of six illustrations virtually moved the reader through its spaces—the “spacious modern elevators” that took subscribers directly to the club, the lobby and gift shop, the Diamond Club Restaurant, the Diamond Club Bar, and the “Charcoal Room.” The reader was informed, “For magnificence and elegance in dining, the Diamond Club is on par with any restaurant in the country.” This upscale space was wood-paneled, outfitted with white tablecloths, decorative dining chairs, floral arrangements, wall-mounted lighting fixtures with tiny lampshades, and plush carpeting. It would regularly seat 372 diners, but could also be

portioned to host private parties. The Diamond Club Bar, a lounge, was “a thing of beauty—spacious, and luxuriously appointed, with the accent on ease and comfort.” The Diamond Club Charcoal Room featured wood floors, brick walls, exposed wood frames, gas-lamp wall fixtures, and a grill pit. It had a more rugged, masculine look than the Diamond Club. The description corroborated this impression: “Meat always seems tastier and juicier when cooked over an open fire. The Diamond Club boasts one of the finest outdoor grills to be found anywhere. Just looking at it will give you an appetite.” The people staged in the illustrations—in the elevator and at the gift shop—were men in suits, giving the reader the impression that the space was geared toward the business class.

The Combo Room was more casual than the “Diamond” entities—a restaurant and bar where subscribers could “enjoy a quick snack or hot meal depending upon their mood.” Unlike the Diamond Club, the Combo Room boasted no plush carpeting. It could seat 244 diners in a room with walls paneled in a synthetic wood and decorated with murals of players. There were no tablecloths or fancy dining chairs. Another illustration featured the Combo Room Escalator, which ran exclusively there. Some of the men wore shirtsleeves, as opposed to suits. Some women were visible as well. Visually, this space was coded middle class and domestic, like the new fans the club hoped to attract from the exploding suburbs to the east.<sup>188</sup>

Some commentators noted that the stadium club was not an invention of Shea Stadium; they pointed to the club created by Larry MacPhail at Yankee Stadium.<sup>189</sup> MacPhail, one of sport’s most influential innovators, had joined the Yankees in 1945 and quickly installed, in the words of Arthur Daley, an “exclusive Stadium Club, two swank taverns under the stands where thirsty holders of season tickets can quaff a stray beaker safe from the vulgar gaze of

the hoi-polloi.” These clubs were for box-holders, individuals and businesses, who received brass nameplates for their boxes, first call on tickets for other Stadium events like prize-fights and football games, and “a magnificent feeling of aloofness.” The club had no problem selling access to twenty-five hundred seats.<sup>190</sup>

The Diamond Club, in the hands of some writers, became just another symbol of the changes being effected by Shea Stadium in contrast to the structure and culture of the Polo Grounds. Milton Gross compared the “tenement atmosphere” of the Polo Grounds and its fans, with their homemade banners drawn on bed sheets, to the “monument to modernism” of Shea, with its “diamond clubs, Mrs. Payson’s posh executive lounge and season ticket plans for the corporations that can write off the cost as a tax deduction.” He termed the contrast “obscene.” Concerning the move of the Polo Grounds crowd to Shea, he figured: “A bunch of kids with crayons and cardboard will be as much at home as finger painters in the Louvre. Gradually their artistic sense must be beaten out of them by the architecture, conformism and the Brooks Brothers types who will take their places and push them back to the uppermost rows of pure fandom.”<sup>191</sup>

These clubs became a symbol, to many, of the rich and powerful taking care of themselves. Vecsey, in his contemporaneous history of the Mets’ early years, wrote, “In a classic example of letting its patrons eat cake, Shea Stadium did have the plush Diamond Club for its season ticket holders, a restaurant in the upper right-field section where fans could eat, drink, and watch the game through the cigar haze, win or lose.”<sup>192</sup> Jimmy Breslin facetiously referred to them as “the saloons inside the ball park,” adding, “Mrs. Payson does not like her friends drinking in dingy places.”<sup>193</sup> The *Herald’s* Jack Mann reported that Moses kept his speech short at the stadium dedication, saying, “This is no time for oratory. Let’s get

to lunch.” Mann quipped, “and they did, in the ‘Diamond Club’ that was readier than any part of the plant.” Mann’s insinuation, that those at the top of the social order made sure they were taken care of first, was evidenced in the fact that the private club was ready before the field itself.<sup>194</sup>

### **The domestication of the stadium: color, gadgetry, and feminization**

Shea Stadium, like many other stadiums constructed through the 1960s and 1970s, expressed a suburban ethos. Its location and spatiality catered to suburban ideals of mobility and spaciousness. Its internal segregation was fraught with postwar concerns for both classlessness and distinction. And in some ways Shea Stadium primitively aped the suburban home itself. The use of color to brighten the space and the celebration of gadgetry within reflected those same characteristics in the stocked split-level and ranch-style houses of Long Island—an expression of the postwar good life and triumph of American capitalism and consumerist democracy. But more significantly, the stadium was both openly and subtly presented as a place for women; its promoters embraced a new domestic orientation that engaged postwar gender ideology and distinguished Shea from the old, masculine Polo Grounds.

In spite of its plain, engineered concrete frame, Shea Stadium was outfitted with colorful decoration. A Department of Parks brochure told readers that the “Stadium’s gracefully curved facade is achieved by a giant screen of flat, gayly colored aluminum plates.”<sup>195</sup> Orange and blue aluminum panels of various sizes were suspended from vertical cables at the edges of the banks of ramps. These aluminum squares gave the exterior a sense of whimsy, partially concealing the severe geometry of the ramps. Architects often used decorative

aluminum facings to add color to new buildings in the 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to soften the cold engineering of modern architecture. Others used aluminum facing in the rehabilitation of old buildings to signify their modernization.<sup>196</sup>

Some writers interpreted the decorative panels as gestures towards an artistic high culture. One reporter covering the World's Fair praised Shea, linking it to another of the city's new modern landmarks: "Its exterior walls glitter with do-dads that might have been left over from the acoustical ceiling of Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall."<sup>197</sup> Another also connected the stadium to the neighboring fair—a color explosion in itself—and high art. He ventured, "It has color—in a general sense and in the specific. It bestrides a landscape of Flushing Bay and the perimeter of the Fair exhibits. Then there are blue-and-orange squares brightening up the exterior and hitting the eye with the impact of an abstract painting."<sup>198</sup>

Other interpretations were less generous. Bob Addie of the *Washington Post* noted a local vein of discontent when he wrote, "What grabbed me... were the vari-colored sheets of corrugated metal 'washboards' which seemed to hang haphazardly out of the stadium like Navajo blankets displayed for Albuquerque tourists... 'The architect,' explained a native New Yorker uneasily, 'wanted to put some color into Shea Stadium.'"<sup>199</sup> Mets employee Bob Mandt recalled that stadium workers called the plates, "the laundry," because "they just hung up there like the laundry and rattled when the wind blew."<sup>200</sup> For some, then, the stadium expressed domestication—though undoubtedly in a way designers would have neither intended nor appreciated—as a backyard clothesline.

The blue and orange panels of the stadium's perimeter were outdone by a riot of color inside the stadium. The most obvious characteristic of the interior was the range of seating colors, each horizontal section a different color and shade. The lowest seats (the movable

sections) were bright yellow. The loge seats, behind them, were dark orange in the boxes, mustard colored in the sections behind the boxes. The mezzanine was royal blue at the front, sky blue in the rear. The upper deck was dark green in front, pea green in the back.<sup>201</sup> The intense coloration of the stadium prompted sportswriter Dick Young to call it a “pastel beauty.”<sup>202</sup> Roger Angell was less enthusiastic and noted that others might share his reserve: “The bright colors of the different stands are cheerful, I guess, but women in the field boxes are not going to be pleased with their complexions during night games, when the floodlights bouncing off those yellow seats make the section look like a hepatitis ward...”<sup>203</sup>

The colors of the stadium echoed the range of colors, the abundance of choices, consumers enjoyed in postwar product lines. Pastel colors, curving contours, and technological referents were characteristics of a postwar decorative style historian Thomas Hine termed “populuxe.” Populuxe items, as the name implies, combined the image of luxury and the accessibility of the popular. They expressed postwar abundance and the wide-held belief that consumption choices reflected participation in the good life. The futuristic affectations of populuxe items—tailfins indicating speed, handles suggesting mobility, pushbuttons signifying automation—suggested that the fruits of modernity were available to all. Shea Stadium was in many ways a populuxe stadium, noteworthy for its extravagant color scheme and the display value of “technology” within.<sup>204</sup>

The lowest level of seats, Angell’s “hepatitis ward,” was noteworthy for its role in making the stadium “convertible”—a characteristic rhetorically celebrated and analogous to the push-button automation of populuxe styling. These two banks of five-thousand-seat stands sat atop tracks that allowed them to pivot powered by four electrical motors, in order to accommodate both baseball and football. For baseball, the seats were drawn together at one

end to form a V, hugging the diamond, so that fans were angled toward second base; for football, the seats were shifted so that they faced one another, framing the rectangular field and aligning fans towards the fifty-yard line. Shea Stadium was the second stadium to feature moving banks of seats like this; the first was D. C. Stadium in Washington, in which the movable section was also designed by Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury.<sup>205</sup> It was the first, as stadium propaganda would enthusiastically point out, to use motors to automate the process.<sup>206</sup>

The massive “Stadiarama Scoreboard” added even more color to the setting. It filled in part of the gaping space between stands, curving around the baseball outfield. The Mets’ 1963 program whetted fans’ appetites for this technological marvel, promising it would be a “spectacular departure in major league scoreboard design, function and showmanship.” Created by General Indicator Corporation of New York, the scoreboard was one hundred seventy-five feet long, rose eighty-six feet above ground, and weighed over sixty tons. It was backed by a huge, white “cycloramic shell,” which displayed color light shows choreographed to music. An eighteen-by-twenty-four-foot rear projection screen, the “Photorama,” sat atop the scoreboard and displayed player photos and color motion pictures. Put in terms a suburban audience could grasp, the program informed readers, “Electrical power to operate the scoreboard complex is sufficient to provide full electrical service for fifty homes.”<sup>207</sup> The 1964 *Dedication* magazine instructed visitors that they were experiencing “the most modern scoreboard in the country.” It was “unlike any in the country,” both “as tall as a seven-story building” and endowed with “an electronic brain.”<sup>208</sup> The mid-season team yearbook devoted almost half its content to the scoreboard and its “enormous electronic brain.”<sup>209</sup> This artificially brainy scoreboard, it advertised, would

connect fans to information more fully than ever before. The “Play-O-Gram” feature could explain confusing plays. “Score-O-Gram” would help fans keep score. The board would, of course, track the scores of the day’s other baseball games, as scoreboards always had. But surely the most mesmerizing element sat atop the board—the “living color ‘television’” as one reporter called it, or the “Giant Movie Screen,” according to a headline.<sup>210</sup> This screen would show still photos of players at bat, but could also broadcast video replays of key moments via kinescope, or even movies in the case of rain delays. An illustration of the new scoreboard ran in the *World-Telegram* and *New York Times*—a rendering that was often used in club publications as well. The black board was lit up with information—statistics, scores from other games, and information about players. The gleaming white screen seemed to hug it, leaning forward as though in motion. The projection screen, symmetrically framed by a sleek, numberless clock and a Rheingold Beer ad of the same size, featured a headshot of a Mets player.<sup>211</sup>

The Stadiarama Scoreboard was designed, so the club claimed, to address a basic need of both serious and novice watchers of baseball—to illuminate the unclear play. Baseball writer Ed Rumill of the *Christian Science Monitor* noted that this was a real flaw of earlier parks—the paying fan often knew less about the game than the one listening to the radio or watching a television, who benefited from the explanations of broadcasters.<sup>212</sup> In practice, however, the board was used less to enmesh fans more fully in game action than to distract and entice them. Angell complained in May 1964 that the board wasn’t being used to relate game information, such as relief pitchers warming up, but instead, “the gargantuan scoreboard” with its “huge central message center... has been largely employed to boost souvenir and tickets sales and (very unsuccessfully) song lyrics for between-innings and sing alongs.”<sup>213</sup>



The scoreboard in the modern stadium behaved like a television set—entertainment interspersed with advertising. The use of the boards to distract and inject artificial, top-down entertainments like sing-alongs—as opposed to action on the field or what might be called organic entertainments, generated “bottom-up” from the crowd itself—became increasingly popular and problematic to serious sports fans who needed no such distractions from the game and their neighborly discussions of the game during lulls in the action. The scoreboard as entertainment was an appeal to the casual consumer of the game who, executives figured, were more likely to be suburban and affluent—not Roger Angell’s screaming sans culottes or Robert Lipsyte’s shirtless tenement dwellers. Shea Stadium’s Stadiarama Scoreboard represented an early escalation in the stadium scoreboard arms race. Bob Addie, of the *Washington Post*, wrote of the new Shea Stadium scoreboard as though it was another consumerist status symbol of postwar America, like a new car or home: “Perhaps the piece de resistance is the new scoreboard. For some reason, the baseball people have gone daft over scoreboards in the past few stadiums. The scoreboard must be the new status symbol. The bigger your scoreboard, the more prestige.”<sup>214</sup>

The reclassification of the stadium from an urban to suburban space was in part achieved through the use of colors and gadgetry that echoed those qualities in postwar homes. The domestication of the stadium was further achieved through a partial feminization of that space with the use of women as service workers within and the explicit and implicit invitations of women into the stadium as customers. The postwar period from the late 1940s to the early 1960s was one in which dating, marriage, and family were obsessively pursued and celebrated. With these cultural preoccupations came clearly defined, traditionally gendered roles for men and women: man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker. The

celebration of the domestic ideal entered the stadium—a site that was traditionally masculine. Male space was feminized and domesticated, and the stadium became, at least ideally for stadium promoters and many consumers, an expression of suburban values, which were feminized while remaining patriarchal. The new modern stadium of the early-to-middle 1960s expressed a clearly suburban sense of cleanliness, order, and domesticity. While the modern stadium wasn't designed *for* the female consumer, it created space for her and actively recruited her. In doing so, it also sought a different brand of masculinity—the domesticated, postwar type, the “family man.” The modern stadium was a heterosocial and domestic space, not a homosocially masculine one. Stadium officials indicated this through the staging of women in visual representations of stadium space and the insertion of women as service personnel within the stadium itself.

Visual representations of women in stadium spaces could prescribe a domestic audience, suggesting to readers that Shea Stadium was a space appropriate for respectable female attendance. A commonly used architectural rendering of the stadium and parking lot that appeared in club and city publications staged just such a scene. This illustration portrayed an approach from the stadium's closed, west side. The reader looked across vacant parking space, then rows of tightly packed cars to the stadium itself in the distance. Pairs of fans—almost all male-female couplings, men in sweaters and slacks, women in long skirts or dresses—strolled towards the stadium across the lot. It seemed a pleasant, sunny scene—a lovely day for a drive out to the stadium and a game with the wife or husband. This was, certainly, how the image was intended to be read and understood. The display of heterosexual companions becomes more conspicuous, however, when one considers the awkward staging of the scene. To make the couples visible amongst the cars, they had to

occupy the lot's open spaces, suggesting that all these people parked at the far boundaries of the lot—behind the frame—rather than conveniently in the open spaces closer to the stadium. This loose thread in the verisimilitude of the image suggested the deliberateness of the gesture, the conscious effort of designers to insert women into the frame.<sup>215</sup>

Visual representations of female consumers in stadium space were buttressed by the use of women as hostesses and ushers in the stands and clubs. The use of women as service was certainly different, but linked to, the attraction of women as customers. The former was a strategy to achieve the latter, a way to code the stadium as female friendly and “classy” enough for respectable women. It was widely assumed that young women naturally injected a sense of class and distinction into a space, and they were used as service employees in many industries for this very reason—most prominently as stewardesses. Legal challenges to the airline industry's practice of hiring almost only women for its in-flight service positions revealed some of the widespread cultural assumptions about men and women that gendered certain service positions as female. United Airlines claimed in 1966, as a defense of its practice of hiring women only:

Men can carry trays, and hang up coats and assist in the rare event of an emergency—they cannot convey the charm, the tact, the grace, the liveliness that young girls can—particularly to men, who comprise the vast majority of airline passengers... [Men] cannot create for the passenger the psychological impression of a memorable occasion... add to the pleasure of the trip, the loveliness of the environment or the ego of the male passenger.<sup>216</sup>

Besides the native “grace” of the young girl, stewardesses and female ushers alike were believed to visually enhance the setting and cater to the egos of men in ways other men couldn't. These “uses” of femininity in the air were equally exploitable on the ground. Furthermore, the presence of young women didn't just work on men, stroking their egos and brightening their sightlines. These charms no doubt also worked on women who, after

playing the service role within the walls of their own homes, might have enjoyed being catered to in the stadium.

The seemingly innate capacity of a certain class of women to lend an “air of refinement” merely through their presence was a cultural peculiarity that baseball clubs had been trying to take advantage of since the beginnings of the game. Operators of baseball grounds had historically attempted to attract refined women as upscale customers to enhance the sport’s cultural status—and had with some success in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as many women’s interests in baseball were piqued by television broadcasts.<sup>217</sup> However, early uses of women as ushers seemed to be less about tapping into young women’s native graceful aura than responses to labor conditions or promotional gimmicks capitalizing briefly on sensuality. Professional sports clubs began experimentally using female ushers in the stadium at least by 1915. Accounts of these games invariably referenced the girls’ influence over male fans; these ushers seemed to be used more as a sexual curiosity than a signifier of refinement. When the Newark “Peps” opened play in the Federal League in 1915, an estimated twenty-five thousand came out to see the game.<sup>218</sup> However, due to the novel attraction of “girl ushers in the grand stand,” the reporter noted, “a lot of young men didn’t see very much of the ball game.”<sup>219</sup> The Chicago Cubs used female ushers in 1918, as did the New York Giants, complying with the War Department’s order to “work or fight.”<sup>220</sup> Larry MacPhail, one of baseball’s greatest innovators, introduced female ushers to the fans of Cincinnati in the mid-1930s, then used them again when he moved to the Brooklyn Dodgers in the late 1930s. A columnist for the *Washington Post* remarked of MacPhail’s experiment: “He even borrowed a shot of the time-honored S.A. [sex appeal] from Hollywood, assembling a bunch of handsome young fillies to serve as usherettes.”<sup>221</sup> War again provoked

baseball clubs to use female ushers in the 1940s. All three New York clubs—the Giants, Dodgers, and Yankees—planned to use girl ushers in 1943, after “usher” was listed as a non-essential job during the war by the Manpower Commission.<sup>222</sup> Both of Chicago’s major-league teams, the Cubs and White Sox, introduced female ushers in 1945.<sup>223</sup>

The San Francisco Seals, a member of the Pacific Coast League, was among the first sports clubs to try to take advantage of the supposed innate sense of refinement women supplied to entertainment spaces.<sup>224</sup> After buying a portion of the club in 1945, Paul I. Fagan effected a number of changes at Seals Stadium, including installing flowers in the ladies’ lounge and hiring glove-wearing usherettes, in order to attract, in the words of columnist Al Wolf, the “carriage trade, replete with lorgnettes, mink coats, canes and blanket-carrying chauffeurs, in the stands.”<sup>225</sup> Fagan’s changes seemed a success to Seals manager Lefty O’Doul, who claimed in 1948, “You should see Seal Stadium. It’s spick-and-span, fresh and clean. We not only try to give the fans a good ball club, but comfort, pleasant surroundings, every possible accommodation. It’s worth the price of admission just to see our usherettes.”<sup>226</sup> Fagan’s use of female ushers, though perhaps initially influenced by the labor shortages of war, was also part of a broader strategy to culturally elevate the baseball park: as Wolf noted, these women seemed a magnet for the “carriage trade” class.

The use of female ushers in stadiums wouldn’t become regular practice until the 1960s with the construction of new modern structures. San Francisco’s baseball fans, accustomed to usherettes, found them in the new Candlestick Park in 1960—listed as one of many attractive features of the new stadium including heated floors in some sections, chairs with backs and arm rests, deluxe loge boxes, and a membership Stadium Club with a bar and restaurant.<sup>227</sup> Dodger Stadium opened in Los Angeles in 1962, and it too employed female

ushers. Walter O'Malley had coveted a more affluent audience throughout the 1950s (see Chapter One). The Dodgers had hoped to use an all-female usher staff when their new "Taj Mahal" of baseball opened in 1962; however, they could only use twenty-five female ushers after the union representing male service employees in the stadium objected.<sup>228</sup> The club, then, staffed the more elite areas of the stadium—the Stadium Club and some box seat sections—with usherettes.<sup>229</sup> Paul Zimmerman of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "In the dugout boxes you live in your own little private domain, far from the maddening throng high above you. Blue-clad usherettes are close at hand and your own little concessions stand is just a few steps away."<sup>230</sup> He rhetorically linked the privacy and privilege to the female service—conspicuous signifiers that one was distant from the "maddening throng." These usherettes wore blue suits and straw hats with red and blue bands.<sup>231</sup> A photo in the *Times* brought them to life, featuring two glowing, young, attractive women in conservative skirt suits with "LA" written in cursive on the leg. They were thus modest and subtly suggestive: their wholesome good looks were undeniable, even as a viewer's eye was drawn to the writing across their thighs.<sup>232</sup>

The New York Mets, taking a cue from the Dodgers and Giants, employed young women as greeters to evoke a sense of dignity and manners—to "civilize" stadium space, a traditionally masculine realm. Many New Yorkers were introduced to the new corps of female ushers—"chic usherettes in tailored suits," according to the *New York Times*—a month before the stadium opened. An illustration featured an unnaturally thin, conservatively dressed woman sporting an early twentieth-century sense of style; she wore a bowler hat, sport coat, tie, skirt to the knee, and heels. If the reader missed the periodization, the caption clarified that the costume would "provide flavor of [the] 1900s." The article also

located the dress socio-economically, specifying that the women would wear “at a sporty angle, the kind of derby women once used when they went riding side saddle.”<sup>233</sup> In response to the stadium’s opening, Larry Van Gelder of the *New York World-Telegram* wrote, “In matters sartorial the Met management was right up there in first place.” A visitor to the new stadium claimed, according to Van Gelder, “It’s tremendous—the color, the atmosphere! It’s stylish—high sophistication with a lot of class.”<sup>234</sup> Robert Lipsyte said the ushers, officially known as “female directors,” were “installed by the Met management to add ‘class’ to the ball park and create a warm first impression on newcomers.”<sup>235</sup> Like stewardesses in the air, these gracious hostesses on the ground invested commercial space with what at the time seemed a peculiarly feminine form of charm and allure. Like women in the home, they invested the stadium with the domestic ideals of the postwar American Dream.

Shea Stadium was loaded with referents to suburban homes and lifestyles. In a sense it was constructed in the image of the living room, its suburban crowds lounging in comfortable seats, looking onto a massive television screen atop the scoreboard. This was not just a response to the old ballparks, but also one to the challenge of televised baseball and the comforts of home. When designing the stadium, Richard Praeger suggested as much: “We are competing with the stay-at-home, the garden puterer [sic]. We want to get him out of there... There are no columns in front of his TV set, and he doesn’t have to climb three tiers to get there, either.”<sup>236</sup> But if the stadium was part living room, it was also part suburban kitchen—a much-celebrated site of color and gadgetry. Vice President Richard Nixon had famously sparred with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in the famed “kitchen debate” in 1959 at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow. For Nixon, the model ranch-style home loaded with appliances was tangible proof of the superiority of the

American capitalist way of life over the Soviet communist model. The realization of the American Dream, in the mind of Nixon and many others, was “successful breadwinners supporting attractive homemakers in affluent suburban homes,” as cultural historian Elaine Tyler May put it.<sup>237</sup> Shea Stadium expressed this dream at gigantic scale, designed to be the equivalent of affluent suburbia, stocked with successful breadwinners and attractive homemakers. Massive, modern, and engineered, Shea hardly seemed to have much in common with a suburban ranch house. But beneath its soaring verticality, it embraced and embodied a suburban ethos grounded in spaciousness and mobility, spatial segregation and distinction, color and gadgetry, and affluent domestication. It remained to be seen if this stadium designed in the spirit of the suburbs would attract the residents of those suburbs.

### **The suburban New Breed**

Did all this reconfiguring and domesticating actually alter the type of customers and the behaviors of fans within the stadium? This was, of course, a matter of interpretation, though overall it seemed that while the early Mets fans of Shea maintained much of the exuberance of the New Breed (certainly in contrast to the Yankees’ customers), those fans also tended to be more affluent and more often white. The New Breed at Shea became a hybrid form in the stadium’s early years, in many ways reflecting the new suburbia and its populations, while at the same time performing some of the rites of the old city through the baseball traditions of its old grounds, channeling the voices of old Ebbets Field and the club’s early years at the Polo Grounds. By the late 1960s, however, the New Breed—or at least, the “old New Breed” as Angell put it—seemed to be dead, and Shea Stadium was largely attracting a fan base in its own suburban image.



Some early reports of the New Breed in its new home professed that nothing had changed. Jimmy Breslin, writing for *The Saturday Evening Post*, argued this point energetically upon the stadium's opening. He used the Mets fans to advance the claim that the spirit of Brooklyn remained in New York, in spite of suburbanization. Breslin described Mets fans in action at the opening game:

A wall of noise fell out of the stands in one piece and crashed all over the field. And everywhere you looked, fists were held up high, and they were shaking at the cloudless sky and calling for Roman victories by this atrocious baseball team. There were 53,000 people in the stands, and they were all shouting and shaking fists, and you knew they would be doing it all afternoon long and that it will be like this for the rest of the season, too, because right here, in these few seconds, New York had gone and stepped off onto one of those dippy little tangents that it has not taken since Fiorello La Guardia was mayor, and there was a chance to laugh every day.<sup>238</sup>

The enthusiasm was generated, ironically, by the club's legendary incompetence; this attracted and animated all these people. It was "a team which is so bad at playing baseball that it has stepped out of sports and has become, along with the Guggenheim Museum, a driving force in the city's culture." In a city of winners, as Breslin framed it, "filled with people who are successes and others who are in search of success," it was the ineptitude of the Mets that gave them their charisma. Winning would "spoil everything... Anybody can root for a winner"—this final remark a jab at the fan base of New York's other major-league baseball team, the Yankees.

An accompanying photograph illustrated the Mets' curious mixture of high and low: in it, a Manhattan physician wore what the caption called a "homemade cheerleader costume"—a plastic, yellow parka with "Let's Go Mets" hand-drawn on the front. This elite professional dressed in homespun cheerleading outfit stood with arm extended, back to the playing field, hollering, exhorting his fellow fans to do the same. This was hardly the sort of behavior, or attire, one might expect from a doctor. The photograph and caption suggested not only how

the Mets allowed people to express their underdog status, but also how they allowed those who clearly weren't under the boot heel of the social order to borrow that status for a baseball game.

This exuberance from all quarters was the evidence Breslin needed to argue that Brooklyn still existed, though it was “Brooklyn-in-1964.” Brooklyn used to be “trolley cars or the Brighton Beach subway line or crowds of people in shirt sleeves walking through traffic to get to the park,” but then it moved to places like Levittown, Long Island and Tenafly, New Jersey. The Giants and Dodgers left town because they thought the suburban exodus would make the city dead to any baseball beyond the Yankees, “who draw all the bankers and all the out-of-towners.” Yet, Breslin claimed, “This view was wrong. There always has been a spirit to New York, and just because you put a lot of the spirit onto something called the Long Island Rail Road every night does not mean you are losing it. Lose? Hell, this city hasn't lost a thing.” New Yorkers, then spread out among the suburbs, tapped into the spirit of the Mets—a vacuum created by the departure of the Giants and Dodgers. These people “turned everything into Brooklyn, 1964.” For Breslin, Shea Stadium seemed a jar of formaldehyde preserving the city and its eccentric minions in the face of that city's seeming erosion.<sup>239</sup>

Other commentators would have certainly been dubious of Breslin's early (and perhaps wishful) claims that Shea Stadium, via the Polo Grounds, was channeling unadulterated Ebbets Field. Robert Lipsyte flatly disagreed, claiming that the “bourgeois smugness” of Shea almost instantly changed its residents. “One doesn't have to be a materialistic dialectician to see what this all adds up to,” he wrote, “The Mets are not representatives of the proletariat any more.”<sup>240</sup> Others split the difference between Breslin and Lipsyte. Roger

Angell, also writing in the stadium's early days, saw some carry-over of the fan culture from the Polo Grounds—more than he had expected even. He had feared that “the move from the banks of the Harlem River to the shores of Flushing Bay might civilize the Met fans, transforming them into a cautious, handclapping audience of suburban lawn-tenders,” but that transformation wasn't immediate. He noted, “There are more well-dressed, unexcitable, merely pleasant onlookers visible in the gleaming new stands,” though he thought some of them might be visitors from the adjacent World's Fair. Angell seemed pleased to report that some of that old urban, masculine culture remained, evidenced when “a dozen or so of the New Breed—the *old* New Breed—staged a rousing fistfight in the lower right-field stands, attracting roars of encouragement and subsequent boos for the fuzz.” Clearly, Shea Stadium wasn't a wholly civilized, suburban space early on, as some of the old guard took the subway out to the stadium. Angell remained skeptical, however, that the new New Breed would seem the same as the old one—not only because the club itself had moved to the suburbs, but also because the fans, fueled by media fascination, were becoming aware of themselves as performers of a New Breed identity. Angell wrote, “As must befall all fanatical movements, self-consciousness and formalization have overtaken the Met religion.” Behavior that had seemed organic and honest in the shabby confines of the Polo Grounds seemed orchestrated and artificial in the modern suburban cleanliness of Shea.<sup>241</sup>

Writers like Leonard Koppett, George Vecsey, and Leonard Shecter—each of whom had covered the Mets and their move to Shea as New York sportswriters then published books on the Mets at the end of the decade—testified that those early Shea Stadium fans remained noisy, but were constituted differently. Koppett thought that the crowds “combined some of the features of past and present. Although they were distinctly more orderly, and

undoubtedly more prosperous, than the Polo Grounds people, they were just as diligent about cheering and making signs.”<sup>242</sup> Vecsey noted, “The makeup of the fans seemed to change a little.” Notable Polo Grounds eccentrics like Louie Kleppel and Mother of the Mets stopped going to games “because there was no forum for their lectures, no bleachers where they could express their freedom of speech.” There were “somewhat fewer black and Latin fans now that the club had moved from uptown. But if the Met fan turned a lighter shade of pale in 1964, his noise level remained constant—hysterical and zonked out.”<sup>243</sup> Koppett thought the opening day crowd was “noticeably different in character from the Polo Grounds variety”—a notably well-dressed group, even for an opening day crowd. He thought the fans “somehow less passionate even though they were just as noisy.” Part of this was due to the stadium itself—the games could be expected to be less “bizarre” because the Shea was “a symmetrical and roomy park,” unlike the curious dimensions of the Polo Grounds. “In this, as in the crowd,” he concluded, “an element of respectability had been introduced.”<sup>244</sup>

Many commentators connected crowd makeup and behavior to the prospects of winning and losing. Central to the “old New Breed” identity was this ironic sense of regeneration through failure; the team’s loser status begged its support, and the drama of losing in creative and extravagant ways only fueled the club’s legend and fan attachment. Theoretically success would unravel New Breed identity. This formulation was complicated by a move to the achievement-oriented suburbs as well, where losing, many speculated, would be less tolerable. Shecter introduced this idea by noting “a different flavor” to the crowds at the two stadiums. At the Polo Grounds, “the fans were raunchier, somehow. They seemed to drink more beer and spill more of it on themselves and in the stands. They laughed a lot more,

too, and seemed to have a better time—even when the Mets were losing.” He observed, “The fans at Shea have a good time, too, these days. But winning seems more important to them.”<sup>245</sup> Vecsey believed this as well, writing, “The Mets were up against a different crowd now—theoretically. They were appealing to a suburban, success-oriented crowd. Would a father with a high-paying job pack up his 2.3 children and drive all the way in from Split Level Land to watch a team that could not win?”<sup>246</sup>

A few years after the move, the Mets fans were unquestionably changed from the club’s early years. Koppett eulogized the New Breed in 1968:

Shea Stadium customers now were predominantly suburban, middle-class, running heavily to family groups. The teen-agers and young people who had flocked to the Polo Grounds in 1962 and 1963 had been good-natured rebels; the rebels of 1966 and 1967 had turned their attention to far more serious things than baseball, and the young people at Shea Stadium were very much Establishment: their banners, still clever, still enthusiastic, were now an expression of conformity—to Met tradition—instead of a spontaneous flowering of irrepressible expression. They were stoic about defeat and satisfied by what limited victories the Mets could provide—but it was an acceptance of short rations, not a masochistic glorification of the doomed-to-failure effort. They came more and more from Long Island and Queens and Brooklyn, and less from the inner city. They came more by car than by subway. They came in organized groups, whose presence was duly noted on the electric scoreboard as promised by the promotional department. They were every bit as loyal as the original Met fans—but if they were very young, they hadn’t been in on the beginning, and if they had, they were no longer that young... In fact, the whole subject of fan participation in the Met Mystique had long since become institutionalized.<sup>247</sup>

Koppett pointed to examples of this institutionalization of fan culture in the promotions put on by the club, like “Banner Day,” “Fan Appreciation Day,” and “Senior Citizens Day.”

These were “sound, progressive business practice,” he admitted, “but they made official things that had been unplanned, spontaneous, fan-initiated, and that meant a different kind of environment.” By the time the “Miracle Mets” won the 1969 World Series, “Met Mystique had become a cliché suffering from overexposure.” People invoked figures of the Mets’ tragic past, like Marvelous Marv Throneberry, and asked questions like “Will success

spoil the Mets?” However, Koppett wrote, these questions erroneously presumed that the Shea Stadium crowds of the late 1960s were the same as the Polo Grounds crowds of 1962 and '63. The New Breed was alive in name only, replaced by “the rather square, mainstream suburban, honestly victory-hungry ‘nice people’ who now patronized the Mets... Kookiness had been the Met image and kookiness it would remain, unable to cross the abyss between the real world the Mets now lived in and the mythology of the past.”<sup>248</sup>

By 1969, Shea Stadium had become, according to a *New York Times* report, “one of the best spots in town to find a date” (an assertion that was surely never made about the Polo Grounds in the early 1960s). Since moving to the new stadium, the Mets had tried to attract female visitors by organizing the Met Women’s Booster Club.<sup>249</sup> Player Johnny Lewis seemed to appreciate the infusion of women into the new stadium. He claimed in 1965 that women made better fans than men because, “When women come out to the game, they come to cheer. When men come, they often come to boo.”<sup>250</sup> As the team made its improbable pennant run in 1969, Shea Stadium officials estimated that one-quarter of attendees that season were women, a number that was escalating as the club moved closer to first place. Reporter Nancy Moran, after noting the great surge in female interest, proceeded to discuss the stadium not as a site for female fans of baseball, but female fans of men. Marilyn Marcus, a twenty-eight-year old “blonde-model” in attendance, explained the phenomenon: “Women like winners. Successful men, whether they’re ballplayers or businessmen, are sexy. Right now, the Mets are very successful.” Moran noted that twenty-three of twenty-seven Mets players were married, and those who weren’t had “been flooded with offers or marriage and home-cooked meals” since they had started winning. The odds of landing a Mets player were thus pretty slim, though she added, “if the girls don’t marry a

Met, they may still find a doctor or lawyer or salesman at Shea.” Another attendee, eighteen-year-old Jane Nagel, used this strategy, informing Moran, “I used to write letters to Ron Swoboda, but all I got back were pictures of Wes Westrum. Then I started paying attention to the boys in the stands. I haven’t had to ride home alone on the subway all summer.”<sup>251</sup>

Shea Stadium, designed in the image of suburbia, had realized its suburban identity by the late 1960s. Its location and interior, geared towards maximum transportational convenience and spaciousness, catered to the new suburban classes. Its colorful and technologized interiors reflected suburban homes stocked with mass-produced, populuxe consumer items. These spatial and material appeals to the suburban imagination and experience worked, as Shea Stadium attracted visitors who were more affluent, more domestically oriented, and more success oriented. When constructed, it channeled a particularly postwar vision of the good life for middle America. By 1969, it had become solidly suburban and middle class at a time when suburban middle-class ideology was being challenged widely throughout society.

Shea Stadium was an influential structure in establishing a modern stadium idiom—along with new stadiums in San Francisco, the District of Columbia, and Los Angeles. Its shape, spatiality, expressiveness, and the discourse constructing it were repeated and refracted across the country through the 1960s and 1970s. The Houston Astrodome, opened one year after Shea, both reflected its predecessor and elaborated on its model. But while meanings of the modern stadium in New York often circulated around the city’s shifting urban landscape, the modern stadium in Houston—a drastically distinct social and material environment from New York—would express a different set of virtues.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Exley, *A Fan’s Notes* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1988), 68, 132-33.

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 25-28.

<sup>3</sup> This hierarchy of uses would change in some markets into the 1970s, where ascendant professional football became an equal priority to baseball for many cities.

<sup>4</sup> Lester Bromberg of the *World-Telegram* called it “a card-carrying member of the ‘NBBPA’—New Breed Ball Park Assn. This includes Chavez Ravine (Dodger Stadium) in Los Angeles, Candlestick Park in San Francisco, District of Columbia in Washington, Metropolitan Stadium in Minneapolis and County Stadium in Milwaukee.” Lester Bromberg, “Shea Stadium Fulfillment of a Promise,” *New York World-Telegram*, April 16, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> City of New York Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*, 1964, folder P4.0—Opening Day—1964 Special Events, Box 380, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library. Stan Isaacs, “No Bleachers in Mets’ Split-Level Palace,” *Newsday*, April 20, 1964. Leonard Shecter, “Yea Shea,” *New York Post*, April 18, 1964. “Everything Is Ready For Opening Day,” *Long Island Star Journal*, April 16, 1964. Leonard Koppett, “Soggy Shea Stadium Bails Out For Dedication Ceremony Today,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1964. Jack Mann, “Shea Stadium Dedicated—Mets in Home Debut Today,” *New York Herald Tribune*, April 17, 1964. Bob Addie, “New Breed Has Fun,” *Washington Post*, July 9 1964. Milton Gross, “Casey Knows What’s Missing,” *New York Post*, April 20, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> “Flushing Meadows” is singularized by some speakers and writers to “Flushing Meadow.”

<sup>7</sup> “Stadiums: City Status Symbol,” *Newsweek*, September 30, 1963, 74-75.

<sup>8</sup> Murray Schumach, “Mets’ Euphoria Means All’s Well in Flushing,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> Maury Allen, “Mets Have a Solid Hit—How Far Will It Stretch?” *New York Post*, April 19, 1964. Maury Allen, “50,000 Greet Mets,” *New York Post*, April 17, 1964.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, “Mets Have a Solid Hit.”

<sup>11</sup> Red Smith, “50,312 Mets Fans Silence Huge Jet,” *Washington Post*, April 18, 1964.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” in *The Summer Game* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 61.

<sup>13</sup> The “asymmetry” Vecsey refers to is presumably the cacophony of ramps, banks, cables, panels, and doorways about the outside of the stadium.

<sup>14</sup> George Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville: Being a Complete Account of the Unparalleled History of the New York Mets from Their Most Perturbed Beginnings to Their Amazing Rise to Glory and Renown* (New York: The McCall Publishing Company, 1970), 93.

<sup>15</sup> “Topics of the Times,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1957.

<sup>16</sup> I specify the “New York” Giants here because, of course, the club would return as a visitor as the San Francisco Giants in 1962 and 1963 against the expansion Mets.

<sup>17</sup> “Topics of the Times.”

<sup>18</sup> The original Polo Grounds was located between 110th and 112th streets, 5th and 6th avenues. The land, owned by newspaper tycoon James Gordon Bennett, was used as a site for Bennett and his wealthy compatriots to play, of course, polo. However, it was also used for baseball—for the first time in 1880. The New York Giants baseball club began playing there in 1883. Their last game at these grounds was in 1888. The stadium was torn down, through court order, so that 111<sup>th</sup> street could be extended. The Giants played in Jersey City and St. George’s on Staten Island for twenty-five games before their new park uptown,



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Manhattan Field, was ready. It was located directly north of 155<sup>th</sup> Street and west of Eighth Avenue. When the Giants moved in, it was re-branded as the new Polo Grounds in a nod to the Giants' previous home. The Giants lasted little more than a season there. To their fortune, a better facility next door became vacant the following season. Brotherhood Park had opened in 1890 as the home of New York's Players League franchise. That league, however, disbanded after a single season, leaving a ballpark in need of a tenant. The Giants obliged, moving in for the 1891 season. As was their wont, they renamed the park, the "Polo Grounds." Stew Thornley, *Land of the Giants: New York's Polo Grounds* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Lampton also prefigured later complaints in stadiums of all types, regarding concessions: "Up to the last minute before the game began the food and drink dispensers at the rear of the grand stand had sold enough wet goods and hot dog to retire on a fortune. It wasn't very hot dog, either, at least not until you put the mustard on it thick. Hot dog, to be good, shouldn't be boiled in cold water. And cold beer isn't so palatable when it is warm, either. The temperature of the prices was not so low as that of the hot dog, nor so high as that of the beer." W. J. Lampton, "Hits and Misses," *New York Times*, October 15, 1911.

<sup>20</sup> "H.B. Herts Dead; Noted Architect," *New York Times*, March 28, 1933.

<sup>21</sup> Thornley, *Land of the Giants*, 65-66.

<sup>22</sup> *Meeting the Challenges of the Times: A Century of Progress: A History of The Osborn Engineering Company, 1892-1992* (Cleveland: The Osborn Engineering Company, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> The roots, and reasons, for terming a cheap home run "Chinese" are unclear, though the descriptor does not seem complimentary to the Chinese. Regarding Polo Grounds dimensions—there were really no "typical" baseball park dimensions at that time. Of the parks built in the 1910s, some were roughly symmetrical, like Chicago's Comiskey Park, which had foul lines of 363 feet and a center field fence at 420 feet from home plate. Others had irregular outfields that stretched well over 400 feet at their deepest points (which weren't necessarily in dead center field). The Polo Grounds configuration was peculiar even for that time though, combining a deep center field with very short foul lines.

<sup>24</sup> Thea Arnold, "Sugar Hill" in *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1140-41.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey S. Gurock and Calvin B. Holder, "Harlem" in *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Jackson, 523-25.

<sup>26</sup> Thornley, *Land of the Giants*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Laymond Robinson, Jr., "Our Changing City: Harlem Now on the Upswing," *New York Times*, July 8, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997), 878.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, "Our Changing City: Harlem Now on the Upswing." Lee E. Cooper, "Realty Undergoes Sweeping Changes Along the Harlem," *New York Times*, May 6, 1951. Charles Grutzner, "Housing Outlook Cloudy in Harlem," *New York Times*, February 23, 1958.

<sup>30</sup> "San Francisco Giants year-by-year results," *The Official Site of the San Francisco Giants*, [http://mlb.mlb.com/sf/history/year\\_by\\_year\\_results.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/sf/history/year_by_year_results.jsp).

<sup>31</sup> Thornley, *Land of the Giants*, 112.

<sup>32</sup> *New York Daily News*, April 5, 1956.

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<sup>33</sup> Sportswriter Roger Kahn later claimed that Jack was an “eccentric” who “had no plan to raise construction money.” Roger Kahn, *The Era, 1947-1957: When the Yankees, the Giants, and the Dodgers Ruled the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 334. “Jack Gives Plans For New Stadium,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1956. Charles G. Bennett, “Stadium Project Interests Giants,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1956. “110,000 Capacity Stadium Proposed For Manhattan,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 1956.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph M. Sheehan, “Dodgers, Giants Win Right To Shift if They So Desire,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1957.

<sup>35</sup> Wayne Phillips, “Baseball Parley a Scoreless Tie,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1957.

<sup>36</sup> Antitrust Subcommittee (Subcommittee No. 5) of the Committee on the Judiciary, *Organized Professional Team Sports: Hearings Before the Antitrust Subcommittee (Subcommittee No. 5) of the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives Eighty-Fifth Congress First Session on H.R. 5307, H.R. 5319, H.R. 5383, H.R. 6876, H.R. 6877, H.R. 8023, and H.R. 8124 Bills to Amend the Antitrust Laws to Protect Trade and Commerce Against Unlawful Restraints and Monopolies*, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (1957), 1946.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph M. Sheehan, “Football Giants Quit Polo Grounds for Ten-Year Lease of Yankee Stadium,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1956.

<sup>38</sup> Dressen was then manager of the Washington Senators, previously of the Brooklyn Dodgers. John Drebing, “Sports of the Times: San Francisco or Bust,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1957. Though attendance perked up slightly each of those pennant-winning seasons, just over one million in 1951 and just under 1.2 million in 1954, the team had drawn under 700,000 in 1956 and ’57.

<sup>39</sup> Antitrust Subcommittee, 1945.

<sup>40</sup> Noel Hynd, *The Giants of the Polo Grounds* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 380.

<sup>41</sup> Kahn, *The Era*, 333-34. In an effort to attract crowds, the Giants traded for Dodgers legend Jackie Robinson and offered him, according to Feeney, \$50,000 to play, “although we knew he wasn’t in great shape. We were hoping desperately to boost attendance with Robinson.”

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Gray, “An Address That Drew the City’s Black Elite; Thurgood Marshall and Roy Wilkins were among the Tenants,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1994.

<sup>43</sup> Marc Ferris, “Smalls’ Paradise” in *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Jackson, 1079.

<sup>44</sup> “Friend Triumphs On Six-Hitter, 9-1,” *New York Times*, *New York Times*, September 30, 1957.

<sup>45</sup> Milton Bracker, “Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball Club Rip Up Polo Grounds After Team Is Defeated There in Its Final Game,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1957.

<sup>46</sup> Bracker, “Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball Club.”

<sup>47</sup> Bracker, “Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball Club.”

<sup>48</sup> Howard M. Tuckner, “Two Trumpets and a Trombone Sound Dirge in Empty Ballpark,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1957.

<sup>49</sup> Bracker, “Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball Club.”

<sup>50</sup> Bracker, “Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball Club.”

<sup>51</sup> “Topics of the Times.”

<sup>52</sup> William J. Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans: The Early Years of the New York Jets and the AFL* (Kingston, NY: Total Sports Illustrated, 2000), 119.

<sup>53</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 120-21.

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- <sup>54</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 120.
- <sup>55</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 123.
- <sup>56</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 170.
- <sup>57</sup> Joe Gergen, "When Shea Stadium Meant Class," *Newsday*, December 7, 1983.
- <sup>58</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 170.
- <sup>59</sup> Gordon S. White, Jr., "Titans Park Cars for Giants' Fans," *New York Times*, October 29, 1962.
- <sup>60</sup> Gergen, "When Shea Stadium Meant Class."
- <sup>61</sup> Ryczek, *Crash of the Titans*, 171.
- <sup>62</sup> Charles G. Bennett, "Polo Grounds Doomed to Make Way for Low-Rent Housing Project," *New York Times*, March 10, 1961.
- <sup>63</sup> Louis Effrat, "National League Admits New York, Houston for 1962," *New York Times*, October 18, 1960.
- <sup>64</sup> John Drebing, "Mets Sign Four Players and Start \$300,000 Refurbishing of Polo Grounds," *New York Times*, January 12, 1962.
- <sup>65</sup> Leonard Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds: The Mets That Were* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 138.
- <sup>66</sup> Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 61, 138-39.
- <sup>67</sup> Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 59-62.
- <sup>68</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 9-14.
- <sup>69</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 10.
- <sup>70</sup> Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: With Proper Finality," *New York Times*, September 18, 1963.
- <sup>71</sup> Robert Creamer, "The Quaint Cult of the Mets," *Sports Illustrated*, May 6, 1963, 61-63.
- <sup>72</sup> Creamer, "The Quaint Cult of the Mets," 62.
- <sup>73</sup> Leonard Koppett, *The New York Mets: The Whole Story* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 12. Harry Frommer, *New York City Baseball: The Last Golden Age 1947-1957* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1980), 85. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 61-63.
- <sup>74</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 99-100.
- <sup>75</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 9. Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 12.
- <sup>76</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 87.
- <sup>77</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 13-14.
- <sup>78</sup> Kahn, *The Era*, 45, 189.
- <sup>79</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Sports of The Times: The Burdens of History," *New York Times*, June 19, 1969.
- <sup>80</sup> Howard M. Tuckner, "Mrs. Payson in Group Seeking 2d Team Here," *New York Times*, Jun 10, 1959. Joseph Durso, "Joan Whitney Payson, 72, Mets Owner, Dies," *New York Times*, October 5, 1975.
- <sup>81</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 16.
- <sup>82</sup> Alfred Wright, "Happy Blend of Sport and Cash," *Sports Illustrated*, May 14, 1962, 82-94.
- <sup>83</sup> New York Mets, *New York Mets Revised Year Book 1964*, 1964, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>84</sup> Robert L. Teague, "Close-Up of the Met Fan: Loud, Happy Desperation," *New York Times*, June 3, 1962.

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<sup>85</sup> Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 71.

<sup>86</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 64.

<sup>87</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 62.

<sup>88</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 56-57.

<sup>89</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 58-59.

<sup>90</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 61. After the Mets improbably won the World Series in 1969, people entered the streets of Manhattan to celebrate. Vecsey recounted the scene as though it were New York's diverse populations taking back the streets from the powers that be: "On East Forty-fourth Street, between Third and Lexington avenues, it was like V-E Day, like Lindbergh's homecoming, like New Year's Eve used to be. But it was even better because it was spontaneous. No Commissioner of Civic Celebrations engineered this display. It just happened, and the streets belonged to the people... In one circle, holding hands, there was a Chinese man with sleek black hair, a young man with a razor haircut and turtleneck shirt, a chunky Puerto Rican girl with smoked glasses, a Negro man in a jacket and bow tie, a very tall girl in a very short skirt, a short black girl in an Afro haircut, a husky middle-aged salesman with floppy cuffed trousers. They had come together in an outpouring of happiness. It was the kind of afternoon when anything was possible. The Mets had delivered a miracle to the fans who had kept the faith." Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 242-43.

<sup>91</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 61-62.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Yankee Fans vs. Met Fans: Tinker to Evers to Freud," *New York Times*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>93</sup> Creamer, "The Quaint Cult of the Mets," 62.

<sup>94</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 61-62.

<sup>95</sup> Lipsyte, "Yankee Fans vs. Met Fans."

<sup>96</sup> Yankee Stadium had been partner in a shameful affair for some National League fans, as Vecsey told it: "For four years these fans had crawled into an emotional cellar, brooding over the loss of their loved ones. Some of them, guiltily, had patronized Yankee Stadium like a drinker who will take 3.2 beer if Chivas Regal is not available. But few National League fans felt any thrill at watching the rest of the American League fall tamely at the Yankees' feet every summer. Also, the sombre atmosphere in Yankee Stadium—which Weiss had helped maintain—was hardly conducive to enjoying baseball." Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 55.

<sup>97</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 61.

<sup>98</sup> George Weiss traded Throneberry to Buffalo in 1963. Leonard Shecter claimed that Weiss was never able to understand what Throneberry meant to the Mets fans, "just as they didn't understand why huge crowds fought their way into a crumbling, obsolete ball park to cheer for a losing team." Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 114.

<sup>99</sup> Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 110-11.

<sup>100</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 51-52.

<sup>101</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 56-58.

<sup>102</sup> Angell, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar," 67-68.

<sup>103</sup> Robert L. Teague, "Close-Up of the Met Fan: Loud, Happy Desperation," *New York Times*, June 3, 1962. Leonard Koppett, "Mets' Attendance Passes Million Here as Reds Win, 1-0, After 5-3 Defeat," *New York Times*, September 3, 1963. Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 124. These banners would, after the Mets moved to Shea Stadium, become more formalized and self-conscious. In May 1964, Roger Angell noted that the banners

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increasingly looked to have “been created by art students or advertising men.... This year, I saw a neatly printed sign that could have been a radio jingle.” Television played a role in this formalization of the banner culture. People tried to catch the eye of the camera, and the banners provided broadcasters with engaging content beyond the field. Angell argued, “I must report that the signs this year [1964] seem to have been made for the television cameras rather than for the team; mostly they are unfurled when a foul ball, with its attendant TV eye, comes into the stands, instead of when the Mets desperately need a run.” Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” 67-68.

<sup>104</sup> New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Official Year Book 1962*, 1962, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>105</sup> Claudia Gryvatz Copquin, *The Neighborhoods of Queens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 55-57.

<sup>106</sup> Schumach, “Mets’ Euphoria.”

<sup>107</sup> Fred Powledge, “‘Mason-Dixon Line’ in Queens,” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, May 10, 1964, 12. Jason D. Antos, *Shea Stadium* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 55.

<sup>108</sup> Antos, *Shea Stadium*.

<sup>109</sup> It should be noted that the proposed stadium was not the Bel Geddes design.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Moses to Board of Estimate, September 28, 1959, Stadium-Land Construction folder, M-R, Box 183, C3.615, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division.

<sup>111</sup> Paul Crowell, “Approval Due Today for Study of Flushing Baseball Site,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1959.

<sup>112</sup> Crowell, “Approval Due Today for Study of Flushing Baseball Site.”

<sup>113</sup> William R. Conklin, “City Votes Study of a Stadium In Flushing for 3d League Team,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1959.

<sup>114</sup> It’s unclear exactly what other retractable roof projects—executed or merely proposed—that Shea had in mind. In 1953, the cost for a Praeger-designed retractable roof stadium in Brooklyn for the Dodgers was eight million dollars (for the entire structure). John Drebing, “Baseball Group Will Meet Today On Legislation Recommendations,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1954. Pittsburgh was in the process of constructing a retractable roof arena at an anticipated cost of twenty million dollars. The Pittsburgh Public Auditorium was a central component to the urban renewal of the city’s “Golden Triangle,” “a modern showplace of civic development.” The arena project would include a mall and parking area—total site occupying twenty acres. The arena could accommodate 13,600. The roof would be the largest retractable dome in the world, 415 feet in diameter and 136-foot-high at the center. The roof would be divided radially into eight forty-five-degree sections (six movable, two stationary). The movable sections would retract back over one another on top of the two fixed sections (on each side) in less than three minutes. The auditorium would host a variety of things, including conventions, exhibits, meetings, basketball, hockey, and the Pittsburgh Civic Light Orchestra. It was scheduled for completion in spring 1961. The designers were Architects Mitchell and Ritchey of Pittsburgh—a firm that would later design Three Rivers Stadium, opened in 1970. “A Retractable Stainless Steel Dome for Pittsburgh,” *Architectural & Engineering News*, June 1959, 6-10.

<sup>115</sup> Edmond J. Barnett, “Shea Wants Roof on Baseball Park,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1959.

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<sup>116</sup> Charles G. Bennett, “Wagner Pledges Queens Stadium Will Be Erected,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1960.

<sup>117</sup> Howard M. Tuckner, “Dome for Stadium in Flushing Shea’s Goal for 1962 Opening,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1960. A Moses letter to the board of Estimate in March 1960 suggests that he was skeptical of such expansion, thinking it “financially unsound” given the probable infrequency of the seats’ use. Robert Moses to Board of Estimate, March 11, 1960, Stadium-Land Construction folder, M-R, Box 183, C3.615, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division.

<sup>118</sup> Stanley Frank, “Boss of the Yankees,” *The Saturday Evening Post* April 4, 1960, 113.

<sup>119</sup> Herbert Hermele, “Letters to The Times: Conditions in Harlem Hospital,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1961.

<sup>120</sup> Paul Crowell, “Financing Plans For Stadium Win,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1961.

<sup>121</sup> The National and American Leagues each admitted two clubs from the proposed Continental League in 1960, cutting the league in half and effectively eviscerating it as a viable entity. Louis Effrat, “National League Admits New York, Houston for 1962,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1960.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Crowell, “City Votes Lease of New Ball Park,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1961.

<sup>123</sup> Many sportswriters commented on Moses’ extravagant speech. Among the colorful descriptions was from Lou O’Neill of the *Long Island Star Journal*: “Easily the longest job was turned in by Mr. Moses, president of the 1964-65 Worlds [sic] Fair, who unleashed his famed invective on the unsuspecting head of Walter O’Malley, the erstwhile Squire of Amityville, who decamped with the Dodgers in 1957. Moses’s speech, which took his listeners back to 80 AD and the Colosseum of Rome, was replete with scorn, derision, alliteration and onomatopoeia, and must have ‘shook’ The O’Malley to his Chavez Ravine foundations... We hope Flushing, Corona, and other scholars present had their trots of Homer, Gibbon and Bulfinch along to aid understanding of Moses’ many classical references.” See Lou O’Neill, “The Touting and the Tumult,” *Long Island Star Journal*, October 31, 1961. Moses had his speech printed as a pamphlet and sent far and wide. He ordered his assistant to send copies to Port Authority members and staff (300 in all); World’s Fair directors, members, staff, and consultants (1000); State Park Commissioners and executives (80); Triborough members and staff (25); Long Island State Park Commission staff; members of NY City Planning Commission; New York politicians, “carefully selected sports reporters, editors, etc.”; and, “baseball and other athletic leaders.” Robert Moses, “Remarks of Robert Moses at the Groundbreaking of the Flushing Meadow Municipal Stadium,” October 28, 1961, Box 450, Folder Moses, Robert -10/28/61, Speeches, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library.

<sup>124</sup> City of New York Department of Parks, “Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium: Groundbreaking Ceremony, October 28, 1961, Box 380, Folio P4.0, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library.

<sup>125</sup> A cartoon by Gallo, of the *Daily News*, celebrated the groundbreaking. In it, Casey Stengel, standing out front, told readers, “It ain’t built yet—but here’s the dream house they’ve been telling you about—hand y’r hat—we’re home.” Two massive hands met in a handshake atop the scene, one cuff labeled “Bill Shea,” the other “Dick Young”—in reference to Young’s

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advocacy for the new stadium through the pages of that newspaper. Gallo, "Thanks, Fellas," *New York Daily News*, October 28, 1961.

<sup>126</sup> Joe Williams, "Maybe It's Guile, Bob, Not Bile," *New York World Telegram*, October 30, 1961. Joe Williams, "Story of a Stadium... From 10 to 340 Million," *New York World Telegram*, October 28, 1961.

<sup>127</sup> I borrow the term "threshold" from literary critic Gerard Genette's description of the "paratext." According to Genette, the "paratext" is what enables a book to be a book—elements surrounding a text that aren't the text itself, but through which people experience the text. Paratexts can be attached to texts (like covers, typeface, prefaces, indexes) or separate from the text (reviews, interviews, advertisements). Paratexts set up meanings and interpretive strategies for readers, helping them make sense of the text itself. Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For an example of the use of paratexts in action, see Jonathan Gray's use of the concept to analyze television advertising. Jonathan Gray, "Television previews and the meaning of hype," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11:1 (2008): 33-49.

<sup>128</sup> See Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1959). Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> Maury Allen, "50,000 Greet Mets," *New York Post*, April 17, 1964.

<sup>130</sup> Larry Van Gelder, "Mets Live It Up—The Die," *New York World-Telegram*, April 17, 1964.

<sup>131</sup> Milton Gross, "Casey Knows What's Missing," *New York Post*, April 20, 1964.

<sup>132</sup> Stan Isaacs, "No Bleachers in Mets' Split-Level Palace," *Newsday*, April 20, 1964.

<sup>133</sup> Jimmy Breslin, "It's Metsomania," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 13, 1964, 22. A study conducted by Philadelphia-area developer Ralph Bodek and University of Pennsylvania marketing professor William T. Kelley found in a 1955 study that there were particular social-class associations with certain suburban home types. Split-level homes were considered solidly middle-income and popular among young couples who considered themselves modern, but more traditional than those willing to buy the single-level ranch house. Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 208-9.

<sup>134</sup> "Historical Census Browser," University of Virginia Library, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>.

<sup>135</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Yankee Fans vs. Met Fans: Tinker to Evers to Freud," *New York Times*, April 28, 1963.

<sup>137</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "An Image in Concrete," *New York Times*, July 7, 1963.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "An Era Ends, Perhaps," *New York Times*, April 19, 1964.

<sup>139</sup> Angell, "S Is for So Lovable," 55-56.

<sup>140</sup> Angell, "S Is for So Lovable," 55-56.

<sup>141</sup> Angell, "Farewell," 57-58.

<sup>142</sup> Angell, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar," 66.

<sup>143</sup> Michael Johns, *Moment of Grace: The American City in the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 92. A veteran could buy a Levitt house in 1950 for fifty-six dollars per month on a thirty-year mortgage with no down payment. The average monthly rental for

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apartments in many cities was ninety-three dollars. Clifford Edward Clark Jr., *The American Family Home, 1880-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 222.

<sup>144</sup> The City of New York Department of Parks, *New York City's Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium*, 1962, Stadium Brochures Stadium Construction folder, Box 183, C3.615, New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library.

<sup>145</sup> Department of Parks, *New York City's Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium*. City of New York Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*, 1964, folder P4.0—Opening Day—1964 Special Events, Box 380, New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library. The City of New York Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*, 1964, folder P4.0—Opening Day—1964 Special Events, Box 380, New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library. New York Mets, *New York Mets Revised Year Book 1964*, 1964, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>146</sup> "Yes, Virginia, There Is a Shea Stadium," *New York Times*, April 18, 1964.

<sup>147</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 77.

<sup>148</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*.

<sup>149</sup> This is not to say that the only thing that made these parks "obsolete" was the transportational issue—they were, as has been noted, physically deteriorated and not appropriately physically comfortably for a "modern" audience. However, the old parks' obsolescence, particularly in New York, was grounded in these problems of movement and location.

<sup>150</sup> New York Mets, "Ticket Application," 1964, folder P4.0—Opening Day—1964 Special Events, Box 380, New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library.

<sup>151</sup> Herbert Shuldiner, "A New Home for the Mets," *Popular Science*, April 4, 1964, 86-88.

<sup>152</sup> Vincent Butler, "All-Purpose Stadium Being Built in New York," *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1964.

<sup>153</sup> Bob Addie, "Views From Shea Stadium," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1964.

<sup>154</sup> "All Roads Lead to Shea Stadium," *New York Times*, April 12, 1964.

<sup>155</sup> "Traffic Plan Set for Shea Stadium," *New York Times*, April 17, 1964. "Barnes Maps Road Lineup For Games at Shea Stadium," *Long Island Press*, April 14, 1964. "Barnes Shift to Zip Stadium Traffic," *Long Island Star Journal*, April 14, 1964. "Make Room for the Mets," *New York Post*, April 14, 1964.

<sup>156</sup> Leonard Koppett, "Shea Stadium Opens With Big Traffic Jam," *New York Times*, April 18, 1964.

<sup>157</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*.

<sup>158</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*.

<sup>159</sup> Frank Litsky, "Team of 15 Architects Planning 'Airy' Arena," *New York Times*, April 28, 1960.

<sup>160</sup> "Stadiums: City Status Symbol," *Newsweek*, September 30, 1963, 74-75. Butler, "All-Purpose Stadium Being Built in New York." Mickey Herskowitz, "Domed Stadium Puts Shea in Shade," *Houston Post*, June 5, 1964.

<sup>161</sup> New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Final Revised Official 1963 Year Book*, 1963, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.



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<sup>162</sup> “Escalators at Mets Park to Take Toil Out of Grandstand Climbing,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1963.

<sup>163</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 78-79.

<sup>164</sup> Antos, *Shea Stadium*, 25.

<sup>165</sup> Robert Lipsyte, “An Image in Concrete,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1963.

<sup>166</sup> “Escalators at Mets Park to Take Toil Out of Grandstand Climbing.”

<sup>167</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*.

<sup>168</sup> New York Mets, “Ticket Application.”

<sup>169</sup> Litsky, “Team of 15 Architects Planning ‘Airy’ Arena.”

<sup>170</sup> Howard M. Tuckner, “Last-Place Mets Are Getting a First-Class Ball Park,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1962.

<sup>171</sup> Clark, *The American Family Home*, 211-12, 223.

<sup>172</sup> Isaacs, “No Bleachers in Mets’ Split-Level Palace.”

<sup>173</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 93.

<sup>174</sup> Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” 61.

<sup>175</sup> For some, Shea Stadium’s internal transportational logic was no example of modern rationalism, but existential absurdity. A writer for the *Village Voice* covering a 1970 music festival wrote: “If anybody out there is looking for a convenient, already built set for a film of Kafka’s ‘The Castle,’ I’ve got just the thing—Shea Stadium. Endless ramps that lead nowhere in particular, mysterious passageways, sudden twists and turns that lead from grubby kitchen areas in to stark daylight. It’s even equipped with guards who have an innate feeling for Kafkaesque logic: ‘Press room? Well, now I heard something about a room like that once; why don’t you try going up that ramp over there and then down the other side to level C and then take the elevator up to the fourth level. But then you better ask somebody when you get there.’ For Kafka?—terrific. For the Summer Festival for Peace? Ha.” But there were no other real alternatives in the city—a place “large enough or secure enough to hold 40,000-50,000 people. So, Shea Stadium it was.” “Danger: Music for Peace,” *Village Voice*, 1970, Flushing Shea Stadium 1964-1988 bound clippings, pp. 53-55, Long Island Division, Queens Library.

<sup>176</sup> Packard, *Status Seekers*, 12, 267.

<sup>177</sup> Homeowners were thus very wary of who was moving in and out of the area. Home pricing became a primary sorting mechanism for neighborhood homogeneity. In the American suburb, a world determined by “the drive for... high-value property,” according to political scientist Robert Wood, to overlook the income and race of one’s neighbors was “to invite financial suicide.” As such, not only were suburbs socio-economically homogenous; they were also racially homogenous. While racial exclusion and segregation in public accommodations was receding more generally into the 1960s, it was being accentuated residentially through suburban development. Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*, 202, 210, 218, 253.

<sup>178</sup> Clark, *The American Family Home*, 233-35. Clark invokes Herbert J. Gans’s study of Levittown, New Jersey, *The Levittowners: The Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1967).

<sup>179</sup> New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Official Year Book 1962*, 1962, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame. New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Final Revised Official 1963 Year Book*.

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<sup>180</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 93-94.

<sup>181</sup> The 1965 program for the Houston Astrodome would baldly express this sentiment, collapsing the luxury and middle classes, telling readers that with the stadium's padded seats, "Sports fan is now a king!" At the dome, "You will be able to sit in a chair as comfortable as any found in the world's finest theatres and opera houses." *Inside the Astrodome* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, Inc., 1965), 41.

<sup>182</sup> Isaacs, "No Bleachers in Mets' Split-Level Palace."

<sup>183</sup> Angell, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar," 61.

<sup>184</sup> Michael Benson, *Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Baseball Grounds, Yards and Stadiums, 1845 to Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1989), 257.

<sup>185</sup> Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic*, 251.

<sup>186</sup> Packard, *Status Seekers*, 168.

<sup>187</sup> They were largely out of public view, perhaps revealing a distinction between the deportment of eastern and Sun Belt wealth. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *Power Shift: The Rise of the Southern Rim and Its Challenge to the Eastern Establishment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) and Packard, *Status Seekers*.

<sup>188</sup> New York Mets, "Ticket Application." "The Mets Score in Restaurants," *New York Times*, August 23, 1964.

<sup>189</sup> Bob Addie, "Shea Stadium Spectacular," *Washington Post*, April 2, 1964.

<sup>190</sup> Arthur Daley, "More Stars, More Fans, More Everything," *New York Times*, April 14, 1946.

<sup>191</sup> Milton Gross, "Casey Knows What's Missing," *New York Post*, April 20, 1964.

<sup>192</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 93-94.

<sup>193</sup> Jimmy Breslin, "It's Metsomania," *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 13, 1964, 20.

<sup>194</sup> Jack Mann, "Shea Stadium Dedicated—Mets in Home Debut Today," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 17, 1964. This is corroborated in a memo written by Bill Denny, of the Parks Department, who noted that the Stadium Club was "one of the most critical phases" of the stadium. Bill Denny, "memo to file," September 13, 1963, Stadium-Land Construction folder, A-L, Box 183, C3.615, New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library. As plans to roof Shea Stadium continued after its opening, stadium expansion also called for a "gigantic restaurant" at the top level. Sports Commissioner Ben Finney explained, "This restaurant would be for the average guy going to a ball game, at prices he could afford to pay. Unless he's a season ticket-holder or a member of the Diamond Club, he can't get into the restaurants now on the grounds." Finney's words suggested that there was some anxiety about the exclusive clubs in Shea, and could also be read as a response to the Houston Astrodome's well-publicized and well-developed range of clubs and restaurants which each catered to a different socio-economic slice of customer. Carl Lundquist, "Roof on Shea by '66, Sports Boss Forecasts," *The Sporting News*, June 5, 1965, 7.

<sup>195</sup> The City of New York Department of Parks, *New York City's Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium*.

<sup>196</sup> Johns, *Moment of Grace*, 32. The first apartment building in New York faced with aluminum opened in 1956, located at First Avenue and Fifty-Seventh Street. It was used in combination with white brick to "give the building a bright appearance," according to architects. John A. Bradley, "Luxury' Housing for the East Side," *New York Times*, July 17,

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1955. Aluminum facing was a signifier for the modern, whether used in new buildings or to “modernize” old ones. See “New Styling Set for 511 Fifth Ave., *New York Times*, October 16, 1955. Ada Louise Huxtable, “Arts Group Saves Bits of Landmark,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1964. Robert Schoenfeld, project engineer for Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury, later explained the purpose of the exterior panels as “an attempt to put a facade on the outside without putting a full facade. It was cheaper and I suspect it freed us from some code requirements.” Richard Sandomir, “Stadium’s Appeal Lay in Futuristic Functionality,” *New York Times*, September 28, 2008.

<sup>197</sup> Richard L. Coe, “Gotham’s Got ‘em at the Fair,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 1964.

<sup>198</sup> Lester Bromberg, “Shea Stadium Fulfillment of a Promise,” *New York World-Telegram*, April 16, 1964.

<sup>199</sup> Bob Addie, “New Breed Has Fun,” *Washington Post*, July 9, 1964.

<sup>200</sup> Sandomir, “Stadium’s Appeal Lay in Futuristic Functionality.”

<sup>201</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*.

<sup>202</sup> Dick Young, “Young Ideas,” *New York Daily News*, April 17, 1964.

<sup>203</sup> Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” 61.

<sup>204</sup> Thomas Hine, *Populuxe: The Look and Life of America in the ‘50s and ‘60s, from Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

<sup>205</sup> Shuldiner, “A New Home for the Mets.” *District of Columbia Stadium Official Dedication Magazine*, 1961, George Washington University Gelman Library Special Collections Research Center.

<sup>206</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: William A. Shea Municipal Stadium*.

<sup>207</sup> New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Final Revised Official 1963 Year Book*.

<sup>208</sup> Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*.

<sup>209</sup> New York Mets, *New York Mets Revised Year Book 1964*.

<sup>210</sup> Jerry Levine, “Shea, Fair Run Dead-Heat,” *New York Journal American*, April 4, 1964.

“Mets to Use Giant Movie Screen to Introduce Stars,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1964.

<sup>211</sup> “A Spectacular,” *New York World Telegram*, March 28, 1964. “Mets to Use Giant Movie Screen to Introduce Stars,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1964.

<sup>212</sup> Ed Rumill, “When Play Is On, Scoreboard Should Be Seen, Not Heard,” *Baseball Digest*, August 1966, 65-66.

<sup>213</sup> Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” 61.

<sup>214</sup> Bob Addie, “Shea Stadium Spectacular,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 1964.

<sup>215</sup> City of New York Department of Parks, *New York City’s Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium*. City of New York Department of Parks, *Flushing Meadow Park Municipal Stadium: Groundbreaking Ceremony*, October 28, 1961, Folio P4.0, Box 380, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library. Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*. New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club 1963 Official Program and Score Card*, 1963, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>216</sup> Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 158.

<sup>217</sup> Frommer, *New York City Baseball*, 46.

- <sup>218</sup> The Federal League tried, briefly, to compete with the National and American Leagues as an independent, but “major-league” association.
- <sup>219</sup> “Baseball Fever Hits Newark Hard,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1915.
- <sup>220</sup> “Vaughn’s Single Gives Him a Victory Over Demaree of Giants, by 1 to 0,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 1918. “Girls Usher N.Y. Fans,” *Washington Post*, July 4, 1918.
- <sup>221</sup> Cunningham, “Dodgers’ Following Built On Sentiment, Not Greatness,” *Washington Post*, October 11, 1941. “Sport: Big Deal,” *Time*, February 5, 1945. Larry Durso, “Baseball’s Larry MacPhail Dies; Started Night Games, Led Yanks,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1975.
- <sup>222</sup> “New York Ball Clubs To Use Girl Ushers,” *Washington Post*, February 5, 1943.
- <sup>223</sup> “Who Wants to Argue About Where to Sit?” *Washington Post*, March 29, 1945.
- <sup>224</sup> The Pacific Coast League was essentially a minor-major league. Concentrated, as the name suggests, on the Pacific coast, the league enjoyed strong support from growing western cities. However, as major-league games became nationally televised in the 1950s and jet travel allowed the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants to relocate in California, the league became “minor” in status to the then nationalized National and American Leagues.
- <sup>225</sup> Al Wolf, “Sportraits,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1945.
- <sup>226</sup> Wolf, “Sportraits,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1948.
- <sup>227</sup> Wolf, “Sportraits: S.F. Ball Park Quite a Place,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1960.
- <sup>228</sup> “25 Usherettes All Set for Chavez Ravine,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1962.
- <sup>229</sup> Sid Ziff, “Dodgers in Drydock,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1962.
- <sup>230</sup> Paul Zimmerman, “City to Benefit by New Stadium,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1962.
- <sup>231</sup> Walter Bingham, “Boom Goes Baseball: Ticker Tape, Dyed Grass, Blue Cowboy Hats,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 23, 1962, 18-25.
- <sup>232</sup> John Manmiln, photo of Dodger usherettes, *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1962.
- <sup>233</sup> Will Lissner, “City Improves Facilities For Shea Stadium Fans,” *New York Times*, March 15, 1964.
- <sup>234</sup> Van Gelder, “Mets Live It Up—Then Die.”
- <sup>235</sup> Robert Lipsyte, “‘Fabulous’ Stadium Delights Fans,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1964. Lipsyte, “Metchicks Have All the Answers,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1964.
- <sup>236</sup> Litsky, “Team of 15 Architects Planning ‘Airy’ Arena.”
- <sup>237</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 12.
- <sup>238</sup> Breslin, “It’s Metsomania,” 20.
- <sup>239</sup> Breslin, “It’s Metsomania,” 20, 22.
- <sup>240</sup> Robert Lipsyte, “Fans Arise! It’s Mets vs. Yanks Tonight,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1965.
- <sup>241</sup> Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” 66, 67-8.
- <sup>242</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 87-88.
- <sup>243</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 95.
- <sup>244</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 84-85.
- <sup>245</sup> Shecter, *Once Upon the Polo Grounds*, 129.
- <sup>246</sup> Vecsey, *Joy in Mudville*, 93-94.
- <sup>247</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 137-38.
- <sup>248</sup> Koppett, *The New York Mets*, 138, 190, 203.
- <sup>249</sup> The club was also organized to help the Mets sell tickets. A reporter wrote, “It is hoped that area clubs will be formed that will compete in selling tickets for games, with the best club winning a prize.” Tania Long, “Mets Field Fast Questions From Women Fans,” *New*

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*York Times*, July 4, 1965.

<sup>250</sup> Long, “Mets Field Fast Questions From Women Fans.”

<sup>251</sup> Nancy Moran, “For Women, Home Is Where the Plate Is,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1969.

## Chapter Three

### **The Houston Astrodome and modern narratives of progress**

The operators of Houston's Astrodome, the Houston Sports Association, formally introduced visitors to the new stadium in 1965 with a thick, glossy-paged, color souvenir guidebook, *Inside the Astrodome*. Readers—many sitting there under the stadium's revolutionary roof, in its padded theater seats, cooling off in its air-conditioned climate—were informed in the volume's opening pages,

Sparkling like a rare jewel on a one-time Houston swap, the ASTRODOME is the Taj Mahal of all stadiums from Rome's Colosseum on down to this day. It is beyond compare because nothing like it has ever been built before. It is big, beautiful and something to behold. It rises from the flat Texas plain like some dazzling new creation out of the Space Age. From the outside, the gently, curving blister-bubble roof resembles nothing so much as a lunar landscape. When workmen are on the roof, they look like spacemen crawling on a planet in outer space. Inside, the stadium is a bright picture of color and symmetry giving the spectator a warm glow of intimacy.<sup>1</sup>

The passage pulled together a range of themes expressed through the stadium's materiality and discourse—the Astrodome as a triumph to be measured against humankind's past achievements, the Astrodome as space-age icon, and the Astrodome as exemplar of the comfortable, democratically luxurious, consumer-oriented postwar good life. The past, the future, and the present were woven together in the stadium, combining to mark the vanguard of modern progressiveness.

This chapter examines the Astrodome as an exemplar of modern progressive thinking. When I use the terms “progress” and “progressive,” I refer to post-Enlightenment beliefs in the steady and consistent improvement of human existence grounded in human rationality. In the postwar United States, this faith in progress was often demonstrated through rhetoric of science and engineering, and the evidence of that progress was increased human control

over the natural environment, often to the ends of enhanced human convenience and comfort. Humankind, on the wings of the human mind, was destined for a series of increasingly happy endings. The Astrodome aptly demonstrated the valorization of scientific thinking—proven through technological advancement and material prosperity—among “mainstream” Houstonians and Americans more generally.

The chapter begins with a short introduction to the Astrodome and its predecessor, Colt Stadium. I consider the Astrodome in comparison to some of Shea Stadium’s signature characteristics, its contexts of postwar Houston, and the political and economic process of building the new structure. Next, I examine how the Astrodome was celebrated, by stadium promoters and media alike, as a model of man’s inventiveness, industry, and scientific know-how. (I use “man” purposefully here, for this brand of modern progress was distinctly masculine.) I then look at the stadium as an exemplar of the material benefits of a progressive modernity in the service of physical comfort and pleasure—aspects of modern progress bound up with cultural conceptions of domesticity and femininity, which were vital to coding the space as modern. Fourth, the chapter considers how the stadium was located in a broader historical arc—compared, for example, to icons of human achievement like the Taj Mahal and Roman Colosseum as seen in the passage above—which not only lent the Astrodome the monumentality of humankind’s great creations, but positioned it at the end of human progress. The stadium was tangible evidence of the progressive superiority of a postwar American society that occluded the realities of social dysfunction—the Cold War, racial tension, and inadequate social services among them—outside its miniature world.

### **Astrodome: “A stately pleasure dome”**

Celebrated as the “Eighth Wonder of the World” by boosters, the Astrodome was the modern world’s first completely enclosed, roofed stadium.<sup>2</sup> Sited seven miles southwest of downtown adjacent Houston’s new freeway loop encircling the city, the massive structure rose 218 feet above a thirty-thousand-space parking lot. Its roof spanned 642 feet—twice the size of any other roofed expanse.<sup>3</sup> Athletes, fans, conventioners, religious revivalists, and circus animals alike escaped oppressive Houston summers to a cool seventy-four degrees and fifty percent humidity, prompting an observer to quip, “Texas has just discovered a new frontier—the Great Indoors.”<sup>4</sup> The stadium was notable for a number of other features as well. The animated scoreboard, four stories high and nearly five hundred feet long, was an object of great attention and envy from other cities. The facility boasted six different restaurants, each catering to a different economic slice of society. Around the top, the stadium was ringed with fifty-three private luxury boxes for its highest paying customers. These suites, exotically themed with names like “Bangkok” and “Old Mexico,” were outfitted with many of the luxuries of the suburban home of the fifties and sixties—thick pile carpeting, plush sofas, telephones, radios, televisions, toilets, ice makers, and bars.<sup>5</sup> These stadium features prompted *The New Yorker’s* Roger Angell to call the stadium a “giant living room—complete with manmade weather, wall-to-wall carpeting, clean floors, and unrelenting TV shows.”<sup>6</sup>

The Harris County Domed Stadium, as the structure was officially named, resisted description for its singularity. Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* conceded, “Since the Astrodome defies description I wouldn’t be so presumptuous as to try.”<sup>7</sup> Of course, writers tried anyway, employing an expansive range of descriptors, metaphors, and allusions. The



stadium was often compared to Kubla Khan's "stately pleasure dome" in Xanadu, the famous invention of British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Roger Angell called it the "cool bubble."<sup>8</sup> The *Houston Post's* Mickey Herskowitz described the stadium as a "bubbletop" defined by a "gleaming hemisphere of glass, chrome, polished concrete and plastic."<sup>9</sup> It was a "Texas-size solarium" and a "710-foot-wide umbrella of glass and steel" according to a reporter for *Life*.<sup>10</sup> Larry McMurtry, writing for *The Texas Observer*, was less reverential than most, mockingly suggesting that the air-conditioned stadium's form followed its function, as "the huge white dome poked soothingly above the summer heat-haze like the working end of a gigantic rub-on deodorant."<sup>11</sup> Many turned to the past to make comparisons. Dan Cook of the *San Antonio Express-News* called it "the most celebrated palace of play since the Romans' Coliseum opened its doors to the public." Other commentators turned to the future. It was "like a giant space ship that came in from another planet," according to John Steadman of the *Baltimore News American*.<sup>12</sup> Bob Fenley of the *Dallas Times Herald Sunday Magazine* thought "it belongs on Mars instead of on Earth."<sup>13</sup> "It defies description," Joe Reichler of the Associated Press claimed, "It looks like it might have been built by Jules Verne in his most fantastic dream."<sup>14</sup>

The opening of the remarkable Astrodome invited the universal sense that the stadium, as a building, had been redefined—what was once, for many, an experience to be endured would become comfortable, a place even for fashionable women. A local writer assessed the impact days before the Astrodome's opening:

An era ends Friday. Houstonians may stop suffering while being entertained. No longer will their faces burn red in the semi-tropical sun. No longer must they perspire for the pleasure of watching experts at play. With the hardships banished, women in their best hairdos and finest dresses can enjoyably learn why their husbands deserted them and returned home hours later, hoarse, tired, sunburned—and content.<sup>15</sup>

Wells Twombly of *The Sporting News* echoed this assessment:

Undoubtedly, baseball's image will change with the opening of the Domed Stadium. Gone forever from Houston are such institutions as the hard-baked grandstand seat, the sun-drenched bleachers, the rain-check, the infield tarpaulin... The colorful décor and the upholstered comfort is expected to draw a large number of female fans to the stadium.<sup>16</sup>

Herskowitz drew a parallel between the shift from old park to modern stadium and two dominant figures in Houston identity—the cowboy and the spaceman—writing, “A new order comes Friday to Houston, and to baseball, a break with the past as dramatic as the difference between Roy Rogers and Buck Rogers.”<sup>17</sup> The contrast between Roy and Buck was more salient when considering the park that the baseball club had played its first two seasons in, Colt Stadium.

### **Colt Stadium: “A blend of Disneyland and the old wild west”**

The Houston Sports Association (HSA), which owned the baseball club and would operate the Astrodome, constructed Colt Stadium in a corner of the future Astrodome's parking lot. It was the temporary home for the Colt .45s, as the baseball club was known in its first two seasons. The thirty-three-thousand-seat stadium was originally estimated to cost just eight hundred thousand dollars, it being little more than an assortment of simple, uncovered banks of seats. HSA President Roy Hofheinz's extravagant demands, however, drove the bill to two million dollars. Gabe Paul, Houston's initial general manager, had wanted the team to play at Buff Stadium (officially known as Busch Stadium)—Houston's minor-league park—reasoning that the city's baseball fans would be so excited about having a major-league team that they'd gladly go to the old grounds. Hofheinz was less interested in baseball die-hards; he hoped to draw those casual customers who might be put off by the

difficulty of driving to an old ballpark in an old part of town. Paul's interest in putting together a good baseball product was at odds with Hofheinz's commitment to putting on a show, or as Hofheinz would later put it, "I guess I scared the hell out of Paul. Paul had been in business too long to have the imagination required for the job we needed done here."<sup>18</sup>

Hofheinz's "imagination" produced a unique ballpark that embraced a western theme permeating the team's image at all levels and in all forms—from uniforms, to club publications, to the stadium. A writer for the *New York Daily News* called Colt Stadium "the damndest [stadium] you ever saw... its atmosphere is a blend of Disneyland and the old wild west."<sup>19</sup> A visit to Colt Stadium began in the thirteen-thousand-car parking lot branded with names like "Matt Dillon Territory" and "Wyatt Earp Territory"—heroes of the western frontier both real and fictional. Parking attendants wore white overalls, orange Stetsons, and blue neckerchiefs. At the stadium gates, customers encountered turnstile attendants in 1880s pillbox-style baseball caps, blue-and-white blazers, and orange pants. The Triggerettes, the Colts' female ushers, wore pin-striped blouses and skirts—blue stripes on white, with orange piping—as well as blue-and-orange pillbox baseball caps.

The Triggerettes escorted fans to extravagantly colored seats: chartreuse, turquoise, burnt orange, or flamingo, depending on the section. Many of these seats were located behind seventy-five-foot dugouts, which were intentionally made much longer than standard dugouts because, according to Hofheinz, "Everybody wants a box seat behind the dugout." As people made their way to the seats, they heard a Dixieland band made up of banjo, clarinet, trumpet, and trombone honking out southern tunes as the players warmed up. On the field, the grounds crew wore fluorescent orange coveralls, blue cowboy boots with orange trim, and blue cowboy hats. If fans got tired of watching the poor play of the Colts

on the field, they could retreat to the brightly colored umbrellas in the picnic area behind the right field stands or stop by the concessions stands that reminded a reporter of “a carnival, each booth decorated with strings of pennants and splashes of vivid colors.”<sup>20</sup> Programs told readers that visitors (presumably, the readers included) were “pleasantly surprised by the appearance of colorful Colt Stadium, which provided an appealing eyeful to fans used to the drab green of most major league baseball parks.”<sup>21</sup> Certainly, all that color made an impression. Multiple sportswriters referred to the stadium as “a riot of color.”<sup>22</sup> Players called it “the rainbow sherbet.”<sup>23</sup>

The Wild Western pantomime was enhanced for the stadium’s high rollers in the Fast Draw Club, a private bar and restaurant for season ticket holders willing to pony up the yearly \$150 membership fee. It was “a rough facsimile of the Long Branch Saloon from TV’s *Gunsmoke* series,” as historian Robert Reed put it, housed in a temporary building near the main gate. Bartenders—in straw hats, striped shirts, vests, stiff cuffs and collars, and sporting handlebar moustaches—manned an eighty-foot-long, brass-trimmed mahogany bar accented with spittoons. Chandeliers hung from the ceiling, as did a saloon girl balancing on a swing high above the bar. The walls were decorated with prints of old baseball players and, according to Joseph Sheehan of the *New York Times*, “Rubens-like paintings, including one of a reclining nude mischievously retitled [sic] ‘Safe at Home.’” If not atop a bar stool, patrons sat in tavern chairs at sturdy oaken tables. Waitresses in low-cut ruffled gowns, net stockings, and lacy garters (equipped with toy pistols) patrolled the dining hall, along with a chef astride a small wagon, dishing out dishes like “Braggin’ Beans,” “Cow Country Corn Pones,” “Hell Fire Stew,” “Branding Iron Sourdough Bread,” and “Cow Puncher Coffee.” A player piano rocked the hall with songs from the 1890s. The *Times*’s Sheehan was moved to

claim, “[It] outshines in lavish splendor the most ornate eating and drinking parlor of Denver’s gold-rush days.”<sup>24</sup>

The team’s western identity was perpetuated through publications and souvenirs. Most Houston Colt game programs in the franchise’s first three seasons of play featured a western theme. In 1962, for example, most programs featured a framed image of a Colt .45 handgun with six bullets and a weathered illustration of a nineteenth-century baseball player, both set atop a wood-grained background. The team name was rendered in a decorative font whose curves and knobs recalled a frontier newspaper. A pistol dominated many of the programs from 1963, stretching diagonally across the page. “Colt .45s” in a wispy, shadowed font emerged like smoke from the gun. Cartoon figures of baseball players in cowboy hats were positioned about the page, some distracted by a buxom saloon belle dressed in fishnet stockings who waved at the reader. The Colt .45 handgun was clearly central to the club’s identity in its early years—an easy signifier of a western frontier attitude that Houston’s leaders often celebrated. The gun was so important to team identity that it not only was part of the club’s logo, but even made it onto the home uniforms—a six-shooter stretched across player chests, underlining “Colts.” Fans could buy a stake in this image by purchasing a range of Colt .45 souvenirs at the stadium and through the mail—t-shirts, replica uniforms, head scarves, pajamas, jackets, key chains, cigarette lighters, all adorned with the iconic six-shooters.<sup>25</sup> The western charade even went off the field; Hofheinz employed fashion designers to produce cowboy ensembles for players to wear when traveling to games—outfits that “would make Gene Autry’s fancy \$300 duds look drab by comparison,” according to Frank Finch of the *Los Angeles Times*.<sup>26</sup> Team members objected to the circus-like atmosphere that the powder blue outfits seemed to invite, and the dress code was

scrapped halfway through the 1962 season.<sup>27</sup>

All this Disneyfied dramatization and color was an elaborate bait and switch— compensation for what was a Spartan stadium in the most trying of climates. Stadium programs claimed that the stadium was “comfortable” in addition to being colorful, but few would have agreed.<sup>28</sup> Structurally the stadium was little more than “a glorified assemblage of wooden steps with folding chairs atop them,” as Ray Sones of the *Chicago Daily News* put it.<sup>29</sup> A reporter from the *New York World-Telegram* called it “a wooden plant resembling a vast bleacher” and claimed that if the fans continued their coordinated stamping of feet, he could imagine “the whole she-bang collapsing and everybody drowning in an oil field.”<sup>30</sup> But worse—much worse—than the amateurish banks of stands was the physical reality of watching and playing baseball in Houston—a city of unrelenting temperatures, unwavering humidity, and legendary mosquito hordes. Robert Lipsyte of the *New York Times* was as impressed with the stadium as he was with the mediocre team, writing: “The Houston Colts are as interesting as a swamp. Their field is hot and fetid and damp, and it is said that the mosquitos are big enough to take infield practice with the regulars.”<sup>31</sup> The heat and humidity, which prompted legendary broadcaster Harry Caray to announce a game in his underwear, was exacerbated by the rigorous swarms of insects.<sup>32</sup> Repellent was sold at concessions stands, along with the traditional ballpark fare, and players even took small cans out in the field when playing defense. Player Carl Warwick claimed, “It wasn’t much more than a swamp to start with, and when they dug that huge hole in the ground for the dome it seemed like every mosquito in town found it.”<sup>33</sup> Mosquitoes coupled with the heat and humidity made the park a truly miserable place at times. Player Rusty Staub recalled, “I don’t care what ballpark they ever talk about being the hottest place on the face of the earth, Colt

Stadium was it. There was just no relief, no place to hide. It was the hottest stadium that's ever existed."<sup>34</sup> In a game with the Dodgers in June 1962, seventy-eight fans were treated for heat exhaustion. During that series, one starting pitcher lost fifteen pounds, pitching just four innings. An umpire had to retire from a game, faint from the heat. A *Los Angeles Times* headline captured the spirit most visiting clubs surely felt after a series at Colt Stadium: "Dodgers Happy to Leave Town After Summer Roasts Houston."<sup>35</sup> Houston's baseball fans, however, didn't enjoy their opponents' luxury of leaving town. They counted the days to when the domed stadium, being constructed just a few hundred feet away from Colt Stadium, would provide them relief from the heat, humidity, and mosquitoes.

The move from Colt Stadium to the Astrodome was a remarkable one for spectators and players alike. The team was re-branded as the "Astros," as the HSA put aside the old Wild West signifiers of the Colt .45s and embraced a modern, progressive image resonant with the new NASA Manned Space Program headquarters just south of the city. It replaced its old six-shooter logo for an atomically themed one, featuring an image of the Dome as a nucleus being orbited by baseballs. Customers followed the team into a new stadium that was no dusty old saloon, but the most modern of buildings—a structure that not only expressed Houston's explosive growth, its brazen new confidence, and its lingering anxieties (topics this chapter addresses shortly), but also elaborated on many of the signal qualities of Shea Stadium in New York.

### **Shea Stadium's suburban virtues and the Astrodome**

The opening of the Astrodome drew comparisons between Houston's new stadium and New York's Shea Stadium, which had opened the previous season. The *New York Journal-*

*American's* Til Ferdenzi thought the new dome made all other stadiums “look like something out of the stone age, and that includes such palaces of sport as Shea Stadium, Chavez Ravine [Dodger Stadium] and D.C. Stadium.”<sup>36</sup> Frank Eck of *the Indianapolis News* promised, “National Leaguers are proud of New York’s \$25 million Shea Stadium, but when they see what Houston has done with \$31.6 million for baseball and other games to beat the heat, rain and mosquitoes, they will flip their lids.”<sup>37</sup> The president of New York publisher Random House wondered, “How could the builders of Shea Stadium in New York possibly [have] been short-sighted enough not to do the same thing that the people in Houston had dared[?]”<sup>38</sup>

Roof aside, the two stadiums certainly shared many qualities. As at Shea, mobility and spaciousness were certain virtues at the Astrodome. Like Shea, the Astrodome’s spaces suggested socio-economic stratification, though the promotion of the stadium often employed a rhetoric of democratic luxury. Like Shea, the domed stadium was colorful and readily displayed its technologies, making it a sort of analogue to the postwar suburban home. And finally, like Shea, the Astrodome was a domesticated stadium space, a feminized version of the traditionally masculine stadium. The different contexts of Houston and New York, however, inflected these qualities—these two modern stadiums were both quite similar and yet distinct. While Shea Stadium expressed a central concern between the relationship of the city to its suburbs, Houston’s Astrodome more fully embodied a postwar fascination with human progress, ideologically and materially.

Mobility—to, from, and within—was a key component of modern stadiums like Shea and the Astrodome. *Inside the Astrodome*, the popular souvenir guidebook published by the HSA and sold at the stadium, told readers the Dome was the “nation’s easiest stadium to reach,”



thanks to ten traffic arteries and fifty lanes that “radiated” from the stadium in all directions. Houston’s new freeway system allowed many to avoid downtown altogether. A traffic control tower on the stadium roof helped police direct traffic on the ground, in and out of the enormous thirty-thousand-car parking lot that covered two hundred sixty acres. Eight “rocket” trains—six-car trams outfitted like nineteenth-century locomotives, holdovers from the Wild West Colt Stadium and undeserving of their space-age name—took customers from their cars to the stadium front gates. After the game, the lot could be emptied in twenty-two minutes, according to “traffic experts.”<sup>39</sup>

“Mobility,” stadium promoters pledged, “is one of the ASTRODOME’s built-in characteristics.” Astrodome customers were told that the stadium’s designers had “traveled thousands of miles studying the movement of crowds in the nation’s top baseball and football stadiums and exposition buildings” in order to construct the most easy and modern circulation system. Users moved throughout the structure via ramps, escalators, elevators, and concourses. Pedestrian ramps had an eight percent grade, “lowest of any stadium in the country.” Most of the feeder ramps were a whopping one hundred feet wide; the interior ramps were sixteen feet wide. The escalators were forty-eight inches wide, moved one hundred twenty feet per minute, and were reversible. Four elevators served the most moneyed customers in the sky-box and club levels, and two elevators moved team equipment, concessions merchandise, and members of the press.<sup>40</sup>

The seemingly borderless parking lot, broad ramps, and wide escalators created a sense of spaciousness as visitors moved in and around the stadium. Once inside, of course, they occupied a truly monumental space—likened by various observers to the Grand Canyon, the Taku glacial field, and Franco’s Valley of the Fallen monument.<sup>41</sup> McMurtry, on a tour of the

dome, was grateful the guide paused when they arrived at the upper stands, allowing them to “adjust to the altitude” and “come to terms with the size of the Astrodome” and thus avoid the disorientation that many visitors felt upon their first visit.<sup>42</sup>

The Astrodome roof certainly produced a different sense of stadium space than at the seemingly expansive Shea Stadium. Visitors’ eyes couldn’t wander out of the stadium, as they could across the ragged landscape of Flushing. Vision was contained by the banks of stands, the enormous scoreboard stretching across the entire outfield, and the geometry of the lamella roof. It was, essentially, the “world’s largest air-conditioned room,” as Robert Lipsyte called it.<sup>43</sup> Michael Oriard, who played football there in the early 1970s, recalled “a sensation of constriction in the Astrodome, my constant awareness of being indoors.” As a spectator, McMurtry asserted, “The amount of physical space in the Dome is very great, but the psychological space is disproportionately small.”<sup>44</sup> Whereas many enjoyed Shea Stadium as a structure that “breathed”—particularly in comparison to the tight sightlines and spaces of its antecedent, the Polo Grounds—the Astrodome provided no such sense of relief. The sense of enclosure and constriction, perhaps, was a virtue in a city that was famous for its sprawling suburban landscape; enclosure may have been a welcome thing for Houstonians accustomed to wide-open spaces.

The Astrodome was, like Shea Stadium, a “populuxe” structure, with its display of technological and futuristic affectations and extravagant use of color even outstripping its predecessor. Liz Smith noted that the stadium was “full of mechanical marvels.”<sup>45</sup> *Inside the Astrodome* celebrated the stadium’s automated maintenance and cleaning devices, using language that called to mind the housekeeper’s chores in the suburban home. The stadium would be kept “spic and span and shiny new” by a maintenance crew of over one hundred

for capacity crowds. A “permanent house keeping crew” of twenty-seven was backed up by contracted labor. The “foam-rubber cushioned seats are vacuumed on a continuous basis.” The cleaning crew used “24 litter vacuums, 10 vacuum cleaners for seats, automatic scrubbing machines, floor scrubbing and polishing machines, power sweepers and power riding sweepers for the parking lots.” Altogether, the HSA estimated the “yearly housekeeping tab” at between two hundred fifty and three hundred fifty thousand dollars—an amount of “housekeeping” that would have surely impressed many homemakers.<sup>46</sup>

The scoreboard was a more celebrated form of technological gadgetry, and a considerable elaboration on Shea Stadium’s Stadiarama scoreboard. After climate control, the scoreboard was the most talked about component of the new stadium; it seemed to have been designed to be more an icon of automation than a functional source of game information. The HSA called it an “electronic marvel” and boasted, “The \$2,000,000 Scoreboard Puts the Aurora Borealis to Shame.”<sup>47</sup> The complete board was 474-feet long, over four stories high, and stretched across the entire outfield above the pavilion seats. It weighed three hundred tons, consisted of twelve hundred miles of wiring, was lit by over fifty thousand bulbs, and was controlled by a twenty-five-foot console board in the press box manned by six technicians and a producer. At either end of the massive board were two illuminated advertising medallions, for which Gulf Oil paid one million dollars for five years.<sup>48</sup> Most of what was called the scoreboard was actually an expansive dark screen pocked with fourteen thousand fixed light bulbs that, when illuminated in a pre-orchestrated, animated routine, rendered the celebrated “home run spectacular.” At the center of the massive installation was “the world’s largest 100 line television screen,” which covered eighteen hundred square feet and was capable of displaying animated or still pictures and messages. This screen was flanked by two

141-by-21-foot electronic boards that provided game statistics and information, plus written messages.

The “home run spectacular” consumed most of the scoreboard’s space and mesmerized audiences. After the Astros hit a home run, the forty-five second routine would begin. The show included images of a baseball exploding from the roof of the stadium and soaring across the screen; two agitated cowboys, kicking their heels and freely discharging their six-shooters (their bullets ricocheted around the board, incredibly missing the two gunmen, but filling the screen with streams of light); two fire-snorting steer, with Texan and American flags sprouted from their horns; and a cowboy on horseback wielding a lariat, trying to rope a steer that had appeared on the other side of the board. This spectacular fusion of forward-looking whiz-bang gadgetry and backward-looking Texan iconography then concluded with a multi-colored fireworks display, backed with exploding sound effects, covering the entirety of the 474-foot board. In a September 1964 tour of the yet unfinished Astrodome, a guide promised Jerome Holtzman of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, “It’s going to be worth the price of admission just to see that scoreboard go off.”<sup>49</sup> The 1965 stadium souvenir guidebook dubiously reported, “It has been said that the scoreboard pyrotechnics are so spectacular that some fans will now say: ‘Let’s go to the Scoreboard tonight,’ instead of the tried and true ‘Let’s go to the ball game.’”<sup>50</sup>

Other scoreboard routines, displayed on the video screen, included a player retiring to the shower when an opponent’s pitcher was pulled, the exclamation “Tilt!” when an opponent hit a home run, and the urging, “Go! Go! Go!” If an opponent made it to second base, the television board showed an Astro fall out of the sky and land on that player, followed by the word, “WHOA!” The fans then responded, “Whoa!” in unison. A common conceit was a

small cavalryman riding across the screen followed by the instruction, “CHARGE!” Sometimes a small bull burst across the screen followed by “OLE!” Larry McMurtry, speculating on the relationship between the screen and the game, asserted, “what the game did was provide material for the man who operated the screen”—a subjugation of the game on the field to the entertainment around it. He wondered if fans would have even endured a game between the feeble Mets and the Astros without this artificial stimulation from the “big electronic screen in center field.”<sup>51</sup>

Angell too was reluctantly infatuated with the scoreboard. He confessed, “The giant set is impossible not to look at, and there is no ‘off’ switch.” Although a baseball purist, wholly intent on watching the game on the field, Angell “found that I was giving the game only half my attention; along with everyone else, I kept lifting my eyes to that immense, waiting presence above the players.” He noted multiple times during the games he witnessed when fans started cheering organically (for example, starting to clap rhythmically, in unison), only to be then overwhelmed by commands from the board to yell “charge!,” which then stifled the fan-generated cheering. When he was leaving a game, he noticed that others weren’t discussing the game itself, but an episode in the second inning, when the scoreboard controller had accidentally set off the home run spectacular in response to a mere double off the top of the outfield wall. Angell concluded, “The board had been the big hit of the evening.”<sup>52</sup>

HSA president Roy Hofheinz would have been pleased by those words. When Angell told Hofheinz that he had seen few fans keeping score manually at an Astrodome game—one of Angell’s signifiers of true baseball fandom and engagement—Hofheinz responded,

This park keeps ‘em interested enough that they don’t *have* to keep busy with a pencil and a scorecard. Why, in most other parks you got nothing to do but watch the

game, keep score, and sit on a hard wooden seat. This place was built to keep the fans happy. They've got our good seats, fine restaurants, and our scoreboard to look at, and they don't have to make a personal sacrifice to like baseball.<sup>53</sup>

This idea—that baseball was something to be endured rather than enjoyed—suggested that stadiums required a range of material carrots to get customers to the ballpark. An animated scoreboard that behaved like a giant television screen was one such attraction. Another way stadium designers and owners like Hofheinz tried to make their stadiums appealing to a broader audience—and differentiate their modern stadiums from the old rusty barn ballparks they replaced—was through the liberal use of color.

Shea Stadium was noteworthy for its interior rainbow of seats; Hofheinz one-upped it. Prominent New York sportswriter Dick Young noted “the eye-blinking vividness of the color... The Shea Stadium pastels are drab by comparison to the color explosion of Houston’s seat-spectrum.”<sup>54</sup> As at Shea, the seating sections of the Astrodome were a conspicuous source of this color explosion, making it “aflame with color,” according to the HSA, and thus “the most eye-appealing stadium in the world.” Starting at the bottom, seating levels were lipstick red, coral, burnt orange, terra cotta, black, purple, gold, bronze, and royal blue.<sup>55</sup> Considering the colorful layers of seats, Angell joked, “I had the momentary sensation that I was sinking slowly through the blackberry-brandy layer of a *pousse-café*.”<sup>56</sup> Lou Maysel of the *Austin American* called the Astrodome “an orgy of color” and imagined Hofheinz walking into a paint store, grabbing the color book, and saying, “Give me 500 gallons of each of these colors.” Then, Maysel figured, he walked into a fabric shop and “bought up every bolt of eye-dazzling material they had” and told the clerk to rush him “a few thousand yards of ‘this, this and that.’”<sup>57</sup> The Astrodome’s color extravaganza produced a synaesthetic moment for Mickey Herskowitz, who called the color at the stadium opening

“deafening.” It wasn’t just the stadium that was colorful; the people were as well. Herskowitz wrote, “There were the vendors in iridescent [sic] blue coveralls, of the type worn by airplane mechanics; the grounds crew in burnt orange spacesuits and helmets... and finally there were the spectators themselves, the men in dress suits and neckties, their ladies in evening wear, as though attending the opera, rather than a baseball game.”<sup>58</sup>

If Hofheinz was to be believed, the colors were a tactic for attracting women to the stadium, which in turn was part of a broader strategy to culturally elevate stadium space. He often spoke of the two—color and women—in relation to one another. He told *Sports Illustrated*’s Liz Smith, “I studied up on color psychology and I also studied crowd psychology” and chose colors “designed to get people in the right mood for different things.” He continued: “On the blue level, where our most expensive boxes are, we experimented for a week to determine what light looked best on ladies’ makeup and clothes. Listen, every day here will be ladies’ day.”<sup>59</sup> Hofheinz told another reporter,

The domed Stadium was designed for beautiful women...

We did a lot of research before choosing the colors. We made sure that each color complemented the complexion and cosmetics and clothing of women.

Believe me, it is quite a job when you have to come up with 53 different color schemes [for each of the sky box suites], trying to make each club unique. It took us two weeks alone to get the right color of blue. Many blues would give ladies a pasty-looking complexion.<sup>60</sup>

Hofheinz definitely didn’t want his ladies looking pasty—especially the elegant women of the stadium’s luxury-box blue level.

As at Shea, women were “useful” in the Astrodome not only as paying customers, but also as signifiers of distinction. The importance of distinction in the Astrodome cannot be understated, and anxiety over civic status was palpable in the words of many of Houston’s political and business leaders—Hofheinz in particular, who claimed that some of the

stadium's elaborate interiors were "just a showcase for my Madison Avenue friends who think Indians are loose when they go west of the Hudson."<sup>61</sup> Postwar Houston was a city exploding in population, increasingly vital to national and international economies through its petroleum-related industries, and increasingly visible as home to the country's manned space center. Civic leaders like Hofheinz were eager to help the city make its mark nationally and internationally as a world-class city, a cosmopolitan metropolis worthy of being mentioned in the same sentence as New York and Chicago. The "feminization" of the stadium in New York was bound up in the changing urban landscape there—the move from the dense city and its masculine ballparks to the spacious suburbs, its feminized shopping centers, and domesticated split-level homes. The feminization of the stadium in Houston expressed the city's struggle to assert itself as modern, using the Astrodome as an icon of that modernity. It exemplified the progressive thinking that drove modernization and the material fruits and cultural cachet that came with being modern. To better understand the Astrodome as an expression of the modern requires a fuller examination of postwar Houston.

### **Postwar Houston: "spreading like a spilled bucket of water"**

The Astrodome was, in many ways, the perfect expression of postwar Houston—a brash, modern, expansive structure befitting a city of the same qualities. The *London Times* predicted in the 1950s that postwar United States would shortly be organized around four major cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston. By the 1960s, it was clear that this prediction held some merit. Houston's explosive growth and increasing national significance rested on the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries so vital to the postwar economy. The



city's population grew by fifty-one percent between 1950 and 1960, from 947,500 to 1,430,394. It grew by nearly forty percent between 1960 and 1970, from 1,430,394 to 1,999,316. A significant expansion in residential and commercial construction in the 1950s matched this booming population. Over ninety-nine thousand new homes were built in that decade, expanding the city's suburban footprint. This residential growth was joined by the new commercial and office buildings outside the city center—unrestrained construction due to the city's lack of zoning laws.<sup>62</sup> Houston thus grew haphazardly, without any substantive central planning. It spread outwards, annexing adjacent communities into a widespread, sprawling, and uneven cityscape.<sup>63</sup> French journalist Pierre Voisin said of the city in 1962: "There is no plan. I am horrified. Everyone is just doing as he pleases, building here and there... Houston is spreading like a spilled bucket of water. If something isn't done about it quickly, it will be horrible, horrible."<sup>64</sup>

Few Houstonians in power, if any, shared Voisin's revulsion. Instead, the city buzzed with excitement and anticipation. A writer for the *Dallas News* wrote in 1962 of the city's continuing and anticipated growth: "It is likely that even many Houstonians have no conception of what is happening and what it may mean to their community."<sup>65</sup> Houston journalist George Fuermann wrote of the city's youthful enthusiasm and sense of hope. He claimed in 1962 that the median age of the city was 27.5 years, making it the youngest of America's big cities. Fuermann thought the youthfulness of the population a natural fit for a city so forward-looking and unbothered by history:

The city seems younger than it is, for since the 1920s Houston has given the impression of being always new. Few structures stand long enough to become old. When the lovely patina of age does get a chance to form, it is scrubbed away as though it were an embarrassment... Houstonians have shown little compassion for their city's past.<sup>66</sup>

Major construction throughout Houston reflected this disregard for the past and embrace of the future. The one-hundred-million-dollar Manned Spacecraft Center opened twenty-five miles south of downtown Houston in 1963. The one hundred-twenty-five-million-dollar “Jetero” Airport was under construction by 1964, designed to relieve the pressure on Houston International.<sup>67</sup> Houston’s downtown skyline—newly dominated by an assortment of new office towers—reflected a modern contempt for history. The twenty-one-story Texas National Bank building (opened in 1955), the twenty-four-story Bank of the Southwest building (1956), and the thirty-two-story First City National Building (1961) preceded a number of skyscrapers completed in the early 1960s. Ten new downtown buildings opened in 1963 alone, increasing office space by forty-one percent, including the forty-four-story, thirty-two-million-dollar Humble Building, the thirty-three-story Tenneco Building, the twenty-one-story Southwest Tower, and the twenty-one-story 500 Jefferson Building.<sup>68</sup> By 1964, half of Houston’s downtown core floor space was in office buildings—having increased by 455% since 1950—and several new buildings were being planned. The Sheraton-Lincoln Hotel and the Hotel America, modern high-rise structures both, had opened in the early 1960s as well.<sup>69</sup>

Like most American cities, new and old, the central business district (CBD) in Houston was largely given over to big business in the 1960s. Most professionals had left the CBD. In 1940, seventy percent of Houston’s doctors, seventy-six percent of engineers, and thirty percent of architects were located downtown; by 1963, just fourteen percent of doctors, twenty-four percent of engineers, and ten percent of architects remained. Retail shopping had ceased to be a principal activity downtown, accounting for only thirteen percent of the total floor space. While sixty percent of the people entering the CBD did so to work, just ten

percent went downtown to shop. Though the volume of sales had remained somewhat constant through the 1950s, the percentage of sales had dropped, impacted greatly by the construction of three large regional, suburban shopping centers, each over fifty acres in size, since 1950. There was little housing in the center city, and what remained was increasingly being torn down and replaced by surface parking lots to support the influx of daily commuters.<sup>70</sup>

A traffic expert told the Houston City Council in 1961 that Houstonians, more than any other Americans, preferred private cars to public transportation.<sup>71</sup> By 1960, 95% of Houstonians were using private cars to get around, up from 86% in 1953; bus use, the only other significant form of transportation, dropped from 13.7% to 4.5% of people over that same period. Half of the CBD was spatially committed to the car through streets, parking lots, and ground floors of parking garages. But most of Houston's driving was done outside the downtown, throughout its predominantly suburban landscape. Only twenty-five percent of employed people in Houston worked downtown (compared, for example, to forty percent in Dallas). Of an estimated 2.5 million person trips in Houston's sprawling 612-square-mile metropolitan area on an average workday, only thirteen percent of them occurred to or from downtown.<sup>72</sup> A spate of new postwar freeways enabled Houstonians' driving habits. A four-lane expressway to Galveston, the Gulf Freeway, was completed in 1952. The cost was twenty-eight million dollars, paid largely by the state and federal governments. In 1953, the Texas Highway Department announced plans for a \$2.5 million freeway interchange as part of a larger \$100 million highway system encircling downtown Houston.<sup>73</sup> Highway construction became a constant and visible feature around the city for the remainder of the decade and into the 1960s.

By the 1960s, the city had become a core of sleek office towers and a wide ring of five-hundred-square-miles-plus of suburbia, all strung together by massive freeway arteries, coursing through and around the city, linking the suburbs and region to the downtown and the Astrodome site seven miles to the southwest. Writer Kirkpatrick Sale suggested, “The spirit which infuses all this is, as it has been since the founding of Houston, the making of money. The business of Houston, as its functional character would suggest, is business.”<sup>74</sup>

Oil-rich Texans figured prominently in the national imagination in the 1960s. “Cowboy” was an epithet used by those on Wall Street who encountered the newly powerful Texas entrepreneurs of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their power stemmed from their roles in the petroleum industry, which was physically centered in Texas—first emanating from the East Texas field in the 1930s, then the Permian Basin in the 1950s, and then the Gulf of Mexico in the 1960s. Houston was the oil capital of the United States, and increasingly was an energy center for the world over. The incredible amounts of wealth spawned countless legends and caricatures of the spend-happy Texan, in cowboy hat and tooled-leather boots. Sale noted the “infinite of tales about Texans with four ranches, one for each season, or right- and left-wheel Rolls-Royces so both arms get tanned.”<sup>75</sup>

The popular conception that the business of Houston was business implied that the city and its power brokers might have guarded a *laissez-faire* attitude, opposing interventionist government—an image these men cultivated rhetorically. But, as sociologist Joe R. Feagin argued, the image of *laissez-faire* Houston belied its reality on the ground. Houston, historically, had been a city profoundly and repeatedly shaped by the decisions of business leaders in major industries in consort with state intervention, whereby government was “the instrument of the local business community,” as Feagin put it. Houston’s growth throughout

the twentieth century relied on the largess of public funding that supported private industry, from state and federal support to dredge the Houston Ship Channel beginning in the late 1800s, to federal money for highways and bridges, to post-World War II federal home loan policies, to the substantial military-industrial aid for the petrochemical industry during WWII and later for the Manned Spacecraft Center of the 1960s. Government officials working with business leaders—or more accurately, installed by business leaders in office—funded business endeavors through the use of special bonds while maintaining weak regulatory mechanisms. While support for profit-making projects seemed a viable form of governmental intervention for Houston’s elite, action was usually opposed for other types of projects like the development of neighborhood infrastructure, the regulation of development via zoning or planning, increased taxes to fund public services, or the assistance of poor residents through social welfare programs. Free-market advocates celebrated Houston as an example of the extensive benefits of private development and markets blessed with a low-tax, business-friendly government geared towards creating a “good business climate.” On the other hand, the intense resistance to taxation and spending on public services and other infrastructure produced a city that was enormously stratified socio-economically and beset consistently by major flooding, water pollution, toxic waste, sewage, and street maintenance problems.<sup>76</sup>

In many cities, politicians emerged from machines or unions; in Houston, most top city politicians were either members of, or sponsored by, the business elite. Business leaders in Houston not only received the support of government; they effectively controlled it. From the late 1930s into the 1970s, much of the business of Houston’s government was channeled through the “Suite 8F crowd.” Jesse H. Jones was at its center. Jones had been Houston’s

largest prewar developer, responsible for most of the city's major prewar construction, and had interests in real estate, banking, Humble Oil, the Ship Channel, and the *Houston Chronicle*. As chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Committee from 1933 to 1939, he was among the most influential men in the country—a position that empowered him to dictate national investment and assist the development of the steel and chemical industries in Texas. Jones was joined in the Suite 8F crowd by figures like Herman and George Brown—whose Brown and Root construction firm built military bases, roads, dams, bridges, petrochemical plants, offshore drilling platforms, and the Manned Spacecraft Center—and Judge James A. Elkins, Sr., of the influential Houston law firm of Vinson and Elkins, who had also founded one of Houston's major banking firms and served as a director for a wide range of companies. The name, the "Suite 8F crowd," referred to George Brown's suite in the Lamar Hotel, where Houston's most powerful business leaders met regularly to lunch and plot the city's future.<sup>77</sup>

R. E. "Bob" Smith was one of Houston's more influential oil entrepreneurs and played a major role in city real estate and politics. By virtue of his wealth and holdings, he was part of, though not central to, the 8F Crowd. Smith would become arguably the second-most important player in the realization of the domed stadium in Houston as the most prominent private financier of the project. He was a strong man with a powerful build at the age of seventy—called "Croesus with a mane of white hair and a mania for physical fitness," by one writer.<sup>78</sup> A *Texas Sunday Magazine* article featured a seven-photo spread of Smith lifting weights. The accompanying profile cast him as a winner, a man of few words, a Christian, and an advocate for desegregation—at least within churches.<sup>79</sup> Smith was an influential oilman and owner of much land around the fringes of Houston—including the land that the Astrodome was built on. He had a public reputation: Kirkpatrick Sale put him in the ranks

of those “great names of oil... the old-timers who bring faraway looks to the eyes of modern oilmen as the evening waxes moister,” a group that included J. Paul Getty, H. L. Hunt, Sid Richardson, Clint Murchison, D. H. “Dry Hole” Byrd, John Mecom, and Glenn McCarthy.<sup>80</sup>

Smith was the economic brawn behind the domed stadium; Judge Roy Hofheinz was the brain. The Suite 8F clique had installed Hofheinz as mayor in 1953, only to switch its support away from him in 1955 when he became too centrist for their extremely conservative tastes. Hofheinz had been a pro-economic-growth mayor, but his support of a property reassessment drive downtown, which would have increased taxes there, and his opinions on some social issues, regarding Civil Rights for example, alienated him from some of Houston’s elite.<sup>81</sup> But the scope of Hofheinz’s image stretched well beyond this short period as mayor. Hofheinz was a classic Texan “rags-to-riches” story: he had become a lawyer at age nineteen, a member of the Texas Legislature at twenty-two, was a four-term county judge in Houston’s Harris County beginning at age twenty-four, and mayor from 1953-55. Just fifty-three years old when the Astrodome opened, Hofheinz had become a multi-millionaire through a range of business interests in radio, real estate, television, law, and oil.<sup>82</sup>

Hofheinz was, without a doubt, the star of the show—a magnet for attention from reporters and citizens who treated him with a mixture of bemusement and revulsion, but were largely incapable of resisting his over-the-top personality. A reporter from the *San Antonio Express* captured Hofheinz’s essence effectively when he wrote, “Perhaps the only thing in Houston more amazing than The Dome is the stadium’s father, Roy Hofheinz. Tuesday he stood on the stadium’s fourth level and talked to newsmen for over an hour—without once repeating.”<sup>83</sup> This was the most obvious of Hofheinz’s skills—the ability to talk

and talk, pitch and promote, convincing people that building a domed stadium was not only possible, but also a good investment. Jack Valenti claimed that he was the best platform speaker around outside of Hubert Humphrey. A director of marketing for the Houston club compared his oratory powers to Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler.<sup>84</sup> Hofheinz was described by writers as a “far-seeing Texas tycoon,” a “biscuit-bodied dynamo, a Texas operator,” and a “futuristic genius.”<sup>85</sup> Roy Terrell of *Sports Illustrated* provided a fuller portrait:

Roy Hofheinz is a large man with an even larger stomach, a theatrical flair and a mind as quick as a cash register. He smokes a box of cigars a day, sleeps only when there is nothing else to do and would, if charged with the U.S. space program, have had John Glenn in orbit by the astronaut’s third birthday. He is considered unusual even in Texas.”<sup>86</sup>

Many introductions to Hofheinz noted his pear-shaped physique and his standard accents—the heavy, black-rimmed glasses that gave him the “look of an enormous owl”; his lank, black hair; the ever-present cigar, a signifier of masculine power; and the telephone, a symbol of deal-making, Hofheinz’s specialty.<sup>87</sup> *Sports Illustrated*’s Liz Smith called him “a shrewd and sophisticated operator in the Lyndon B. Johnson genre—country-boy geniality mixed with a gimlet-eyed grasp of the realities.”<sup>88</sup> Robert Lipsyte of the *New York Times* compared him to Sam Houston, Lyndon Johnson, P.T. Barnum, and the fraudulent Texan wheeler-and-dealer Billie Sol Estes.<sup>89</sup> “This guy Hofheinz is the most refreshing mind to come into baseball in years,” a New York television executive said of him, adding, “You watch him. He’ll out-O’Malley O’Malley and out-Veeck Veeck. I just hope he doesn’t decide to change the rules of the game.”<sup>90</sup>



## **Changing the rules of the game: planning and building the Astrodome**

Houston's postwar boom made some citizens long for the "big league" status a major-league baseball team would grant the city. George Kirksey, a former sportswriter who moved to Houston in 1946 and owned a small public relations firm, tried to entice existing clubs to the city in the 1950s. He attempted to put together an investor group to either purchase another club or lure a discontented owner south, but was unsuccessful.

Kirksey tried again in the late 1950s, joining forces with Texaco heir Craig Cullinan to form the Houston Sports Association (HSA), a syndicate of twenty-eight investors. In their bid to attract a major-league franchise to Houston, the HSA faced a common problem for aspiring cities: local leaders were afraid to support the construction of a new stadium until the city was promised a team, but no major-league teams would move to a new city unless a new stadium was secured. Milwaukee had taken a leap of faith in the early 1950s, approving a new stadium, and was rewarded when the Boston Braves moved there in 1953. The Harris County Board of Park Commissioners was created to assemble a proposal for a new stadium that might, like Milwaukee's County Stadium, attract a major-league team. Houston voters bought this logic, approving a twenty-million-dollar bond issue on July 25, 1958 that would finance a sports center and exhibition park, including a six-million-dollar air-conditioned coliseum.<sup>91</sup>

With stadium financing in hand, the HSA applied for membership in both the American and National Leagues in 1958, to no avail. The group then joined other sports entrepreneurs to start a third major league, the Continental League. At first, National and American League owners were unbothered by the prospects of a new competitor; however, they were soon spooked by Congressional action. Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee chaired a

subcommittee that investigated the application of antitrust laws to professional sports leagues. Kefauver was a close friend of Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas; Johnson, in turn, was close to Roy Hofheinz, who had administered his senatorial campaign in Texas. Kefauver's subcommittee unsurprisingly produced Bill 3843, which clearly stated that obstructing the creation and operation of a new major-league baseball club was an antitrust violation. Johnson pushed for an early vote on the bill, which nearly saw it passed. The near-victory was victory enough for Houston. Major-league owners, fearful that the Continental League might actually become a reality, negotiated with some of the most attractive ownership groups to forestall the creation of a third major league. On October 17, 1960, the National League awarded Houston and New York franchises to begin play in 1962. The public face of the HSA at this point consisted of Cullinan, Hofheinz, Smith, Kirksey, and K. S. "Bud" Adams, who was a co-founder of the fledgling American Football League and owner of that league's Oilers. Joan Payson fronted the New York franchise. The American League added teams in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. (to replace the club that had moved to Minneapolis) to begin play in 1961, and the potential challenger, the Continental League, had been successfully gutted by baseball's major-league incumbents.<sup>92</sup>

Hofheinz set to regaling Houstonians and anyone else in earshot with his vision of a new domed stadium, lugging a thirty-five-thousand-dollar model around the city and its satellite communities. Local media supported the plans. The *Houston Chronicle* ran a series on how other minor-league cities had tried to attract major-league clubs. One such article chronicled how "the thrifty burghers of Milwaukee County took a \$7.5 million gamble and won," six years previously. "Without even a prospect of acquiring a major league baseball team at the time," the reporter wrote, "Milwaukee County built one of the finest stadiums in the United

States on the chance that a big league club might someday move in. The gamble paid off in a hurry.”<sup>93</sup> Newspapers published drawings of planned domed stadiums that would be tall enough to cover the famed Shamrock Hotel; one such plan was a geodesic structure from Buckminster Fuller’s Synergetics firm.<sup>94</sup> These well-publicized arguments and proposals, joined with Hofheinz’s salesmanship and well-funded promotional campaigns, helped convince Harris County voters. They approved Propositions One and Two on January 31, 1961. Proposition One provided eighteen million dollars in bonds to acquire a site and construct the stadium; it passed by a vote of 62,033 to 54,204. Proposition Two approved four million dollars in bonds to build access roads and bridges to the site; it passed by a vote of 64,041 to 48,292. It was the largest voter turnout for a bond election in the city’s history. Support for the propositions came from the city’s more affluent southern and western areas; northern and eastern Houston was largely opposed or narrowly in favor. Black precincts supported the project enthusiastically.<sup>95</sup>

Houston’s African-American population played a vital role in the realization of the stadium, not only as a voting bloc that assured the dome’s success, but also as agents in efforts to desegregate the city’s public facilities. Quentin Mease, a Houston activist, threatened to organize black votes against the project if the stadium weren’t fully desegregated. Other city leaders realized that more than just the stadium would have to be racially integrated; a television producer asked Hofheinz, “Have you thought what will happen when the Giants come to Houston? You can’t have Willie Mays and the other ballplayers staying at a segregated hotel.” More interested in big-league status than Jim Crow, many business leaders collaborated with local media to desegregate the city’s downtown stores and restaurants quietly, without immediate news coverage. This averted organized

resistance to the changes. John T. Jones, publisher of the *Houston Chronicle*, nephew to the powerful Jesse Jones and administrator of the Houston Endowment, ended segregation in many of the city's major hotels—the Rice, Lamar, and McKinney Hotels were all owned by the Endowment—on April 1, 1962, just days before the Houston team began play.<sup>96</sup>

Ground had been broken on the domed stadium on January 3, 1962. Before long it was clear that the original twenty-two-million-dollar outlay wouldn't be enough to get the domed stadium built. On 28 May 1962, Harris County Commissioners determined that the stadium couldn't be built for the remaining \$13.4 million from the original \$15 million bond issue. Over the summer, people weighed in with their support for the project, in spite of the misestimated costs. Chamber of Commerce president George T. Morse, Jr. told the Houston Rotary Club that the stadium was vital to the attraction of tourists and industry to the city: "County Stadium must be built... first class in every respect and air conditioned. We must provide whatever funds are needed."<sup>97</sup> The case was made on the grounds of civic pride. A *Houston Chronicle* editorial stated: "The domed stadium has already become known world-wide. It is a symbol, outside of Texas, of the way Texans do things—with flair, imagination, comfort, class. We either wind up with the equivalent of 'an Eiffel Tower' for Houston, or a costly international black eye. We're for the stadium instead of the black eye."<sup>98</sup> The intense heat of the Houston summer made its pitch as well. During a nationally publicized game in June 1962, seventy-eight customers were treated for heat prostration.<sup>99</sup>

Another set of construction bids released November 1, 1962 produced a low bid of \$19.44 million, \$6.64 million more than the original estimated cost. The *Houston Press*, *Houston Post*, and *Houston Chronicle* all supported new funding. Commissioners voted to propose an additional \$9.6 million bond issue for voters to decide.<sup>100</sup> Houston voters

approved the additional bonds on December 22, 1962, by a vote of 42,911 to 36,110. As the HSA turned to the county for more funding, it also underwent dramatic changes. Cullinan, convinced that Hofheinz's involvement and influence over the project was undermining the future of baseball in Houston, dropped out, asking Smith to buy his shares. Smith obliged, and with Hofheinz the two then owned ninety-six percent of the HSA. Only three of the original shareholders still owned a stake. Hofheinz, backed by Smith's money, strengthened his grip over the stadium and the club.<sup>101</sup>

Construction was begun on the stadium in early 1963; it opened in April 1965. The final cost of the total project was \$45,350,000. Most of this, \$31.6 million, was financed through county bonds approved by referendum and spent on construction, architectural and engineering fees, land acquisition, and parking lot and access road pavement. Hofheinz and the HSA dropped six million dollars to outfit the stadium with luxury skyboxes, restaurants, elaborate scoreboards, and other concessions. City and state agencies and property owners spent the rest on road development around the stadium.<sup>102</sup> The HSA signed a forty-year lease that would amortize the bonds and pay the stadium's operating expenses.

The domed stadium met some resistance, of course, as any project of this size would—especially one funded by public dollars. That opposition, however, was relatively anemic. Former Councilman Gail Reeves argued before the voting on Propositions One and Two in January 1961 that the public shouldn't take on debt to support a private corporation. After the vote, he acknowledged the impossibility of battling with the well-financed promotional campaign supporting the stadium: "It's hard to stop a panzer division with a cap pistol, but we tried. It's hard to fight dollars with sense."<sup>103</sup> A resident of Baytown, a satellite community of Houston, complained to the *Houston Post* that the dome was "sickening.

Imperial Rome had nothing on us... We have overcrowded hospitals. We have a populace of questionable morality which voted money by the millions for the unneeded stadium, but voted down a... tax for the relief of our unfortunates who are ill, and in dire need of adequate medical care.”<sup>104</sup> A high school teacher suggested, “The voters should have air conditioned the schools instead of the stadium.”<sup>105</sup> Larry McMurtry, writing for the politically left-oriented *The Texas Observer* after the stadium opening, likely reflected the opinions of a silent minority in Houston:

Pallid though the argument may appear, 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. (Conscienceless, but not surprising. Houston is the kind of boom city that will endorse almost any amount of municipal vulgarity so long as it has a chance of making money. Here, it is customary to build in order to steal, and however questionable the motive, it means that all sorts of public marvels do get built.)<sup>106</sup>

The stadium was certainly a marvel—a concession made by its harshest critics. In the hands of advocates, the Astrodome was a symbol not of the city’s conscienceless vulgarity, but of humankind’s ability to think and build a better world.

### **“What men can accomplish”: the Astrodome, progress, and modern masculinity**

Larry McMurtry, having arrived early on his first visit to the stadium, spent an hour or so before game time in his seat, “perusing a fascinating compendium called *Inside the Astrodome*, a book I would love to review.” *Inside the Astrodome* was the definitive stadium guidebook, published by the HSA. The glossy magazine, two hundred sixty pages in length and one dollar in cost, was “a book you will want to preserve in your home library,” according to its introductory address to readers. McMurtry captured the essence of the text in his brief description:

It contained a letter from the President, another from the governor, a quote from Coleridge (guess which), a detailed comparison of the Astrodome and the Roman Colosseum, and page after page of Staggering Statistics on the Dome. The stadium's ice plant can produce 18 tons of ice a day, for example—no one in this climate can fail to be impressed with such a figure.<sup>107</sup>

The guidebook—a back-slapping combination of celebration, explanation, and advertisements—was the most coherent source of information on the stadium, presenting a unified articulation of what the operators and designers hoped to accomplish there. This volume and other club promotional materials like yearbooks and scorecards established and controlled stadium meanings from an “official” perspective. These meanings were then reiterated, refracted, rearticulated, and challenged by others, publicly by writers for newspapers and magazines, local and national, and privately by stadium users. McMurtry's précis hinted at the book's dominant messages: the Astrodome was the product of great men and their visions (befitting of presidential letters), a monument for the ages (on par with the Colosseum), and a marvel on a scale hitherto unknown (comprehensible only through page-after-page of measurements and figures).

Though the stadium had many critics, who opposed it on a range of issues from its financing to its impact on stadium culture, virtually no one disagreed with the guidebook's central points: that it emanated from the effort, savvy, and vision of scientists, engineers, and civic leaders, particularly Hofhienz, and that it was a structure without parallel, not only within the sporting world, but beyond it. *Inside the Astrodome* crystallized this version of the stadium in a single volume; it was an interpretive device for visitors like McMurtry sitting in the stadium's air-conditioned comfort, settled into its cushioned theater seats after dining in its restaurants, enjoying its mesmerizing scoreboard, perhaps even watching the game on the field. The book comprehensively proposed the stadium as a symbol of human progress at

the apex of modern know-how—an exercise in masculine expertise at a time when masculinity seemed feminized and society seemed soft, given over to comfort and consumption rather than big ideas and national purpose.

Many of the book's opening pages were platforms for expressions of stadium support from political celebrities and the self-congratulations of many of Houston's leaders. These commendations crystallized the stadium as an example of the ingenuity and doggedness of humankind generally and Houstonians specifically. On reproduced White House letterhead, President Lyndon Johnson told R.E. Smith and Roy Hofheinz of the HSA, "You and the people of Houston and Harris County have shown the World what men can accomplish when imagination, energy and sheer determination are combined in one tremendous project. The Astrodome will stand as a deserved tribute to the genius of its planners, to be welcomed by all those who respect industry and dedication." Texas Governor John B. Connally agreed: "The Astrodome is truly one of the great marvels of our time and a wonder of the world... This edifice is a tribute to the imagination, ingenuity, courage and abilities of all who have made it possible."<sup>108</sup>

The praises of Houston's civic leaders took up this symbolism and linked it to the material prosperity and comfort of area citizens. Mayor Louie Welch mused, "Through the transparent dome of this stadium, visitors to our city will be able, at night, to see the stars. This will serve to remind them that we in this city and county are always reaching for the stars. We are constantly searching for new and striking ways of adding to the prosperity, culture and contentment of our teeming and progressive population." As Johnson and Connally suggested, the stadium epitomized human endeavor, but Welch tied this endeavor to specific goals—prosperity foremost among them. The population's "progressive" nature



seemed grounded in its commitment to the new and striking in the service of prosperity, culture, and contentment. Welch's image is one of a burgeoning population of Houstonians building, desiring, buying, and rightfully enjoying.<sup>109</sup> Gail Whitcomb, president of the Chamber of Commerce, stated this local commitment to material prosperity more flatly, calling the stadium "a civic and commercial asset" whose value rested in its attraction of spenders and their "massive purchasing power" to the area for events. This led him to the conclusion, "The citizens of Harris County displayed far-reaching vision when they approved the bond issues which made this Stadium a reality." For Whitcomb and other Houston business leaders, vision and imagination were driven by consumption, business, and the growth of both in the city.<sup>110</sup>

The symbolization of the Astrodome as progressive vision was hardly limited to those "great men" who had the political pull to get their pictures and words into the program's early pages. Advertisers accessed this trope as well, borrowing a bit of the stadium's visionary glamour by affiliation. An advertisement for a financial company quoted Daniel Webster: "Let us, in this, our day and generation, perform something to be remembered."<sup>111</sup> Below this, the company celebrated the stadium, what it stood for, and the men who delivered it: "We have the deepest admiration for Messrs. Smith, Hofheinz, Judge Elliott and the Harris County Commissioners Court, as men of foresight who brought into reality a vision, for Houston and the nation, in creating 'something which will be remembered for generations.'" Local sportswriter Mickey Herskowitz, a staunch supporter of the project, thought the stadium was driven by "man's passion for creating monuments to himself."<sup>112</sup>

Hofheinz was the star of the Astrodome—in part because most people agreed that the stadium would likely have not been constructed without his singleness of purpose in getting

it done, in part because he was a mesmerizing figure, particularly to media from outside Texas. He was a huckster and promoter extraordinaire, a persuasive salesman of ideas who was charismatic to many, gratingly alienating to others. A walking caricature of himself, he would have been absurd had he been less effective. *Inside the Astrodome* cast Hofheinz as the inventor of the entire concept of a roofed stadium, a plan reportedly realized through the combination of his hopes for constructing a covered shopping center, his observation of plant growth in an air-conditioned room in his house, and a visit to the Colosseum in Rome in the mid-1950s. He supposedly began thinking about covering a stadium when he was told of the velarium used at the Colosseum, pulled over the stadium in inclement weather. Buckminster Fuller convinced him that with a large enough budget he could cover any size space. After he added a room onto his house and noticed how quickly plants grew in it, Hofheinz claimed, “It looked to me like the plants grew three times as fast in the air-conditioned room as they did out-of-doors. This fact along with what I had learned from Buckminster Fuller stuck in my mind, and later was to form the basis for pioneering the Domed Stadium.”<sup>113</sup>

The Astrodome’s origin story, resting on the vision of Hofheinz, certainly belied the actual generation of a domed structure in Houston. Famously eccentric oilman Glenn McCarthy had publicized plans for a covered stadium, which would have a retractable aluminum roof, in Houston in 1950. It would have seated one hundred ten thousand, with expansion potential to one hundred eighty thousand, and be constructed within blocks of McCarthy’s Shamrock Hotel—which was, incidentally, blocks from the Astrodome (and where Hofheinz spent much of his time, in Suite 18A, as the Dome was constructed).<sup>114</sup>

*Inside the Astrodome’s* article on the stadium’s origins noted O’Malley’s attempts to build a

covered stadium in Brooklyn in the early 1950s—though this acknowledgment didn't seem to complicate, in the writer's mind, Hofheinz's claims to originality. His plan for a domed stadium was hardly unique in the 1950s; and yet, Hofheinz's Astrodome origin story trumped all other accounts and was widely circulated in public discourse, particularly in Houston.<sup>115</sup>

Photographs accompanying the *Inside the Astrodome* story on Hofheinz and appearing in magazine and newspaper profiles reinforced his ownership of the project; these engaged visual clichés common to stadium representations in Houston and elsewhere. Stadium photos often positioned civic leaders, sports club executives, and engineers as men of action and authority. In *Inside the Astrodome*, Hofheinz was staged with a miniature model of the dome, removing its roof as though he were Zeus exercising his will on a tractable human population below. He was seen at groundbreaking ceremonies, commanding the attention of well-dressed dignitaries—Houston's rich and powerful. In another, he held a cigar and looked pensively into the distance, seeming to contemplate his next revolutionary project for the people of Houston. He was pictured in a hard hat, under the stadium's incomplete frame, pointing, directing, explaining—another cliché that signified authority, understanding, and control.<sup>116</sup> These visual representations appeared throughout club publications, as well as in newspapers and magazines—sometimes featuring Hofheinz and sometimes not—but always positioning men (and men alone) as directors, as commanders, as helmsmen of the engineered and technological.<sup>117</sup>

Men like Hofheinz controlled a project that was staggering in scale—a structure regularly referred to as a “wonder of the world.” Photographs provided evidence of that human control by breaking down the construction process into a series of steps, producing large-

scale “how-to” manuals for readers—many of whom were no doubt tinkerers and model-builders back at home, as was the postwar fashion for suburban men.<sup>118</sup> *Inside the Astrodome* featured a nine-page spread of twenty-three photos of the construction process itself, visually laying out the monumentality of the task. There were photos of the massive foundational hole, the ferro-concrete support walls, the placing of massive support towers (that looked like familiar Texas oil derricks) for the roof, the raising of the circular steel frame, and the laying of lamella trusses across the towers in a gigantic metal spider web. Captions let readers in on the inside dope of construction specifications, wowing them with figures in the process; for example, they were told, “The key to the dome is the 300-ton tension ring, one continuous band of steel which circles the stadium and rests on 72 steel columns, each capable of supporting 220,000 pounds, or a total of 16,000,000 pounds.” Text emphasized the engineered precision of the stadium and linked it to aerospace technologies, telling readers, “Wind-tunnel tests were made on a 1/16th inch model by McDonnell Aircraft Corp., to determine wind pressures, uplift pressures and various other computations.” The difficulties and dangers of putting together such a monumental structure were outlined in detail surely beyond the comprehension of most. Together, these photographs and texts highlighted the accomplishment by revealing a process that united brains and brawn—one that was painstaking, deliberate, and guided at every step by scientific expertise.<sup>119</sup>

The massive superstructure of the Astrodome was matched to an interior stocked with automated devices and modern comforts, tangible evidence of the “magic” of science. Visitors were told, “The sports fan who comes to the ASTRODOME will, without actually knowing it, step right into the middle of the Age of Automation.”<sup>120</sup> Of course, every visitor

to the Astrodome would have been fully aware of the stadium's automated character, as it was promoted so roundly in HSA materials and circulated so widely in stadium discourse.

The most obvious of the stadium's modern comforts and signifiers of automation was the stadium's climate control. Visitors to the stadium were told, "Houston and Harris County have provided 'the world's largest room air conditioner' to give patrons of the ASTRODOME solid comfort the like of which earth man has never before experienced at an athletic contest." Numbers and figures tried to relate the monumentality of the accomplishment: the forty-one million cubic feet of space in the Dome required "four centrifugal refrigeration machines supplying 6,600 tons of cooling capacity" to regulate the temperature. These figures were translated into a more decipherable language as "approximately the amount of cooling given off by the daily melting of enough ice to cover a football field to a depth of nearly five feet."<sup>121</sup>

The air conditioning was controlled by a "modern, revolutionary Control Center, nicknamed 'The Brain.'" Readers were told that this was the "biggest advance in customer comfort in sports annals." The Brain was monitored and manipulated at a seventeen-foot-long console, combining "the most modern system of electronic and mechanical gadgets, gauges, scanners, testers and instruments of its type ever put together on one operation." Its sensory reach was so complete that it replaced the labor equivalent of two hundred eighty men. The Brain cost \$333,000 (though reportedly much more in development by Honeywell), required eight miles of instrument tubing, and consisted of one hundred fifty miles of wiring. As if the reader could make any sense of it, he or she was told that The Brain controlled more than two hundred valves that ranged in size from 1/2" to 14", that the device operation was enabled by "more than 2,000 relays mounted in 50 individual fan room

panels,” that the four hundred remote weather measuring devices had a “display accuracy of up to one part in 1/1000th,” and that the system could scan “400 data input points periodically at a speed of three points per second.” This technical nonsense undoubtedly impressed many who valued numbers and measurements out of hand as an expression of scientific precision. All this centralized automation made the system more responsive and less error-prone than human-run operations, according to the program. Yet, men were still in control of the magical device: to illustrate the point, operators were photographed punching buttons on machines, reading computer screens, and checking power readings.<sup>122</sup>

Climate control required a roof, and the roof was designed to be less a barrier to the outside than a filter—allowing in sunlight, keeping out Houston’s tropical humidity, mosquitoes, and torrential downpours. One of the most celebrated technologies in the stadium was the Lucite paneling of the roof. These translucent panels would allow an indoor space to remain connected to the outdoors. The stadium needed light; architects thought there would be “something oppressive about sitting under the [light] arcs in mid-afternoon.” Lucite solved the problem. It was, readers were informed, a substance both “beautiful” and “rugged.” Initially introduced in 1939 as a synthetic crystal, this DuPont acrylic resin was applied to gunner cockpits of World War II—a quality that gave the material the technological credibility of advanced weaponry. Its use in the Astrodome was presented as just another milestone in this miracle material’s early life. Lucite was, readers were told, “one of the most beautiful of the plastics. It comes close to realizing the chemist’s dream of organic glass.”<sup>123</sup>

The stadium itself was framed as a victory for chemical invention—of mankind’s ability to artificially improve on the natural world. An article in *Chemical Week*, an industry trade

journal, called the stadium “a monument to imaginative application of chemical products in construction.”<sup>124</sup> Readers of *Inside the Astrodome*—many of whom worked in Houston oil, gas, and petrochemical industries—were instructed,

The great dome itself started life as hydrocarbons imprisoned in oil and gas deposits under Gulf Coast farmlands. Freed and transformed by the modern magic of petrochemistry in one or more of the refining and processing complexes dotting the coastal landscape, some became the methacrylate base for the 4,596 ‘Lucite’ plastic skylights and others provided the raw material for the waterproof synthetic rubber skin over the solid portions of the span.

The foam cushioning of the seats relied on the work of petrochemists who “whip up nylon from ammonia, cyclohexane and benzene,” all based in natural gas. The polyurethane likewise was derived from natural gas. Natural gas powered the air conditioning, it heated the water for the hot dogs and steaks found in the range of food stands and restaurants, and it even greened the grass as a base for fertilizers. “Thus it is,” the writer concluded, “that the great Gulf Coast community of oil and gas people—from roughnecks to research scientists—can point to the ASTRODOME as something very special indeed... Examples of an industry’s impact just don’t come this big very often.”<sup>125</sup>

Even the grass, “the green velvet floor... the most pampered grass in the nation,” was heavily engineered. Its scientific and official name, Tifway 419 Bermuda, distinguished it from a pedestrian suburban lawn. This grass “was not merely grown,” but rather “conceived, developed and nurtured.” Dr. M. H. Ferguson, a Texas A&M agronomist, directed this development. Tifway 419 Bermuda combined African Bermuda, common Bermuda, Merion bluegrass, Pennlawn Red Fescue (which had been developed by breeders at Penn State University), and Poa Trivialis. In preparation for the seeding, the Astrodome’s topsoil “was thoroughly cleaned and sterilized before the seed was even sown.” The Davidson Grass Farm took a truckload of soil from the inside of the stadium, trucked it to its plant, where it

was “purified” and fumigated with methyl bromide—eighteen hundred pounds in all. Readers learned that increased carbon dioxide levels, due to spectator exhalation, actually helped the grass grow by increasing photosynthesis. Thus, the Dome provided a closed ecosystem for its grass that improved upon nature’s design.<sup>126</sup>

The notion that the Dome, through the wonders of manmade technology, had rendered the weather obsolete was central to stadium discourse. The HSA told visitors, “The searing Texas sun will still beat down, the angry Gulf Coast winds will still howl and the tropical rains will still fall, but NOT on the spectators in the ASTRODOME.” Companies inserted their products into this narrative of scientific control. A DuPont advertisement asserted, “Skylights of acrylic sheet cast from Du Pont LUCITE help Harris County Domed Stadium conquer the Texas climate.” The Buffalo Forge Company, which made some of the Dome’s fans and air conditioning units, claimed, “This beautiful Texas weather... was made in Buffalo!”<sup>127</sup> This rhetoric—that climate could be conquered and weather “made”—reflected a deliberately confrontational framing of the relationship between humankind and nature; it stretched back to when Willis Havilland Carrier patented dew-point control in 1906, insisting on calling it “man-made weather” rather than “air-conditioning.”<sup>128</sup> Columnists readily embraced the stadium as a symbol of human victory over the natural. Wells Twombly, writing for the *Houston Chronicle*, announced, “Man has triumphed over nature.”<sup>129</sup> Syndicated sportswriter Red Smith noted that the person who coined the saying, “everybody talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it,” didn’t live to see “the revolutionary all-weather, temperature-controlled, bubble-topped, science-fiction hothouse which will shelter, but not conceal, Houston’s Astros.”<sup>130</sup> A syndicated story called it a “monument to man’s



war with nature.”<sup>131</sup> A year later, Mickey Herskowitz borrowed that line, claiming, “What the Domed Stadium will really be is a monument to man’s war with nature.”<sup>132</sup>

The construction of the Astrodome came at the end of what cultural historian Michael L. Smith called a “global engineering ethos,” lasting from the 1930s into the mid-1960s. Central to this ethos was the rhetoric of conquest, particularly humankind’s conquest of nature. Natural environments were portrayed as challenges to or sites for large-scale projects. Gigantism was central to this vision—dams, nuclear plants, space stations, all in their massive scale, signified human triumph over the natural. New York’s Robert Moses, builder of bridges, tunnels, freeways, and Shea Stadium, personified the global engineering ethos. By the mid-1960s and opening of Shea Stadium, this ideology of engineering, gigantism, and growth was being openly challenged in New York by figures like Jane Jacobs. Yet, these ideologies of engineered conquest remained salient for many mainstream Americans. Exhibits like Futurama II at the 1964 World’s Fair depicted what Smith called “technocolonial” projects, locating people in futuristic communities on the moon, under the sea, in the jungle, and in the desert.<sup>133</sup>

In Houston, Texas, where everything was presumably bigger, this ethos thrived—Exhibit A was the Dome. It was so big that “a small neighborhood village could be put underneath the vast caverns of the Astrodome.” Stadium lighting was “powerful enough to light a city of 20,000 persons.” It housed fourteen thousand square feet of HSA offices, “enough for seven medium sized homes.” It included clubhouses, dressing rooms, equipment storage, showers, interview rooms, loading docks, ticket rooms, and other offices. A reporter from Dallas thought the Astrodome was “almost like a city in itself.”<sup>134</sup> The stadium was pitched as an enclosed world, a utopian space of consumption, entertainment, and functionality—a pitch

that would have resonated with other technocolonial propositions of the time, demonstrating a thorough faith in the products of science.<sup>135</sup>

At the steering of all these utopian technologies was man—the engineer, the scientist, the politician, or the businessman of progressive vision. Michael L. Smith has written of the central role of the “helmsman” in American culture—a figure that was appropriated by advertisers as that industry matured in the twentieth century. The helmsman was a loaded signifier in a society that had historically associated physical mobility with not only individual autonomy, but also national destiny. Helmsmen like sea captains and aviators were figures who mastered their environments through the products of technology. This mastery made them useful icons for advertisers; the image of masculine expertise exhibited by the helmsman could be transferred to products, which in turn could be purchased and transferred to the consumer. The utility of the helmsmen figure was salient in part because of the ambiguous relationship of humankind to mechanization, which had historically been understood as both a source of power and a threat to autonomy. The helmsman fused man and technology together in a powerful alliance, mastering the threat of the mechanical and channeling its promise.

The appeal of this masculinized, mechanized power was particularly resonant in the 1950s, in a period of the “organization man,” when bureaucratic values of cooperation and security were also characteristics of an idealized femininity. The helmsman in control of the machine helped counter anxieties about the feminization of post-war men. Smith cited the Marlboro Man as a classic example of the helmsman. Created in 1954 to facilitate the re-branding of a cigarette that had been largely considered a “woman’s cigarette,” the Marlboro Man was cast as a pilot, a racecar driver, a sailor. In 1962, the Marlboro image was extended

to the cowboy in Marlboro Country, creating a trans-historical image of male competence and independence, uniting the helmsman of the present to that of the past. Another common image of the helmsmen in 1950s and '60s advertising appeared in automobile ads. The car was likely the most complex piece of machinery the average consumer would own and operate, and thus was the easiest way for consumers to enjoy the helmsman's sense of masculine competence.<sup>136</sup> While the Astrodome was not operable or pilot-able in the way of a car, airplane, or boat, it was a highly technologized object and experience—something that promoters and reporters never ceased noting. The Astrodome proposed a brand of masculinity bound up with technological mastery, scientific expertise, and progressive ambition at a time when the seeming cohesiveness of the postwar era appeared weakened and the “national purpose” was being thoroughly and publicly questioned.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, many Americans fretted over the “flabbiness” of what seemed a materialistic, satisfied, directionless public that was indifferent to the threats of the Cold War and insensible of any national mission. A national space program helped address this problem, as did a series of studies intended to reinvigorate a sense of national purpose. President Eisenhower appointed a Commission on National Goals in 1960. A Rockefeller-funded project studied national purpose, and Henry Luce ran a series of essays on the topic in *Life*.<sup>137</sup> Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society were sweeping national projects that coalesced individual goals into a national program. Arguably, the Astrodome project itself symbolized the “problem,” as it was essentially an elaborate vehicle for entertainment and consumption; however, the rhetoric of the Astrodome project resonated with high-minded calls for an invigorated national purpose and the grand social endeavors of the 1960s intended to aggregate and realize a national purpose.

The HSA tapped into a broader discourse of scientific progressiveness, human mastery, and purposeful ambition that might have quelled some fears of a society gone soft through comfort and consumption. The stadium functioned for some—at the prodding of the HSA—as a symbol of progressive mankind and man’s command and control over his world. This emanated from the masculine mind, masculine expertise, and masculine command of the technological. While the HSA and other civic leaders framed the Astrodome as a masculine marvel of scientific progress, it certainly wasn’t simply a “masculine” structure. The modern stadium of the 1960s was noteworthy for its appeals to female customers through enhanced cleanliness, comfort, convenience, and peripheral entertainments. The Astrodome achieved this feminization of traditionally male stadium space more fully than any other modern stadium. A pre-condition for stadium feminization was the enhancement of stadium comfort—an enhancement that expressed, and was celebrated as, a feature of a postwar prosperity that extended to people of all incomes and tastes.

### **“A ticket to the Astrodome makes you a king”**

Houston mayor Louis Welch suggested the stadium’s earth-bound progressiveness in the opening pages of *Inside the Astrodome*, when he linked the star-gazing aspirations of Houstonians to “prosperity, culture, and contentment.”<sup>138</sup> The stadium on one hand could be a symbol of the technological mind and masculine control; on the other it was a material entity that satisfied and reinforced Houstonians’ physical desires for comfort and entertainment. Alongside celebrations of technological progressiveness were tributes to the stadium’s many comforts and luxuries that set it apart from stadiums of the past, recasting it as an upscale space where not only Houston’s jet set and oil barons could see, be seen, and

seal their big-money deals with firm handshakes, but also Houston's hoi polloi could enjoy a "democracy of goods" and partake in the consumable prosperity of postwar progress.

Gender was vital to this understanding of progressiveness, for it was through the feminization of stadium space that promoters like Hofheinz coded the Astrodome as classy, affluent, and a realization of the earthly fruits of progressive modernity (a topic I will take up more fully in the succeeding section).

Hofheinz, the HSA, and like-minded newspapermen embraced the seemingly contradictory notion that the Astrodome was both a site of equality and difference, a place where everyone enjoyed the material fruits of modern progress—though, presumably, some more "equally" than others. Hofheinz bragged to a *New York Times* reporter: "Now let's talk about real grandeur, about the guy who spends \$1.50 to see a ball game, and can sit on a foam rubber [seat], and have a reasonable meal without having to eat hot dogs. If we've established grandeur we've done it for the bleacher fan and the country club member."<sup>139</sup>

*Inside the Astrodome* proclaimed,

Sit down sports fan! Your day is here. A ticket to the Astrodome makes you a king... for the first time in sports history you can watch a baseball game from deep-cushioned, foam-padded, nylon-upholstered chairs. You will be able to sit in a chair as comfortable as any found in the world's finest theatres and opera houses.<sup>140</sup>

Visitors were told that the days of hard bleachers were over, as there was "a seat for everyone from pavilion to luxury boxes." Gary Cartwright, of the *Dallas News*, alleged curiously, "This is EVERY MAN'S STADIUM—from the cushioned center field section at \$1.50 to the upper rim of blue suites which can be grabbed for \$18,000 a year"—a claim that was reprinted in the souvenir guide.<sup>141</sup> Cartwright's formulation at once appropriated the democratic suggestiveness of the "every man" and gutted it of this meaning; for him, "every man" didn't signify the typical or the ordinary, but rather each person's socioeconomic

distinctiveness and ability to pay. This wasn't a democracy of equality, but a democracy of the equal ability to consume at whatever level one could afford.<sup>142</sup>

This conflation of equality and hierarchy, the idea that equality meant access to elevated, though still differentiated, degrees of comfort and luxury was shot through the stadium's interior spaces and discourse—most obviously in the presentation of the range of stadium restaurants available (and unavailable) to customers. The stadium featured five separate restaurants, ranging from the elite “Skydome Club,” restricted to occupants of the luxury boxes and featuring a view of downtown Houston from its two-hundred-ten-foot-long glass window, to the plebeian Domeskeller, located on the stadium's bottom level and featuring a view of part of the playing field through mesh wire. Descriptions of the restaurants in *Inside the Astrodome* attempted a delicate balancing act, on the one hand clearly denoting the relative advantages of each space, on the other hand hedging these distinctions with gestures towards equality. In the Skydome, Japanese women prepared food at the patron's table; each owner was given a gold spatula to serve himself or herself. Five-course meals were served in the Astrodome Club, a private membership club for season ticket holders. The Trailblazer, open to the public, dished up its pre-prepared entrees (three to choose from) on molded trays; nonetheless, readers were reassured, “the food is comparable to that served in the ASTRODOME Club.” Another notch down the totem pole was the Countdown Cafeteria. While the means of distribution—“two super-speed lines” that “make it possible to feed more than 1000 persons in a reasonable length of time”—might have suggested a declension in food quality, and although “the menu is limited to five or six basic items,” program readers were told the offerings remained “comparable to the clubs.” Simultaneously different and equal, stadium promoters tried to convince patrons that “every taste and every appetite

is catered to with a variety of food and speed of service never attempted before at a baseball park, football field, race track or convention center.”<sup>143</sup> They were most certainly correct in the latter claim and were often successful in convincing patrons that difference and equality were two sides of the same coin. As writer Larry McMurry put it after visiting the stadium: “Everyone who comes to the Astrodome considers they have escaped the lower class.”<sup>144</sup>

The most genuinely democratic form of comfort in the stadium was the air conditioning—a comfort and technology that all enjoyed and that allowed the stadium to behave in very un-stadium-like ways. The roof that made the stadium “all weather” and air-conditioned was, at the bottom of it, the point of the stadium. It made events possible on the hottest and wettest of days, it allowed for the installation of cushioned theater seats, it enabled people to dress up in ways appropriate to the stadium’s more upscale spaces. It inverted the stadium, turning it from an outpost for sporting die-hards to an oasis for sporting illiterates; Hofheinz told Red Smith, “Up to now baseball has been a fair-weather game. We expect to do our biggest business on weekends when the weather is bad.” A stadium visitor added, “And on a nice night when it’s too stinkin’ hot to breathe, people will say, ‘Let’s go out to the ball park and cool off.’”<sup>145</sup> Once there, the climate control provided the foundation for an unprecedented level of physical comfort. *Inside the Astrodome* asserted that the stadium “provided ‘the world’s largest room air conditioner’ to give patrons of the ASTRODOME solid comfort the like of which earth man has never before experienced at an athletic contest.”<sup>146</sup> One could only speculate, the text seemed to imply, on whether non-earthmen had achieved such levels of comfort in the far reaches of outer space.

Houstonians loved their air conditioning, so much so that the technology became a core component of the city’s image. Author James Street called the city an “air conditioned

Tower of Babel.”<sup>147</sup> An article titled “The Place for Pleasure” in *Houston* magazine, a monthly published by the Chamber of Commerce, celebrated the city’s cool, interior spaces in 1958:

More than a few convention delegates are surprised to find that in Houston people not only talk about their fine weather—they actually do something to make it even better. They push a button or twist a dial to produce their own climate indoors if they don’t like what’s going on outside. The fact that Houston has long been called the most air-conditioned city in the nation (for several years running it has been named the “Air-Conditioning Capital of the U.S.”) looms large in the minds of convention delegates bent on escaping sweltering summer heat or thawing out from biting winter cold. In Houston, delegates can pick whatever indoor weather they want at any time.<sup>148</sup>

Air conditioning in the Astrodome unified the “masculine” and “feminine” sides of the stadium; on the one hand it signified a technological command and control over nature, on the other it represented expertise as a servant of comfort. Air conditioning was consumable science and progress. The spreading use of air conditioning in the 1950s and 1960s that facilitated the explosive growth of the Sunbelt made an air-conditioned stadium seem possible. Houston, the self-proclaimed “Air-Conditioning Capital” of the country, was a logical location for the first such stadium. Once constructed, some argued, the climate-controlled stadium would have to become the norm. Joe Trimble of the *New York Daily News* reasoned, “Air conditioning in homes, cars, offices and places of entertainment has improved our way of life. Houston has brought it to baseball and 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. Texas brags... but in this case, is entitled to.”<sup>149</sup>

Air conditioning in the United States didn’t attract meaningful public attention until the 1920s, when it began to be installed as a customer attraction in spaces like movie theaters, department stores, hotels, and transcontinental railroads. Air conditioning was a central appeal of the movie palaces of the 1920s and 1930s, not only making the spaces more



comfortable, but also seemingly more modern, progressive, and luxurious. These movie palaces—decorated with gilded balustrades and moldings, lavish restrooms, enormous chandeliers, sumptuous seating, and uniformed ushers—were sites where the lower middle classes could fantasize about upper-class luxury, and air conditioning contributed to this air of opulence. One of the first movie theater air conditioning installations in the South was Houston’s eighteen-hundred-seat Texan Theater, where climate control was installed in 1926. Through the 1930s, air conditioning seemed a technological promise for a better future. It was promoted at the Chicago World’s Fair (1933-34) and the New York World’s Fair (1939-40) as a technology of tomorrow and an attraction in itself. Many viewed these fairs as air-conditioned and climate-controlled visions of a futuristic utopia.

After World War II, air conditioning began to seem less a modern novelty than a middle-class necessity—an attitude driven in large part by the air conditioning industry, which targeted the single-family home as a ripe market in the postwar years. It went from being futuristic to a standard middle-class aspiration in the suburbs. Cultural critic Vance Packard noted the technology’s appeal for class-conscious suburbanites, calling air conditioners “an obviously costly, status-enhancing touch” to one’s home. Air conditioning makers claimed that their products guaranteed comfort, or were even synonymous with it. Ads often spoke directly to women, suggesting that air conditioning would enhance family togetherness and reduce cleaning. Like household appliances, air conditioning was pitched as an essential part of the suburban ideal of a clean home, healthy and well-behaved children, and happier husbands.<sup>150</sup>

This affiliation of air conditioning and domesticity was a subtle but instrumental piece of the branding of the Astrodome as a space for women as much as men—an elaboration on

the regendering of stadium space witnessed in Shea Stadium. The technological comfort of the ideal suburban home, grounded in gadgetry and air conditioning, was replicated in the Astrodome. This allowed Hofheinz to target women as potential patrons—something baseball entrepreneurs had been attempting since the game was professionalized in the nineteenth century in order to attract both bourgeois money and behavior. He told Roger Angell, “We have removed baseball from the rough-and-tumble era... Baseball isn’t a game to which your individuals come alone just to watch the game. They come for social enjoyment. They like to entertain and *be* entertained at the ballpark.” Following this theorization of the modern baseball consumer, Hofheinz added, “We make a big effort to bring out the ladies.”<sup>151</sup> The ideal Astrodome patron was not really there for the baseball, according to Hofheinz; the ideal Astrodome patron was there to socialize, entertain, and be entertained. Women were essential participants in and markers of such an environment.

### **Bringing out the ladies: women in the Astrodome**

Air conditioning was the precondition, in the minds of many, for attracting women to the stadium. Men had long assumed that women required a more decorous and comfortable environment to attract them to the stadium. John B. Sheridan wrote a critique of the state of baseball in 1922 for *The Sporting News*, calling for wider seats, corporate boxes, and an atmosphere where the ladies could “dress up.” As it were, seats were too narrow and parks were poorly maintained. The absence of amenities at baseball’s facilities compared unfavorably to theaters and large department stores, then graced with escalators and elevators. Competitors of baseball—horseracing, boxing, and college football—had all surpassed the game in terms of comfort and convenience by providing broader aisles, more

exits, and enhanced parking services (including porte cocheres, valets, or even just enough parking for the new demand).<sup>152</sup> Sheridan's critique anticipated changes that would occur in stadiums over the next eighty years. It also reflected an attitude among some in baseball that the game should accent its ballparks with the trappings of middle-class status as a way of attracting a more moneyed and distinguished audience; this was an attitude that long preceded Sheridan, stretching back to Albert Spalding's efforts to cast stadium space as an acceptable Victorian entertainment. In this imaginative formulation, women were a stand-in for the casual customer—not interested enough to come to a game for the game's sake, they would have to be lured by comfort, convenience, auxiliary entertainment, and, at times, luxurious accoutrements.<sup>153</sup>

Since the earliest days of grounds enclosure, sports clubs had tried to attract middle-class and affluent women to the ballpark in order that they might “discipline” their crowds. Executives saw women as civilizing agents, pacifying men and their behavior. Women were also believed to elevate the status of the event to that of other forms of entertainment and leisure regularly attended by women—for example, legitimate theater, country clubs, and the opera. To combat rowdiness at baseball games in the 1860s, newspapers advocated for clubs to “encourage the patronage of the fair sex.” A writer for the *New York Chronicle* in 1867 observed, “the presence of an assemblage of ladies purifies the moral atmosphere repressing as it does, [sic] all the outburst of intemperate language which the excitement of the contest so frequently induces.”<sup>154</sup> The *Sporting News* noted that men were “more choice in the selection of adjectives” when women were at games.<sup>155</sup>

Women were not always the civilizing agents they were intended to be; in fact, at the “Ladies Day Riot” of 1897, they were agents of discord and even violence. Win Mercer, a

handsome young pitcher for the Washington Nationals, was a women's favorite. The club tried to start Mercer on Tuesdays and Fridays, designated as Ladies' Days. At one of these games in 1897, Mercer was ejected by umpire Bill Carpenter. Outraged women reportedly charged the field, knocked Carpenter to the ground, beat him, and tore his clothes. Some women in the stands tore out seats and others broke windows at the park before police got the melee under control.<sup>156</sup>

The Ladies Day Riot was, of course, the exception. Branch Rickey, one of the most influential executives in the history of sport, once claimed that the use of regular Ladies' Days was "a very important step forward. Probably no innovation did so much to give baseball respectability, as well as thousands of new fans."<sup>157</sup> These twin benefits—respectability and attendance—drove many of sport's more innovative promoters to target women as vital clients for modern sports entertainment. The way they pitched these stadiums to women suggested the roles they wanted women to play within them, and thus the changes women might effect on these monumental sports spaces.

To attract women to the stadium, promoters needed to help women imagine themselves there. While baseball had attracted new female fans in many markets postwar, the ballpark remained a male-dominated space. Women in many cities likely imagined the ballpark as a dirty, rough-and-tumble, sun-drenched and wind-whipped space where men consorted with other men and their beer. In existing major-league markets, women and men alike were increasingly experiencing ballparks, most of which were constructed in the 1910s, in their deteriorating form in their deteriorating urban contexts. These contexts, both inside and outside the stadium, were increasingly at odds with postwar public spaces like shopping

centers—spacious, new, and clean—that explicitly catered to women and were located well outside the congestion and grime of the city.<sup>158</sup>

One way clubs encouraged people to imaginatively reinvent stadium space, making it more amenable to middle-class women and men who craved a more decorous atmosphere, was by picturing women using stadium space in their club publications. Women appeared in all sorts of club-produced and stadium-related visual materials: as users of stadium spaces in architectural drawings, on scorecard covers as fans, eating in photos of private restaurants, as usherettes and entertainers, as animated users of luxury suites, and as inert decorative devices in photos of stadium features like clubs, suites, restaurants, escalators, and even dugouts.<sup>159</sup>

The most concerted effort to inject women visually into stadium spaces came in Houston. Houston had a long history of minor-league baseball, but also a brutal summer climate that demanded endurance and commitment from its spectators. A traditional urban ballpark like the old Busch Stadium (popularly known by its original name, Buff Stadium), home of the city's minor-league baseball team from 1928 to 1961, was a hot, sweaty, and decidedly unfeminine place in the imaginations of Houstonians. The twelve-thousand-seat park was wedged into an eighteen-acre site adjacent railroad tracks, between neighborhoods that were increasingly populated by African and Mexican Americans.<sup>160</sup> Though women attended games there—and some remembered it fondly—it certainly wouldn't have been considered a female-friendly environment.<sup>161</sup> This was, after all, a city of predominantly conservative conceptions of gender difference, a city where, according to *Houston Post* reporter George Fuermann, it was “against the law... for women to wear slacks.”<sup>162</sup>

The Astrodome was Houston's man-made answer to its oppressive summers. Hofheinz was obsessed with attracting women to the stadium, and the HSA's publications reflected

this obsession, combining a range of visual clichés of women in stadium space—as users of its luxury suites, as diners in its restaurants and clubs, as curiously arbitrary decorative devices in photos of stadium features. But people didn’t just experience these visual representations of stadium women in HSA publications like programs, scorecards, and ticket applications; they were also circulated to print media, appearing in newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. The Astrodome was thus widely advertised—both visually and textually—as a space for women to wear the latest fashions, to enjoy fine foods, and to mingle with others doing the same.

One type of these visual representations, and certainly the most puzzling, might be termed, “Women in Unexpected Places.”<sup>163</sup> Women were staged awkwardly and without any narrative context in many of the stadium’s spaces—in front of its enormous scoreboard, in its baseball dugouts (advertised as “the longest in the world”), riding on escalators, and sitting on the padded theater seats. Women in these images did little beyond merely existing in the spaces themselves. The images weren’t anchored by text explaining what women meant in the scenes. Absent textual signposts to rein in meaning, readers were left to make sense of them, if sense was to be made, through association with more coherent uses of women in visual representations—as in tableaux.

The staging of women in tableaux provided readers a more legible image with a more contained range of possible connotative meanings. Instead of being inert decorations in stadium spaces, these women were integrated into dramatized scenes in the array of stadium clubs and restaurants. These illustrations, and others like them that appeared in newspapers, shared many qualities. Women were prominently featured in the foreground and always paired with men. These featured couples were usually the best-dressed figures in the scene;

background characters were typically more casually dressed. There were often male couplings in the background. And finally, everyone appeared to be white. What did these standard characteristics suggest about the images themselves? Most obviously, they recommended that visitors be white—not a surprise for a southern city like Houston that was in the process of desegregating its commercial spaces. Beyond race, these illustrations suggested that visitors should dress up, but more casual attire may also be acceptable. Customers should come with a wife or husband, but it was also okay for a man to come with a buddy who loves baseball. But a clear message that each scene conveyed: this was not your father's stadium, but ideally a space to either bring a woman or be one, escorted by a man.

These idealized representations of women and men in stadium space presented a new vision of how stadium space should be used and gendered—a vision that was fully in line with postwar constructions of gender that celebrated the domestic ideal. In these images, women seemed to signify class, civility, and respectability. They wordlessly marked the space as female-friendly (even female-centered at times), and thus elevated it above stereotypical stadium space coded male, rowdy, dirty, hot, and marginally uncivilized. They were the visual partners to the ostentatious claims so often made by Roy Hofheinz, who asserted, “Our fans are more like the ones they have out in California. We don’t have any of those rowdies or semi-delinquents who follow the [New York] Mets. We have by far a higher percentage of fans in the upper economic brackets than you’ll find in any other park... We make a big effort to bring out the ladies.”<sup>164</sup>

Hofheinz and other club executives had to do more than just use women in visual representations to “bring out the ladies.” While images of women in the stadium may have worked toward de-naturalizing its masculinity, these promoters also actively solicited

women's attendance. One way they did this was by appealing to what they thought essential to feminizing a space—that it be able to support a healthy display of women's fashions.

Many women, of course, *were* quite interested in dressing up to go to the stadium. While ballpark fashion was largely casual, particularly in baseball's summer months, ballparks were splashed with more stylish clothing on special occasions like Opening Days or World Series games. In a 1952 article in the *Washington Post's* "Women's World" section, entitled "First Lady Risks A Hat for Nats," reporter Evelyn Hayes chronicled First Lady Bess Truman's bona fides as a baseball fan. She began, "These days it's hard to keep the women away from the ball par[k]—even when the temperature is a damp 50—especially when the woman is a baseball fan like Bess Truman." Truman had been a pitcher in her youth, and thus, Hayes explained, understood baseball's finer points. After establishing Truman's baseball credentials, Hayes continued, "Normally Opening Day brings out as many spring fashions as Easter—with the ladies airing their new spring suits and bonnets for the occasion." Most of the article then addressed, in some detail, what Truman and other women around the stadium wore.<sup>165</sup>

While women could be both fashionable and fanatical in the park, women's fashions sometimes signified ignorance. Roger Angell, writing in *The New Yorker*, zeroed in on groups of affluent women during the 1962 World Series at Yankee Stadium. New York, he noted, was "full of cool, knowing baseball fans"; however, not many of them had been able to get tickets to the opening game of that series. Instead, he observed, "the northbound D trains were full of women weighted down with expensive coiffures and mink stoles, not one of whom, by the look of them, had ever ridden a subway as far as the Bronx before." The silent crowd seemed, in his estimation, more excited about its own size (over seventy thousand)



than the game that awaited it. A striking comparison can be made with the female fans he found on the streets outside Boston's Fenway Park in 1967: "a mass of children and parents, old ladies in straw porkpies, pretty girls with pennants, South Boston and Dorchester youths in high-school windbreakers, a party of nuns." This motley group "then pushed and jammed, laughing at the crush, through the turnstiles and into the damp gloom under the stands; and out at last to that first electric glimpse of green outfield and white bases."<sup>166</sup> The plainness of dress, the range of age, and the delight in the physicality of the crowd coded these women, for Angell, as legitimate sports fans, not poseurs.

Regardless of the range of women's expertise and seriousness concerning sport, women's reputations for wanting to be fashionable in the stadium impacted how some baseball executives appealed to potential female customers. In 1957, in what would prove their final season in Brooklyn, the Dodgers adjusted their advertising to specifically target women. Beginning in late June the Dodgers placed ads in the women's pages of daily newspapers in New York and New Jersey. The ads, reminding readers, "Don't Forget Now, Ladies Day at Ebbets Field Every Saturday," were published on Thursdays, when women did most of their shopping and thus read through ads more closely (according to the advertising executive, Tim Villante). The text was accompanied by what the *New York Times* called "high fashion" illustrations. These featured a tall, thin, elegant woman in a long overcoat and fur hat (an odd outfit for summer baseball, to be sure), holding a scorecard in her gloved hand—an aesthetic roughly resembling that of a Bloomingdale's ad.<sup>167</sup>

The Dodgers continued to link fashion in the stadium to women's attendance after they moved to Los Angeles. The club advertised its "Dodger Dolls Night" Ladies Day promotion in 1961 with a photo from "Fashion Day" in 1960. Five Dodgers players posed with twelve

models, posing in an array of outfits (many in bathing suits—like the overcoats of the “high fashion” ads in New York, peculiar attire for the stadium). Readers were instructed, “Come early and enjoy the latest in styles—and the models. . . . It will be another crowd-pleasing show that will combine models-in-motion with the latest in sports and casual, swimsuits, gowns and what have you.”<sup>168</sup> This kind of promotion likely appealed to many men as well as fashion-conscious women.

But nowhere was stadium space and female fashion as relentlessly linked together as at Houston’s Astrodome. Understandably so, as it was the only climate-controlled stadium in the United States until the New Orleans Superdome opened in 1975. It had the most brazen promoter in Roy Hofheinz, who was able to push the necessary political buttons to get the structure built. The culture of its city, Houston, perfectly invited such a presentation—traditionally gendered, brashly Texan, explosively growing, and yet desperately anxious about its status as a “bush-league” city. In a sense, the Houston Astrodome was both an outlier and an exemplar—it was able to accomplish materially what other sports executives and civic leaders dreamed of elsewhere, but could not realize in their own cities given the political and economic conditions there. The Astrodome allowed Hofheinz to promise extravagantly, “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. The Astrodome will get a promenade of the best-gowned, best-looking and most-influential women ever collected.”<sup>169</sup> The HSA’s vice president, George Kirksey, agreed, asserting, “Women will take a different view of sports events. Think of it; 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.”<sup>170</sup>

The idea that the Astrodome would provoke a revolution for women and women's fashion in the stadium was pushed by both the club and Houston newspapers. A photo of local model Elsa Rosborough, family in tow, appeared in "Chic," the fashion insert for the *Houston Post*, in February 1965. The paper branded Rosborough as "one of Houston's most famous and most beautiful models [who] wore the ideal costume for a spectator, whether in the stands or a private box." Other photos featuring more fashion prescriptions accompanied this image of Rosborough. There was a young couple, he donning a madras sport coat, she wearing a two-tone dress. Another pictured Rosborough's son dressed in a blue-striped seersucker jacket. These were the standards for Astrodome dress—at least as they were pitched to women reading the *Post's* fashion section. Though the primary audience for these articles was women, and attention to style in the stadium largely focused on women's fashion, recommendations were also made regarding the attire of men, who were expected to escort these fashionable women to an imaginatively reconstructed stadium.

The *Post* Fashion Editor, Virginia Drane McCallon, wrote the accompanying article. She began by promising, "The Harris County Domed Stadium should change our ideas on what to wear to a baseball game." She doubted that women would be as dressy as those at English horse races, but suggested outfits something more in line with the Kentucky Derby. That is, unless one would be a guest in what she called "the prestige space boxes," where "covered cocktail clothes" would be appropriate. The private Skydome Club would be, after all, "as elegant as any club."<sup>171</sup>

The same photo of Rosborough was used in the stadium guide, *Inside the Astrodome*, accompanying a full-page article titled, "Fashion Under the Astrodome," written by Judy Ward, a fashion consultant for Battelstein's department store. Ward expounded on how the

Astrodome would impact women's dress at sporting events, liberating them to wear all the latest fashions, season-to-season. She noted that though "Houston has long been noted for its fashion conscious women," the heat and sun had undermined their ability to fully express themselves as the fashionable Houstonians they were. The air conditioning would allow "Milady to dress in style, from the tip of her head to the tip of her toe." Ward ended the article with the fabulous proclamation: "It has long been rumored by the male population that the majority of women attend sports events 'to be seen' rather than to view the event, and although this is hotly denied by women, let's admit the ASTRODOME will make history as the most fashionable 'RUNWAY' in America."<sup>172</sup> Ward's closing remark seemed to both challenge and concede the point that a woman's primary function at the stadium was to look stylish. Her construction of the stadium as a fashion show runway may have seemed hyperbolic even to her; however, the very suggestion intimated that well-dressed women could elevate a stadium's status, if not to that of a fashion show, at least many notches above a dusty, old baseball park.

Appeals to women as customers were supported by the use of young women as service workers. As evidenced in Shea Stadium and other modern stadiums of the early 1960s, young, attractive female service was used to accent the Astrodome with what seemed a distinctly feminine charm. Like airline stewardesses or retail clerks in new suburban shopping centers, female ushers marked this commercial space with an allure that appealed to men and women alike—non-threatening, graceful, feminine.

Houston's baseball club used female ushers from its inception in 1962, in the temporary and western-themed Colt Stadium adjacent the Dome construction site. Ray Sons of the *Chicago Daily News* called attention to the female ushers, comparing them to Andy Frain,

whose ushering service oversaw fifty million people per year at sporting events and conventions: “The ushers are girls, called Triggerettes. They haven’t been in business as long as Andy Frain, but they’re prettier.” The Triggerettes wore blue-and-white-striped blouses with orange piping on the collars, skirts, and caps of blue and orange. They were “picked for their looks and their manners,” according to Hofheinz biographer Edgar Ray, suggesting that in spite of their rather colorful costumes, the women were intended to express a modest and respectable image.<sup>173</sup>

When the Houston club moved into its new domed stadium in 1965 and the club was re-branded from a western outfit (Colt .45s) to a space-age one (the Astros), the female ushers were retained but repackaged as “Spacettes.” The Spacettes ranged in age from eighteen to thirty years old. For a typical game, there would be two hundred sixteen Spacettes and ten “Chief Spacettes” on hand to guide fans to their seats or direct them toward the stadium’s restaurants, snack bars, restrooms, or exits.<sup>174</sup> They wore quilted gold lamé suits, trimmed with royal blue velvet and orange accents; blue pillbox hats with round, ribbed caps (allusions to the Dome itself); gloves; boots; and scarves. Whereas the Triggerettes were forced to suffer the brutal Houston summers—blindingly hot and sunny during the day, oppressively humid and mosquito infested at night—the Spacettes would benefit from the Astrodome’s climate control, which allowed for a more visually enhanced line of female service. As Sharon Wilhoit, head Spacette put it: “Working conditions in the stadium should be a lot better. We had trouble with our hairdos before in the humidity. Our hairdos will stay now, and our appearances in general should be much improved.”<sup>175</sup>

The value of a Spacette was not just in her appearance, but also in her charm and manners. Teddye Clayton, a staff writer for the *Houston Post* women’s section, introduced

many Houstonians (presumably women, given the article's placement) to the crew's training days before the stadium's opening. She promised, "A 10-Hour course from the John Robert Powers School insures the girls will be as charming as they are helpful." Instructors from the Powers School, which worked with models and actresses on self-presentation and social etiquette, taught the Spacettes "speech and personality, poise and grooming." This was the sort of training women in the airline industry received. Like Houston's Spacettes, Continental Airlines sent its stewardesses to the Powers Modeling School in the early 1960s.<sup>176</sup> Clayton's words echoed those of American Airlines, which informed prospective recruits in 1961, "At the Stewardess College, a staff of professionals is on hand to help you learn the proper hair-styling, tricks of good grooming, make-up and figure improvement. You'll learn to walk, talk, and think with new poise."<sup>177</sup> These similarities in approach revealed similarities in intention.<sup>178</sup> The management of the space-age Astrodome certainly hoped to borrow and project the same sense of glamour, comfort, and luxury of jet travel and airline stewardesses. A conspicuous visual display of refinement accompanied the *Post's* introduction to the ushers: a large photo dramatized three Spacettes being civilized by an instructor from the Powers School. The caption noted that the students "watch attentively" as the instructor demonstrated proper posture. The photo was staged in the stadium's lower levels, amongst the padded theater-type seats, thus weaving together key values of the stadium: beauty, docility, manners, comfort, and luxury.<sup>179</sup>

Women, the use of women, and the use of cultural conceptions of femininity played central roles in the design, promotion, and experience of the Astrodome and other postwar modern stadiums. They were used to recast the image of the stadium from urban, masculine, dirty, and uncomfortable to suburban, modern, domesticated, and luxurious. They marked

stadium space as classy and an appropriate entertainment for the affluent—cultural brethren of upscale restaurants and clubs, theaters and museums. Hofheinz and others believed that women could elevate sports spectatorship to a more reputable form of entertainment at a time when people were investing more time and money in leisure. A female friendly consumer space—a cousin to shopping malls and Disneyland—was one ideologically in concert with moneyed, suburban, white, middle-class America.

The re-classing of the stadium was, like the Astrodome's technologies and engineered monumentality, a symbol of progress. The Dome was a giant leap in stadium design and execution—a point agreed by its proponents and detractors. Ben McGuire, an adviser to Hofheinz, recalled attending World Series games in different cities with Hofheinz, who “saw how dirty the stadiums were, and he said his stadium was never going to be that way... He said he was going to have the best dressed people in town, in neckties and coats, with air conditioning, and he was right. He got people out to baseball games that wouldn't go in other cities.”<sup>180</sup> This, for Hofheinz and others, was progress—the business of sports entertainment pulling itself up by the bootstraps and modernizing, turning its back on a rough-and-tumble past and stepping into a clean and prosperous future. As Walt Disney had done with Disneyland, opened in 1955, Hofheinz sanitized an old form of entertainment for the middle classes, projecting a postwar sense of comfort, order, cleanliness, and safety. And like Disneyland, the Astrodome collapsed themed environments from the past and future into a present technological entertainment utopia.<sup>181</sup> It was important for Hofheinz and other progressives of his ilk to keep the past around, in some form or another. Representations of the past were quite useful, for they persuasively illustrated the futuristic progressiveness of the present.

## The Astrodome and a narrative of progress

The space-age futurism of the Astrodome was presented alongside constant visual, material, and rhetorical references to the past—the Texan past, the human past, and the pre-modern global present of Texan imagination. These representations positioned the Dome as an equal to the monumental accomplishments of humankind, the “great wonders of the world”; these representations also simultaneously located the stadium at the end of a historical narrative of progress. Users, commentators, and promoters were constantly reveling in how the stadium—through the material evidence of its technological gadgetry and universal comforts—represented the pinnacle of human accomplishment. Progress was objectified through the material environment of the Astrodome; progress was less a human process of discovery and understanding than an enhancement of automation, control, convenience, and prosperity. References to the past and pre-modern, exoticized present of non-white peoples in the Astrodome proposed and ratified this ideology, pointing to the material fruits of modernity, inviting visitors into a collective club of frontiersmen and adventurers, showing them that the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, 1965 was *the* time and place to be.

Countless observers classified the Astrodome as a “wonder of the world”—a claim central to stadium discourse, engaged by promoters and observers alike.<sup>182</sup> The cover of *Inside the Astrodome* exclaimed: “Eighth Wonder of the World!” An article within titled “and now there are eight!” catalogued the Dome with the other manmade wonders of the world. Readers were told,

From the dawn of time man has built many almost unbelievable structures. In ancient times there were the seven wonders of the world, some of which defied the



imagination and were awe-inspiring. Since then, man has continued to build many magnificent structures—giant dams, great bridges spanning angry rivers, and tall buildings reaching far into the sky.<sup>183</sup>

The Astrodome seemed to exceed them all: none of the dams, bridges, and tall buildings had made the list, whereas the ancient human expressions seemed quaint in relation to the new stadium. Structures like the Egyptian Pyramids, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and the Temple of Artemis were built with old materials—stone, bronze, marble—and with old methods. Alongside the modern Astrodome they were curiosities of ancient times, equals in its monumentality but naïve as expressions of human genius. The HSA cited a visitor from the relatively old world of Berlin to corroborate its trans-historical claims; Gerhard Kalks declared, “Without a doubt the domed Stadium will be entered in annals as one of the wonders of the western hemisphere.”<sup>184</sup>

The Astrodome was linked to a variety of iconic world structures outside of these “wonders.” A press release from the HSA asked,

What single edifice is the world’s greatest attraction?

The Eiffel Tower? The Empire State Building? The Rome Colosseum? The Statue of Liberty? The Washington Monument? The UN Building? Rockefeller Center? McCormick Place? The Museum of Science and Industry? Smithsonian Institute? Dodger Stadium? The Louvre?<sup>185</sup>

The answer, of course, was the Astrodome. Writers almost unerringly compared the stadium to the world’s most identifiable manmade landmarks. It was the “Taj Mahal of all sports palaces” and an “Eiffel Tower in its field.”<sup>186</sup> One writer promised, “Your first glimpse of the Golden Gate, Washington Monument or 100-floor skyscraper pales in comparison.”<sup>187</sup> Hofheinz boasted, “The Astrodome will become to Houston what the Leaning Tower is to Pisa, what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris.”<sup>188</sup> But the most common comparison was made, understandably, with the ur-stadium, Rome’s Flavian Amphitheater, the Colosseum. A two-

page spread in *Inside the Astrodome* made the comparison explicit and, unsurprisingly, favorable to the Houston stadium. An illustration of the Colosseum faced a photograph of the Dome. The interiors resembled one another—each with swooping, symmetrical arcs of seats, each with covers protecting the interiors from the weather. The velarium of the Colosseum seemed paneled, with a circular gap in the middle where the sections of cloth covering were pulled together; the roof of the Astrodome too was geometrical, the lamella framing intersected with the rectangular panels and a circular gondola hung from the stadium roof, echoing the velarium gap. The most distinctive visual difference was that the Colosseum was shown in use, its stands packed with hordes of faceless people, its floor the scene of a war game, populated by manmade hills, plants, and armored men fighting with animals. The Astrodome, on the other hand, was a pristinely modern landscape, clean, ordered, and uncluttered by people. Accompanying text concluded, “The ASTRODOME is bigger, brighter, and has a multiplicity of conveniences and appointments far beyond the Colosseum but, after all, Texans had almost 1900 years to improve on the Rome masterpiece.” A.C. Becker, of the *Galveston News-Tribune*, would agree, writing, “Man, those shows in the old Roman Colosseum were back alley crap games compared to this one.”<sup>189</sup>

Comparisons between the dome and older stadiums were constantly made in print, but Houstonians needed to look no further than their own physical experiences of stadiums in Houston to understand the difference between the traditional and the modern, the historical and the futuristic. Baseball watchers in particular would have remembered the traditional ballparks of Buff Stadium, where the city’s minor-league teams had played for decades, and Colt Stadium, the major-league club’s temporary field in the Astrodome’s parking lot, used from 1962 to 1964. Colt Stadium in particular would offer a marked contrast to the

Astrodome, for it too was a themed space—though it was outfitted in wild-western duds, a considerable contrast to the futurism of the Dome. The move from Colt Stadium to the Astrodome was thus an occasion to reflect on Houston’s two versions of itself, caricatured as those were—the rough-and-tumble, no-holds-barred frontier cowboy and the space-age, progressive, modern, sophisticated entrepreneur. While the opening of the Astrodome ushered visitors out of the Disneyfied wild-west of Colt Stadium and into a self-consciously space-age environment, Houstonians didn’t fully escape representations of the past. Though the dominant theme of the Astrodome was space age, designers incorporated numerous references to a shared human past that located the new stadium at the end of a long line of human accomplishment.

The stadium restaurants provided a range of imaginative safaris for diners. The Astrodome Club was “reminiscent of San Francisco’s old Hippodrome Theatre at the height of its turn-of-the-century opulence,” according to a full-page advertisement for the interior decorating contractor in the *Houston Post*. A large illustration dominated the page, depicting what looked like the lobby of an extravagant casino or, perhaps, an upscale brothel—a gaudy, crimson setting accented with globe lights, a massive mahogany bar backed by a nude portrait, and stained glass windows. Couples in suits and minks populated the setting—one that seemed as distant from a sporting event as a trip to the opera.<sup>190</sup> Among the Astrodome Club’s distinctively Hofheinzian oddities were a mural in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec depicting Hofheinz examining the French can-can dancer La Goulue, mottoes such as “All That Glitters Is Not Gold” on the bar, and a meat carving chef who wore snap-on velvet sleeves with ermine tails.<sup>191</sup>

The other restaurants too offered visitors temporal departures from the present. The

Domeskeller was a mid-nineteenth-century, Austrian-themed beer garden. Support columns were “converted into artificial trees,” and the walls were decorated with Germanic crests and banners.<sup>192</sup> The décor of the Countdown Cafeteria depicted the history of sports from ancient Greece to the Astrodome, complete with “uniformed Blastoff Girls to serve you under anachronistic murals of Cretan bull dancers, stubby Trojan warriors and other ancient sportsmen,” as Liz Smith of *Sports Illustrated* saw it. “Full-course meals comparable to those in the private clubs will be available in the Trailblazer restaurant,” Smith reported, “where the murals depict man’s struggle for a better life and where the judge wants the customer to feel he has achieved it.”<sup>193</sup>

A man’s sense of achievement was no doubt most gratifying in the celebrated luxury suites—one of the stadium’s most iconic and original features.<sup>194</sup> Ann Valentine of the *Houston Post* speculated, “Most of the world has already heard about the wonders of Houston’s unique Domed Stadium but we wonder if Vance Packard has gotten word of the latest Texas status symbol: A deluxe, private box clubroom towering 550 feet up on the royal blue level of the new stadium!”<sup>195</sup> There were fifty-three boxes in all. Boxes of twenty-four seats cost \$15,000 per season; boxes of thirty seats sold for \$18,600. Both required five-year commitments. Each box of seats was adjoined to a club room with “wall-to-wall thick pile carpeting,” telephone, radio, television, ice maker, bar, furniture, a Dow-Jones ticker, and a closed-circuit TV broadcasting the game and other information from the field. Special elevators took the box holders to their ninth-level seats from the ground, lest they have to climb or mingle with non-box holders. Box customers could use the exclusive Skydome Club—a space-themed Japanese steak house complete with waitresses from Japan and gold spatulas. They could also order room service to their clubrooms or seats.<sup>196</sup>

Each private clubroom was decorated in a different style, so that, as Valentine reported, “As you open the door of each box it is like raising a stage curtain on a setting. Each box has a completely different and striking décor.”<sup>197</sup> The Petroleum Room, for example, featured a mural of a refinery—a design that allowed some of Houston’s wealthy to muse on the source of their wealth. Across the room another wall was decorated with a wire sculpture of an oil derrick that provided “a bold accent for this room with a décor that captures the zestful character of oil pioneers, past and present,” Valentine claimed.<sup>198</sup> Pioneering rich Houstonians could alternately choose to drink their game-time scotch in the Las Vegas box, which sported massive dice for coffee tables, or in the New Yorker or Metropolitan, if they wanted to celebrate urbanity. Many of the rooms facilitated temporary journeys into the distant past: Parthenon, Classical Mediterranean, Spanish Armada, and the Aztec. Others provided a more proximate departure, like Old Mexico, Old South, and Southern Plantation—themes that might have been troubling to some Civil Rights advocates who were still laboring to desegregate the city’s public spaces. The most popular theme seemed to tap into a fascination with Eastern civilizations and engage an Orientalist discourse; separate boxes were named Imperial Orient, Bangkok, Far Eastern, Panjim Emerald, Egyptian Autumn, The Red Dragon, Tahitian Holiday, Ramayana, and Pagoda Den. When placed in the context of the futuristic Astrodome, the mystical and exotic pre-modern qualities of the East were only accentuated, providing visitors a safely sensual counterpart to the Western hyper-rationalism of the Dome, while also underscoring Houstonians’ roles as pioneers in the march of human progress.<sup>199</sup>

These Eastern themes were no fluke, as evidenced by Hofheinz’s extensive use of Asian decorations in the sumptuous (and most would note, garish) private offices at the stadium.

Hofheinz's office was "of such comically voluptuous and sybaritic furnishings," Angell wrote, "that I was half convinced it had been designed by, say, John Lennon."<sup>200</sup> The boardroom, called "the throne room," was outfitted with velvet upholstery, Mexican onyx panels, spongy royal blue rugs, and a twelve-foot-long boomerang desk made of rosewood with an inlaid black marble top. A gold phone for deal making and dictionary for wordsmithing sat atop the desk. At each side of the desk were six-foot-tall, teak and gold oriental lions, fangs bared, carved of teak with wide gold collars and curling gilt goatees. Hofheinz decorated the offices himself, shipping the items—like a wall-mounted, jewel-scaled dragon—back from a trip to Thailand. After visiting the offices, Bob Hope termed the style, "early Farouk."<sup>201</sup>

While some were impressed by Hofheinz's gilded touch, many found it hilariously gauche—Liz Smith called the Hofheinz style "fu Manchu"—and others were appalled.<sup>202</sup> Vivian Smith, wife of Bob Smith, recalled visiting the Dome with her daughter and a friend from New York. During the tour, Fred Hofheinz, son of Roy, told them that the throne room was Bob Smith's office, as chairman of the board. Smith remembered:

I was horrified. I had never seen it. It was one of those garish-looking rooms with red velvet and a woman's breast exposed on the arms of the chairs. I told Fred right then, and I told [Roy Hofheinz's assistant] Mary Frances: 'Don't you dare tell anyone that this is Mr. Smith's office. He doesn't go for things like that and I think it's an insult to Mr. Smith to call it his office. Call it whatever you will, but don't you call it Mr. Smith's office.'<sup>203</sup>

Vivian Smith's tastes clearly contrasted with those of Hofheinz, whether those were regarding the decorative use of breasts or the production of a baseball game itself; she was dismissive of the distractions and luxuries, eschewing the skyboxes to sit behind home plate so she could "fuss" at the umpires.<sup>204</sup> Other visitors to and users of the Astrodome would share her distaste for some of the extravagances and auxiliary entertainments that seemed to

shift attention from events on the field to the socializing and consumption off it. But most found this display mesmerizing, and totally unlike any stadium ever before constructed.

People in Houston, across the United States, and even abroad listened to Hofheinz's hucksterism, and they heard it echoed in newspapers, magazines, and television coverage. Locals read claims like this one from *Finger Contract*, which installed the stadium interiors: "Past, present and future, near and far meet here. Under the great span of the Astrodome, the romance of foreign lands mixes and mingles with the vital pulse of America. Like a giant kaleidoscope, the picture changes, ever more colorful and exciting wherever you look."<sup>205</sup> The Dome exemplified for many the fruits and potential of a progressive, rationalist, consumerist modernism that used the vision and genius of man to produce a more comfortable and convenient world. It was the end point in millennia-long pursuits, a reflection of the pioneering impulse of the westerner made modern. Visitors to the Astrodome merely had to look around to witness how the present had improved on the past and how the future was now.

While engaging this narrative of historical progress, the Dome sealed off the people within, physically and imaginatively, from the social realities of mid-1960s United States, just as the roof blocked out the weather. The Astrodome was one of many mid-century escape pods that would allow the white middle and affluent classes to circumvent social issues of the time—like the lunar space stations and undersea communities presented at *Futurama II*, like stocked and sealed bomb backyard bomb shelters in suburban backyards, like suburban housing and shopping centers. Michael L. Smith called the technocolonies of *Futurama II*, "the ultimate fallout shelters"; though described by advocates as "frontiers of unfettered freedom," their inhabitants "would have to live in conditions of severe confinement." The

failure of postwar America to meaningfully confront nuclear threat fueled what Smith called a “technology of escapism.”<sup>206</sup>

In a March 1965 address to the Houston Philosophical Society, F. Talbott Wilson, a partner in one of the Astrodome’s architectural firms, delivered a speech about the ugliness of cities and the dangers of ignoring them. Citing shopping center designer Victor Gruen, Wilson claimed that the “Home Beautiful in the City Terrible” was “an unworkable paradox.” Though he subscribed to the idea of the home as a castle, he couldn’t support the notion of the home as a fortress. Wilson continued,

To live in esthetically pleasing fortresses, defended against the outside world, with filters in the air-conditioning system to keep out the poisoned air, heavy curtains at the windows to keep out views into neighboring slums, sound-proofing to defend us from the nerve-racking noise of mechanized traffic, surrounded by precious objects to keep our minds off the vulgarity of the outside world, is a hopeless task. The prettier and more protected our shelter becomes, the more we suffer at every sortie and foray into the outside world: and inasmuch as these sorties are necessary in order for us to gain a livelihood and to participate in the social and cultural life of the community in which we live, our return to the fortress finds us physically and psychologically maimed and exhausted.<sup>207</sup>

The Astrodome—as a “technology of escapism” and Wilson’s suburban-home-as-fortress—embodied this turn inwards; it created an engineered, utopian world that needn’t bother with the conditions outside. While a reflection of nuclear-age escapism, it also expressed that other great technological infatuation of the postwar period—the space race. As residents of “Space City, U.S.A.,” home of the Manned Space Center, Houstonians no doubt fancied themselves as modern pioneers, the winners in a Darwinian race—an identity that intersected conveniently with the cowboy and boom-or-bust oilman imaginaries of Texans who took risks and won big. The Astrodome allowed everyone—from those paying \$1.50 for a pavilion seat to those forking over \$18,600 for a luxury box—to participate in and enjoy the fruits of modern progress. Harris County residents, who funded the structure,



could pat themselves on their backs, retreating into the sealed Dome and forgetting those impoverished residents who were left behind materially in the march of progress, those whose basic civil rights remained insecure, and the city's failure to adequately fund infrastructure to stave off problems of flooding, water pollution, toxic waste, sewage, and street maintenance. In all its glory, the Astrodome revealed Houston's identity as a free enterprise city, as opposed to a free market city—one that rhetorically claimed an aversion to governmental influence, but was more than willing to mobilize an activist government and its public money to support projects that would benefit the elite, both materially and ideologically.<sup>208</sup>

The channeling of public monies for private benefit was of course not a practice limited to Houston. Business and political leaders in St. Louis were combining the powers of governments at the federal, state, and local levels with private investment in the 1960s. As in New York and Houston, St. Louis replaced an old and idiosyncratic urban ballpark with a stadium embodying a postwar, affluent, suburban ethos. But unlike in New York and Houston, this “suburbanized” stadium was planted in the heart of the city. It was a monumental gesture anchoring the attempted reclamation of the diseased city—as a center of corporate control and upscale entertainment—for those who had left it for the suburbs in the preceding decades.

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<sup>1</sup> *Inside the Astrodome* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, Inc., 1965), 8.

<sup>2</sup> I use “enclosed” to mean that the stadium field was encircled by stands, precluding views of the outside world beyond what could be seen above the stands. Thus, Shea Stadium would not be a fully enclosed stadium, because it had an open end with views of Flushing. “Roofed” stadiums were both enclosed and topped, fully sealing stadium inhabitants inside.

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<sup>3</sup> Astrodome propaganda never listed the runner-up in this contest. The Belgrade Fair dome, opened in 1957, was reinforced concrete and had a diameter of 340 feet. The Charlotte Coliseum was a steel-framed dome with a 332-foot expanse, opened in 1955. Harrison E. Salisbury, "Building Pattern Set by Belgrade," *New York Times*, August 22, 1957. "Uncovered Steel is Gaining Favor," *New York Times*, August 18, 1957. "Several Area Florists Attend 9<sup>th</sup> Convention," *Gadsden (Alabama) Times*, November 4, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 130.

<sup>5</sup> The stadium also introduced synthetic grass to the sports world, "AstroTurf," in 1966, after the glare problems with the roof forced the county to paint over the translucent panels, thereby killing the grass below.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Angell, "The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble," *The New Yorker* XLII (14 May 1966): 141.

<sup>7</sup> "What Nation's Writers Think Of Our Dome," *Houston Chronicle*, April 11, 1965.

<sup>8</sup> Angell, "The Cool Bubble."

<sup>9</sup> Mickey Herskowitz, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian, Chief, You Can Find a Home in the Dome," *Houston Post*, April 8, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> "Rain or shine—play ball!" *Life*, April 9, 1965, 86-88.

<sup>11</sup> Larry McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," *The Texas Observer*, October 1, 1965, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Cook and Steadman are quoted in "What Writers Are Saying About Dome," *Houston Post*, April 10, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> Bob Fenley, "Dome on the Range," *The Dallas Times Herald Sunday Magazine*, April 4, 1965.

<sup>14</sup> "What Nation's Writers Think Of Our Dome," *Houston Chronicle*.

<sup>15</sup> "Debut of the Dome," *Texas Sunday Magazine*, April 4, 1965, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Wells Twombly, "Money Flows Like Oil Into Astrodome," *The Sporting News*, April 10, 1965.

<sup>17</sup> Mickey Herskowitz, "A New Order Cometh to Baseball," *Houston Post*, April 9, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Harry Grayson, "The Judge: Veeck Looks Like Peanut Man," *Houston Post*, April 8, 1965.

<sup>19</sup> Edgar W. Ray, *The Grand Huckster: Houston's Judge Roy Hofbeinz, Genius of the Astrodome* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1980), 283.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Finch, "Gaily Decorated Colt Stadium Puts Most Ballparks to Shame," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1962.

<sup>21</sup> *Colt .45s Souvenir Program* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, Inc., 1963).

<sup>22</sup> Joseph M. Sheehan, "Colts Open First Major League Season in Houston," *New York Times*, April 10, 1962. Frank Finch, "Gaily Decorated Colt Stadium Puts Most Ballparks to Shame," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1962.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Bingham, "Boom Goes Baseball: Ticker Tape, Dyed Grass, Blue Cowboy Hats," *Sports Illustrated*, April 23, 1962, 18-25.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Reed, *Colt .45s: A Six-Gun Salute* (Houston: Lone Star Books, 1999), 74-75. Ray Sons, "Houston's Dome a Real Chicago Challenge," *Chicago Daily News*, February 6, 1964. Sheehan. Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 280-81.

<sup>25</sup> *Colt .45s Souvenir Program*.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Finch, "Gaily Decorated Colt Stadium Puts Most Ballparks to Shame," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1962.

<sup>27</sup> Reed, *Colt .45s*, 106.

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- <sup>28</sup> *Colt .45s Souvenir Program*.
- <sup>29</sup> Sons, "Houston's Dome a Real Chicago Challenge."
- <sup>30</sup> ".45s Fans Pop Off," *New York World-Telegram*, May 22, 1962.
- <sup>31</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "An Image in Concrete," *New York Times*, July 7, 1963, S3.
- <sup>32</sup> Reed, *Colt .45s*, 82-83.
- <sup>33</sup> Reed, *Colt .45s*, 77.
- <sup>34</sup> Reed, *Colt .45s*, 78.
- <sup>35</sup> Frank Finch, "Dodgers Happy to Leave Town After Summer Roasts Houston," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1962. "Houston Heat Boosts Domed Stadium Hope," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1962.
- <sup>36</sup> "What Nation's Writers Think Of Our Dome," *Houston Chronicle*.
- <sup>37</sup> Frank Eck, "Astrodome Out Of This World," *The Indianapolis News*, April 6, 1965.
- <sup>38</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 242.
- <sup>39</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 90-91.
- <sup>40</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 85.
- <sup>41</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 202. McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 2.
- <sup>42</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 2.
- <sup>43</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Johnson Attends Opening of Houston's Astrodome," *New York Times*, April 10, 1965.
- <sup>44</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 3.
- <sup>45</sup> Liz Smith, "Giltfinger's Gold Dome," *Sports Illustrated*, April 12, 1965, 51.
- <sup>46</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 86.
- <sup>47</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 80-82.
- <sup>48</sup> "Bigger and Better in Texas," *The Economist*, June 10, 1967, 1125.
- <sup>49</sup> Jerome Holtzman, "New Houston Stadium Greatest of All," *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 13, 1964.
- <sup>50</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 80-82.
- <sup>51</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 4.
- <sup>52</sup> Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 128, 130.
- <sup>53</sup> Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 135.
- <sup>54</sup> Dick Young, "Roy's Shack The Greatest," *Houston Post*, April 30, 1965, sec. 4, 3.
- <sup>55</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 37.
- <sup>56</sup> Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 125.
- <sup>57</sup> "What Writers Are Saying About Dome," *Houston Post*.
- <sup>58</sup> Mickey Herskowitz, "In a Mighty Splash, It's Open," *Houston Post*, April 10, 1965.
- <sup>59</sup> Smith, "Giltfinger's Gold Dome," 54, 56.
- <sup>60</sup> "Debut of the Dome," *Texas Sunday Magazine*.
- <sup>61</sup> Smith, "Giltfinger's Gold Dome," 46.
- <sup>62</sup> Joe R. Feagin, *Free Enterprise City: Houston in Political-Economic Perspective* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 6-10, 71.
- <sup>63</sup> Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 108-9.
- <sup>64</sup> David G. McComb, *Houston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 138-39.
- <sup>65</sup> George Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years* (Houston: Premier Printing Company), 6.
- <sup>66</sup> Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years*, 24.

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- <sup>67</sup> “Jetero” Airport would later be renamed Houston Intercontinental Airport; Houston International would become William P. Hobby Airport.
- <sup>68</sup> McComb, *Houston: A History*, 132-33.
- <sup>69</sup> Houston City Planning Department, *Houston: CBD Today* (Houston, 1964), 14-15.
- <sup>70</sup> *Houston: CBD Today*, 14-15, 18, 24.
- <sup>71</sup> Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years*, 34.
- <sup>72</sup> *Houston: CBD Today*, 36-38, 40-43.
- <sup>73</sup> McComb, *Houston: A History*, 124.
- <sup>74</sup> Sale, *Power Shift*, 53.
- <sup>75</sup> Sale, *Power Shift*, 13, 35.
- <sup>76</sup> Feagin, *Free Enterprise City*, 6, 109. George Lipsitz, “Sports Stadia and Urban Development: A Tale of Three Cities,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* vol. 8, no. 2 (1984).
- <sup>77</sup> Feagin, *Free Enterprise City*, 107-110. Also, see the Texas State Historical Association’s *Handbook of Texas Online* at <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/search.html>.
- <sup>78</sup> Roy Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” *Sports Illustrated*, March 26, 1962, 32-42.
- <sup>79</sup> “Debut of the Dome,” *Texas Sunday Magazine*.
- <sup>80</sup> Sale, *Power Shift*, 34.
- <sup>81</sup> One of Hofheinz’s first acts as mayor was to remove the “White” and “Colored” signs over city water fountains. City employees threatened to strike, so Hofheinz ordered the return of the “White” signs (but not the “Colored”). Some white employees, in support of desegregation, began using the non-marked fountains. After six-to-eight months, they removed the “White” signs, and it was no longer an issue. William Sherrill, former mayoral aide to Hofheinz, remembered, “That was one of the very early and very small steps toward social justice in Houston.” Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, appendix.
- <sup>82</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 99.
- <sup>83</sup> Dan Cook, “Domed Stadium Among World’s Wonders,” *San Antonio Express*, April 30, 1964.
- <sup>84</sup> Dick Blue, the former director of marketing for the Astros, claimed: “I heard that in one county judge race Roy was called a ‘fuehrer.’ I never heard it said in my presence, but I can’t help comparing him with Hitler in many ways, not from a derogatory standpoint, but from an oratory standpoint. There were three men that I have heard in my lifetime that I thought were the greatest orators—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Hitler, and—by far the best—Hofheinz. I listened to Hitler on the radio, and, although I didn’t speak German, I could feel the tension as he built his speeches. Hofheinz followed the same pattern of speech. It was incredible.” Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, appendix.
- <sup>85</sup> “The Business of Baseball,” *Newsweek*, April 26, 1965, 66-70. Frank X. Tolbert, “The Incredible Houston Dome,” *Look*, April 20, 1965, 96-98. Twombly, “Money Flows Like Oil.”
- <sup>86</sup> Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” 32.
- <sup>87</sup> Angell, “The Cool Bubble.” Robert Lipsyte, “Hofheinz Says Yanks Will Be Awed in Game Tomorrow” *New York Times*, April 8, 1965. Harold Scarlett, “Goldphone,” *The Houston Post Sunday Magazine*, June 13, 1965, 12-13. “Debut of the Dome,” *Texas Sunday Magazine*, April 4, 1965. Liz Smith, “Giltfinger’s Gold Dome,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 12, 1965, 45-63. Smith referred to Hofheinz as an owl, a metaphor echoed in Robert Altman’s 1970 film, *Brewster*

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*McCloud*, which featured a fictionalized version of Hofheinz whose car bore the license plate, “OWL 180.”

<sup>88</sup> Smith, “Giltfinger’s Gold Dome,” 45.

<sup>89</sup> Lipsyte, “Hofheinz Says Yanks Will Be Awed in Game Tomorrow.” Estes was an extravagant, wealthy, and corrupted Texan under federal indictment for fraud in the early 1960s.

<sup>90</sup> Terrell, “Fast Man with a .45,” 34.

<sup>91</sup> Bob Gray, “Bonds for Sports Center Win Heavy Endorsement,” *Houston Post*, July 27, 1958, 16A. Plans for the sports center anticipated it being located on 230 acres off South Main—where the stadium ended up being constructed. The Parks Commission had wanted to build it at Memorial Park, but Ima Hogg, who had sold the land to the city at a discount, was opposed. The city feared that the title to the park might be revoked if they pushed forward to try to use it as something besides a public park, so they backed off. Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 259.

<sup>92</sup> Hofheinz and Smith became increasingly involved with the bid, particularly after the HSA won the new franchise. New teams were required to make a \$5 million deposit to cover start-up costs; they also needed an additional \$1.75 million to spend on players in an expansion draft set to follow the 1961 season. Cullinan offered ownership roles to Smith and Hofheinz after twelve of the original twenty-seven HSA stockholders backed out of their initial pledges. Smith and Hofheinz each then owned thirty-three percent of the enterprise (with Smith financing Hofheinz’s share—an arrangement that would become a point of contention and factor in Smith’s departure from the club in the coming years). Cullinan owned fifteen percent and Kirksey two percent. Benjamin D. Lisle, “Houston Astros,” *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs, Volume I: The National League*, ed. Steven A. Riess (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 163-65. Louis Effrat, “National League Admits New York, Houston for 1962,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1960.

<sup>93</sup> “New Stadium Lured Team to Milwaukee,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 6, 1959.

<sup>94</sup> Clark Nealon, “All-Weather Sports Stadium Planned for site Off South Main,” *Houston Post*, August 21, 1960. “Photo of domed stadium,” *Houston Post*, December 6, 1960. Box 94-274/18, folder “magazine clippings, 1951-1965,” Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Dick Peebles, “\$15 Million Domed Stadium Planned,” *Houston Chronicle*, no date. Box 94-274/19, Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>95</sup> Harold Scarlett, “Bonds for Stadium Win in Record Vote,” *Houston Post*, February 1, 1961.

<sup>96</sup> *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow: How Houston Desegregated Its Public Accommodations, 1959-1963, A Documentary*, VHS, 60 min., Institute for Medical Humanities, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, 1997. Lisle, “Houston Astros,” 165. Many in Houston struggled with the realities of Jim Crow throughout the 1950s, producing a gradual and uneven desegregation of public spaces. Five African Americans sued the municipal golf course in 1950. The Public Library was desegregated in 1953, without much publicity. Buses were desegregated in 1954. The desegregation of schools began in September 1960. City Hall cafeteria began serving blacks in 1961. In 1963, city pools were opened. Some of these changes were done under cover of organized non-publicity campaigns. Racial change in Houston was hardly quiet

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however. A prominent example was the riot at the historically black Texas Southern University in Houston in November 1965, when four hundred students rioted after a pep rally, throwing rocks, beer cans, and vegetables at police. McComb, *Houston: A History*, 166-170.

<sup>97</sup> George T. Morse, Jr., "Roadblocks to Houston's Progress," *at work: monthly newsletter of the Houston Chamber of Commerce*, June 1962, vol. 17, no. 6.

<sup>98</sup> "Let's Build the Stadium," *Houston Chronicle*, May 20, 1962.

<sup>99</sup> "Houston Heat Boosts Domed Stadium Hope," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1962.

<sup>100</sup> Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 285.

<sup>101</sup> Marshall Verniand, "Voters Approve Bond Issue for Domed Stadium," *Houston Post*, December 23, 1962. Lisle, "Houston Astros," 166.

<sup>102</sup> Ray puts the figure at \$35.5 million for the entire project: \$31.6 million from the county bond issues (\$22 million for the stadium itself) and \$3.75 million from the City of Houston and the Texas Highway Department for off-site improvements like paved streets, bridges, drainage, and storm sewers. He doesn't include the HSA improvements. Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 285-86.

<sup>103</sup> McComb, *Houston: A History*, 188.

<sup>104</sup> Baytown resident Ray Heinrich's complaint was cited in Fenley, "Dome on the Range."

<sup>105</sup> Gene Goltz, "Visitors Queue Up To Goggle at Dome," *The Houston Post*, April 18, 1965.

<sup>106</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 2.

<sup>107</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 3. Use of letterhead was a common cliché for opening stadium programs. It seemed to lend the document (and stadium) a sense of occasion and gravity, as well as letting the reader in on some inside dope from one powerful man to another.

<sup>109</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 6. Stadium officials would have to paint the translucent panels of the roof due to a glare problem shortly after its opening, rendering Welch's metaphor an ironic commentary on the limitations of progress.

<sup>110</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 7. Kirkpatrick Sale claimed that the presidency of the Chamber of Commerce in Houston was a step up from being mayor in terms of political power. Sale, *Power Shift*, 53.

<sup>111</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 33.

<sup>112</sup> Herskowitz, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian, Chief."

<sup>113</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> "That Man McCarthy Plans 180,000-Seat Covered Stadium," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1950. McComb, *Houston: A History*, 187.

<sup>115</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 11.

<sup>116</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 10-13.

<sup>117</sup> For other examples, among many, see "Electricity Has Big Role In Operation of Our Dome," *Houston Post*, Apr 8, 1965, "Stadiums: City Status Symbol," *Newsweek*, September 30, 1963, 74-75, and just about any photo of Hofheinz appearing in the print media.

<sup>118</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 50-84.

<sup>119</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 19-27.

<sup>120</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 52.

<sup>121</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 49-51.

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- <sup>122</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 52-53.
- <sup>123</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 28-31.
- <sup>124</sup> "Plastics Score in Stadiums," *Chemical Week*, Apr 17, 1965, 87-90.
- <sup>125</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 26.
- <sup>126</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 76-77. The HSA would install specially designed artificial turf, AstroTurf, during the 1966 season—an episode addressed in Chapter Five.
- <sup>127</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 9, 40, 250.
- <sup>128</sup> 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), 345.
- <sup>129</sup> Wells Twombly, "History in The Making," *Houston Chronicle*, April 10, 1965.
- <sup>130</sup> Red Smith, "Weather's Bad? Watch the Astros," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1965.
- <sup>131</sup> "Houston's Dream of a Domed Stadium Rapidly Nearing Conversion to Reality," *Chattanooga Times*, Jan 12, 1964.
- <sup>132</sup> Herskowitz, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian, Chief, You Can Find a Home in the Dome."
- <sup>133</sup> Michael L. Smith, "Making Time: Representations of Technology at the 1964 World's Fair," *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 239-40.
- <sup>134</sup> Bob Fenley, "Dome on the Range," *The Dallas Times Herald Sunday Magazine*, April 4, 1965, 6-8.
- <sup>135</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 9, 93.
- <sup>136</sup> Michael L. Smith, "Selling the Moon: The U.S. Manned Space Program and the Triumph of Commodity Scientism," *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 184-85.
- <sup>137</sup> Smith, "Selling the Moon," 192.
- <sup>138</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 6.
- <sup>139</sup> Robert Lipsyte, "Astrodome Opulent Even for Texas," *New York Times* April 8, 1965. A subtitle of the article read, "Houston Club Chief Uses Gold Phones in Various Sizes."
- <sup>140</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 41.
- <sup>141</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 33, 45.
- <sup>142</sup> This sort of attitude is of a piece with the post-World War II changes described by historian Lizabeth Cohen, whereby the categories of consumer and citizen were fused together. It also recalls the parable of a "democracy of goods" that historian Roland Marchand identified in pre-war advertising. Of these marketing clichés, Marchand wrote: "By implicitly defining 'democracy' in terms of equal access to consumer products, and then by depicting the everyday functioning of that 'democracy' with regard to one product at a time, these tableaux offered Americans an inviting vision of their society as one of uncontested equality." See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003) and Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 218.
- <sup>143</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 58-59.
- <sup>144</sup> McMurtry, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 3.
- <sup>145</sup> Smith, "Weather's Bad? Watch the Astros."

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<sup>146</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 49.

<sup>147</sup> Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years*, 3.

<sup>148</sup> "The Place for Pleasure," *Houston Magazine*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1958.

<sup>149</sup> "What Nation's Writers Think Of Our Dome," *Houston Chronicle*.

<sup>150</sup> Marsha E. Ackermann, *Cool Comfort: America's Romance with Air-Conditioning* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 5-6, 47-53, 127. Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 281. Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1959), 68.

<sup>151</sup> Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 135.

<sup>152</sup> John B. Sheridan, "Yankee Colonels Have Chance To Set New Pace in Ball Parks," *The Sporting News*, February 9, 1922, quoted in Kammer, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," 133-35, 139.

<sup>153</sup> See Peter Levine, *A.G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>154</sup> *New York Chronicle*, August 22, 1867, quoted in Melvin Leonard Adelman, "The Development of Modern Athletics: Sport in New York City, 1820-1870" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980), 406.

<sup>155</sup> *Sporting News*, December 11, 1886, quoted in Allen Guttman, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 115.

<sup>156</sup> Michael Benson, *Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Baseball Grounds, Yards and Stadiums, 1845 to Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1989), 407-09. Kristin M. Anderson and Christopher W. Kimball, "Minnesota Twins" in *Major League Baseball Clubs*, ed. Steven A. Riess (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 673. Frederick G. Lieb, *The Detroit Tigers* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1946), 51-52. Bruce Nash and Allan Zullo, *The Baseball Hall of Shame* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 129.

<sup>157</sup> Jean Hastings Ardell, *Breaking into Baseball: Women and the National Pastime* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 34.

<sup>158</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* 101:4 (1996): 1050-1081.

<sup>159</sup> For examples, see the following publications: Houston Sports Association, Inc., *Inside the Astrodome* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, 1965). *Los Angeles Dodgers 1961 Souvenir Yearbook* (1961). *Los Angeles Dodgers 1962 Official Dodger Score Card* (1962). *New York National League Baseball Club 1963 Official Program and Score Card* (1963). *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook* (1970). *Phillies New Stadium Yearbook 1971* (1971). *Phillies 1972 Yearbook* (1972). *Kansas City Royals 1973 Yearbook* (1973). *Kansas City Royals Official American League Scorebook* (1973). *Kansas City Royals Yearbook* (1974). A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>160</sup> Lisle, "Houston Astros," 163.

<sup>161</sup> Roger Angell concludes his assessment of the Houston Astrodome with a woman's memories of old Buff Stadium, where she had been a fan for over thirty years. She recalled the smells of a nearby bakery: "I'll never forget sitting in the stands in the afternoon and watching the games, and the sweet smell of fresh bread in the air all around." Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 142.



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<sup>162</sup> Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years*, 34.

<sup>163</sup> I use this phrase descriptively and don't mean to suggest too close a kinship with Philip J. Deloria's arguments in *Indians in Unexpected Places*. However, just as many of Deloria's analyses pivot on the tension between white stereotypes of Indians as primitive and Indian use of modern technologies, the juxtaposition of women and stadium space here is not only "unexpected," but revealing. Women were conspicuously used in these images to "soften" and domesticate the space, to make a new type of architecture and sports space seem more familiar, safe, and inviting. Their awkwardly forced use in this way suggests just how gendered (masculine) stadium space was in the early 1960s.

<sup>164</sup> Hofheinz refers to the New Breed of the Polo Grounds. See the previous chapter. Angell, "The Cool Bubble," 135.

<sup>165</sup> Evelyn Hayes, "First Lady Risks a Hat For the Nats," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1952.

<sup>166</sup> Roger Angell, *The Summer Game* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 78-79, 159.

<sup>167</sup> "Advertising: Dodgers Schedule a New Series," *New York Times*, June 10, 1957.

<sup>168</sup> *Los Angeles Dodgers Official Dodger Score Card 1961*, 25.

<sup>169</sup> "Debut of the Dome," 23.

<sup>170</sup> Dave Bruce, "Houston's Big Bubble: Rain Or Shine Stadium," *Texas Parade*. This article was not dated, but is located in the "Stadiums: Anaheim, CA" clippings folder at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>171</sup> Virginia Drane McCallon, "Fashions Under the Dome," *Houston Post*, February 28, 1965.

<sup>172</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 39.

<sup>173</sup> Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 282. "Andy Frain, 'Usher King' Dies; Supervisor of Crowds was 59," *New York Times*, March 26, 1964.

<sup>174</sup> Wells Twombly, "Money Flows Like Oil Into Astrodome," *The Sporting News*, April 10, 1965.

<sup>175</sup> Teddye Clayton, "Spacettes Will Sparkle Under Dome," *The Houston Post*, April 4, 1965.

<sup>176</sup> Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 47.

<sup>177</sup> Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 46.

<sup>178</sup> I should clarify that stewardesses, of course, underwent much more rigorous training beyond grooming and sociability; they were not merely air-born Spacettes, but practiced professionals in ways that the stadium ushers were not.

<sup>179</sup> While the Spacettes were supposed to signify class, and did to many, not everyone was convinced. A writer for the *New York Times* wrote, "The décor is on the garish side—the costumes of the usherettes, waiters and other servants of the public look like all the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas mixed together, and the physical furnishings might be termed Early Cinemascope—but the totality is festive and exciting." "Baseball Under Dome," *New York Times*, May 2, 1965.

<sup>180</sup> Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 337.

<sup>181</sup> Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 86-126.

<sup>182</sup> The lines between promotion and independent interpretation were often crossed and mingled, as promotional materials for the stadium often cited newspaper and magazine writers, appropriating them as advocates. An inversion of that also occurred regularly, as writers quoted or repackaged the claims of promoters made through interviews, press conferences, and press releases.

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<sup>183</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 18.

<sup>184</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 144.

<sup>185</sup> “Press release,” Jul 9 1965. Box 94-274/19, folder “Press releases concerning Astrodome correspondence, 1966.” Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>186</sup> Andy O’Brien, “The Stadium that Could Revolutionize Sport,” *Montreal Star Weekend Magazine*, May 15, 1965, 30-32. “Houston’s Dream of a Domed Stadium Rapidly Nearing Conversion to Reality,” *Chattanooga Times*, January 12, 1964.

<sup>187</sup> John Cronley, “Some Dome!” *The Daily Oklahoman*, Dec 22, 1964.

<sup>188</sup> “Debut of the Dome,” *Texas Sunday Magazine*, April 4, 1965, 11.

<sup>189</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 16-17, 45.

<sup>190</sup> Finger Contract advertisement, *Houston Post*, April 8, 1965.

<sup>191</sup> Smith, “Giltfinger’s Gold Dome,” 58.

<sup>192</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 58-59. The guidebook specifically designates the Domeskeller as Austrian, not German. I can only speculate as to why; perhaps Austria seemed slightly more exotic than Germany.

<sup>193</sup> Smith, 52-53.

<sup>194</sup> Architect Herman Lloyd recalled that the space on the ninth level “was an afterthought as far as we were concerned. Space at the top we had planned for transverse-travel for our duct work. When Roy saw that space he felt he could sell private boxes for what was then fabulous amounts. We didn’t see how he could do it, but we put in the boxes. Ever since, there hasn’t been a big stadium built without boxes.” Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 305.

<sup>195</sup> Ann Valentine, *Houston Post*, Box 94-274/18, folder “Magazine clippings, 1951-1965,” Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>196</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 33.

<sup>197</sup> Valentine. Liz Smith was less impressed with the boxes than Valentine, writing, “the rooms are decorated in a riot of astounding styles from western to southern to Oriental to heaven-knows-what, with much fake ivy and other plastic plant life and scenic wallpaper panels (there are no windows). Despite the conflicts and contrasts, they create an overall impression of motel modern.” Smith, “Giltfinger,” 56.

<sup>198</sup> Valentine.

<sup>199</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 33-34. “Orientalism” as a discourse, as Edward Said described it, was a mechanism for post-Enlightenment European and American cultures to discipline, manage, and produce the Orient. Through it, Western cultures distinguished themselves from Eastern ones by ascribing certain characteristics—irrationality, mysticism, uncivilization—onto the Orient as a way of confirming their oppositional characteristics for rational Westerners. Orientalist discourse, thus, is a misrepresentation of the East in the service of Western identity. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>200</sup> Angell, “The Cool Bubble,” 135.

<sup>201</sup> Scarlett, “Goldphone,” 12. Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 312.

<sup>202</sup> Smith, “Giltfinger,” 46

<sup>203</sup> Ray, *The Grand Huckster*, 328.

<sup>204</sup> Bill Roberts, “The Town Crier,” *Houston Post*, December 23, 1964.

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<sup>205</sup> Finger Contract advertisement.

<sup>206</sup> Michael L. Smith, "Making Time," 244.

<sup>207</sup> F. Talbott Wilson, "The City: Our Shame and Hope," address to the Houston Philosophical Society, Mar 18, 1965. Box 94-274/18, Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>208</sup> Feagin, *Free Enterprise City*, 5-6, 39, 44.

## Chapter Four

### St. Louis, Busch Stadium, urban decay, and urban rebirth

Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable took the measure of urban renewal in downtown St. Louis in February 1968, after the central city had undergone dramatic redevelopment at the hands of Civic Progress, a group of the city's elite business leaders.

There are all of the faceless, characterless, scaleless symbols of economic regeneration—luxury apartments, hotels, a 50,000-seat stadium and multiple parking garages for 7,400 cars. Sleek, new, prosperous, stolid and dull, well-served by superhighways, the buildings are a collection of familiar profit formulas, uninspired in concept, unvarying in scale, unrelated by any standards, principles or subtleties of planning or urban design. They just stand there. They come round, rectangular, singly and in pairs. Pick your standard commercial cliché. The centerpiece is the Busch Stadium, big and banal, smoothed up by the esthetic ministrations of Edward Durell Stone... There are none of the traditional values of vitality, variety and humanity that make cities challenging and great... The new St. Louis is a success economically and a failure urbanistically. It has the impersonal gloss of a promotional brochure. A prime example of the modern landscape of modern alienation, it has gained a lot of real estate and lost a historic city.<sup>1</sup>

Huxtable's scathing assessment in the *New York Times* provided a remarkable counter-narrative to local interpretations of the new, progressive, modern downtown. When Busch Stadium opened in May 1966, the stadium's primary tenant, the Cardinals baseball club, told the tale of urban change differently. The club's souvenir guidebook related the story of the stadium and the area around it in terms that were no doubt familiar to St. Louis residents, as this story had been told repeatedly through local newspapers over the previous half-decade. The program recalled the visit of President Johnson on February 14, 1964, to officially celebrate St. Louis's two hundredth birthday. Johnson "saw in the so-called 'stadium area'... one big mass of blight and decay." It was an "eyesore" of vacant lots, empty and rundown buildings, industrial plants, warehouses, and parking lots. Those who knew the area best were the "police, fire marshals, and building and health inspectors." The only citizens who

entered, the program stated, either worked there, had business there, or were simply “a few unfortunate human derelicts who had no place else to go. No visitors ever came... and nobody ever invited them.” This sad condition—sad seemingly for its absence of white-collar workers and retail shopping—would become transformed. “Today,” readers were told, “more than any other single project this great stadium marks the determination of our community to grow and to prosper. It symbolizes the results of a unique partnership between private business, labor unions, various branches of the government, and long-range planning.”<sup>2</sup> This portrait painted by the Cardinals expressed the pervasive “official” interpretation of Busch Stadium and, more broadly, the role of urban renewal in reinventing and redeeming the American city in the 1950s and 1960s. The city seemed to many to be an obsolete social form rotting from the disease of blight. A surgical team of progressive business leaders, planners, construction workers, and business-friendly public officials promised to rescue cities from their tragic conditions, mobilizing public funds, governmental powers, and private investments to save the urban patient.

Busch Stadium was noteworthy for its location in downtown St. Louis—a new context for the modern stadium, which for over a decade had been newly constructed on the edges of the city or in vacant pockets within.<sup>3</sup> At first glance, the construction of a new stadium downtown might have seemed a reconsideration of trending stadium design—an attempt to embrace the city and reclaim baseball’s urban tradition after a period of intense suburbanization. But on closer inspection, the St. Louis project was not a gesture towards the urban—or at least an urbanity of socio-economic and cultural diversity and mixed uses. Instead, developers tried to recast the stadium in the image of the suburbs—as a new, clean, consumerist, middle-class space accessible by car and cleansed of the idiosyncrasies of the

city (whether those be merely irritating or fully frightful). The modern stadium—itsself so loaded with suburban virtues and mainstream postwar ideologies of gender, race, class, and progress—was an ideal anchor to wide-scale, clean-sweep projects that might suburbanize the urban, making not only the ballpark a middle-class paradise, but the city around it one as well. Modern stadiums like Shea exported an urban form and suburbanized it, materially and ideologically. Busch took the modern stadium and its suburban ethos back into the city, prefiguring the postindustrial city-as-entertainment-zone of the 1980s and 1990s and providing a blueprint for other cities that would, with varying success, use stadiums as anchors of urban redevelopment over the coming years.

This chapter examines Busch Stadium as an expression of postwar attitudes concerning the city, its so-called death, and its supposed renewal. It begins with a description of the new Busch Stadium in downtown St. Louis, relating it to modern stadiums in New York and Houston. Attention then shifts to its predecessor, Sportsman’s Park, an early-twentieth-century ballpark located in one of the city’s north side residential neighborhoods. (Sportsman’s Park was renamed Busch Stadium in 1954—though I will refer to it, as many locals did, as Sportsman’s Park throughout.) As Sportsman’s Park aged, so too did the city as a whole and the area around it in particular; this chapter will assess postwar change in St. Louis and organized responses to those changes in the form of urban renewal policies. Led by groups of local businessmen, working with local politicians, plans for a new Busch Stadium were hatched that would reinvent industrial downtown St. Louis, making it more attractive for affluent suburban shoppers and a center of corporate activity. The chapter examines those plans and considers how a particular urban renewal discourse was employed. Through this discourse Busch Stadium signified a “rebirth” for the city and its delivery from

the decay of “blight”—an often used, but rarely defined descriptor of urban conditions.<sup>4</sup> The stadium’s gleaming whiteness and modern expressiveness—and the conspicuous visual representations of these qualities—marked it as new, progressive, and modern, a victory over the boxy, dirty, and black (aesthetically and racially) city of the past. Finally, I revisit ideas of “progress” discussed in the previous chapter. As did Houstonians, St. Louisans invoked “progress” as they constructed their stadium; in fact, the most powerful agent of urban change downtown came from a group of elite businessmen that called itself “Civic Progress.” Progress in St. Louis, however, bore a different meaning than in Houston. Celebrated though it was, many St. Louisans (or at least those who weren’t members of Civic Progress) seemed more ambivalent about their relationship with the past, less gung-ho about the erasure of the city’s long history that included its time as the famed “gateway to the West” and its possession of baseball’s oldest grounds.

### **The new Busch Stadium: an introduction**

The new Busch Stadium was located in downtown St. Louis, just blocks from the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the Gateway Arch, along the Mississippi River. The nearly circular structure, with an outside diameter of eight hundred feet, sat on twelve sloping acres, part of a larger ninety-acre redevelopment scheme designed to reinvent the center city. The stadium’s distinguished exterior identified it as more “architectural” than its modern predecessors, as did its designer, Edward Durell Stone. Reflecting on his work, Stone argued, “The stadium’s near-round design has an elegant symmetry lacking in the horseshoe-shaped sports arenas found in most U.S. cities.”<sup>5</sup> Upon the unveiling of Stone’s plans, an editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* agreed, favorably comparing the future stadium to existing ones

and assigning credit to the city as a whole: “Considering the basic ugliness of such structures, the community may well congratulate itself on the designers’ achievement.”<sup>6</sup> Like many of Stone’s other projects, Busch Stadium employed thin columns, simple geometric shapes, and an overall sense of visual order (standard features of mid-century modern architecture); however, it was also accented with minor decorative details (a departure Stone often made from modernist orthodoxy). A thin band of roof pinched inward around the stadium’s top, like a rim, supported by a series of small arches that echoed Eero Saarinen’s ur-Arch of the Expansion Memorial. From above, the series of arches looked like a ring of sea-shells or a toothed gear; from the ground, they bulged over the edge of the roof like little bubbles, sitting atop a curving colonnade of thin concrete pillars, each just two feet wide. Slanting pedestrian ramps ran between exterior and interior series of columns, waving around the face of the structure. Though massive and monumental, these features made the stadium seem airy and light.

Besides its elevated architectural pedigree and downtown location, Busch Stadium was essentially an elaboration of the postwar modern stadium type being developed across the country in various cities: from San Francisco to Washington, Los Angeles to New York to Houston. It embodied many of those same characteristics that this series of stadiums usually shared in some form or another. Its size and footprint was markedly increased over the previous generations of stadium. It was more spacious and physically comfortable. Operators championed enhanced, consumption-oriented customer service, particularly to the more affluent. It catered to the private automobile. It was designed to be more adaptable to uses other than baseball, though the baseball club was its primary tenant.



Like many other modern stadiums, the most notable initial quality of Busch was its size relative to the stadium it replaced and the spaciousness this size accorded. The stadium “overwhelmed most of the customers with its size, simplicity and spaciousness,” according to a reporter.<sup>7</sup> Another wrote, “What impressed first-nighters most were the massiveness and spaciousness of the stadium.”<sup>8</sup> A local television station congratulated the fans of St. Louis for their new stadium and its “beauty, convenience, size and comfort.”<sup>9</sup> The stadium seemed so large to some that they experienced vertigo when they arrived at the upper decks—prompting complaints that the structure featured no escalators.<sup>10</sup> Cardinal vice-president and legendary player Stan Musial, who was also director of the national fitness program, was reportedly pleased with “the fact that the new park requires much more walking than the old one.”<sup>11</sup> Like Musial, Ray Blades, a former player-manager for the baseball Cardinals, tried to put a happy face on the elevation of the top levels, joking, “Fifteen more feet up and I’d be in heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

The size of the stadium cultivated a sense of spaciousness—a standard modern stadium virtue. A headline for *The Sporting News* foregrounded this quality: “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”<sup>13</sup> The interior was a great sweeping enclosure of red seats—49,453 in all, perched on three major levels—each with “plenty of extra elbow room.”<sup>14</sup> Roger Angell registered his standard complaint of the modern stadium; he “admired everything about this open-face mine except its shape,” which put the fans in the upper deck too far from the field below, “a dismaying distance from the infielders within the right angles of the diamond.”<sup>15</sup> A reporter for *The Sporting News* noted the distance as well, but defended the new stadium. “Obviously, quite a few fans have to sit farther from the playing field than they did at the much-smaller old Busch Stadium,” he wrote, adding, “but many were well

prepared with binoculars.”<sup>16</sup> The distance of the fans from the field was manageable, he seemed to suggest, and ultimately called attention to the inadequacy of the old park rather than the over-sized scale of the new one.

Busch promiscuously displayed its pedestrian traffic routes, like Shea Stadium and many other modern structures. The ramps around the exterior were one of its most visible characteristics, as were the distinct and tidy aisles and rows throughout the seating sections. Visitors noted the “wide outside concourse and the wide ramps inside,” and many used them as observation decks to look out across the cityscape.<sup>17</sup> More than one-and-a-half-miles of ramps, according to architect Stone, “speed the flow of spectators” to the stadium’s mezzanine and upper levels.<sup>18</sup>

Automobility was a primary concern for designers, as it was in all American cities. While many stadiums were moved outside of the city, toward a targeted suburban and affluent audience, the St. Louis stadium was notable for moving from a congested residential neighborhood to an equally dense downtown. Vital to the project was the complementary construction of parking garages adjacent the site—particularly because stadium development had wiped out many area surface lots. The location also relied on the development of ninety-three million dollars worth of new expressways—north, south, and east from downtown—that had been voted into existence in the mid-1950s and were being constructed through the 1960s. Civic leaders hoped to revitalize downtown with the construction of the stadium and associated development—a new approach in the stadium game—but not everyone was convinced the new expressways and multi-layered parking garages would properly accommodate visitors. A resident of suburban Florissant wondered in a letter to the editor

why so much development was focused downtown, complaining, “How about asking them to ease up a little and to give the motorist a fighting chance?”<sup>19</sup>

When the suburban consumer chose to brave the traffic and made it inside new Busch, she found a stadium space that by the mid-1960s was fairly standard. The cantilevered design removed view-obstructing support posts. The sunken playing field was adaptable to football—the National Football League’s Chicago Cardinals had moved to Sportsman’s Park in 1960 and would join the baseball team at new Busch—through rotating stands like those used in both Shea Stadium and the Astrodome. As at other modern stadiums, customer service was promiscuously displayed. A large usher corps, over three hundred on Opening Day (one hundred more than had worked the old Sportsman’s Park on its busiest days), attended to customers. This included the debut of a forty-two-member female usher corps, “attractive young women” who worked in the stadium’s more expensive box seat areas, charming the stadium’s more moneyed patrons. Engaging a historic riverboat theme, ushers wore bright red blazers, straw hats with red bands, black trousers, white shirts and bow ties.<sup>20</sup> Also like other modern stadiums, Busch boasted a Stadium Club to separate the economic wheat from the chaff—a club “spacious and splendid,” according to Red Smith. The split-level facility on the stadium’s northeast side was outfitted with wall-to-wall carpeting, paintings and photographs depicting sports scenes, a massive U-shaped bar offering “a commanding view of the field,” and “lavishly decorated” dining tables with “posh” leather swivel chairs.<sup>21</sup> Reporters for the *Post-Dispatch* called it “a private retreat,” and its inhabitants were “the jet set of the swank Stadium Club.”<sup>22</sup>

The scoreboard, of course, was another cause for celebration for visitors and writers; one called it “the new St. Louis ‘super-star.’” It was officially named the “St. Louis Color

Informatic Display,” a neologistic label resonant with Shea’s “Stadiarama” scoreboard that called attention to the device’s presumed technological savvy. The Busch scoreboard cost \$1.5 million and consisted of panels in left and right field. Newspaper readers were informed that the 492 miles of wiring and load of one hundred eighty thousand watts provided “enough electricity to light 450 homes”—a comparison combining the mesmerizing power of quantification with a domestic sympathy resonant with suburban homeowners. The right-field panel displayed game information and trivia and advertised future home dates. The board in left field, however, was the main attraction, a fifteen-foot tall and fifty-four-foot long panel that featured color display.<sup>23</sup>

The left-field scoreboard was St. Louis’s answer to the Astrodome’s scoreboard extravaganza. The message board could display images of a cardinal, a paddleboat, a banjo, and the salutation, “howdy.” What set this board apart from the others was its ability to not only flash messages, but to display them in color—capabilities the boards at Shea and Dodger Stadium lacked. The stadium thus added “living color” to the scene, though on opening night the board only displayed Anheuser-Busch ads (free advertising was one of the benefits the company accrued for contributing five million dollars to the private redevelopment corporation that built the stadium). Boosters appreciated the board’s color; they also contrasted the scoreboard’s use favorably with its well-publicized counterpart in Houston. Dave Lipman of the *Post-Dispatch* claimed it took “the bull out of the scoreboard business.” “The Houston scoreboard,” he explained, “much to the disgust of baseball men across the country, takes an active part in the game, waging psychological warfare against the foe and actually entering into the game.” Baseball had traditionally “had an understanding” that such artificial forms of partisanship would be off-limits during play. Major league

baseball, as Lipman saw it, had condoned the Houston scoreboard. But, he argued, “Such antics will not be the case here.” Scoreboard technicians in Busch Stadium would display an image of a cardinal flapping its wings and broadcast chirping noises on the public address system no matter which team scored.<sup>24</sup> This scoreboard that might have seemed inferior to the one in Houston was actually a defense of traditional baseball, Lipman implied, by virtue of being less capable of intrusion.

Though some saw the St. Louis Color Informatic Display as a humble correction to the Astrodome’s scoreboard—while still a necessary and acceptable advance over scoreboards in other modern stadiums—many visitors were disappointed that it didn’t seem to measure up to the one in Houston. One reporter noted at an early game,

Once in their seats, most persons marveled at the size of the two scoreboards above the outfield walls and wondered what electronic gimmicks they could expect to see. Most were disappointed, however, because the boards displayed little of the ingenuity and entertainment of the famous scoreboard in the domed stadium in Houston.<sup>25</sup>

This sense of civic inadequacy may have been amplified by reports that a scoreboard gag, an “electronic gimmick,” went awry on opening day. When a helicopter lowered an American flag to the field for the national anthem, the scoreboard was supposed to taunt, “Let’s see the dome match this.” The board wasn’t properly functioning, however—an ironic commentary on its relative shortcomings.<sup>26</sup> And yet, this failure didn’t quell all boosterism.

Sportswriter Bob Broeg boasted,

If things get dull this summer downtown at the new stadium, a guy will have only himself to blame for the boredom, not the ball players. After all, between the colorful advertising designs on the scoreboard in left-center and the trivia, minutiae and messages of [the] moment on the board in right-center, a spectator wouldn’t have to know General Eckert from General Motors to find baseball appealing.<sup>27</sup>

It was a claim that could have come from the mouth of Roy Hofheinz in Houston. The

scoreboard, a metonym for the modern stadium, could make baseball “appealing”—an assertion that revealed a remarkable lack of faith in a sport that had been one of the country’s most popular forms of entertainment for over sixty years.

Many Cardinals supporters would have certainly disagreed with Broeg’s suggestion that baseball required Color Informatic scoreboard entertainment. In 1964, Roger Angell had called St. Louis “perhaps the most dedicated baseball town in the country”—no mean compliment coming from such a perceptive and well-traveled observer.<sup>28</sup> Baseball in St. Louis was serious business, and had been for a very long time. Though the stadium experience was becoming increasingly standardized across the country by the mid-1960s—new modern structures had opened in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, Anaheim, and Atlanta since 1960—the modern stadium experience was a drastic departure for most St. Louis sports fans. They were accustomed to watching baseball, football, and soccer at grounds that had been used for that purpose for a full century, in a ballpark that, aside from some modifications, had been constructed over fifty years before. For them, the modern Busch Stadium was something totally new. To get a sense of how new requires an examination of the old Busch Stadium, or as it was more widely known, Sportsman’s Park.

### **The old Busch Stadium: a history of Sportsman’s Park**

The home of field sport in St. Louis was located for nearly one hundred years on the same patch of grass, bordered by North Grand Boulevard, Dodier Street, North Spring Avenue, and Sullivan Avenue, approximately two-and-a-half-miles northwest of downtown St. Louis. The ballpark around that field morphed repeatedly to suit the needs of patrons, contingent

on the finances of the owners. Sportsman's Park was an organic park, built up and adjusted over the years in a way at odds with the master-planned, publicly financed, comprehensive modern stadium projects like the one that would replace it. Those in the grandstands looked out over a mixed cityscape marked by old landmarks, the material accretions of decades-long development, and increasing signs of deterioration.

From above, the park looked like an open clamp: its dark-roofed, double-decked wings trapped the playing field, with small teeth at each end where the grandstands pivoted back towards home plate. The outfield was surrounded with open bleachers and a towering scoreboard in left field, along Sullivan Avenue, from the grandstand; a small, seat-less section filled with shrubbery in dead centerfield, at the corner of Sullivan and Grand Boulevard; and a roofed pavilion in right field, along Grand. The park shared the block with a thin strip of surface parking just south of the grandstand's first base side, with cars parked ten deep off of Dodier Street.

The grandstands soared upwards, thin erector-set banks held up by two series of support posts. These stands, unadorned with a façade along the street, seemed nearly as open at the back as they were in front, releasing the pressure of the small lot. Two press boxes, one on the roof and another hanging from it, curved around home plate. Four banks of lights sat atop the grandstand roof, two on each side. Two lighting standards towered over the right-field pavilion; two more flanked the massive scoreboard hovering over the left-field bleachers. The board, hung on a wall of trusses, was topped by a massive Budweiser logo—an eagle in an "A" that flapped its wings when the Cardinals hit home runs.

Looking in from the outfield, the tall grandstand frames, colored in red and green and topped with pennants, boxed the field in. Looking out from the grandstand—and

particularly from the second deck, the park opened out to the cityscape just beyond. Over the shrubs in center was the North Side YMCA, which had sat catty-corner from the park since 1919. A Busch Bavarian Beer billboard clung to the top of a building across Sullivan Avenue, though it seemed so close as to be a part of the park itself; sometimes it teased fans with snow-skiing-themed illustrations, sometimes it approached them with the friendly face of Cardinals broadcaster Harry Caray. Monumental buildings were scattered about the cityscape further afar, across the tops of trees, the roofs of the two- and four-family dwellings that made up much of the neighborhood, and the game-day automobiles rammed into every vacant lot, driveway, and street space. Fans saw eighteenth-century Catholic and Lutheran churches, the north side's first high school, and an Egyptian-styled Masonic Hall.<sup>29</sup>

The neighborhood around Sportsman's Park mixed commercial, industrial, and residential buildings. Grand Boulevard, the main artery running to and from the park, was a commercial strip. Light manufacturing facilities were scattered around the area. The massive Carter Carburetor plant loomed directly south, across Dodier Street. Three stories high and over three hundred feet long, it filled up the equivalent of an entire city block. The rest of the area consisted of two- and four-family apartments, mixed with some single-family homes, largely constructed between 1890 and 1920. Many of the single-family homes had been converted into rooming houses—the suggestion of a gradual but increasing economic downscaling in the area.

A ballpark seemed appropriate to this environment of mixed uses, though one had been there so long that no one questioned its appropriateness. Old Grand Avenue Park—on the same lot as Sportsman's Park—was located on a horse-drawn trolley line, just beyond the city's denser settlement and blocks south of the city's Fairgrounds.<sup>30</sup> Used for baseball since



the 1860s, the grounds were home to St. Louis's first professional team, the Brown Stockings, in 1875. After an initial season in the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, the Brown Stockings became charter members of the new National League in 1876, but then folded after a gambling scandal in December 1877—their brief existence exemplifying the fundamental instability of professional leagues and clubs in the early years of professionalized sport. The park hosted a semiprofessional club for the next three seasons, but was on the brink of demolition in October 1880.

The Sportsman's Park and Club Association rescued the grounds. Alfred H. Spink, who would soon found *The Sporting News* (which would become the country's preeminent baseball publication), organized the group. Importantly, he convinced German immigrant Chris Von der Ahe, owner of the nearby Golden Lion Saloon, to invest as well. The Golden Lion had benefited for years from game-related business, and Von der Ahe hoped to maintain this traffic. He took over the lease of the park for sixty-five hundred dollars, then contributed most of the five thousand dollars spent to refurbish it, renaming it Sportsman's Park.<sup>31</sup>

The new Sportsman's Park, opened in 1881, was a double-decker covered grandstand. The enhanced ballpark drew better teams from larger cities, attracting larger crowds. Sundays were especially popular, when the working classes were off and came to the grounds to enjoy a game and the right-field beer garden. To meet additional demand, Von der Ahe erected bleachers down the first-base line. Six thousand could then fill the stands, and many more could stand across the outfield. On the back of this success, Von der Ahe acquired a controlling interest in the Brown Stockings for eighteen hundred dollars, then joined with five other teams to create the American Association.<sup>32</sup>

The AA was a league for the urban working classes. At Von der Ahe's insistence, its clubs

targeted these customers with twenty-five-cent tickets, beer, and Sunday contests (the only day laboring men had off). These were fans excluded by the class-conscious National League. The NL catered to a more decorous audience, charging fifty cents for tickets, prohibiting the sale of beer, and outlawing Sunday games. As William Hulbert, president of the NL, put it, the league's owners hoped to attract the "support and respect of the best class of people," while avoiding "the patronage of the degraded."<sup>33</sup> The NL may have catered to a better class of people, but the AA attracted more, outdrawing the NL for five years. The Browns were especially popular at Sportsman's Park, leading all major leagues in attendance for three of those seasons. Von der Ahe was particularly adept at attracting crowds to the ballpark, given his appetite for promotion. He catered to women by constructing ladies rest rooms, he hired bands for pre-game entertainment, and he sometimes coupled games with non-baseball events like Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.<sup>34</sup>

Von der Ahe ran into trouble in the late 1880s, however, as the club was weakened by the owner's meddling in baseball affairs and the market devaluation of many of his real estate holdings in the neighborhood. The Browns, once dominant in the AA, entered the more stable and respectable NL where they were a poor side amidst a higher level of competition. Attendance dropped; Von der Ahe tried to stimulate interest by constructing a new ballpark in 1893. The new Sportsman's Park was located at Vandeventer Avenue and Natural Bridge Road, just two blocks north of the old grounds. Attendance continued to plummet. Von der Ahe turned the new park into the "Coney Island of the West" in 1896, outfitting it with amusement-park rides and horse racing. Customers were unimpressed and baseball aficionados were even offended; Alfred H. Spink, Von der Ahe's former partner, ran a story in *The Sporting News* titled, "The Prostitution of a Ballpark."<sup>35</sup> As attendance continued to sag,

Von der Ahe did away with the amusement park and horse track in 1898, returning the focus to baseball. During the season's second game, however, fire burned most of the park to the ground—a common problem for the all-wood ballparks of the time. Hundreds filed lawsuits for injury. Von der Ahe, already pressed financially, had failed to secure enough insurance for the park. He spent the thirty-five-thousand-dollar settlement to rebuild the park with eight thousand seats, but lost a foreclosure case in 1899. The Browns were sold at public auction.<sup>36</sup>

Von der Ahe limped off the stage, but his influence was lasting. He had stimulated baseball interest in St. Louis and been part of a broader movement that drew working classes into the ballpark through cheaper ticket prices, Sunday games, and beer sales. In this sense, Von der Ahe was an inversion of Houston's Roy Hofheinz—like Hofheinz, he was a showman who upset baseball's class-conscious National League purists, but unlike Hofheinz, he did it in service to the city's beer-drinking, working-class rowdies.

Von der Ahe was gone, but both the ballparks he had built remained, blocks apart. Frank and Stanley Robison, owners of the Cleveland Spiders baseball club, bought the Browns. Bitter over poor attendance in Cleveland in spite of a winning team, the Robisons essentially swapped out the rosters of the two clubs, instantly giving St. Louis fans a good team to cheer for. They also switched the club's traditional brown trim for cardinal red, prompting fans to begin calling the club the "Cardinals." St. Louisans, once reluctant to attend games at the "Coney Island of the West," turned up at the remodeled park at Vendevanter and Natural Bridge. By 1901, the Cardinals were top in league attendance, Sportsman's Park had been abandoned for nearly a decade, and there were no longer Browns playing in St. Louis.<sup>37</sup>

That would change in 1902, when the owners of the Milwaukee Brewers, of the new

American League, relocated their club to St. Louis. They erected a new park at Grand Avenue, before the 1902 season, tearing down the old Sportsman's Park stands and installing a new wooden grandstand and three sets of wooden bleachers. The total capacity was fifteen thousand. In a nod to the city's recent baseball history, the owners renamed their Brewers, the "Browns."<sup>38</sup>

Sportsman's Park was not just a home for baseball. As with most stadiums, its owners tried to fill out the schedule with other tenants and events. The field was also a football stage, most notably a laboratory for the game's most revolutionary invention. Eddie Cochems's St. Louis University football team played and practiced there, inflicting its innovative use of the forward pass on opponents starting in 1906 and scorching many of the best teams in the Midwest in the process.<sup>39</sup> Sportsman's Park also hosted soccer matches—a sport particularly popular in the city. But the park was fundamentally a baseball park. The Browns' success in 1908, when they drew over six hundred thousand fans—a total that wouldn't be surpassed by the club until 1922—funded the modernization of the ballpark in 1909. A double-decker grandstand of concrete and steel—considered state-of-the-art at the time—replaced the old wooden one.<sup>40</sup> The new park held over twenty-four thousand customers.<sup>41</sup>

The Cardinals remained at the park Von der Ahe had built at Vandeventer in 1893, which was variously called "League Park," "Robison Field, and "Cardinals Park" when they were tenants there. League Park held twenty thousand in the 1910s, its single-deck grandstand and baseline pavilions notably distant from the diamond. The park was remarkable for being the last all-wood major-league ballpark, and thus a constant fire hazard. Midway through the 1920 season, the Cardinals—suffering horribly at the gate—moved into the more substantial

Sportsman's Park. The club agreed to pay thirty-five thousand dollars in annual rent and half of the park's maintenance expenses.<sup>42</sup>

Sportsman's Park, then home to both the Browns and Cardinals, was remodeled and renovated in 1925 at a cost of five hundred thousand dollars. The double-decker grandstand was extended into the left- and right-field corners and the right-field pavilion was roofed. The capacity of the park increased to 30,500. Outfield dimensions were expanded as well, from 315 to 320 feet in right field and from 340 to 355 in left; centerfield remained at 430 feet.<sup>43</sup> Such asymmetrical dimensions were, of course, the standard for baseball outfields at the time; St. Louis baseball fans wouldn't see a game with a symmetrical outfield until the modern Busch Stadium was opened in 1966.

The Cardinals enjoyed better attendance at Sportsman's Park, and by the end of the 1920s, they had become the city's preferred team. The Browns, second-best in the park they had built, drew fewer fans than any other AL club from 1926 to 1943. In their 1944 pennant-winning season, the Browns finally outdrew the Cardinals, themselves pennant winners, by attracting 508,644 customers, and turned a profit of \$285,034.<sup>44</sup> Two years later they would draw even more—526,435. The Cardinals, however, left them in their wake; more than one million came to see them in 1946, earning the club almost \$700,000.<sup>45</sup> In 1949, the Cardinals set a Sportsman's Park record of 1.4 million, turning an \$857,553 profit in a heated pennant battle.<sup>46</sup>

The Cardinals' second-place finish in 1949 would be its best for fifteen years. In the 1950s, the team's developmental system, once so productive under the steerage of Branch Rickey, had become less fruitful. Rickey had moved to Brooklyn and his Dodgers, who broke the color line in 1947, employed a number of excellent black players beginning in the

late 1940s and replaced the Cardinals as the NL's dominant club. The arrival of players like Jackie Robinson on the field came just years after Sportsman's Park had officially desegregated its stands in 1944. It had been the last park in the big leagues with a Jim Crow section—the right field pavilion. The official desegregation of the stands certainly didn't make the space race-blind in the late 1940s—or even necessarily desegregated. Dodgers player Don Newcombe, whose major-league debut came at Sportsman's Park in 1949, later recalled an episode there in which black fans were temporarily barred from entering the stadium after the three-thousand-seat “colored” section had been filled. Jackie Robinson told Dodgers manager Burt Shotton that he, Newcombe, and Roy Campanella—the Dodgers' three African-American players—refused to take the field unless the fifteen thousand fans outside the park were allowed in.<sup>47</sup> This exclusion of black fans may have been motivated not only by race, but tactics as well. Game reports of the 1949 season repeatedly noted the support the Dodgers enjoyed at Sportsman's Park, suggesting that many black fans had indeed made it in to cheer for Robinson, Campanella, Newcombe, and the racially integrated Dodgers.<sup>48</sup>

The Browns, hoping to capitalize on black attendance to save them from bankruptcy, signed black players after Jackie Robinson's debut with the Dodgers. In 1947 the club signed Willard Brown and Henry Thompson from the Negro League's Kansas City Monarchs, the first black teammates in the major leagues, and also inked Piper Davis of the Birmingham Black Barons to a 30-day option.<sup>49</sup> Richard Muckerman, one of the Browns' primary owners, hoped it might increase turnstile numbers, just as Robinson and the Dodgers attracted black fans during Cardinals games. General manager Bill DeWitt suggested, “It seems in order that this large Negro population should have some representation on their city's baseball team.”<sup>50</sup>

None of the trio would last through the summer with the club, however, as they suffered at bat, and the Browns enjoyed no attendance spike from black St. Louisans.

The Cardinals, meanwhile, remained an all-white club—though they certainly accepted payment from the city’s Brooklyn supporters. Owner Fred Saigh, who was of Syrian descent, refused to sign black or Latino players, claiming the Cardinals were “a team for the South.” Southerners indeed flocked to St. Louis games from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and elsewhere; the growth of radio broadcasts after World War II, and absence of a Southern major-league team, had fueled a regional fan base. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the St. Louis Cardinals network included one hundred twenty stations spread over nine states. Buses of fans from hundreds of miles away would arrive on weekends, testifying to the scope of the radio community.<sup>51</sup> The club’s regional support, however, didn’t seem to wane after the club relented and signed black players in the 1950s, beginning with first baseman Tom Alston in 1954.

Saigh’s reign at the helm of the Cardinals was short-lived, lasting from just 1949 to 1953. He had amassed his wealth from real estate ventures, and these ventures attracted an IRS investigation resulting in a fifteen-month prison sentence for income-tax evasion. Bill Veeck—a notorious promoter in the vein of Von der Ahe—had been part of an ownership group that bought the Browns in 1951. Veeck suspected that St. Louis could only support one major-league team and thought that the Cardinals, weakened by Saigh’s ownership, might be run out of town—this in spite of the fact that the Browns had outdrawn the Cardinals only once in the previous twenty-five years, during the 1944 championship season.

Veeck was characteristically undaunted and put his promotional imagination to work with the Browns. To boost attendance, he sponsored jazz days, Bat Days, Grandstand Manager’s

Night, and performances from clowns and acrobats. He signed three-foot seven-inch Eddie Gaedel to pinch hit and draw a walk on August 19, 1951; Gaedel's strike zone was so small that the opposing pitcher could only throw balls.<sup>52</sup> The Browns drew 518,795 in 1952, up over seventy-five percent from the previous year (though the Cardinals attracted 913,113). Veeck's plans to wrest the St. Louis public from the grip of the Cardinals, however, soon hit an iceberg.

The Cardinals passed from the distressed hands of the soon-to-be-imprisoned Saigh, to the welcome arms of the St. Louis-based Anheuser-Busch Brewing Association on February 20, 1953. August "Gussie" Busch, the president and chief operating officer at Anheuser-Busch, took over control of the Cardinals with \$3.75 million of company funds. Veeck knew he couldn't compete with the brewery's resources and looked to move the Browns. He first hoped to relocate to Milwaukee; however, Lou Perini moved his Boston Braves there (see Chapter One). Other owners prevented a possible move to Baltimore. Veeck was thus forced to return to Sportsman's Park for the 1953 season, and he sold the grounds to Anheuser-Busch for \$1.1 million. Furious fans—cognizant of Veeck's overtures to other cities—cancelled their season tickets and even burned him in effigy. Just 297,238 came out to Sportsman's Park to see the Browns in 1953—fewer than four thousand per game. Veeck was not just the enemy of Browns fans, however; owners resented his promotional irreverence and were intent to force him out of the game. Temporarily blocking the club's relocation from St. Louis—which would require their approval—baseball's club owners forced him to sell the Browns to an investor group in Baltimore, where the team moved for the 1954 season.<sup>53</sup>

With the Browns out of the way, Gussie Busch invested an additional \$1.5 million of



company money in Sportsman's Park, redesigning and renaming it. When Busch bought the property, he remarked, "the way it is now, I'd rather play in Forest Park" (the city's large municipal park and site of the 1904 World's Fair). Busch replaced or repaired every seat, removed the advertising from outfield walls, planted shrubbery in the center-field bleachers, installed new loges, erected a new scoreboard, and remodeled the dugouts and clubhouses.<sup>54</sup> He had hoped to call his new park "Budweiser Stadium," but the league vetoed this plan, not wanting a park named after a beer. Instead, he renamed it Busch Stadium, then introduced Busch Bavarian Beer as a work-around to the league's promotional hurdles. Many St. Louisans continued calling the stadium Sportsman's Park, nonetheless—a title that had endured since Chris Von der Ahe and Alfred H. Spink had saved the grounds and opened the first park by that name at Grand and Dodier in 1881.<sup>55</sup>

In many ways Sportsman's Park seemed timeless, enduring year-after-year, even as the city around it seemed to deteriorate. Unlike Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds, where attendance dropped continuously throughout the 1950s, in spite of good teams, the attendance levels at Sportsman's Park remained relatively constant throughout the decade, even as the Cardinals fielded mediocre squads—fluctuating between eleven and fifteen thousand fans per game. Mary Ott—a Midwestern version of Brooklyn's famous rooter Hilda Chester—remained a park fixture into her seventies, her famously loud farm-animal calls a feature there since 1920.<sup>56</sup>

It was this sense of continuity and timelessness—relative to changes elsewhere on the sports landscape—that prompted Roger Angell to pull for the Cardinals in the 1964 World Series against the Yankees. In an attack against the direction of baseball, originally published in *The New Yorker*, Angell chronicled the damage done by expansion, franchise relocation,

growing corporate influence (signified by CBS's purchase of the Yankees that season), and the demands of television that were changing the ballpark experience. The Cardinals, in spite of Gussie Busch's meddling in the front office that season, seemed a symbol of old ways. Angell argued that the success of the Cardinals was "solid puck in the eye for contemporary baseball ownership and management." This was an organization, in his estimation, that had "been a model of modest, intelligent planning and direction" over the years. It drew young players out of the West and South and developed them through its far-flung farm system. Attendance at Sportsman's Park was consistent, no matter the quality of the teams. The Cardinals were a symbol of a purer, more traditional baseball business and experience, and their success in 1964 against the CBS-owned, pin-striped Yankees only accentuated this clash of cultures occurring in baseball.<sup>57</sup>

Angell then painted an appropriately timeless portrait of the re-named Sportsman's Park:

On the first two days of the Series, Busch Stadium—a seamed, rusty, steep-sided box that will be replaced within two years by a new ballpark on St. Louis's riverfront—reminded me of an old down-on-her-luck dowager who has been given a surprise party by the local settlement house; she was startled by the occasion but still able to accept it as no less than her due. The Cardinal fans around me were plainly and noisily delighted, but I detected none of the unbelieving hysteria with which San Francisco greeted its first pennant in 1962. These were veteran city and country loyalists. The parked cars around the stadium bore license plates from Iowa, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, and their occupants, approaching the gates, had to wade through a moat of trash, broken glass, and old beer cans left by the urbanites who had camped outside the park for two cold nights while waiting for the bleachers to open. Inside, I noticed many spectators (and two young ushers) keeping score in their programs. Clearly, that new pennant would be at home here.<sup>58</sup>

This deep description engaged Angell's standard signifiers of authenticity. The park was steep and boxy—modifiers he often used in describing old baseball parks. The fans were diverse—a mixture of country and city—not the streamlined crowd of well-dressed fans in the Astrodome (in Houston, Angell's "true fans" were the mixed-race, mixed-gender, mixed-

class residents of the outfield pavilion). They were expressive. They kept score in their programs. As in New York, Angell imaginatively connected the park to the city. The previous year, he had analogized the Polo Grounds to Rivington Street in the Lower East Side—a collection of stoops and fire escapes. In St. Louis, he associated the old park with a settlement house. The stadium was feminine, but urbane. She was not affluent or even domestic in the postwar fashion; she was a proud old widow whose time, whether she knew it or not, had passed.

Complaints about old Sportsman's Park were measured and muted when compared to others of its ilk that were more roundly criticized for their shortcomings. The stadium certainly faced many of the challenges that beset parks like Boston's Braves Field, Brooklyn's Ebbets Field, Harlem's Polo Grounds, and Washington's Griffith Stadium. Transportation in and out of the residential neighborhood required patience, as the park was lodged into the grid of the old city. Street parking demanded arriving up to ninety minutes early for a game. There was room for only about four thousand cars on homeowners' property or in small individually owned lots around the edges of the park, but these spots were unpredictable and it would generally take drivers twenty to thirty minutes to get out of the lot after the game.<sup>59</sup>

The changing face of the neighborhood—and the city in general—certainly convinced many that it was time for the Cardinals to leave the old park. City officials considered the entire area east of Grand Boulevard, including most of the city's residential north side, “blighted” by 1947. The area immediately north of downtown and south of the park was considered irredeemably “obsolete.”<sup>60</sup> A mid-1960s door-to-door survey of the neighborhood directly south of the park found that fifty percent of the housing was sub-standard, seventy percent had incomplete plumbing, and nearly all of it was poorly

maintained. The report posited that the neighborhood was site of the worst health conditions, the highest crime rates, and “the most unattractive and over-crowded living and working conditions anywhere in the city.” City officials estimated that seventy-five percent of the housing was “unfit for human habitation” according to city codes. Sixty-seven percent of residents were unemployed. The income of seventy-one percent was below the poverty level.<sup>61</sup> And with each passing year, the area around the park became increasingly African American—a characteristic of no small consequence for a club that had only desegregated its roster in 1954. The Associated Press described it as a “decaying, predominantly Negro area where frustration too often is a simple fact of life.”<sup>62</sup> A reporter for the *New York Times* referred to the city’s north side as a “decaying negro ghetto.”<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, the area around Sportsman’s Park was better off than other parts of the city; but on the other, it too—park and neighborhood—was in a state of visible deterioration, on the northern edge of much of the city’s most explosive racial and socioeconomic geographic changes. To be sure, St. Louis underwent massive postwar changes; to understand the shift from Sportsman’s Park to Busch Stadium requires an examination of those changes in and around St. Louis and the wholesale attempts to deal with those changes.

### **Postwar St. Louis**

Urban decline and urban renewal in St. Louis were two sides of the same coin; or, as historian Eric Sandweiss put it, “In postwar St. Louis... ‘civic improvement’ and civic decline came so close to one another in time and space that it was hard, at times, to tell which had come first.”<sup>64</sup> The urban and regional landscape of St. Louis changed profoundly from the 1940s through the mid-1960s, when Sportsman’s Park was closed and downtown

Busch Stadium was opened. Human policies and practices, as Sandweiss suggested, facilitated, produced, addressed, and exacerbated the massive postwar changes, with complex and often tragic results. Troubled St. Louis was the stage for Busch Stadium, arguably the most prominent arrow in the city's urban renewal quiver; the public meaning of the stadium was indelibly bound to urban decay and rebirth.

A geographically shifting population was one indicator of the massive changes in the city and beyond. Residents left St. Louis steadily after World War II, most moving into suburban communities circling the central city. The population of St. Louis city grew from 816,048 to 856,796 between 1940 and 1950, before plummeting to 750,026 (1960) and 622,236 (1970). At the same time, St. Louis County, surrounding the city, grew explosively from 274,230 (1940) to 406,349 (1950) to 703,532 (1960) to 951,353 (1970). The city shed nearly two hundred thousand residents over that period; the suburban county gained almost seven hundred thousand. Adjacent counties, many hosts to suburban bedroom communities, grew considerably as well.<sup>65</sup>

A decline in population corresponded with the city's economic decline. Federal policies after World War II hurt many older industrial cities like St. Louis. Home loan policies privileged new single-family suburban housing over the renovation of existing urban units. Federal highways subsidized commuter costs and enabled more dispersed settlement patterns. The resulting suburbanization both undermined the urban tax base and diverted state and federal funds from the city to the new suburbs, which required new infrastructure. Downtowns were suffocated as the economic oxygen was sucked into the suburbs. Department stores downtown were hit hard—particularly smaller retailers, who did not have suburban branches in new shopping centers to compensate for drops in earnings downtown.

In St. Louis, city businesses had made \$1.17 billion in retail sales in 1958 (forty-eight percent of the metro area's total). This dropped to thirty-seven percent by 1963. By 1970, the center city was accounting for just thirty-three percent of the metro sales and trailed overall sales elsewhere in the county. Retail shopping and other businesses made the same suburban departure as residents, following customers and workers out of the city.<sup>66</sup> Residential and commercial suburbanization channeled wealth into the areas around St. Louis, and poverty was increasingly concentrated in the center city and surrounding residential rings. Urban residents lost economic opportunities. The differences between urban and suburban landscapes and experience were accentuated.<sup>67</sup>

As many white residents moved out, most black citizens did not and could not due to the racial bias of white homeowners and the machinations of the real estate industry. The black population of St. Louis city grew from 108,765 (1940) to 153,766 (1950) to 214,377 (1960) to 254,191 (1970)—from thirteen percent of the city's total population in 1940 to forty-one percent in 1970.<sup>68</sup> Through the 1940s, most of St. Louis's African American residents were concentrated in the Mill Creek area, extending west of downtown, and the near north side. As white residents left for the suburbs and racist real estate practices were legally challenged, this would change, and black residents replaced white ones throughout the north side of the city. Many white residents who moved to the suburbs took racial biases with them. County communities, broken into a huge number of municipalities, often adopted an antagonistic attitude towards the central city fueled by, as historian James Neal Primm put it, “unsubtle tones of racism.”<sup>69</sup>

Historically speaking, St. Louis was an intensely segregated city. African Americans had long been restricted to certain wards and neighborhoods, particularly on the city's near north

side, and almost wholly kept out of the surrounding suburbs. The realty industry played a central role in this. It lobbied for explicitly racial zoning in the 1910s and 1920s, enforced race-restrictive deed covenants in mid-century, invented the practice of using residential security ratings (which governed private mortgages and public mortgage guarantees), and actively impeded the desegregation of private housing after a Supreme Court ruling in the 1948 case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*—a case emanating from St. Louis’s north side—barred the practice of racial covenants.<sup>70</sup>

Restrictive covenants had been particularly effective tools for maintaining racial segregation. These documents attached specific racial restrictions to the use and resale of property. Most preambles in St. Louis covenants, for example, read, “It is to the mutual benefit and advantage of all of the parties to preserve the character of said neighborhood as a desirable place of residence for persons of the Caucasian Race and to maintain the values of their respective properties.” The covenants usually covered no more than a couple city blocks. By the 1940s, there were around three hundred eighty separate covenants spread across the city’s residential areas. Sportsman’s Park was on the eastern edge of an area of heavy covenant use in the mid-1940s, even as the seating in the park was officially being desegregated.<sup>71</sup>

Enforcement of the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision allowed black residents to live further north. By the end of the 1950s, the “Negro Community” stretched north as far as Natural Bridge, three blocks north of Sportsman’s Park.<sup>72</sup> As African Americans began to move beyond the boundaries of Mill Creek and the near north side, middle-class whites, racially fearful and governmentally incentivized, often abandoned these areas. Property values dropped.

Pruitt-Igoe—perhaps the most pervasive symbol of the ideological and operational failure of both urban renewal and postwar social welfare—was less than one mile southeast of Sportsman’s Park. This public housing project, first occupied in 1954, became home to thirteen thousand people in twenty-seven hundred apartments. Conditions in the thirty-three, eleven-story structures were poor as soon as the early 1960s, just years after their opening. The apartment slabs were physically deteriorated and the site of high crime rates, high vacancies, and considerable tenant anxiety. This was an environment beset by broken windows, abandoned flats, mice, roaches, garbage, broken sidewalks, broken-down automobiles, and often the stench of urine.<sup>73</sup>

A project like Pruitt-Igoe, massive and idealistic, was representative of the postwar self-confidence and imagination that drove the reinvention of the American physical landscape in the 1950s and 1960s. American cities, neglected through decades of depression and war, were in poor physical shape. Policymakers, at both the local and national level, tried to address the decline of the city with powerful instruments that would reinvent them. Coalitions of business leaders and municipal officials attempted to rescue the city, its property values, and its tax revenues.<sup>74</sup> Civic leaders disagreed over the causes of blight—exemplified in substandard housing, abandoned commercial property, and aging infrastructure. However, urban interests—political and private—agreed that the solution to blight was beyond the powers of private interests or municipal policing. Urban renewal thus combined federal money, state laws, local initiatives, quasi-public redevelopment corporations, and private investment.<sup>75</sup> In St. Louis, much of this renewal was directed by a group known as “Civic Progress.”



### **Civic Progress and urban renewal in St. Louis**

In 1952, Mayor Joseph Darst approached a group of prominent city businessmen about stimulating city development. No new office buildings had been constructed in the city for two decades, traffic congestion downtown was awful, and much of the city's housing was rated substandard. Darst appointed eight business leaders to Civic Progress, Incorporated, calling it "the conscience of the community."

Civic Progress, inspired by Pittsburgh's Allegheny Conference of Community Development, would attempt to reconstruct downtown St. Louis as a center for shopping and corporate headquarters. The group would use governmental powers, through slum clearance, and governmental subsidies to accomplish these goals. Slum clearance could allow for corporate expansion or new development downtown; it also could enhance surrounding property values. The addition of amenities—like shopping, sports entertainment, and even an amusement park—to the downtown area would not only attract more affluent suburban shoppers and their dollars to the city, but also help businesses compete with other cities in attracting executive talent.<sup>76</sup>

The group added ten more members to its original eight in 1953, including August A. Busch, Jr. and Sidney Maestre of Mercantile Trust. Both Busch and Maestre were powerful enough corporate figures that they could commit their companies to urban renewal projects without fear of being reversed by the boards.<sup>77</sup> They would also both be key figures in the realization of Busch Stadium downtown—Busch as owner of the Cardinals and Maestre as one of three leaders of the urban redevelopment corporation that organized and executed the stadium plans. Busch led a Civic Progress delegation to Pittsburgh in 1953 to consider the work of the Allegheny Conference there. He was enthusiastic about what he saw,

reporting, “The great thing we saw up there are the city, state, and federal government funds being spent for the good of Pittsburgh.”<sup>78</sup>

Missing from Busch’s equation were the private investments that piggybacked on governmental ones. The logic of what would come to be known as urban renewal in the mid-1950s was this: in a troubled urban area, the economic risk was too great for private investors. They needed assurance that their projects would be accompanied by neighboring development, infrastructural upkeep, and maintenance of public safety. To satisfy these needs, the renewal of slum areas required that relatively large parcels of land be assembled, cleared, and then redeveloped as part of broader renewal plans. There were, however, legal and political barriers to this. While local governments *could* designate private property for public use through the power of eminent domain, they didn’t typically have the compensatory money to acquire and assemble these large parcels of blighted property. In Missouri, the state government controlled the city’s taxing and political powers—another complicating factor. Furthermore, avoiding the private sector and using large-scale public efforts to develop land invited complaints of “socialization” at the expense of private industry. Finally, it was difficult to transfer property from one private owner to another under any legal understanding of “public use”—a requirement for the use of eminent domain.<sup>79</sup>

Urban renewal in St. Louis and elsewhere thus relied on a complicated dance of laws and procedures. Theoretically, a project started when federal and municipal money was secured to assemble and clear blighted land. A state law was exercised that allowed municipal governments to designate an area as blighted, and the city made the property acquirable through eminent domain. A private redevelopment corporation was then created to develop

the area, having used public funding to acquire and clear the plot. In practice, urban renewal in St. Louis typically followed a different process. A private developer identified a property he was interested in, local authorities designated it as blighted, and state and federal monies were then employed to assemble and clear the blighted area.<sup>80</sup>

This practice relied on state and federal legislation, particularly Chapters 353 and 99 in Missouri and the National Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954. The Chapter 353 Urban Redevelopment Act, passed in 1945, specified the form and function of development corporations. These development corporations were the private entities that would, with the power of the city's claims of eminent domain, redevelop urban areas. St. Louis developers successfully lobbied for the Act to include a schedule of tax abatements for property owners in renewal areas and allow for out-of-state investments in redevelopment corporations. This latter revision was advocated by insurance companies headquartered in New York City that hoped to take advantage of the white-collar reclamation of downtown St. Louis. The 1947 City Plan for St. Louis anticipated a rebuilding of the central city using Chapter 353, transforming an "obsolete" area into one with an upscale residential neighborhood, open areas, shopping centers, and park and recreation space. And yet, while Chapter 353 laid the groundwork for developing corporations, it didn't provide the necessary financial resources for acquiring and clearing the land that was to be developed.<sup>81</sup>

The National Housing Act of 1949 began to provide those resources. Under that law, the federal government advanced money to redevelopment agencies to survey areas and plan new developments. With federal approval of those plans, redevelopment agencies could then use federal funds to assemble and clear land, provided they also partially match the federal contribution with some local dollars and partially repay the federal money when the land was

sold to private investors. The 1951 Land Clearance and Redevelopment Act (Chapter 99) facilitated this practice in Missouri. The 1954 National Housing Act then appropriated more funds for cities and loosened restrictions on residential focus. It allowed up to ten percent of federal housing funds to be used on non-residential projects. This was increased to thirty-five percent in 1965.<sup>82</sup>

These were the tools of the urban renewal trade in St. Louis.<sup>83</sup> Under the steerage of Civic Progress and political leaders, the city was physically redefined through the clearance of hundreds of acres of residential, commercial, and industrial structures; the construction of new expressways in-and-out of downtown; and the reinvention of downtown as a space for affluent residents and visitors, drawn by shopping, white-collar commerce, tourism, and sports entertainment.

Voters of St. Louis expressed their enthusiasm for massive reconstruction when they overwhelmingly approved twenty-three propositions, by an average margin of six-to-one, on May 26, 1955. The total cost of the measures was \$110.6 million. The most expensive outlay was for three major expressways, approximately eight miles each, connecting downtown to the surrounding area to the north, west, and south at a total cost of \$18 million to the city. The federal and state governments contributed \$75 million to fund one-half the right-of-way costs and all of the construction. The propositions also set aside \$16.4 million for schools, \$11.6 million for streets, \$11.4 million for bridges and viaducts, \$11 million for parks and playgrounds, \$10 million for slum clearance, \$7.5 million for hospitals, \$7.5 million for flood control (matched by a \$112.5 million federal appropriation for eleven miles of waterfront improvement), \$6 million for street lighting, \$5.2 million for juvenile and other correctional centers, and \$22.3 million for neighborhood rehabilitation—including street resurfacing,

voting machines, fire stations, public building improvements, garbage facilities, a planetarium, a children's zoo, new library branches, air conditioning for the Art Museum, municipal docks, and other items. The least popular issues, for the planetarium and the museum air conditioning, still passed at a rate of better than three-to-one. The *Post-Dispatch* celebrated the voting in language that would capture the discourse of urban renewal going forward. St. Louisans “voted for the new and clean—and against the outmoded and dirty. They voted for a moving, growing, advancing future—and against a blighting, killing past.”<sup>84</sup> New versus outmoded, clean versus dirty, growing versus killing—this sort of language framed the urban changes that occurred in the city over the next decade.

The vitality of the new relied on the erasure of the “blighting past,” and the 1955 propositions included ten million dollars for slum clearance—a measure receiving overwhelming support from primarily black wards.<sup>85</sup> This bond issue enabled massive land assembly and clearance in two of the city's major industrial areas—Mill Creek Valley and Kosciusko. Mill Creek Valley consisted of about four hundred fifty acres, just west of the downtown, running to Grand Boulevard. Kosciusko occupied about two hundred acres along Broadway, running south from downtown. Renewal plans for both areas were proposed in the late 1940s, but didn't go anywhere until federal laws were expanded to include commercial and industrial projects in 1954. Both areas were designated blighted in 1958.

Redevelopment plans for Mill Creek and Kosciusko publicly promised an expansion in jobs, but were primarily geared towards making these areas, which consumed city services and paid little in taxes, more fiscally solvent. The poor were dislocated from both areas without being properly relocated; funding for clearance, it seemed, was more readily available

than funding for redevelopment. Plans for Kosciusko called for the rehabilitation of existing commercial and industrial areas, along with the excising of “misplaced” residential pockets of working-class whites. Planners hoped that established industries—the Anheuser-Busch brewery, for example, at the southern end of the renewal area—would expand. At Mill Creek, a quarter of the land was reserved for the extension of the Daniel Boone Expressway development, a quarter was reserved for light industrial redevelopment, and the rest was designated for residential, public, and commercial use. Between twenty and thirty thousand were displaced from the neighborhood, which was almost wholly African American and poor, but only a small number were actually placed in public housing. A 1964 federal audit found that more than half weren’t meaningfully assisted and that most who redevelopment officials claimed had been relocated had ended up in substandard housing elsewhere in the city—exacerbating deteriorating housing conditions there. Mill Creek’s leveled and undeveloped expanses, which seemed victims of a protracted war, became known as “Hiroshima Flats.”<sup>86</sup>

A series of plans were hatched—some realized, some not—to reinvent the downtown. An area around City Hall at Twelfth and Market Street, four blocks west of the future stadium site, was targeted for renewal. Plans were devised for a Gateway Mall running westward about one mile from the planned site of the Arch to Union Station, between Chestnut and Market. These plans were eventually downscaled to the Plaza Square area, from Fourteenth to Eighteenth, between Market and Olive. In 1959, an area three blocks north of the stadium site and adjacent the planned Arch was designated blighted under Chapter 353. Three twenty-eight-story apartment complexes opened there in 1966—part of a broader strategy to attract high-income residents downtown.<sup>87</sup>

These plans, however, were minor compared to the two most conspicuous facets of new growth in the city. Though Pruitt-Igoe would later become the most powerful symbol of urban renewal in St. Louis, the Gateway Arch and Busch Stadium epitomized the optimistic spirit of planners and citizens in the early 1960s. The Arch was a largely symbolic structure, simultaneously celebrating the city's past and future; it was a monument to Jeffersonian expansion and St. Louis's once pivotal position in western development, but also, through its spare, cool, steel curve, the epitome of modern expression. The stadium was also a powerful symbol, signifying the economic and physical rebirth of a city that most saw as dead and rotten. Symbolism aside, it was an economic anchor of redevelopment downtown—the foundation upon which a range of new projects would rise and the material center to the reinvention of downtown.

### **Building Busch Stadium**

Early proposals for a downtown stadium in St. Louis envisioned a football structure. The first was made in October 1935, by the football coach at Washington University, who was trying to enhance the program's status by scheduling major schools. Mayor Bernard F. Dickmann proposed a sixty-thousand-seat stadium three years later, as part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.<sup>88</sup> World War II ended planning of the memorial, but Washington University alumni pushed for the plan again after the war. Opponents of the plan thought the memorial should be a more meaningful structure than a stadium.<sup>89</sup>

An elaborate roofed stadium proposal made its way through the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce and Missouri Senate in 1958, before being vetoed by Governor Blair in July 1959. Supporters of the plan published an illustrated advertisement in the *Post-Dispatch* to

excite St. Louisans and try to revive the dreamy project. The incredible plan called for a one-hundred-fifteen-thousand-seat stadium, with air-conditioning and heat, that could accommodate baseball, track, football, swimming and high diving, tennis, and also conventions. The structure would feature a restaurant seating fifteen hundred on three floors, “suspended 385 feet above center field in the apex of the plastic dome.” It would be accessible by “moving sidewalks 600 feet long from the perimeter of the roof to the restaurant center.” Plans called for an office building connected to the stadium, “which could boast the reference of being across the hall from all these activities.” The building would house 2.5 million square feet of “international shopping facilities” that would provide nine million dollars in yearly revenue. A twenty-seven-thousand-car parking area underneath the stadium would service drivers, keeping them and their cars “protected from all the elements of weather.” Should Cold War catastrophe strike, the compound could double as “a civil defense fallout shelter” for six hundred thousand people “with pure water to drink, pure food to eat, fresh air to breathe, forty-two acres of recreational areas under roof and the privacy of individual family cubicles.” This impossible stadium would truly be a technocolonial utopia, a futuristic city unto itself. The entire project, the advertisement claimed, would be funded through revenue bonds paid off by rentals; no county or state bond issues were necessary.<sup>90</sup>

A different, and much more plausible, stadium plan was being cultivated by the city’s power brokers in 1958. Charles L. Farris, executive director of the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority, presented a plan for a thirty-million-dollar downtown stadium to the Chamber of Commerce on December 9, 1958. The peculiar looking structure—whose upturned corners reminded some of a pagoda—was to be located on eighteen blocks near



the Arch (though its designer, Eero Saarinen, had warned that a stadium might “disbalance” the skyline and undermine the memorial). The Chamber put “some of its most progressive members” to work on the project, as a local reporter phrased it. James P. Hickok, president of the First National Bank in St. Louis, was named chairman of a committee to investigate the proposal. An editorial supported the project, though regarded skeptically promises that the stadium would revitalize downtown. It cynically noted, “Of course, some of the boosters always wanted somebody else to put up a stadium for them to move into”—in reference to Busch’s prominence as both Cardinals owner and voice in redevelopment.<sup>91</sup>

The stadium took a giant step forward the following September, when the Chamber of Commerce voted to proceed with an eighty-nine-million-dollar downtown redevelopment project focused on a fifty-thousand-seat stadium. Hickok’s committee recommended constructing a semi-bowl, double-decked, multi-purpose stadium that could be expanded, if necessary, from fifty thousand seats to seventy-two thousand. Construction costs would be close to fifteen million dollars; other costs would run the total over twenty-two million. The stadium would be built on a ten-block site at Fourth, Market, Seventh, and Spruce; it was, however, just part of a much larger development project.

The committee recommended broader redevelopment of a twenty-seven-block area bounded by Third Street Highway, Pine, Eighth, and Poplar. It claimed that for the stadium to attract private investors, the project would have to include associated development to offset losses and developmental control of the area around the stadium. The stadium alone, the committee estimated, would lose about seven hundred fifty thousand dollars per year. To compensate for these losses, developers could create parking for seventy-two hundred cars in four garages, an underground location, and surface lots; a thirty-two lane bowling alley

with a cocktail lounge and restaurant for two hundred and fifty; a seven-hundred-fifty-room motel; two twenty-story office towers; and three commercial areas for shops and filling stations. These additional developments were deemed essential, allowing investors to generate profits of at least \$350,000 per year—considered a baseline incentive.

Hickok's committee recommended that the development shouldn't be run through the Chamber of Commerce, but an urban redevelopment corporation instead. Hickock, Sidney Maestre, and Preston Estep, president of Transit Casualty Co., were appointed to head that URC.<sup>92</sup> It would be called the Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC), and it was formed one day after Anheuser-Busch pledged five million of the initial twenty million dollars needed as equity to obtain a stadium loan. By February 1960, the CCRC had received capital pledges of seventeen million dollars—much of that from banks and insurance companies.<sup>93</sup>

The first major opposition to the Civic Center redevelopment came in late January 1960, when a spokesman for thirty-six businesses said that the area couldn't reasonably be designated blighted. At an aldermanic hearing, opponents of the plan pointed out that there were already businesses in the area. A coffee company had paid \$2.5 million in 1958 for a seven-story building, invested seven hundred fifty thousand dollars for equipment specifically designed for the building, did twelve million dollars in business in 1959, and planned to do twenty million dollars more in 1962. The owner of a printing firm noted that it had paid seventy thousand dollars in taxes the previous year. A speaker pointed out that there were thirty-two parking lots in the area; removing them would aggravate the parking problem and give the stadium corporation a monopoly on downtown parking.

Proponents of the plan—at least as reported by the *Post-Dispatch*—seemed to speak past

these complaints, rather than engage them. They insisted that the stadium and related development would restore the area to productivity. Hickok claimed, “There is no question about the fact that there is no future—and there can be no future for this area—except through its becoming a site of the proposed \$89,000,000 Stadium and Civic Center.”

Maestre, who also served as chairman of Downtown St. Louis, Inc., a promotional association for the city center, stated that the project would “require no financial aid from federal, state or city governments”—a somewhat disingenuous statement, given the CCRC’s reliance on the use of eminent domain to make the real estate available. Aloys P. Kaufmann, president of the Chamber of Commerce, said that the project would produce increased economic activity and tax revenues—a proposition that, too, seemed dubious, given the tax abatements that would accompany the redevelopment of blighted areas.<sup>94</sup>

Whether the arguments of stadium proponents were sounder or the speakers just more influential, the project pushed on. The Civic Center/Stadium Redevelopment Area, nearly ninety acres in size, was designated blighted in 1960 under Chapter 353. It was again designated blighted under Chapter 99.<sup>95</sup> Equitable Life Assurance Society approved a thirty-one-million-dollar loan for the project in June 1961; that company had nine hundred million dollars invested in the city and would soon relocate its new corporate headquarters within the tax-sheltered redevelopment zone in downtown St. Louis.<sup>96</sup> A six-million-dollar bond issue to fund improvements around the stadium, like sidewalks, streets, and lighting, was approved by a two-to-one vote in March 1962, just two months after being defeated. A reporter would later recall that the “Civic Center and its friends” put together a persuasive “public education campaign” to change people’s minds. Architect Edward Durell Stone presented his plans to the Chamber of Commerce in March 1963, accompanied by a twelve-

thousand-dollar plastic model. In May 1964, ground was broken.<sup>97</sup>

Amid the buzz of urban reinvention was a serious, but ultimately unexecuted, plan for a Midwestern Disneyland across the street from the stadium. Planners for Downtown St. Louis Inc. had sketched out a one-block area of theaters, restaurants, and stores—limited to pedestrian access—for the block bounded by Broadway, Walnut, Market, and Seventh, immediately north of the stadium site and west of the Gateway Arch. It was to be called “Riverfront Square.” The CCRC was enamored with the plans, and Downtown St. Louis Inc. President Raymond Witcoff consulted with Walt Disney, a Missouri native, for advice. Disney suggested his company was interested in taking over the development and received a delegation from St. Louis in March 1963, which included Witcoff, Mayor Raymond Tucker, and Preston Estep of the CCRC, at his studios in California. Walt returned a visit to St. Louis in November.<sup>98</sup>

Disney draftsmen drew up plans in early 1964 for a multi-story, indoor entertainment center filling the block—a miniature, indoor version of Anaheim’s Disneyland. The vision called for a main entrance like that of Disneyland’s “Town Square,” featuring an Old St. Louis district opposite an Old New Orleans one (similar to “New Orleans Square,” which opened a few years later at Disneyland). The park would feature a “Caribbean Pirate’s Lair” and “Blue Bayou” boat ride—plans that later evolved into the popular “Pirates of the Caribbean” ride at Disneyland. The facility would also include an Audio-Animatronics show, like that at the New York World’s Fair, a “Western Riverboat” ride, a haunted house, two 360-degree “Circarama” theaters, shops, a large banquet room, restaurant, bar, and a lounge with a view of the Mississippi River. The interior atrium would stage artificial lighting and weather conditions to manipulate the time of day and compensate for the seasonal changes

of the Midwest.<sup>99</sup>

The project ran aground when it came to financing. Disney thought that the city should finance building costs—between thirty and fifty million dollars—that would then be reimbursed by profits from the facility. Once repaid, Disney would own it. This arrangement was unworkable for the CCRC. As Disney pondered the possibility of an urban theme park, the company was offered thousands of inexpensive acres in Florida—a clean slate for a Disneyland East. This development, coupled with the only marginal profitability predicted by consultants (no more than five percent return on investment), squelched project momentum. By July 1965, the deal was dead.<sup>100</sup>

Disneyland St. Louis never materialized, but the CCRC proceeded enthusiastically with stadium construction and area redevelopment. It spun off three subsidiary URCs to organize and manage the construction of the stadium, stadium parking garages, a Stouffer Hotel, a series of corporate buildings (Pet Milk, Equitable Life, First National, General American Life), and the relocation of the Spanish Pavilion from the New York World's Fair—to be used as an exhibition and performing arts space.<sup>101</sup> Once the stadium was constructed, the St. Louis Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority (LCRA), which was a tax-exempt public body, retained the title on the land, leasing it to developers and tenants, who made payments to the LCRA in lieu of taxes to the city.<sup>102</sup> The CCRC facilitated the replacement of urban industry with corporate headquarters and a new stadium that was a boon to Busch, his Cardinals, and his brewery. It increased the value of the franchise, which could host more fans and sell more beer (for Busch, like Von der Ahe eighty years before, baseball was as much about beer sales as ticket sales). Because the club didn't own the stadium, it avoided the costs of construction. By purchasing five million dollars in CCRC stock, the Cardinals

enjoyed access to a brand new, modern, downtown stadium at a fraction of its actual cost.<sup>103</sup>

For many in St. Louis, encouraged by the promises of Civic Progress, the stadium was a symbol of the city's future, embodying dreams for a new downtown that was a clean, sparsely populated center for commerce, business, and entertainment. Downtown St. Louis, Inc. extolled the virtues of a de-industrialized, modern St. Louis, claiming that "all great cities have in common two characteristics, an exciting Downtown filled with a great variety of shops, theatres, museums, and other attractions" as well as "a large middle class population residing near downtown possessing the purchasing power and tastes to help sustain its activities."<sup>104</sup> The post-industrial gentrification of St. Louis anticipated, by many years, the urban revitalization of cities across the country, most prominently exemplified in the festival marketplace phenomenon of the late 1970s and beyond. But unlike James Rouse's Faneuil Hall development in Boston (opened piecemeal from 1976 to 1978) and Harborplace in Baltimore (1980), the urban redevelopment of downtown St. Louis looked forward, not backward, embracing a modern aesthetic, not historicist theming (though had Disney built there, this might have changed).<sup>105</sup>

The modern, Chamber-of-Commerce vision for the downtown contrasted dramatically with a genuinely old Sportsman's Park.<sup>106</sup> That stadium, repeatedly called "ancient" by writers across the country, was a structure from another time in a geography of diversity, mixing uses, classes, and races—not a new and modern downtown pitched to affluent white-collar bureaucrats and their suburban wives out for a night on the town. The transition from one place to the other, the old city to the new one, was narrated by two overlapping discourses—one employing rhetorical and visual representations of death and life, the other engaging conceptions of "progress." Together, these discourses illustrate the dominant

meanings of the new stadium and the loss of the old one.

### **Decay and rejuvenation: stadiums and urban discourse**

To call an old baseball park “ancient” was unremarkable in the 1950s and ‘60s. Writers used the term to describe Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field, Harlem’s Polo Grounds, Boston’s Fenway Park, Cincinnati’s Crosley Field, and no doubt many other stadiums of that type.<sup>107</sup> The term, “ancient,” bore different meanings, depending on the user. Sometimes it was a simple pejorative—sportswriters like Robert Creamer of *Sports Illustrated* and John Hall of the *Los Angeles Times* used “ancient” to dismiss the Polo Grounds in 1963 and Fenway Park in 1967 as obsolete and inappropriate to modern times.<sup>108</sup> But “ancient” could also suggest something more than just age and obsolescence. The term was sometimes instilled with reverence and deference to the authority and accrued wisdom of a park loaded with human experience and memory. Easily the most common descriptor of Sportsman’s Park (old Busch Stadium), even as early as the late 1940s, was “ancient”—a term of endearment, but also recognition that the park was indeed at the end of its utility for a postwar society. It was “ancient,” the “ancient ball park in St. Louis,” an “ancient arena,” an “ancient landmark,” and “ancient Busch Stadium.”<sup>109</sup>

Something ancient, if not already dead, was clearly on its last legs. Many commentators anthropomorphized the park that teetered on the precipice of death. One referred to “the passing of ancient Busch Stadium” as though it were a person who had expired.<sup>110</sup> When personified, Sportsman’s Park was often figured as an old woman.<sup>111</sup> Sportswriter Neal Russo of the *Post-Dispatch* and *The Sporting News* wrote, “the belated face-lifting and later improvements gave Old Lady at Grand and Dodier a good luck that continued even though

execution by the headache ball had been decreed.”<sup>112</sup> Ed Wilks, also of the *Post-Dispatch*, penned an entire article extending the “Old Lady” metaphor. He observed, “Oddly, the Old Lady wasn’t dressed in her finery. Those 10 pennants were missing, folded away some place, on the Old Lady’s final hour.” He grimly observed the final rites, recounting, “The seats weren’t filled on the Old Lady’s last day. But those who were there groaned a bit when a bulldozer dug up her outfield grass. It was like watching ‘em throw dirt on the coffin.” He celebrated the park’s unfeminine resolve, writing “The Old Lady just stood there, and took it like a man.”<sup>113</sup>

To speak of the park’s final days in funeral terms, investing it with humanity so it could die, seemed a variation of a broader discourse concerning the city. The words used to describe urban decline—blight, decay, disease, rot—positioned it as a living or once-living being on the brink of an unseemly death. Geographer Edward Relph noted that medical analogies were used often in 1950s discussions of the city and its problems; cities were believed to have diseases, and it was the job of planners and developers, public and private, to save them by removing these infections, most commonly referred to as “blight.” Thus, Relph wrote, urban renewal “was seen as a sort of radical surgery to clean out unsafe, unsanitary, overcrowded dwellings which fostered social and economic problems.”<sup>114</sup>

The new Busch Stadium and the monumental Arch were powerful symbols of urban renewal in St. Louis—instruments of the “radical surgery” that would arrest urban disease. With these instruments, the city’s progressive leaders would deliver the city from certain death, giving it a new life. This discourse of rebirth and rejuvenation animated much of the conversation about the stadium and downtown development. At the stadium groundbreaking, James Hickok proclaimed, “Look all around us,” gesturing towards the



Arch, the Third Street construction, Poplar Street bridge, and the Mansion House project. “You can see for yourselves the truth in the statement that our city is truly being reborn. We are replacing the old with the new.”<sup>115</sup> Chairman of the Mercantile Trust Company, Kenneth R. Cravens, said of downtown: “a dying and decaying section has made a complete reversal.”<sup>116</sup> As the stadium was being completed, the *Post-Dispatch* announced in headlines, “A New Spirit of St. Louis is Born... A Greater Tomorrow.”<sup>117</sup> Writers celebrated “St. Louis’ renaissance,” “the rebirth of downtown St. Louis,” and the “fresh form to the south face of downtown St. Louis”—a twist on the “facelift” that had kept Sportsman’s Park tolerable for its final few years.<sup>118</sup>

The city’s “rebirth” was also well noted by national media. The *Washington Post* described the “rejuvenation of the riverfront” and “downtown renaissance” that swept away “a warehouse-Skid Row area that spread blight along the waterfront for years.”<sup>119</sup> The *New York Times* noted hopes for “a new economic vitality” in an area that had been “an ugly picture of decay,” while also recalling the city’s image as a “dowager” for how rapidly it seemed to have aged in recent decades.<sup>120</sup> United Press International, too, called St. Louis the “Dowager City,” known to be “once so set in its ways.” But in the mid-1960s, it was “blasting out whole sections of blight and rot,” replacing the “rotting levee” and “an area so decayed that St. Louis turned its back on it for a century.” Urban renewal in St. Louis proved “a catalyst in the rejuvenation of the once-dowdy and depressed ‘Dowager City.’”<sup>121</sup> Not all commentaries on downtown change were positive. Ada Louise Huxtable said of downtown, “All of the stages of decay, death, rebirth and rebuilding are currently visible—with the usual success and failures, ironies and anachronisms.”<sup>122</sup> And yet, even in critiquing most of the

renewal developments, Huxtable too employed this discourse of urban death and birth that associated the old with decay and the new with the vital.

These polarizing equations were reinforced by visual representations of the stadiums and the downtown area. The baseball Cardinals made an explicit comparison between the two stadiums in the 1965 souvenir yearbook. A two-page spread, titled “The Old... and the New,” pitched the two structures against one another in visual terms. On one page was an aerial photo of Sportsman’s Park—branded “The Old” with a decorative Old English font. The park seemed to be an open-end box, but with angles slightly askew. The light standards stuck out like rusty nails. The contexts were almost wholly cropped out of the scene, as though the club was embarrassed to reveal what lurked outside the grounds—cars crammed in every nook-and-cranny of an old neighborhood, dirty brown roofs, and wholesale visual irregularity. Facing this was “The New” (in sleek, modern cursive)—an aerial illustration of the new Busch Stadium. The tight framing was gone here, as the vista opened up to a radically geometric and rational downtown—the curves of the stadium, the arch, a new high-rise hotel, and the old courthouse (a final remnant of the old city) were set against the tidy boxes of office buildings and parking garages. The predominantly African American East St. Louis, across the Mississippi River, seemed to have been converted to idyllic farmland. The brown and jagged ballpark was replaced by a sculpted, modern womb that was blazingly white.<sup>123</sup>

This would be the modern visual vernacular—a curved and glowing whiteness that distinguished the new from the old, the reborn from the decayed. The stadium’s visual and sculptural purity was again celebrated on the cover of the 1966 club yearbook.<sup>124</sup> Illustrations of the stadium and downtown, used in news stories and advertisements, often featured a

wide frame that captured the whole area post-urban renaissance. It was a rational landscape of orderly streets and new white structures—particularly the stadium.<sup>125</sup> Photographs of the downtown usually employed much tighter framing, excluding the stadium’s surrounding area, particularly to the industrial and un-redeemed south. And yet, the stadium, even when photographed, seemed to glow against its brown, urban margins.<sup>126</sup> A full-page Anheuser-Busch advertisement, printed in a special *Post-Dispatch* insert on the stadium and downtown redevelopment, combined photo and illustration. The ad asked readers, “What would the world be without the imagination of men combined with a will to win?” Filling the page was an aerial photograph of St. Louis shot from the southeast, pre-renewal. The blackened, boxy landscape was brightened by seemingly hand-drawn, white outlines of the projects being constructed atop this visually lifeless city—freeways, the Arch, the stadium, new hotels, and apartment towers. It was a dreamy visualization of progress, a re-authored white city to replace a black one.<sup>127</sup>

Like its visual and rhetorical representation, the material stadium itself seemed a beacon of the clean, the modern, the breathing vital—a reproach to the black, heavy, and rotten city. Unveiling his plans in March 1963, architect Edward Durell Stone noted that the thin columns would “give an impression of light weight and wide open spaces, in the words of a St. Louis reporter.<sup>128</sup> An editorial for the *Post-Dispatch* agreed, claiming that the design “adds lightness and grace to mass and bulk.”<sup>129</sup> Many observers confirmed these early promises once the stadium had been physically realized. “The completed stadium bears out the promise of giving the impression of light weight and open spaces through the 2-by-3 foot supporting columns,” one reporter noted, adding, “the brightness is accentuated by the concrete shell covering.” The stadium was thus light and bright, contrasting with the dark,

heavy brick structures that had seemed to blight the area before being destroyed.<sup>130</sup> In his syndicated column, sportswriter Red Smith ventured, “Perhaps the most striking feature of the stadium, seen from the outside, is its open work appearance. Instead of a solid wall of masonry, the facade has been left open between slender columns, leaving the inner ramps visible.”<sup>131</sup> The “Sunday Pictures” insert of the *Post-Dispatch* featured a cover photo shot from one of the interior ramps, framing the inclined pedestrian way flanked by thin columns, titled “Grandeur in Concrete.” The setting was wholly un-stadium-like, resembling the glass-enclosed lobby of a new museum or a plaza beneath an office tower perched atop modern piers.<sup>132</sup> Like these analogical spaces, the openness and lightness of the Busch Stadium exterior expressed modernity, spaciousness, and order.

Many interpreted the stadium’s modern characteristics as indicators of sophistication and beauty. Mrs. Claudia Hanebrink, a resident of suburban Affton, uttered, “This is the most beautiful thing I have even seen”—praise broadcast as a secondary headline on the front page of the *Post-Dispatch*.<sup>133</sup> A reporter called it “a decorative hub in the very heart of the St. Louis metropolitan area.” He continued, “In substance it probably is more magnificent than envisioned in any dream because no lay dreamer could have imagined the final monumental design, the brilliant scalloped canopy and the delicacy of the slender piers. It took inspired architects to do that.”<sup>134</sup> Busch was a “huge, luxurious circle of concrete” to New York sportswriter Leonard Koppett and “a steep, elegant gray concrete pile” for Roger Angell.<sup>135</sup> Player Nelson Briles likened it to the Taj Mahal—a common enough comparison for modern stadiums, though in this case, given the overwhelming whiteness of each, a justifiable one.<sup>136</sup> Busch was beautiful, luxurious, elegant, monumental; it was also, simply, “bright, clean and slightly antiseptic,” in the words of a *Sports Illustrated* writer.<sup>137</sup>

The conspicuous openness of the exterior was balanced against a near complete enclosure of the interior. While only the Astrodome fully sealed its inhabitants inside—a necessary condition for the climate control—Busch Stadium was just the second outdoor stadium with a complete circle of stands (Washington’s D.C. Stadium, opened in 1961, was the other; the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium opened in 1966 with Busch). The circular Busch was like a womb, effecting a sense of protective enclosure for people inside, broken only for those sitting in the southeastern portion of the stadium who could see the top of the Gateway Arch peeking over the rim of the stadium. A thin band of roof around the stadium rim, leaning out over the top portions of the upper level, accentuated the feeling of enclosure. The enveloped spectator enjoyed little of the visual relief allowed those at Dodger Stadium, where one drank in the rugged scenery of the hills beyond, or the uneven spaces of Flushing outside of Shea Stadium. She certainly witnessed nothing like the various and chaotic scene outside Sportsman’s Park. Not only was Busch Stadium the first of the downtown modern stadiums, but it also established this enclosed-form type for those that followed in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. Each of these stadiums visually protected its inhabitants from the unpredictable city outside, forcing them to look at other consumers—often middle-class visitors in from the suburbs—rather than the problematic urban landscape outside.

Stadium discourse and materiality in St. Louis overlapped with a broader discourse on the city, in fact exemplifying it. Rhetorical representations of the city coded it as diseased, decaying, dying, blighted. Visual representations marked it as dark, even black—at a time, of course, that the center city was increasingly racially black. The remedy for these diseases of blight and blackness was a renewal program that extricated this tumorous decay and replaced

it with new, rational, clean, and *white* projects like Busch Stadium. The attempted reclamation of downtown for white-collar workers and affluent white suburbanites—who might shop in its spaces and visit its cultural amenities—represented a whitening of the city on many different levels.

### **A different kind of progress**

Interwoven with this discourse of death and life, blackness and whiteness, was another one regarding the past and the future—“progress” and its costs. The meaning of “progress” when filtered through the Astrodome was multifaceted, encompassing a progressive technological advancement, the execution of that progressive mindset to the ends of physical comfort and convenience, and the structure itself as tangible evidence of the apex of a long, historical march of progress. Busch Stadium too was celebrated as an icon of “progress,” though the word seemed to carry a different meaning in St. Louis. There the new modern stadium signified a rebirth for the inner city, a victory over the disease of urban blight. It didn’t signify the triumph of science in the service of comfort, but symbolized a city emerging from the nineteenth century into modernity—reflected both in the “rebirth” and “New Spirit” of downtown and in the move from Sportsman’s Park to the new Busch Stadium.

At the stadium groundbreaking in May 1964, Preston Estep, executive committee chairman of the Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation, called the project the “spark that will kindle fires of progress”—words that were appropriated for a *Post-Dispatch* headline.<sup>138</sup> Many advertisements in that paper featured companies linking themselves to the new stadium, utilizing it as a symbol of the new, the progressive, the modern imagination. Some

of these gestured to the past—much as Astrodome design and discourse had done—to place the new stadium and the company, by association, at the pinnacle of a historical progression. One such advertisement curiously featured the illustration of a medieval knight on horse, raising his sword to salute an image of the stadium; the text explained, “A Salute to St. Louis Progress... and our New Stadium.”<sup>139</sup> A shared advertisement from the First National Bank in St. Louis and St. Louis Union Trust Company highlighted images of Greek athletes—throwing a discus, running, launching a javelin, and racing a chariot. The ad copy informed readers that the new stadium “gives dramatic evidence of the new spirit which is transforming the destiny and changing the destination of this 200-year-old Gateway City. *It’s concrete evidence of the distance we’ve come*” [their emphasis].<sup>140</sup>

As in Houston, this “progress” emanated from masculine leadership. Men and their unwavering visions drove the project, from early visualizations of stadium planning that featured groups of men in the authoritarian pose—pointing at plans for the new stadium in the mode of explanation and control—to later accounts of the stadium’s completion.<sup>141</sup> When the baseball Cardinals moved from Sportsman’s Park to Busch Stadium, a *Post-Dispatch* front-page headline announced, “Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men.” The reporter assured readers, “Men responsible for the stadium responded to every threatened delay with renewed energy that has overcome many obstacles.” Busch Stadium “came into being because of the labors of dedicated men who overcame public apathy, the opposition of displaced businessmen, investors’ doubts, rival proposals, architects’ fears, high construction costs, strikes and a fire.” These, it seemed, were the obstacles that dedicated men had to overcome—citizens, doubt, fear, expenses, workers, and nature.<sup>142</sup> A full-page Budweiser advertisement in a special stadium newspaper insert

reiterated the point, asking rhetorically: “What would the world be without the imagination of men combined with a will to win?”<sup>143</sup>

But progress in St. Louis was different from progress in Houston—a difference seemingly rooted in how many in those communities collectively understood and valued the past. In broad terms, Houstonian culture embraced a “purer” sort of modern ideology, readily casting aside the past as shabby and retrograde. Houston journalist and author George Fuermann claimed, “Houstonians have shown little compassion for their city’s past.” It was a city that always seemed new because few buildings existed long enough to become old. They were knocked down; the past was “scrubbed away as though it were an embarrassment.”<sup>144</sup> St. Louisans seemed to labor under a more complicated sense of history. Though “progress” was celebrated in full throat, it was also experienced more ambivalently.

The Gateway Arch, or Jefferson National Expansion Memorial—began in 1963 and completed in 1965—symbolically captured this ambivalence. It memorialized the city’s past significance, as the nineteenth-century jumping off point to the American West. St. Louis, once so important as the Midwestern transportation and industrial hub, had long since ceded its significance to cities like Chicago, and more recently ones like Houston. The memorial argued for the city’s historical importance. And yet, the Arch was the ultimate modern icon—an abstract, monumental steel parabola—shorthand for the mathematical, the scientific, the planetary projectile in motion.<sup>145</sup> Though designed in 1948, by the 1960s the parabola form was a design standard, utilized across the landscape from buildings, to signs, to handheld populuxe consumer items.<sup>146</sup> It was a powerful symbol of the modern. And so, as a monument, the Arch looked forward and backward, straddling the city’s past and its hopeful modern future, just as it straddled its lot along the Mississippi River. It was a



“monument to present-day technology as well as to past achievements,” in the words of a *Washington Post* reporter.<sup>147</sup>

Just as the Gateway Arch was an ambivalent symbol—modern and historically reflective—the transition from Sportsman’s Park to new Busch Stadium was one marked with Janus-faced awareness. The move provoked a wave of nostalgia and imaginative recovery of all the oddities the old park had collected over the years. The baseball Cardinals, no doubt officially ecstatic over the earning potential of the new stadium, struck a reverential tone as they shifted grounds, memorializing the park in team publications. The club, like commentators, emphasized that it was the “oldest playing grounds of the game anywhere,” baseball having been played there for a century.<sup>148</sup> Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* wrote two consecutive columns on Sportsman’s Park, which was “one of baseball’s most colorful outposts and contributed vastly to history and legend.”<sup>149</sup> The passing from one stadium to the other prompted a series of articles, locally and nationally, often accompanied by cartoon illustrations that recounted many events both verifiable and apocryphal. A reporter for *Sports Illustrated* wrote,

When they move into bright, clean and slightly antiseptic Busch Memorial Stadium next week, the St. Louis Cardinals will become the 10th big league team in the last 11 years to take up new digs. Happily, all the concrete west of the Mississippi can’t bury baseball’s storied past, which was never more vivid than in old Sportsman’s Park (Busch Stadium to latecomers), where memorable things always seemed to be happening.

This was a common trope—the stadium as a vesicle of quirky memories—at a time when quiriness was seemingly being squeezed out of the game. Writers recalled the outrageous antics of the infamous “Gashouse Gang”; fights between players, coaches, and umpires; the legendary African American pitcher Satchel Paige, in his dugout rocking chair; Stan Musial’s five home runs in a double-header; superfan Mary Ott and her “horse laugh”; “brew

bombs,” or bean bags filled with beer, thrown at straw hats in the stands; Chris Von der Ahe’s refusal to roof the stands because he wanted fans hot and buying beer; the bullet from a holdup that passed over player Ken Boyer’s head and landed in a thirteen-year-old girl fan’s blouse; the former striptease club, Club Boulevard, located under the stands on Grand Boulevard; and, of course, Eddie Gaedel’s infamous walk (or as one writer put it, “Bill Veeck’s midget”).<sup>150</sup>

The city’s baseball fans let the park go with a sense of restraint and perspective. The final game at the park was played on May 9, 1966. Ushers and police lined the field in the bottom of the ninth to discourage vandalism of the field and stands. After the closing ceremonies, they moved aside and many fans went on the field. Some took souvenirs—cups of dirt, a few numbered seat backs, some signs. But the scene was markedly different from the one at the Polo Grounds in 1957, after the Giants had played their final game there, when fans swarmed the field, chased the players, and looted the grounds of base pads, plaques, seats, telephones, and patches of grass. Cardinals fans largely treated the “Old Lady” with respect—more, one might say, than the Cardinals organization. A bulldozer rammed through the outfield wall even before the last people had departed the grounds.<sup>151</sup>

The official transfer from Sportsman’s Park to the new Busch Stadium was capped with a parade. The theme was “St. Louis Through the Years” and consisted of twenty-three floats, costing seventy-five hundred dollars each, populated with “many pretty girls,” in the words of a reporter. The parade began about a mile-and-a-half south of Sportsman’s Park, at Grand Boulevard and Washington (conveniently skipping over most of the city’s African American north side, starting at the edge of the once blighted, but since cleared, Mill Creek area), and ended downtown at the stadium. The floats—imaginative ventures into the city’s past—were

largely sponsored by St. Louis-based corporations and depicted local landmarks like Grant's Farm and the Zoo, events like the 1904 World's Fair, the founding of the city, and a coffee break. One float proposed the city of the future; another venerated the iconic Gateway Arch. Altogether, the parade celebrated the city's history, from the nineteenth century and into the future—appropriate for an event christening the transition from baseball grounds that had debuted in the 1860s to a gleaming new modern stadium that seemed a harbinger for tomorrow.<sup>152</sup>

### **“Pass the iodine”: the modern stadium and big-time sport**

Sportsman's Park was a memorial to baseball's origins by virtue of its age, but it was also a memorial to a passing age of baseball and sport more generally. By the mid-1960s, commentators were increasingly questioning the direction of sports business, as the impact of television and the construction of new, modern stadiums were altering the experience of sport—the product on the field, the experience in the stadium, and the amounts of money involved. Critics accused sport of becoming spectacle and mere “show business,” losing its ethical compass that put the games and their traditions first, selling out to television and casual but more affluent audiences of largely suburban consumers. Sportsman's Park was a symbol of both a previous age and the loss of it.<sup>153</sup>

Cardinals player Nelson Briles recalled the shift from the park—“small, close to the fans, electric atmosphere”—to the stadium as “a compromise for everybody because you are removed from the field, and you lose that intimacy and the closeness to the action.” This shift, he claimed, coincided with a new marketing of the game.

It began the end of the age of innocence for baseball where it was just a game, where you opened the gates and the fans came and you played for the pride of the game

and the win. And that was the real focus, balls and strikes, home runs, outs, base hits. Once marketing became a more integral part of the total operation, there was a focus on promotions. In the past, you didn't see too much of that because the older opinion seemed to be that it was too gimmicky. Promotions made too much a circus of the game. Back then we were there for the pure baseball people. Today you can't survive with just the purists. Today you must market to the masses.<sup>154</sup>

Though there is much to argue with concerning Briles's historical assessment of the game—particularly that it was played for pride in a bygone era—his characterization nonetheless marked the late-1960s as a moment of spiritual transition, regarding both the settings for the games and the production of those games as entertainment. Briles's complaint, a good example of a purist's lament, was dismissed by others who embraced the new money, new culture, and new comforts. The 1967 World Series was staged in stadiums that represented the old and the new: Boston's Fenway Park, opened in 1912, and the new Busch.

John Hall of the *Los Angeles Times* used the occasion to bat away the complaints of purists. "Some people," Hall claimed, "resent the new ballparks, insisting they are too antiseptic, too cold and too commercial. But there are some people who resent everything, including progress, peace and heaven." As the Series transitioned from one venue to the other, it moved "from the Stone Age to the Moon Age." He said of Boston's old ground, "Fabled Fenway Park... is quaint and colorful in its way, but it's a fading and obsolete relic and would be better off being put out of its misery. Or at least officially declared to be what it is, a museum displaying artifacts from another age." It was a "dishonest park," in Hall's opinion, because of its peculiar wall angles and field dimensions. Busch Stadium, conversely, "does it all. It's comfortable, convenient and true with balanced fences... and has all the modern touches." "If this is antiseptic," Hall concluded, "pass the iodine."<sup>155</sup>

Hall's gag line—"pass the iodine"—captured the hubristic spirit of the modern stadium and urban renewal, in St. Louis and elsewhere. His unapologetic celebration of cleanliness,

comfort, and convenience—as well as his easy dismissal of tradition—articulated the approach of modern progressive thinkers in the 1960s. Busch Stadium was the bulkhead of downtown redevelopment in St. Louis, a massive material and ideological project designed to reinvent the downtown, to cleanse it of its age, of its industry, of its diseased blackness—to make parts of the city itself like a modern stadium. If other modern stadiums like Shea represented the geographical, material, and ideological suburbanization of the previously urban stadium form, Busch Stadium was the first effort to take that newly suburbanized form back to the city. It would use the suburban stadium in an urban setting as a jumping off point to suburbanize the urban, sanitizing it, drawing affluent suburban residents and their consumption dollars back into the decayed city, making the urban experience a consumable one. Downtown St. Louis had gone from dirty to clean, black to white, dangerous to safe, cluttered to rationalized, ancient to modern.

As a vehicle of development, Busch Stadium seemed a triumph; as a vehicle for the urban spirit, some thought it a failure. Two years after its opening, Huxtable allowed that downtown St. Louis was an economic success, derisively calling it “a monument to Chamber of Commerce planning and design. It is a businessman’s dream of redevelopment come true.” The “economic regeneration” of the area, she noted, was marked by the standard, placeless structures of mid-century modernity—upscale apartments, hotels, office towners, shopping, and parking garages. It possessed “none of the traditional values” of the city—its life, its diversity, its sense of humanity—characteristics that made cities unpredictable but vibrant and exciting.<sup>156</sup>

Whatever one’s measure of success, the “traditional values” of the city—particularly its visual and social diversity—were absent from this renewed downtown, exemplified in its

feature building. Busch Stadium would be a model for future stadiums because it was the first of the urban modern stadiums, an anchor of urban renewal. But it was also important because it solidified the modern stadium idiom that would be repeated in other cities over the coming years—the enclosed cylinder of plastic seats. Massive and monumental, this concrete form was executed repeatedly across the country. But even when they took slightly different forms, all the modern stadiums of the 1970s *seemed* increasingly alike—cantilevered decks of plastic seats encircling fields that would consist of synthetic grass (a new technology installed in Busch in 1970). Stadium experiences—from one to the next—were increasingly routinized and produced top-down, as scoreboards, stadium clubs, and attractive young women—sexy usherettes for baseball, cheerleaders for football—competed with play on the field for visitors’ attention. Like the renewed modern city, the renewed modern stadium cast aside many of its “traditional values”—most certainly its variety. It became an artificial space—man-made and non-traditional. Just as commentators like Huxtable lamented the loss of urban humanity to urban renewal, so to did many of sport’s most perceptive observers mark the disappearance of humanity from the stadium.

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<sup>1</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “St. Louis Success,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1968, D33-35.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Louis Cardinals 1966 Souvenir Yearbook*, 1966, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>3</sup> Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, for example, was just a mile north of downtown; however, the stadium was set in rustic Chavez Ravine.

<sup>4</sup> “Blight” was rarely defined precisely. A consultant hired by the city of St. Louis in 1970, four years after the opening of Busch Stadium, defined residential blight as a “condition of unacceptably low residential quality—a point on the continuum of residential quality.” Industrial blight, he figured, consisted of facilities that were “undesirable from a social standpoint or are inefficient from an economic point of view.” Historian Colin Gordon—after surveying the city’s history with urban renewal—determined that it was “less an objective condition” than a “legal pretext” for tax abatement. Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline*:

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*St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 189, 192.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Durell Stone, *Recent & Future Architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 30.

<sup>6</sup> “Brilliant and Harmonious,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Mar 13, 1963, 2c.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 13, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Neal Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium,” *The Sporting News*, May 28, 1966, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Advertisement for KSD5-TV, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 15, 1966, 6d.

<sup>10</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.”

<sup>11</sup> Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>12</sup> Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>13</sup> Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>14</sup> Neal Russo, “Site Near Arch, Stores, Hotels Hailed as Ideal for Ball Fans,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>15</sup> Roger Angell, “Two Strikes on the Image,” in *The Summer Game* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 177.

<sup>16</sup> Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>17</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.” Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>18</sup> Stone, *Recent & Future Architecture*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Evans, “Too Much Downtown,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 11, 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.” Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.”

<sup>21</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.” Red Smith, “Stadium Isn’t Pipe Dream,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 13, 1966.

<sup>22</sup> Bob Broeg, “Stadium a Hot Item Without Gas,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 13, 1966. Like Shea, Busch had a private club but no luxury suites. Skyboxes weren’t common in modern stadiums until the 1970s, and even then they didn’t feature everywhere.

<sup>23</sup> Russo, “Something New in St. Louis—Spacious Stadium.” “Together we built the new STADIUM,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>24</sup> Dave Lipman, “For Those Who Know the Score, Busch Board Adds Living Color,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 13, 1966.

<sup>25</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.”

<sup>26</sup> Broeg, “Stadium a Hot Item Without Gas.”

<sup>27</sup> Broeg, “Stadium a Hot Item Without Gas.”

<sup>28</sup> Angell, “Two Strikes on the Image,” 103.

<sup>29</sup> St. Augustine Catholic Church, organized in 1874, was constructed in the late 1800s to serve the area’s population of German Catholics. Central High School, originally James E. Yeatman High School, opened in Sep 1904. Bethlehem Lutheran Church, organized in 1849, opened in 1895. Mount Moriah Masonic Hall opened in 1903. Much of the neighborhood details come from “History of St. Louis Neighborhoods,” written by Norbury Wayman, a city planner, architect, and historian, for the St. Louis Community Development Agency in the 1970s. <http://stlouis.missouri.org/neighborhoods/history/index.htm> (accessed February 5, 2010).

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<sup>30</sup> “Pictorial St. Louis, the great metropolis of the Mississippi valley; a topographical survey drawn in perspective A.D. 1875,” map, American Memory, Map Collections, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4164sm.gpm00001> (accessed February 5, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Jon David Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs, Volume I: The National League*, ed. Steven A. Riess (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 401-02. Michael Gershman, *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 402.

<sup>33</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 402.

<sup>34</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 402.

<sup>35</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 405-07.

<sup>37</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 407-08.

<sup>38</sup> Ronald M. Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era: A Comprehensive Study of Their Dimensions, Configurations and Effects on Batting, 1901-1919* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 157-58.

<sup>39</sup> John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 106-7.

<sup>40</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 408-09.

<sup>41</sup> Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of All 271 Major League and Negro League Ballparks Past and Present* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1992), 228.

<sup>42</sup> Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era*, 152-56. Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 409-12. Upon moving into Sportsman’s Park, the club sold wooden League Park to the Board of Education, then invested the \$275,000 in the development of a farm system—a stroke of genius from the mind of vice president Branch Rickey, who would later sign Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers, desegregating the major leagues in 1947. Traditionally, major-league clubs bought talent from independent minor-league teams, competing against one another at auction. The Cardinals struggled to compete with wealthier teams on these grounds. In an effort to develop talent at low costs, the club bought interests in minor-league clubs (or developed working agreements with them in exchange for financial support); it then signed young, unproven, but promising players, and assigned those players to the Cardinals’ minor-league affiliates. As players developed, they were promoted to higher-classification teams: for example, from Fort Smith of the Western Association to Houston in the Texas League. By 1926, this strategy started to pay dividends, as the Cardinals won a pennant, outdrew the Browns, and began solidifying themselves as the city’s favored team. The club continued to invest in its farm system, which eventually peaked at thirty-two teams and made the Cardinals perennial contenders, winning nine NL pennants and six World Series championships between 1926 and 1946.

<sup>43</sup> William A. Borst, “Baltimore Orioles,” *Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs, Volume I: The National League*, ed. Steven A. Riess (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 468.

<sup>44</sup> Borst, “Baltimore Orioles,” 475.

<sup>45</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 421.

<sup>46</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 421.



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<sup>47</sup> Claire Smith, “Color Issue Reaches People in Seats,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1997. For evidence of Dodgers support in St. Louis see Roscoe McGowen, “Brooks Take 8<sup>th</sup> in Row, 7 to 2; Triple Play for St. Louis in 1<sup>st</sup>,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1949. Roscoe McGowen, “Brooks’ Roe Takes Night Contest, 2-0,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1949. Roscoe McGowen, “Dodgers Break Even With Cardinals, Stay Game and Half Out of First Place,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1949.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Benson, *Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Reference to Baseball Grounds, Yards and Stadiums, 1845 to Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1989), 349.

<sup>49</sup> Though none of these players would last the entire season with the Browns—struggling at bat and, no doubt, with the trying racist environment—the thirty-six-year-old Brown would ultimately be voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Thompson would join the New York Giants in 1949 and won the 1954 World Series there.

<sup>50</sup> Borst, “Baltimore Orioles,” 475.

<sup>51</sup> Benjamin G. Rader, *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Gaedel was given number 1/8. Detroit pitcher Bob Cain was laughing so hard by the third pitch that he could barely throw it. Arthur Daley, “Sports of the Times: The Poor Relation,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1966. The strike zone in 1951 would have been “that space over home plate which is between the batter’s armpits and the top of his knees when he assumes his natural stance.” See “The Strike Zone: A historical timeline,” [http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official\\_info/umpires/strike\\_zone.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/umpires/strike_zone.jsp) (accessed February 2, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 421-22.

<sup>54</sup> Neal Russo, “The Grand Years: Personalities and Pennants,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>55</sup> Cash, “St. Louis Cardinals,” 423.

<sup>56</sup> Louis Effrat, “Whatever Hilda Wants Hilda Gets in Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1955. “Woman Rooter Takes Her Baseball Seriously,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1938.

<sup>57</sup> Angell, “Two Strikes on the Image,” 95-108.

<sup>58</sup> Angell, “Two Strikes on the Image,” 105.

<sup>59</sup> “Cardinals’ Park Oldest in Majors,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 1958. Jerry Rombach, “Sport Scope,” *The Southeast Missourian*, May 22, 1962.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 186.

<sup>61</sup> Barry Checkoway, “Revitalizing an Urban Neighborhood: A St. Louis Case Study,” in *The Metropolitan Midwest: Policy Problems and Prospects For Change*, eds. Barry Checkoway and Carl V. Patton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 245.

<sup>62</sup> “Desire Breeds Success: Armstrong’s Living Proof,” *Spartanburg Herald* (Spartanburg, SC), December 13, 1968.

<sup>63</sup> Walter Rugaber, “Housing Equality Hits a Raw Nerve,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1966.

<sup>64</sup> Eric Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution of an American Urban Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 234.

<sup>65</sup> United States Census Bureau, “State and County QuickFacts,” <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html> (accessed February 5, 2010).

- <sup>66</sup> James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 476, 479.
- <sup>67</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 8. Jon C. Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 114.
- <sup>68</sup> From UVA historical census browser. 1970 stats are from United States Department of Commerce, "Census Tracts, St. Louis, Mo.-Ill., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area," 1970 Census of Population and Housing, [http://mulibraries.missouri.edu/collections/documents/mo/hist\\_stat.htm#1970s](http://mulibraries.missouri.edu/collections/documents/mo/hist_stat.htm#1970s) (accessed Feb. 5, 2010)
- <sup>69</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 481.
- <sup>70</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 69.
- <sup>71</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 71.
- <sup>72</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 86.
- <sup>73</sup> Checkoway, "Revitalizing an Urban Neighborhood," 245. Roger Montgomery, "Pruitt-Igoe: Policy Failure or Societal Symptom," in *The Metropolitan Midwest: Policy Problems and Prospects For Change*, eds. Barry Checkoway and Carl V. Patton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 229.
- <sup>74</sup> Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City*, 121.
- <sup>75</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 153.
- <sup>76</sup> George Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development: A Tale of Three Cities," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 8:2 (1984): 3.
- <sup>77</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 465.
- <sup>78</sup> Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development," 4.
- <sup>79</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 156.
- <sup>80</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 157.
- <sup>81</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 162.
- <sup>82</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 162-63.
- <sup>83</sup> Practically speaking, a private development proposal identified a parcel of land for redevelopment. Investors worked with the city to have the area designated as blighted and to authorize an urban redevelopment corporation (URC) that would redevelop the land. The Board of Aldermen would declare the area "blighted," using Chapter 353, Chapter 99, or both. Chapter 353 was generally used for single projects or buildings; an URC formed under Chapter 353 used the city's power of eminent domain to have properties blighted. Chapter 353 URCs could also buy, sell, hold, and lease property provided that the investors limited profits to eight percent of overall project costs. Chapter 99 was used for larger projects; a Chapter 99 Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority (LCRA) used federal funds to acquire and clear the plot.
- Land acquisition and development defined as a "public purpose" carried the added benefit of tax abatement. Chapter 99 land became city property, and was thus removed from the tax rolls. The LCRA could both clear the land for redevelopment and significantly improve it before selling the title to a private developer or URC. Chapter 353 gave URCs a sliding twenty-five-year property tax abatement on land redeveloped within an urban renewal area. For the first ten years, the property was assessed and taxed at its value before being designated as "blighted." For the following fifteen years, it was assessed and taxed at just half of its improved value. Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 163-64.

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<sup>84</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 467.

<sup>85</sup> Historian James Neal Primm claimed that the city's primarily black wards voted 15,243 to 878 in favor of slum clearance, even knowing that they would be displaced by that clearance. Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 467. However, for a city that was home to 153,766 black residents in 1950 and 214,377 by 1960, this seems only a partial portrait.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 167-68. Gordon puts the figure at twenty thousand, Lipsitz at thirty thousand. Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development," 4.

<sup>88</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 167. Plans to get affluent suburbanites to relocate downtown failed. Mansion House Apartments would be burdened by low occupancy. It was the last attempt to cultivate upscale downtown living for many years. By most accounts, however, non-residential downtown developments flourished.

<sup>88</sup> Though the Gateway Arch wouldn't be completed until the mid-1960s, the competition for the memorial was conducted in 1947-48. Suggestions for the memorial, like Dickmann's stadium, preceded that.

<sup>89</sup> Carl R. Baldwin, "Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>90</sup> "Proposed County Stadium," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, no date. Box 94-274/19. Robert J. Minchew Houston Astrodome Architectural and Engineering Collection, 1958-1967, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>91</sup> Baldwin. "Chance to Build a Dream," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 12, 1958. For an image of the structure, see "Studying Sketch of Proposed Stadium," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 10, 1958.

<sup>92</sup> "Stadium a Part of \$80,935,000 Downtown Plan Ok'd by C. of C.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1959.

<sup>93</sup> Baldwin, "Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men."

<sup>94</sup> "Bid to Declare Stadium Site Blighted Meets Hot Opposition," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 27, 1960.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 168.

<sup>96</sup> Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development," 5.

<sup>97</sup> "Stadium Design Unveiled; Wins Backers' Praise," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 12, 1963.

Baldwin, "Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men."

<sup>98</sup> Brian Burnes, Dan Viets, and Robert W. Butler, *Walt Disney's Missouri: The Roots of a Creative Genius* (Kansas City: Kansas City Star Books, 2002), 142.

<sup>99</sup> Burnes et al., *Walt Disney's Missouri*, 150.

<sup>100</sup> Burnes et al., *Walt Disney's Missouri*, 151. John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit In the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998), 47-48. Peter Bart, "Walt Disney Eyes a 2D Disneyland," *New York Times*, July 3, 1964. "2<sup>nd</sup> Disneyland Proposal Refused," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1965.

<sup>101</sup> The proposed Disneyland site was filled by the Spanish Pavilion. While celebrated at the fair, the Pavilion would largely be seen as an economic failure in St. Louis.

<sup>102</sup> The newness of the stadium accentuated the aged condition of the area around it, putting pressure on city officials to broaden downtown redevelopment. The area was designated blighted, block-by-block, into the late 1960s. This enabled the development of a series of office towers north of the stadium. All of downtown (river west to Twelfth St, Chouteau to Cole) was declared blighted under Chapter 353 in 1971, as officials grew weary of the tedious

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block-by-block blight approach. Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 168.

<sup>103</sup> Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development," 4.

<sup>104</sup> Lipsitz, "Sports Stadia and Urban Development," 5.

<sup>105</sup> Huxtable said of the planned Disneyland development in 1964: "it will recreate in full, phony audio-animatronic riverboat glory just those local features that the city has destroyed." Ada Louise Huxtable, "St. Louis and the Crisis of American Cities," *New York Times*, June 28, 1964.

<sup>106</sup> Huxtable, "St. Louis Success."

<sup>107</sup> "Dodgers Study Possibility of Dome-Covered Stadium," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1955.

"Friend Triumphs On Six-Hitter, 9-1," *New York Times*, September 30, 1957. Robert Creamer, "The Quaint Cult of the Mets," *Sports Illustrated*, May 6, 1963. Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: With Proper Finality," *New York Times*, September 18, 1963. John Hall, "Tale of Two Cities Tells Baseball Trend," *Los Angeles Times*, October 7, 1967. Arthur Daley, "Sports of The Times: Waiting for the Stars," *New York Times*, July 14, 1970.

<sup>108</sup> Creamer, "The Quaint Cult of the Mets." Hall, "Tale of Two Cities."

<sup>109</sup> "Cardinals Seek Sportsman's Park, Offering to Pay \$700,000 'or More,'" *New York Times*, December 2, 1947. Neal Russo, "The Grand Years: Personalities and Pennants," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966. Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: The Poor Relation," *New York Times*, May 31, 1966. Jack Hand, "Baseball Begins With New Look," *Washington Post*, April 10, 1966. Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: Passing of a Landmark," *New York Times*, May 30, 1966. Neal Russo, "Million Memories—They're All That's Left in Cards' Old Park," *The Sporting News*, May 21, 1966, 25. "Defeat Sours Nostalgia, But Cards Had Moments," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 9, 1966. Neal Russo, "Site Near Arch, Stores, Hotels Hailed as Ideal for Ball Fans," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>110</sup> Russo, "Site Near Arch, Stores, Hotels Hailed as Ideal for Ball Fans."

<sup>111</sup> As noted previously, Angell warmly referred to Sportsman's Park as "an old down-on-her-luck dowager" from a settlement house. Angell, "Two Strikes on the Image," 105.

<sup>112</sup> Russo, "The Grand Years: Personalities and Pennants."

<sup>113</sup> Ed Wilks, "100 Years of Baseball End at Old Park," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 9, 1966.

<sup>114</sup> Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 147. The affiliation of cities and disease has a much longer back-history in the United States. Thomas Jefferson wrote, in his "Notes on the State of Virginia," "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution." Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1781-1782), 291,

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefVirg.html> (accessed March 22, 2010).

<sup>115</sup> "Ground Broken for Downtown Sports Stadium," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 25, 1964.

<sup>116</sup> Donald Janson, "Arch Symbolizes St. Louis Revival," *New York Times*, August 4, 1963.

<sup>117</sup> "Stadium Symbolizes City's Rebirth," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>118</sup> Busch Memorial Stadium Special Supplement advertisement, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 1, 1966. Baldwin, "Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men." "Sunday Pictures," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

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- <sup>119</sup> Jean M. White, “St. Louis Is Gracefully Dwarfing All High-Rises,” *Washington Post*, March 28, 1965.
- <sup>120</sup> Janson, “Arch Symbolizes St. Louis Revival.”
- <sup>121</sup> Maggie Bellows, “Two Cities Kick Up Heels in Missouri,” *St. Petersburg Times*, April 20, 1967.
- <sup>122</sup> Huxtable, “St. Louis and the Crisis of American Cities.”
- <sup>123</sup> *The World Champions: St. Louis Cardinals Yearbook 1965*, 1965, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>124</sup> *St. Louis Cardinals 1966 Souvenir Yearbook*, 1966, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>125</sup> For an example, see Advertisement for Mississippi River Transmission Corporation, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.
- <sup>126</sup> For an example, see Busch Memorial Stadium Special Supplement advertisement, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 1, 1966.
- <sup>127</sup> Advertisement for Anheuser-Busch, Inc., *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.
- <sup>128</sup> “Stadium Design Unveiled; Wins Backers’ Praise,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 12, 1963.
- <sup>129</sup> “Brilliant and Harmonious,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 13, 1963.
- <sup>130</sup> Baldwin, “Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men.”
- <sup>131</sup> Smith figured this was done to ventilate the stadium during hot St. Louis summers—a precaution not taken in Washington’s D. C. Stadium, making Busch superior. Red Smith, “Stadium Isn’t Pipe Dream.” If that was the case, the feature wasn’t particularly effective. When asked what he thought of the stadium by a young St. Louis writer, proud of the new stadium, Casey Stengel responded, “It holds the heat very well.” Daley, “Sports of The Times: Waiting for the Stars.”
- <sup>132</sup> “Sunday Pictures.
- <sup>133</sup> Leeming, Jr., “46,048 Attend First Game in New Stadium.”
- <sup>134</sup> Baldwin, “Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men.”
- <sup>135</sup> Leonard Koppett, *The New York Mets: The Whole Story* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 96. Angell, “Two Strikes on the Image,” 177.
- <sup>136</sup> Peter Golenbock, *The Spirit of St. Louis: A History of the St. Louis Cardinals and Browns* (New York: Avon Books, Inc., 2000), 77.
- <sup>137</sup> “Gashouse Full of Memories,” *Sports Illustrated*, May 9, 1966, 28-29.
- <sup>138</sup> “Ground Broken for Downtown Sports Stadium.”
- <sup>139</sup> Advertisement for Mississippi Valley Barge Line Company, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.
- <sup>140</sup> Advertisement for First National Bank in St. Louis and St. Louis Union Trust Company, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.
- <sup>141</sup> “Studying Sketch of Proposed Stadium,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 10, 1958.
- <sup>142</sup> Baldwin, “Public Apathy, Other Barriers Surmounted by Dedicated Men.”
- <sup>143</sup> Advertisement for Anheuser-Busch, Inc., *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.
- <sup>144</sup> George Fuermann, *Houston: The Feast Years* (Houston: Premier Printing Company, 1962), 24.
- <sup>145</sup> Technically, the Arch was a catenary, not a parabola. Many, however, mistook the shape for a parabola—a form with a broader cultural resonance.

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas Hine, *Populuxe: The Look and Life of America in the '50s and '60s, from Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 116.

<sup>147</sup> White, "St. Louis Is Gracefully Dwarfing All High-Rises."

<sup>148</sup> *The World Champions: St. Louis Cardinals Yearbook 1965*.

<sup>149</sup> Daley, "Sports of the Times: Passing of a Landmark."

<sup>150</sup> "Gashouse Full of Memories." Russo, "The Grand Years: Personalities and Pennants." Wilks, "100 Years of Baseball End at Old Park."

<sup>151</sup> Milton Bracker, "Souvenir-Hunting Followers of Baseball club Rip Up Polo Grounds After Team Is Defeated There in Its Final Game," *New York Times*, September 30, 1957. Eugene Bryerton, "Traffic Snarl Fails to Develop at New Stadium," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 9, 1966. Wilks, "100 Years of Baseball End at Old Park." Benson, *Ballparks of North America*, 349.

<sup>152</sup> "Goodby to Old Stadium, Hello to New Today," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 8, 1966.

<sup>153</sup> For a handful of examples of this line of critique see Angell, "Two Strikes Against the Image." Will Grimsley, "Being Big Business a Fact Baseball Today Must Face," *Eugene Register-Guard*, September 13, 1964. Robert Lipsyte, "An Image in Concrete," *New York Times*, July 7, 1963. George Vass, "New Parks Have Symmetry; Old Ones Had Color," *Baseball Digest*, May 1967, 77-84.

<sup>154</sup> Golenbock, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, 476-77.

<sup>155</sup> Hall, "Tale of Two Cities Tells Baseball Trend."

<sup>156</sup> Huxtable, "St. Louis Success." Its impact on the area a decade later was "dramatic," according to real estate consultants—spurring the development of major offices, hotels, restaurants, and other entertainment. Real Estate Research Corporation, *The Stadium Industry and Its Economic and Related Impacts*, 1978, S-7.

Chapter Five  
**The artificial stadium**

Billie Jean King, the world's top-ranked women's tennis player, arrived at the Houston Astrodome on September 20, 1973 to play a match that historian Bruce Schulman would later say "signaled the arrival of the women's movement as a broad cultural force."<sup>1</sup> For just about any other match, King would walk out from the locker room to the court; on this day, she rode in on a gold divan born by four bare-chested men in armbands. This was clearly not the typical match, and her rival—a fifty-five-year-old former Wimbledon champion named Bobby Riggs—was not her typical opponent. Riggs arrived in a rickshaw pulled by five snugly outfitted women he called, with reason, the "bosom buddies." Divan and rickshaw passed by costumed characters from the nearby AstroWorld theme park; elegant women in evening dresses; men in front-row seats, wearing suits and holding signs with messages like "Whiskey, Women and Riggs" and "Who needs women?"; an eclectic mix of celebrities, including artist Salvador Dalí, singer Glenn Campbell, actress Janet Leigh, and football legend Jim Brown; and thirty thousand fans, many holding large banners that conspicuously distinguished the atmosphere of this match from most of the sport's country-club affairs.<sup>2</sup>

The match was certainly among the great spectacles of American sports history, a made-for-television event splattered across front pages of newspapers and magazine covers across the country. What was dubbed the "Battle of the Sexes," was actually a sequel; Riggs had crushed Australian Margaret Court on Mother's Day earlier that year, keeping the powerful player off-balance through his pallet of junk shots and gamesmanship. Court seemed unnerved by both, confirming many people's suspicions that women couldn't handle pressure without breaking down. Though the Court-Riggs match had attracted only a small

crowd, its television ratings caught the attention of Roone Arledge, the head of ABC Sports. Arledge, ever the opportunist, hoped to air another Riggs match on ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. He got his wish when King, who had previously resisted Riggs's taunts, then agreed to play him, rightly grasping the symbolic value a victory might have for the future of girls' and women's athletics and gender relations more fully. ABC paid promoters over seven hundred thousand dollars for broadcast rights and collected over one million in advertising fees. The stage was the famous Astrodome, and promoters there produced the event in the finest Hofheinzian tradition. A reporter called the publicity "almost suffocating."<sup>3</sup> The heavily sponsored match was broadcast to a television audience of more than forty-eight million, in thirty-six foreign countries. Three hundred reporters covered the event.<sup>4</sup>

Print coverage of the occasion largely focused on its theatricality. A writer for *Time* claimed it had a "P.T. Barnum air" and was "pumped up with enough hot air and hard dollars to start a respectable Balkan war." The opening ceremonies, he claimed, "seemed to herald a match between Genghis Khan and Catherine of Russia." It was "a production worthy of Barnum," wrote Curry Kirkpatrick of *Sports Illustrated*. The match "should have been directed by Fellini and scored by Handel," he quipped; it "took on all the conflicting tones of a political convention, championship prizefight, rock festival, tent revival, town meeting, Super Bowl and sick joke." The *New York Times*'s Neil Amdur said the atmosphere was "more suited for a circus than a sports event," with "the flourish of something out of a Cecil B. DeMille movie." Charles Maher of the *Los Angeles Times* called it "the most ambitious, hyperbolic promotion conceived on this continent since Barnum bumped into Bailey."<sup>5</sup>



Beyond the match's fundamental theatricality—which everyone seemed to agree on—the result—King's straight set drubbing of an outclassed Riggs—was interpreted in multiple ways.<sup>6</sup> *Time* recast the match as a referendum on age rather than sex: “The putative Battle of the Sexes turned out to be one more sorry chapter in the story of the ancient struggle between sclerotic age and limber youth.”<sup>7</sup> Some dismissed the event as mere show business. Maher branded it “a harmless match, really, if you don't buy the preposterous proposition that it made a serious statement about the worth of women or men, athletically or otherwise.”<sup>8</sup> Gladys Heldman, the founder of the women's professional tour, asked reporters before the match, “What do we get if Billie Jean wins, 30 Senators?”<sup>9</sup> But many found the match more telling. “Mrs. Billie Jean King struck a proud blow for herself and women around the world,” Amdur wrote on the front page of the *New York Times*. “Most important, perhaps for women everywhere,” he claimed, “she convinced skeptics that a female athlete can survive pressure-filled situations and that men are as susceptible to nerves as women.”<sup>10</sup> After the match, King described the win as a turning point in women's sports and called it the apex of her career.<sup>11</sup> Senator Hugh Scott, a Republican from Pennsylvania, said that King had “ratified the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment” through her victory, assuring passage of the proposed (and ultimately defeated) Equal Rights Amendment that would ban discrimination based on sex.<sup>12</sup>

Some observers were conflicted themselves, not sure what to make of it. Curry Kirkpatrick delivered an ambivalent verdict in *Sports Illustrated* that surely captured the moment for many watching a spectacle overburdened by the sexual politics of the time. His accounting of the match moved beyond the atmosphere to the playing itself, “a dazzling clinical exhibition of tennis by Billie Jean,” which in its descriptiveness legitimized the event

as sport. King was, in his estimation, the redeeming quality of the entire episode. “Because of Billie Jean alone,” he wrote, “who was representing a sex supposedly unequipped for such things, what began as a huckster’s hustle in defiance of serious athleticism ended up not mocking the game of tennis but honoring it. This night King was both a shining piece of show biz and the essence of what sport is all about.” Of the match’s broader implications, however, Kirkpatrick was dismissive, writing

Since Matches of the Century or Battles of the Sexes only come around every four months or so, it is necessary to get a fix on this one quickly. This one is easy. The fact that Billie Jean thrashed Bobby no more means that women are bolder, stronger and more likely to become a different type of creature now than Riggs’ massacre of Margaret Court on Mother’s Day meant that they were enfeebled and representative of the earth’s inadequate.

But even while passing the event off as just another over-hyped “Match of the Century” in a long string of inflated sports-television spectacles, Kirkpatrick succumbed to the powerful symbolism of the event as he concluded: “On the third match point—with most of the women jumping up and down in glee, most of the men morose and silent... an eerie wail came from out of the crowd. ‘Close him out, Sissy. Close him out.’ Billie Jean Moffitt King did. Sissy closed all the pigs out.”<sup>13</sup>

The “Battle of the Sexes” would come to signify in shorthand a broader grass-roots movement in women’s sport. King would be the face of that movement, which overlapped with a feminist agenda asserting women’s rights to control and enjoy their own bodies.<sup>14</sup> But this event also suggested the state of big-time sports in the 1970s. Sports became out-and-out show business, both in the stadium and on television. The game itself was often secondary to the circumstances about it—shiny objects that competed with sports performances, crowding them out, so that sports as entertainment was often just sports-themed entertainment. For those who looked to sport for something *more* than mere

entertainment, they found it had lost much of its transcendental capacities. Though today the Battle of the Sexes is largely remembered as an iconic social moment, an expression of the women's movement and a repudiation of masculinist chauvinism, this symbolism was somewhat occluded at the time by its carnivalesque production. It was an event both deeply meaningful and completely meaningless, a sporting event that, for many, had as much to do with sport as the kiss that King and Riggs shared—at the insistence of photographers—after the match.<sup>15</sup>

As an event, the Battle of the Sexes expressed an artificiality characteristic of stadiums and sport in the 1970s, exemplified in the materiality of the stadiums and the production of entertainment within them. Other keen observers have pointed to the artifice of the modern era in sport. Historian David Voigt wrote of the “plastic style” of baseball between the 1950s and 1970s. Cultural historian Michael Oriard called the post-Astrodome period “the synthetic era of American sport.” In each case, “plastic” and “synthetic” referenced the heavy use of synthetic materials in the new stadiums as well as the pliability and shifting presentation of sports within them.<sup>16</sup> But the best descriptor of the modern stadium, particularly as its form cohered through repeated execution in the 1970s, was another term used frequently by Oriard and other commentators at the time: “artificial.” This is a term of great range and suggestion.<sup>17</sup> When morally neutral, “artificial” refers to something human-made, often a product of scientific and technical expertise. It is a substitute for the natural, or an improvement upon it, an intervention for something that does not occur naturally. But the word can also bear quite negative connotations, as something unnatural, something pretentious, something cunningly deceptive, or something inauthentic.

This texture of meanings is appropriate to the modern stadium of the 1970s. It speaks to the modernization, standardization, and routinization of stadium space. It evokes the battle with, and celebrated improvement on, nature being conducted through the stadium, where “natural” materials (like grass) and traditional ones (like brick, steel, and reinforced concrete) were replaced by synthetics. It addresses the artificiality of stadium experience, in which extra-curricular amenities and entertainments were installed around (and competed with) the games on the field—a brand of artificiality replicated through the medium of television. Just as natural materials were replaced with artificial ones, so too were “naturalized” ways of staging and experiencing sport replaced with “artificial” ones—these extraneous entertainments and activities.

This chapter examines the stadium of the 1970s, particularly in its tendency to artificially replace the natural and the naturalized. These stadiums typically extended the modernist spirit of the 1950s and 1960s as far as it would go. The new stadiums were almost always enclosed around the outside, sealing off their contexts, and increasingly roofed as well. They replaced wooden seats with plastic ones and natural grass with synthetic turf.<sup>18</sup> The result was a desultory placelessness, exemplified in the pejorative “cookie cutter” descriptor often applied to them. The cookie-cutter modern stadium would become sport’s version of Pruitt-Igoe—failures born of a cold and calculating modernism that stripped built environments of their humanity, personality, and pleasure.<sup>19</sup>

The artificiality of the stadium form was paired with an artificiality of experience within, as the promotional ethos of the Astrodome was adopted and amplified across the sports landscape. This chapter explores in detail the expansion of this approach. Elaborate scoreboards and in-stadium television screens, stadium clubs and restaurants, elaborate

luxury suites, and a new brand of sexually charged femininity created a stadium culture that for many was less about sports on the field than sports-themed entertainment. Many commentators lamented this “demythologization” and “secularization” of sport that degraded traditional and even mythic cultural practices. These interpretations were common by the late 1970s, and almost always connected the degradation of sport to the stadium and the production of entertainment within. The anxieties about sport, indelibly linked to the stadium and its virtual big brother, television, were more fully revealed in traditionalist jeremiads (particularly, though not solely, amongst baseball purists). The celebration of a pre-modern, pre-placeless, pre-artificial stadium—often expressed through affection for the existing examples of that form, most often Boston’s Fenway Park and Chicago’s Wrigley Field—would ultimately be materially realized in the retro ballpark of the 1990s. These new parks—and they *were* called “parks” and “fields,” pastoral terms to distinguish them from imperial, Romanesque “stadiums”—signified authenticity and tradition, a direct rebuttal to the artificiality of the 1970s modern stadium and the seemingly broader artificiality of modern American life.

**“They are no longer parks but machines for sports”:  
enclosure, symmetry, synthetics, and replication**

Pittsburgh Pirates third baseman Richie Hebner remarked of the so-called cookie-cutter stadiums: “I stand at the plate in Philadelphia and I don’t honestly know whether I’m in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, or Philly. They all look alike.”<sup>20</sup> The environmental monotony of the modern stadium reproduced that of a wider modern urban landscape. Geographer Edward Relph has argued that throughout the twentieth century, built environments from city-to-city and country-to-country became increasingly indistinguishable

as new building technologies and practices were widely dispersed via exposure and accelerated communications. Designers became increasingly self-conscious as well, calculating everything, making the modern landscape wholly “rationalised and artificial.” Internationalism and selfconsciousness thus squeezed out most traditional and regional distinction from modern landscapes.<sup>21</sup>

The monotony of the modern stadium became particularly identifiable by the early 1970s, as designers and engineers increasingly applied the same schemes in different places. Stadium architect James Finch noted this phenomenon in 1971: “The current rash of stadiums is typical of the cycles architecture goes through. They are generated by developers; what goes well in one place is assumed to go well in another.”<sup>22</sup> Similarity derived from a considerable overlap of expertise as stadiums were built in city after city. Emil Praeger—who had worked in concert with Norman Bel Geddes on the stadium publicly presented in *Collier's* in 1952—and his firm, Praeger-Kavanaugh-Waterbury, were heavily involved in a number of stadiums. They designed Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles (opened in 1962) and Shea Stadium (1964) and worked on the modernization of Yankee Stadium (completed in 1976). The firm teamed with two others on the Seattle Kingdome (1976), and consulted on the District of Columbia Stadium (1961) and the Astrodome (1965). The Osborn Company designed the D.C. Stadium and worked with two Pittsburgh firms on Three Rivers Stadium (1970). Osborn’s project manager at D.C. Stadium, Noble Herzog, designed Anaheim Stadium (1966). Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium (1966), Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium (1970), and Buffalo’s Rich Stadium (1973) were designed by Atlanta’s Finch and Heery. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill produced the Oakland-Alameda County Stadium (1966) and the Minneapolis Metrodome (1982). Kivett and Myers designed Kansas City’s Arrowhead Stadium (1972) and

Royals Stadium (1973), and also worked on New Jersey's Meadowlands complex (1976). The contractor for D.C. Stadium and Philadelphia's Veterans Stadium (1971) was McCloskey & Company. Huber, Hunt & Nichols, Inc. was the contractor for Riverfront Stadium, Three Rivers Stadium, and the Louisiana Superdome (1975). With such considerable cross-pollination, it is no wonder that stadiums increasingly resembled one another.

The modern stadiums of the 1970s largely took on one of two modernist idioms prevalent throughout the urban landscape. One was the "concrete cage," a style vaguely derivative of Le Corbusier and used in office buildings across the country. In these structures, a light-colored, poured concrete frame visually dominated the structure; Riverfront Stadium (1970) was a good example of this form. The airy exterior of the concrete cage contrasted with the solid-walled heaviness of the other prominent style. That was a "no frills" modernism—a bastard vernacular of more elite modernist structures that Relph called the "mostly anonymous vernacular architecture of the new industrial state."<sup>23</sup> This approach, more pervasive and perhaps less architecturally "respectable" than Corbusian cages, frequently suggested the forced adaptation of architects and engineers to limited budgets in the midst of an inflationary economic climate. A no-frills style featured simple geometric shapes, plain colors, and largely impenetrable exterior walls. Seattle's Kingdome was such a structure; baseball manager Sparky Anderson said of it, "I walk in there and I'm not sure what I'm in. It's just a big ball of cement. There's no color, no nothing. It seems like a big factory."<sup>24</sup>

In the first modern stadiums—structures like D.C. Stadium, Dodger Stadium, and even Shea stadium—engineered, modernist applications were distinctive. In the 1960s, it seemed as though a modernist style might last for half a millennium. By 1975, however, "There was

hardly anyone left who had a kind word to say about modernism,” according to Relph.<sup>25</sup> In spite of modernist fatigue, American cities continued to build modern stadiums throughout the decade; a reporter for *Time* magazine, writing in 1975, called it a “pharaonic era of sports-stadium construction, in which city after city vies to encapsulate its populace in ever nobler temples and vaster domes.”<sup>26</sup> Lack of imagination from designers, conservatism amongst civic leaders, and a restrictive economic environment all likely contributed to the monotony of the stadium landscape.

Everyone seemed to be building and the distinctions between those buildings were less evident with each new structure. The modern stadiums of the 1960s, in part by virtue of coming at the front of the trend, were more distinctive than their predecessors. They often featured breaks in the stands, allowing views outside the stadium—views that distinguished one from the other and established a connection between stadium and contexts. Candlestick Park in San Francisco looked out over the bay to Hunter’s Point, Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles across the rough hills of Chavez Ravine, and Shea Stadium over the uneven terrain of Flushing. Anaheim Stadium, San Diego Stadium, and Oakland-Alameda County Stadium each open structures, providing different stadium vistas. Conversely, D.C. Stadium, the Astrodome, Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, and Busch Stadium were all enclosed—prototypes for the enclosed stadiums of the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> Three Rivers Stadium, Riverfront Stadium, and Veterans Stadium were all circular and enclosed. Candlestick Park, originally an open baseball stadium, was enclosed to make it more football-friendly in 1972, as was Anaheim Stadium in 1980. Texas Stadium in Irving (opened in 1971) was enclosed and almost wholly roofed. Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City (1972) and Giants Stadium in the New Jersey Meadowlands (1976) were enclosed. The Louisiana Superdome (1975), the



Kingdome (1976), and the Metrodome in Minneapolis (1982) were all enclosed and domed structures. Schaefer Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts (1971) and Rich Stadium in Buffalo (1973)—both Spartan structures located outside of the city—were largely enclosed stadiums, surrounded on four sides by stands that provided only minimal glimpses of the environmental contexts.

Stadium enclosure was disorienting, as one side of the circle seemed indistinguishable from the others. The monotonous regularity of the stands was echoed in the overwhelming symmetry of baseball's outfield dimensions. In the older parks, of course, the fields were all different, making the game subtly different depending on its venue. However, of the modern stadiums used for baseball and built between 1962 and 1973, all had even dimensions, all had center fields between 400 and 414 feet, and all had foul-pole distances between 329 and 338 feet.<sup>28</sup> Though the football gridiron had long been standard from stadium to stadium, its layout within each old grounds was not, as it was wedged into parks designed for baseball and flanked by temporary banks of stands. This made for a variety of vistas, depending on the seat of the fan. Not so in the modern stadium; for both baseball and football the contexts were increasingly mundane, defined by multiple tiers of brightly colored plastic seats and symmetrical fields. Of the new stadiums in the 1970s, only Royals Stadium (1973)—a baseball-specific park located six miles southeast of downtown Kansas City—was open-ended, facing a verdant hill on the city's outskirts.

The grassy hill beyond the reaches of the Royals Stadium outfield was, for stadium occupants, the only grass in sight; the playing field was covered with synthetic turf. In fact, that suburban Missouri grass was some of the only real grass seen by any sports fans in the

1970s, as stadium after stadium, new and old, installed synthetic grass. The idea of using artificial grass in a stadium stretched well back, at least to Bel Geddes's proposed stadium for Brooklyn. In the notes he prepared for the *Collier's* article, Bel Geddes wrote: "It is more than possible that synthetic material will replace grass as well as base paths. Turf is the most difficult feature of keeping a playing field in condition and its most variable factor for the player. The new material will have equal characteristics, require no seeding or mowing, watering or rolling."<sup>29</sup> Bel Geddes's vision of a synthetic surface stemmed from its ease of maintenance and its predictability as a playing field (making it a more just measure of player performance). Its use in Houston, though pitched as just another of the Astrodome's marvelous innovations, would derive from necessity.

The Astrodome opened in 1965 with a roof consisting of a lamella frame filled in with translucent Lucite panels—an arrangement that would allow the growth of real grass on the playing field below. It quickly became apparent that during day games the panels amplified daylight rather than diffused it, making it nearly impossible to see baseballs hit with a high trajectory. This design error was fodder for newspaper and magazine stories, particularly those who found the hubris of Astrodome patron Roy Hofheinz off-putting. A story in *Life* painted a farcical scene; the reporter remarked, "The Astrodome is a wonder all right. Neither rain, snow nor sleet will stop ball games in it—just sunshine."<sup>30</sup> When Hofheinz boasted, "The Eiffel Tower is all right, but you can't play ball there," a writer for *Time* quipped, "Well, they can't in the Astrodome either—in daytime, anyway."<sup>31</sup>

Hofheinz and the Houston Sports Association responded to the problem short-term by painting over the panels. This, of course, killed the natural grass inside. During his visit in May 1966, Roger Angell compared the outfield to "any Westchester back yard after a five-

year drought.” The long-term solution, begun in 1966, was the installation of an artificial playing surface. The infield, which had already been covered with AstroTurf during Angell’s visit, was “more the shade of a billiard table than a lawn,” as he described it.<sup>32</sup>

The artificiality of the grass marked a symbolic final severance with the natural world in the dome. The HSA pitched it as both domestic, a “beautiful, bright green carpeting” that would be cleaned with vacuums, and scientific, an “engineered surface” that was “painstakingly tested” by Chemstrand, a division of Monsanto Chemical Company. For Hofheinz, the future prospects for artificial grass were just another reason to celebrate his dome: “Everything about the Astrodome is unparalleled and trail-blazing. We feel the addition of this new playing surface, a product of chemistry, not only enhances our own facilities here, but should also launch a new and wondrous era in recreational engineering. The Astrodome is honored to be the original site of this extraordinary experiment.” Manager Grady Hatton toed the company line as well, framing the stadium’s artifice as a victory for fairness and a predictability that would ensure the meritocratic nature of sport. He told stadium visitors, “This puts the icing on the cake. The Astrodome now becomes a real Utopia for baseball. No wind, no sun, no rain, no heat, no cold, and now no bad bounces.”<sup>33</sup>

The opaque roof forced the Astrodome to adopt a synthetic field, but by the late 1960s artificial turf was also being used in many open-air stadiums and planned for many more. Bud Wilkinson, legendary football coach at the University of Oklahoma and lead color analyst for ABC’s college football telecasts, promised, “Artificial fields are the fields of the future.” In a statement that would have put a smile on Hofheinz’s face, William Johnson of *Sports Illustrated* suggested in 1969 that in the near future, “the natural conditions governing football will have passed from the hand of God into the rubber glove of the chemist.”<sup>34</sup>

There were no more than a dozen artificial fields around the country in 1969, but it was clear there soon would be many more. Major universities like Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, and Iowa were installing it in their football stadiums; cities like Cincinnati, New Orleans, and St. Louis were planning it for their municipal stadiums. The spread of artificial turf across the sports landscape was led by a combination of the purchasing power of university football programs and the salesmanship of the product's two major producers—Monsanto, which made AstroTurf, and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M), which designed Tartan Turf. AstroTurf was essentially a removable blanket of bristled, green, nylon tufts, laid atop foamed plastic. Tartan Turf was bonded to the surface below, a permanent, pile surface atop a padded mat.

The financial bottom line, unsurprisingly, drove this trend. The surfaces were relatively expensive, requiring about two hundred thousand dollars for a football field. However, after an initial costly investment, the field was much more durable and inexpensive than a natural one in maintenance. Artificial turfs could be used much more frequently than delicate grass surfaces—an advantage at a time of multi-purpose stadiums used not only for football and baseball, but mass revivals, music concerts, and circuses.<sup>35</sup>

The primary question about artificial fields was how the surface might impact athletes' bodies. In the late 1960s, many believed the fields would actually cut down on injuries due to their presumably uniform and predictable surfaces, absent grass that might catch cleats, resulting in ankle and knee injuries. Early research presented by 3M and Monsanto, unsurprisingly, found that the artificial surfaces drastically cut down on injuries. Monsanto reported, having surveying 185 schools that had used AstroTurf since 1964, that teams playing on real grass suffered 9.6 ankle or knee injuries each year, compared to just 1.6 on

artificial turf.<sup>36</sup> Such claims would soon be challenged and debunked.<sup>37</sup>

Considering the artificial turf trend broadly, *Sports Illustrated's* Johnson mused,

Perhaps it was inevitable in this, the Synthetic Century. Perhaps we should have been prepared for it in an age when people quite readily embrace plastic wedding bouquets and electric campfires and spray-on suntans. Perhaps the realization should have struck long ago that the grassless gridiron, lush as a rug and flawless as a hotel lobby, is indeed the football field of our time. Yet it is still a shock to face it in stark reality.<sup>38</sup>

*Sports Illustrated* revisited the topic again the following year, this time considering the ramifications for baseball. Like Johnson, writer Peter Carry viewed these developments with some skepticism, bordering on cynicism. He began, “Grass, the old-fashioned, common, green growing stuff, is dying out, a lamentable death wrought of ambiguity and polyester progress.”<sup>39</sup> The installation of artificial fields in major-league baseball stadiums—largely the modern multi-purpose type—was being driven by costs, just as it was on college campuses. Estimates suggested that the installation of an artificial field would pay for itself in maintenance costs in seven years. “Impressive for stockholders or city councilmen but unconvincing to the players,” Carry asserted.<sup>40</sup> Though some players publicly praised turf, or at least didn’t condemn it, Carry’s sampling of player opinion found that most opposed it. A significant problem was the intense heat generated by the fields, which reflected temperatures from their asphalt foundations. Some fields reported temperatures as high as one hundred sixty degrees on the surface. On a ninety-degree day in St. Louis, it was one hundred fourteen degrees six feet above the field. This heat sometimes caused blisters on players’ feet and melted shoe bottoms. The asphalt base was also unforgiving for players’ joints. In that respect, more players favored the cushioned Tartan Turf over AstroTurf, though most preferred natural grass to them both.

The trend towards artificial surfaces was fundamentally driven by economics, though it

also spoke to the ascendancy of football. That game was violent towards natural grass, and at a time when stadiums had to be multipurpose and frequently used in order to be economically self-sustaining (a hurdle rarely cleared, as it turned out), playing surfaces needed to be more durable. The prominence of football—a fully modern game in its rationalized, bureaucratic specialization—was evident on the playing surface, even when it wasn't being used for other purposes. Though gridiron markers were supposed to be washable with detergent and water, their outlines remained, ghostly, even as the fields were used for baseball.

Ideologically, synthetic grass was an obvious next step in the modernization of sports spaces—a process grounded in the elimination of oddities and idiosyncrasies in the name of man-made, multi-purpose functionality. Many claimed that the predictable playing surface improved baseball play, eliminating the odd bounces that sometimes plagued infielders and thus rewarding skill over fortune. This would seem to be the technology's only merit in sporting terms—and it wasn't an inconsequential one at a time when many were calling for the standardization of ballpark dimensions because it made the game more rational and the parks fairer through their consistency.

This was certainly not a universal opinion, however. Writing from a baseball perspective, Carry claimed, “The biggest losers of all in the new ball park of even bounces and inorganic sterility may be the fans.” Baseball, he figured, could not “be readjusted to compete with football's violence or basketball's speed. Its lasting attraction must be its atmosphere of relaxation and naturalness.” For evidence, he pointed to the young, friendly crowds at those traditional baseball-first, natural-grass ballparks, Boston's Fenway Park and Chicago's Wrigley Field. There, he wrote, “The atmosphere is warm, unhurried, occasionally exciting

and generally very healthy.”<sup>41</sup> This complaint—that the stadium had become too artificial—was one increasingly common, particularly from baseball advocates.

Boosters for Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, of course, publicly disagreed. In its final full season on the natural grass at old Forbes Field in 1969, the Pirates prepared supporters for the reality of artificial turf at the new Three Rivers. An article in the Pirates *Yearbook* catalogued the advantages of fake grass often touted by Tartan Turf and AstroTurf advocates, putting forth an official pitch for the new surface. Readers of the club’s souvenir yearbook were told that artificial turf “increased functionality” because the field could be quickly adapted to other events. It produced a “uniformity of the playing surface over [the] entire field and at all times” that would allow for more consistent footing, more consistent ball bounces, and the “possibility of fewer ankle and knee injuries.” Artificial turf “reduced postponements because water could be drained more quickly.” When games were played in poor weather, the use of an artificial surface would eliminate “muddy and otherwise undesirable field conditions that tend to detract from the superior performance of professional teams.” And finally, according to the club, it would “improve aesthetic appearance.”<sup>42</sup> This litany of justifications—some dubious (improved aesthetics), some that would soon be proved flatly wrong (decreased injury)—didn’t include the true motivating factor. Artificial surfaces cost less than maintaining natural ones.

Every one of the stadiums constructed in the 1970s had artificial turf. It was installed in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, San Francisco (converted from natural grass in 1970), Irving, Kansas City, New Jersey, Seattle, Minneapolis, Foxborough, and Buffalo. Houston, of course, installed AstroTurf in 1966. Busch Stadium replaced its natural turf with the synthetic type in 1970. The other stadiums of the 1960s—D.C. Stadium, Dodger Stadium,

Shea Stadium, Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, Oakland-Alameda County Stadium, and San Diego Stadium—retained their natural surfaces. Thus, the stadium of the 1970s distinguished itself from that of the 1960s by being more often enclosed, more often roofed, and more often clad in synthetic grass—a sports environment distinctly more disconnected from its built and natural contexts.

When the Pirates faced the Cincinnati Reds in the 1970 playoffs, Roger Angell of the *New Yorker* was able to size up each city's new multi-purpose stadium consecutively. In Pittsburgh, he wrote,

I had plenty of time to study the new ballpark, which is situated just across the Allegheny River from Pittsburgh's downtown Golden Triangle, and to wonder how ballplayers nowadays can remember which town they are playing in as they look up at the same tiered, brightly painted circles of seats that, rising above fields of fake grass, identically and anonymously surround them in so many big-league cities. More and more these stadia remind one of motels or airports in their perfect and dreary usefulness; they are no longer parks but machines for sports. In time, though, I found the difference here—an immense glassed-in dining room and bar called the Allegheny Club, which occupies much of the third and fourth tiers beyond first base at Three Rivers Stadium, permitting affluent locals (who may also lease private boxes, at a price of \$38,000 for five years) to take their baseball a la carte.<sup>43</sup>

Angell's experience of the new stadium was anchored by its overwhelming placelessness—its dreary usefulness, in the fashion of other placeless utilitarian environments like motels and airports. The fundamental tension in the passage is between “parks” and “machines,” the former suggesting the natural, organic, irregular, distinctive places of sport constructed, in the minds of users, through years of human experience; the latter implying a cold modern, efficiency bereft of humanity. In calling the modern stadiums “machines for sports,” he invoked Le Corbusier's fundamentally modern principle that the house be a “machine for living in.” Architectural historian Reyner Banham explained the duality of Le Corbusier's premise—that on the one hand a house should be designed without “inherited prejudices,”



but on the other that houses might resemble machines by being “cheap, standardized, well-equipped and easily serviced, like a mass-produced car.”<sup>44</sup> By these measures, the modern stadium certainly was a machine for sport—a building type that disregarded the “inherited prejudices” of the traditional baseball park, while simultaneously expressing standardization.<sup>45</sup> Angell’s ironic humor accentuated this point. Three Rivers Stadium’s only distinction, he claimed, was that its private Allegheny Club “has six chandeliers in right field.” Stadium luxuries like this, which pushed baseball from the main menu to “a la carte,” had become as common as the stadiums themselves. The placeless interiors were matched with placeless amenities.

When the scene shifted to Cincinnati, Angell wrote, “The playoffs now moved along to Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium, which is another 1970-model four-decker, but with different accessories: no chandeliers, AstroTurf instead of Tartan Turf underfoot, and no dirt on the base paths, which have utterly vanished except for a miniature sandbox around each base.”<sup>46</sup> Riverfront Stadium’s claim to fame, as Angell noted, was in its willingness to synthetically cover more of the baseball diamond than any other stadium, filling in even the base-running paths with the artificial surface. Beyond that, the stadium was hardly distinguishable from Three Rivers in Pittsburgh—a point many made, though a condition that not everyone agreed was problematic.

Riverfront Stadium was a symbolic touchstone for the modern stadium when it hosted major-league baseball’s 1970 All-Star game. The structure temporarily became the focus of national sportswriters, providing a moment for battle lines to be drawn. Some thought Riverfront was tangible evidence of modern progress. Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* was particularly vocal in his praise of the new stadium as a modern icon. He called it “new

and magnificent,” its large seating capacity and all-AstroTurf surface providing the “latest example of the sport’s advance into up-to-date surroundings.”<sup>47</sup> Riverfront was “exquisite” and “the quintessence of modernity.” He pointed to the aggregation of artificial-turf, modern stadiums—particularly in cities that fielded baseball clubs in the National League, noting the resiliency and lowered maintenance required for the synthetic fields. He suggested that American League clubs would be at a disadvantage when forced to play on National League fields in All-Star games and the World Series. Of the American League teams, he claimed, “The future is working against them and they may very well find themselves victimized by progress.”<sup>48</sup> Richard Nixon, a visitor to the All-Star game, agreed. In what must have been music to Monsanto’s ears, the president plugged their product, predicting, “AstroTurf is the playing field of the future.”<sup>49</sup>

Dave Anderson, Arthur Daley’s colleague at the *New York Times*, took an opposing view. He used the occasion to reflect on the impact of stadium changes on the sport of baseball. “With its new stadiums, baseball presumably is progressing,” he wrote. However, he figured, “If progress is baseball’s most important product, personality is its most important loss.” Anderson asserted that of the twenty-six major league stadiums, only Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park were marked by any singular quality, given their irregular dimensions. He suggested that standardized field dimensions likely benefited players and made statistics more reliable. “But for the fans,” he wrote, “there are not so many arguments and perhaps not so much esthetic appreciation.” He thought the “essence” of Ebbets Field, one of those old idiosyncratic parks with personality, was captured in a conversation he had once overheard between two Brooklyn Dodgers loyalists. Sitting on a Florida beach, taking in a beautiful sunset, one asked the other, “Did you ever see anything more beautiful than this?”

“Sure,” his companion replied, “[Dodgers player] Pete Reiser tripling off the exit gate.”<sup>50</sup>

There were certainly no exposed exit gates for adventurous balls to carom off in the regularized outfields of the modern stadiums, eliminating this “essential” characteristic of the traditional grounds.

Anxieties about the routinization of stadiums bubbled under the surface of national discourse, appearing now and then, before erupting more fully in the late 1970s. Complaints about the effects of modern standardization usually came from a baseball perspective, for an assortment of reasons. The stadiums being replaced were, usually, baseball parks that had been adapted to house football and other events of secondary and tertiary priority. Baseball supporters, then, were used to having their way, as their grounds were designed specifically for that sport and the parks were usually owned by the baseball clubs. Furthermore, the sport of baseball lent itself to place identification, arguably more so than football. Baseball teams played many more home games per season—a standard of eighty-one in the 1970s versus seven for NFL teams.<sup>51</sup> Regular baseball fans spent much more time at a well-known ballpark than their football counterparts—and these were often lazy summer nights, not the dying autumn and frigid winter days of the football season. Finally, there was a tradition of place attachment in baseball, whereby the game’s supporters were socialized into a fan culture that attended more to the characteristics of each ballpark—a practice no doubt tied to the distinctiveness of each one. Football gridirons, however awkwardly laid out in a baseball park, were all the same size; baseball fields were all different—differences that regularly influenced the style and strategy of the games as played.

In his 1967 *Baseball Digest* article, “New Parks Have Symmetry; Old Ones Had Color,” George Vass lodged an early critique of the influence of the modern stadium on baseball.

Vass noted that many fans had lamented the disappearance of the “colorful” ball player, but not the colorful ballpark—the old, “lopsided” parks. “For this is the age of progress,” Vass wryly claimed, “and if progress can be gauged with a tape measure, we’re quickly approaching perfection in baseball establishments with standardized dimensions. The ‘perfect’ ball park has arrived in strength—and nothing could be more ‘perfect’ than the Houston Astrodome, where even wind is no longer a factor.” Vass asked, “But is this perfection?” As baseball fans complained that players had become “colorless, stereotyped and dull—all alike, like so many gingerbread men stamped out with a cookie-cutter,” Vass wondered why fans weren’t concerned that “the parks are being stamped out the same way.” The modern stadiums were “superficially attractive yet ‘soulless’ heaps of steel and concrete.” They possessed none of the “irritating yet intriguing individual characteristics” of the old grounds, which asked players and managers to adapt to their unique challenges. Instead, the game was the same in each stadium, with a “more standard managerial strategy.” Vass then recalled some of those odd parks—Ebbets Field, the Polo Grounds, Philadelphia’s Baker Bowl, and the still used Fenway Park in Boston.<sup>52</sup>

Vass’s term, “cookie-cutter,” would be increasingly used to describe the placeless, standardized modern stadium. The modernization of Yankee Stadium in the mid-1970s particularly attracted this pejorative, suggesting both a heightened sensitivity to the impact of stadium design on baseball and perhaps a heightened anxiety about the Yankee Stadium redesign. The project basically called for the construction of a new, modern stadium with cantilevered decks of plastic seats within the walls of the famed old ballpark, opened in 1923. Perry Green, the architect hired by the Yankees on the project, promised before reconstruction in 1973: “This is Yankee Stadium, in the middle of New York City. We’re not

going to change it to some cookie-cutter ballpark like Shea Stadium, in the middle of nowhere.”<sup>53</sup> Upon the stadium’s re-opening in 1976, a reporter noted that the surface was grass and “unlike so many new parks, the new Yankee Stadium will not be symmetrical.” Green again pointed out, “There was a conscious effort to avoid the cookie cutter syndrome. This is still Yankee Stadium,” adding, “It’s like the old Yankee Stadium. It’s got character and charm.”<sup>54</sup> The stadium’s asymmetry and its natural grass surface thus helped it evade cookie-cutter status and evoke “character.” Sportswriter Red Smith agreed with Green, claiming that the new Yankee Stadium retained “much of the cathedral character that set the old one apart.” It remained “a special place, without the sterile and symmetrical sameness of the parks other cities have been stamping out with a cookie cutter.” Although the interior had been wholly gutted, made “functional and up to date in all respects... it is still Yankee Stadium, a storehouse of memories.” The placelessness of the conspicuously modern new interior was tempered by its dimensional asymmetry and the shell of the building that remained, like the retained façade that would mark some postmodern structures of the 1980s and 1990s, as a marker of authenticity.<sup>55</sup> (This would also, I think, make Yankee Stadium the first of the postmodern, historicist stadiums—over fifteen years before celebrated retro ballparks like Baltimore’s Camden Yards opened.) Though no one would argue that the new Yankee Stadium was a cookie cutter, some agreed with the newspaper headline, “Call it Yankee Stadium—but it just isn’t the same.”<sup>56</sup>

The use of “cookie-cutter” became more standard in the late 1970s. A letter to the editors of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in August 1978 suggested a broader engagement of this discourse. Reader William J. Kerr, Jr. speculated that Pirates attendance had been in decline, in spite of a strong team, due in large part to the stadium. He asserted, “For me, the problem

began years ago when they left Forbes Field.” Then, the club fired its announcer. Kerr wrote, “The new stadium[s] and new announcers are similar. All lack the special character which set the Pittsburgh baseball club apart from the rest of the league. Architecturally, Three Rivers Stadium could be any stadium of the ‘new’ variety—barren bowls epitomizing artificiality right down to the ‘turf’... Pittsburgh’s a dynamic, visual place; it deserves better than a carbon copy ‘cookie cutter’ stadium.” Kerr continued, “As the stadium could be anywhere, so, too, could the announcers. They bring no special character to the game. Indeed, they perpetuate the hackneyed, trite expressions of poor announcing everywhere.” The old announcer, Bob Prince, made errors, but “he had a ‘humaness’ which involved the listeners in the game.”<sup>57</sup> Kerr’s complaint—placelessness punctuated by an absence of humanity—was an increasingly common one as baseball fans looked longingly back on an era of idiosyncratic ballparks, broadcasters, and players.

The baseball purist’s lament was pitched louder as the decade came to a close. The *Washington Post*’s Thomas Boswell, writing for *Baseball Digest*, claimed in 1979, “Baseball always suffers when it is played in a cookie-cutter football stadium, like the ones in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.” The game should be played in an amphitheatre, “rather than a claustrophobic cylinder,” he asserted.<sup>58</sup> George Vass, again writing for *Baseball Digest*, this time in 1982, rewrote his critique from fifteen years earlier—though by then it was a more widely embraced position. He revisited those old baseball-first parks, many of which had been put to the wrecking ball in the intervening years. The article was not an exercise in nostalgia, though it was accompanied by cartoon illustrations of the old parks, marking their most memorable moments and features. Again, Vass wrote of the “eccentricities, individuality and foibles” of the old parks, and the influence of the “modern

amalgamations of steel, concrete and plastic” on the game. The “antique parks” were “far more colorful” and “far less perfect,” encrusted with the “accretions of history” and “haunting ambience” of past plays and players. Vass expanded:

Most fans have hailed the advent of the modern, clean, impressive, symmetrical and rationally arranged ballparks, despite their hint of monotonous similarity, because this is the age of progress, and newness tends to be equated with improvement. Only the sentimental and the conservative continue to hum the praises of the older, smaller parks, such as Wrigley and Fenway Park, so redolent of memories extending over several generations... And if progress can be gauged with tape measure and carpenter’s level, we are quickly nearing perfection in baseball establishments with standardized dimensions, playing surfaces and configurations, not to mention that acme of the promoter’s dream, the dome that makes all-weather play possible.<sup>59</sup>

Vass pitted himself against the masses; he was one of the “sentimental and the conservative” rather than “most fans.” This was certainly truer in 1967, when he wrote the first essay for *Baseball Digest*, than it was in 1982, when he published the second. “Most” would have agreed, Vass included, that “the modern parks are more comfortable” and “more efficient in the handling of crowds.” However, more would have also seen the proliferating modern stadium form as “soulless’ heaps of steel and concrete,” lacking much of the “charm” of the old parks. The “individuality and enchantment of the antiques” persisted in many fans’ memories, memories that no doubt improved with age as the novelty of the new stadiums wore off.<sup>60</sup>

Geographer Karl Raitz would later lend academic legitimacy to the claims of commentators like Boswell and Vass. Theorizing the relationship between sports landscape ensembles and pleasure, he argued, “all things being equal... complex landscape ensembles are more stimulating to the senses than simple ones. As complexity and detail increase, the ensemble provides greater levels of gratification.” Exhibit A for Raitz was the modern

stadium. He opposed the stimulation and gratification accorded by the “unique artifact and landscape ensemble” to the drab “placeless cookie-cutter stadiums.”<sup>61</sup>

The modern stadium had been stereotyped by the 1980s. The stadiums of the 1970s cohered around a certain image—symmetrical cylinders of plastic seats centered on fields of synthetic grass. Though the stadiums themselves weren’t as uniform as that, it is significant that many thought they were. The standardization of the modern stadium was not just a matter of materiality, however; the production of events inside these arenas too became regular practice, from stadium-to-stadium. The standard major-league stadium experience in the 1970s had its roots in the 1960s, when sports executives—believing that sports were competing with the non-stop action of television—began repackaging the stadium product in its image. The result was a stadium culture quite different from the traditional ones of the 1950s and before—one that deeply troubled many intelligent and committed sports enthusiasts and contributed to a growing discontent towards the modern stadiums in the 1970s.

### **The artificial experience: modern stadiums and “planned distractions”**

Upon his first visit to the Astrodome in 1966, Roger Angell delivered a penetrating interpretation of the stadium and its potential impact on sport. The remarkable new modern stadium, the most modern of stadiums, represented “a radical break with baseball’s past.” Though he found that his “admiration for the improbable cool bubble grew with each visit,” Angell left Houston bothered by what he had witnessed there. It was not just the “weatherless baseball,” which was a significant change for a sport whose season seemed dictated by the harvest, born each year in spring and dormant by winter. More than this, Angell was concerned with the production of the game within the stadium. The Astrodome



experience was directed by Roy Hofheinz, who derisively remarked of other ballparks, “you got nothing to do but watch the game.” Hofheinz’s revision of the stadium, which included a mesmerizing scoreboard display, a range of clubs and restaurants, climate control, padded theater seats, and attentive and attractive young female staff—meant customers didn’t have to, in Hofheinz’s words, “make a personal sacrifice to like baseball.”<sup>62</sup>

For a sensitive and knowledgeable baseball watcher like Angell—he noted that “Hofheinz’s experience in baseball is minimal”—the Astrodome production threatened the very essence of the sport.<sup>63</sup> He explained the implications:

Baseball is an extraordinarily subtle and complex game, and the greatest subtlety of all may well be the nature of its appeal to the man in the stands. The expensive Houston experiment does not truly affect the players or much alter the sport played down on the field, but I think it does violence to baseball—and, incidentally, threatens its own success—through a total misunderstanding of the game’s old mystery. I do not agree with Judge Hofheinz that a ball park is a notable center for socializing or propriety, or that many male spectators will continue to find refreshment in returning to a giant living room—complete with manmade weather, wall-to-wall carpeting, clean floors, and unrelenting TV shows—that so totally, so drearily, resembles the one he has just left. But these complaints are incidental. What matters, what appalls, in Houston is the attempt being made there to alter the quality of baseball’s time. Baseball’s clock ticks inwardly and silently, and a man absorbed in a ball game is caught up in rural time—a slow, green time of removal and concentration—and in a tension that is screwed up slowly and ever more tightly with each pitcher’s windup and with the almost imperceptible lean and little half step with which the fielders accompany each pitch. Whatever the pace of the particular baseball game we are watching, whatever its outcome, it holds us in its own time and mercifully releases us from our own. Any persistent effort to destroy this unique phenomenon, to ‘use up’ baseball’s time with planned distractions, will in fact transform the sport into another mere entertainment and thus guarantee its swift descent to the status of a boring and stylized curiosity.

It seems to me that the Houston impresarios are trying to build a following by the distraction and entire control of their audience’s attention—aiming at a sort of wraparound, programmed environment, of the kind currently under excited discussion by new thinkers of the electronic age. I do not wish them luck with this vulgar venture, and I hope that in the end they may remember that baseball has always had a capacity to create its own lifelong friends—sometimes even outdoors.<sup>64</sup>

Angell thought the essence of baseball, its appeal to people in the stands, the “game’s old mystery,” was its peculiar tempo—its “baseball time.” The fatal flaw of the Astrodome was not its comfort or its climate-control, but the “using up” of this time with “planned distractions” that would disrupt the sport’s subtle tempo. Baseball’s “swift descent” into being “another mere entertainment” would stem from this alteration of traditional sports time.

Over the coming years, many would register complaints that suggested Angell’s tragic prediction had come true—and not just for baseball. These critiques pointed to the experience within the modern stadium—an experience distinguished from a previous era, for example, by the electronic scoreboards and video screens, the proliferation of stadium clubs and luxury suites, and the use of women as tantalizing attractions themselves. These new additions to stadium culture and game experience shifted attention from the field to the stands, altering the relationship between players and spectators, and changing the meaning and significance of sports as cultural practices.

### **The artificial experience: scoreboards and television screens**

Scoreboards were one of the primary ways that the new stadiums distinguished themselves from the old. They commanded coverage in newspapers, magazines, and club publications—coverage that was often celebratory. If new scoreboards weren’t massive in size, exorbitant in cost, and at the cutting edge of technological progress, they were claimed to be, as each new board was promoted as the newest, the biggest, and the best. These stadium features usually included message boards, video screens, and home run spectaculars. Strategically, the scoreboard was a vital part of the reconfiguration of the stadium as a more domesticated space, mimicking the comforts of the suburban home. Expressively, the scoreboards

embodied and displayed a sense of social progress grounded in technological know-how. This was, no doubt, one reason why they were so celebrated—the modern scoreboard was convenient shorthand for modern progress. The impact of these scoreboards was thorough, commanding the attention of those in the stadium, encouraging behavior that was more reactive than organic—for example, collective fan expression generated by scoreboard mandates rather than fellow supporters in the stands.

The scoreboard traditionally was, as the name suggests, a vehicle for providing the game score, basic game information, and scores from games elsewhere. Secondly, the scoreboard was a site for static advertising, and thus a revenue stream for stadium owners (as almost all older stadiums were privately owned). An example of a traditional scoreboard was the one installed at Yankee Stadium in 1950. Among the most advanced at the time, the board was operated by two men with electronic controls, rather than four or five men on ladders changing numbers manually, as was the traditional method. The board was 73-feet long and 34.5-feet tall, with sixteen-inch-tall characters.<sup>65</sup> A celebrated new scoreboard replaced this one in 1959. Costing three hundred thousand dollars, it was baseball's largest at one-hundred-thirteen-feet wide and forty-five feet tall, with a central tower topping out at seventy-five feet. Letters and numbers on the new board were twenty-four-inches tall and easier to read. The board's novelty, however, derived not from its size but through an electronic message board at the bottom of the central tower, capable of delivering seven lines of eight-character messages. The message board's purpose was to clarify unusual plays and rulings and provide other public information.<sup>66</sup> Each character on the message board, however, was shaped by forty buttons; thus, the operator of the board could only change the message about once per inning. This inflexibility didn't diminish the scoreboard's impact. Til

Ferdenzi of the New York *Journal–American* celebrated the board, calling it “baseball’s most elaborate scoreboard, an electronic pinball machine.”<sup>67</sup> Scoreboards like the one at Yankee Stadium, though not all that large, prompted Harold Rosenthal, writing for *Baseball Digest*, to claim, “The scoreboards are infinitely better than in the days of Cobb, Mathewson and McGraw, easier to see and vastly informative.”<sup>68</sup> Being informative, however, was not the primary purpose of the scoreboard at Comiskey Park.

Ironically, the modern scoreboard’s spiritual progenitor was installed in one of baseball’s oldest grounds, Chicago’s Comiskey Park. Bill Veeck, baseball’s great promoter who had worked his way back into the major leagues as a part owner of the White Sox in 1959, introduced his famous exploding scoreboard in 1960. Veeck’s inspiration, he claimed, was an elaborate pinball machine in William Saroyan’s play, *The Time of Your Life*. When a player hit the jackpot, “The machine practically exploded. The American flag was unfurled; battleships fired guns; music blared. It was just so silly, you know, that it was unforgettably funny. I began to imagine something like that on a big scale, like a scoreboard.”<sup>69</sup> Veeck’s new scoreboard, nicknamed “the Monster” and “the Thing,” cost three hundred thousand dollars. It soared above Comiskey’s center field bleachers, topping out 130 feet from the ground. Slender columns rose above the board, loaded with fireworks, set to go off upon a White Sox home run. When the scoreboard exploded, one reporter wrote, “Lights flash, sirens scream, whistles blow, fireworks light up the sky and aerial bombs shake the ball park as the slugging hero trots around the bases.”<sup>70</sup>

The scoreboard irritated many players and managers. White Sox pitcher Herb Score admitted that, for opposing players, the board added “insult to injury.”<sup>71</sup> Jimmy Pearsall threw a baseball at it, prompting Veeck to vow, “I don’t care what or where he throws

things, just as long as it's not at my scoreboard. If he does it again, I'll send him out of the park on a rocket launcher."<sup>72</sup> Jimmy Dykes, a manager for the Detroit Tigers, compared it to Disneyland. Casey Stengel's visiting New York Yankees provided the most inventive response when the club first experienced Veeck's new toy. After Yankee Clete Boyer homered, the rest of the team emerged from the dugout with sparklers—their own miniature imitation of the exploding Monster.<sup>73</sup>

Veeck's invention was, until the opening of the Astrodome, an anomaly. A more common early modern scoreboard feature was the use of electronic messaging—an elaboration on the 1959 Yankee Stadium scoreboard. When it opened in autumn of 1961, the District of Columbia Stadium's massive two-hundred-seventy-five-foot long, thirty-two-foot high board was, according to stadium officials, "one of the world's most modern and complete scoreboards." It featured auxiliary boards for football and baseball and an "electronically-controlled 'magic message' center" for bulletins.<sup>74</sup> Dodger Stadium, opening in 1962, employed two seventy-five-by-thirty-four-foot boards above the outfield pavilions. One delivered line-ups, scores by inning, and game statistics. The other gave results from other games, attendance, special announcements, visiting organization introductions, and crowd instructions. These were manipulated with, as the *Los Angeles Times* put it, "computer-type controls."<sup>75</sup>

The impact of computer-controlled messaging was considerable, commanding the attention of spectators. Roger Angell observed its influence—along with that of portable radios—on Los Angeles crowds in October 1962. The Dodger supporters "seem to require electronic reassurance," he wrote, continuing:

One out of every three or four of them carries a transistor radio, in order to be told what he is seeing, and the din from these is so loud in the stands that every spectator

can hear the voice of Vin Scully, the Dodger announcer, hovering about his ears throughout the game. There is also a huge, hexagonal sign in left field, on which boosterish messages appear from time to time. The fans respond to its instructions with alacrity, whether they are invited to sing 'Baby Face' between innings or ordered to shout the Dodger battle cry of 'CHARGE!' during a rally. Today the sign also carried news flashes about the orbital progress of Walter M. Schirra, Jr, thus enabling the crowd to enjoy both national pastimes—baseball and astronaut-watching—at the same time.<sup>76</sup>

From their earliest uses, these message boards evoked a change in fan behavior, as people in the stadium shifted attention from the game towards the scoreboard and obedience from crowd-generated imperatives to club-dictated ones. This shift would become more pronounced, and scoreboards became more and more elaborate and voluble, as seen at Shea Stadium in Queens in 1964.

The "Stadiarama Scoreboard" was promised to be a "spectacular departure in major league scoreboard design, function and showmanship." The freestanding scoreboard was one hundred seventy-five feet long, rose eighty-six feet above ground, and weighed over sixty tons. It was backed by a white "cycloramic shell," advertised as taller than a seven-story building, that displayed color light shows choreographed to music. This electronic marvel consumed the same amount of electricity as fifty homes, promoters boasted, and yet was fully controlled by a "small 'magic' console" in the press box, an "electronic brain."<sup>77</sup>

Through its "Play-O-Gram" feature, the scoreboard explained confusing plays; with "Score-O-Gram," it helped fans keep score. But surely the most exciting element, the Photorama, sat atop the board. This eighteen-by-twenty-four-foot rear projection screen presented still player photos, video replays via kinescope, and even movies in the case of rain delays. A reporter called it a "living color 'television'"; a headline branded it a "Giant Movie Screen."<sup>78</sup>

The club claimed that these features were intended to enhance the viewer's understanding of the game on the field—a disadvantage the stadium viewer suffered versus those watching at

home on television who received explanations from commentators. In practice the scoreboard technologies were used between innings to pitch tickets and souvenirs and lead stadium sing-alongs.

The use of the scoreboard as a source of entertainment and advertising was taken to a whole new level in the Houston Astrodome in 1965; it would be the standard against which other stadium scoreboards would be rated for the next decade. The two-million-dollar scoreboard display astounded visitors, stretching 474-feet long and soaring four stories high. It weighed three hundred tons, contained twelve hundred miles of wiring and fifty thousand bulbs, and was controlled by a twenty-five-foot console board in the press box manned by six technicians and a producer. Most of the scoreboard area hosted a fourteen-thousand-fixed-bulb light display employed during the celebrated “home run spectacular.” In the midst of these bulbs was “the world’s largest 100 line television screen.” This 1800-square-foot screen could present animated or still pictures and messages. Two 141-by-21-foot electronic boards that provided game statistics and written messages flanked the video screen.<sup>79</sup>

Of all the scoreboard features, the elaborate home run spectacular attracted the most attention from stadium visitors and national media. The Texas-themed display—featuring animated cowboys, steers, bullets, and flags—was, in the estimation of some, worthy of a stadium trip alone. Indeed, stadium promoters suggested that some fans would be more interested in the scoreboard than the ballgame.<sup>80</sup> Critics pointed out that the game was, in practice, subjugated to the scoreboard, essentially providing material for scoreboard antics. This inversion of the main attraction (baseball) and its auxiliary components (scoreboard) troubled many observers—writers, fans, and players alike—as a violation of the sport’s integrity.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of such objections, stadium builders pushed forward, most making their scoreboards centers of attention in the new structures. The bar established by the Astrodome was perhaps too high to clear, but advocates assured readers they had cleared it anyway. Columnist John Hall, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, told readers that while fans in Anaheim weren't going to get a dome when the new stadium opened in 1966, they wouldn't "have to take a rumble seat to Houston in the scoreboard department."<sup>82</sup> The nickname of Anaheim Stadium, "The Big A," actually derived from its scoreboard: a 230-foot A-frame scoreboard sited just beyond the left field wall, topped with a revolving halo. When the new stadium opened in 1966, the scoreboard was the centerpiece. Hall called the "triangular mountain... the most unique electronic monster in this happily goofy era of the exploding home run." He joked that future astronauts might mistake the halo for a ring of Saturn, adding vaguely, "progress is wonderful," as if this towering board was evidence of the peak of human accomplishment.<sup>83</sup> Columnist Sid Ziff called it "Anaheim's equivalent of the Eiffel Tower."<sup>84</sup> A writer for *The Sporting News* branded it "the world's largest teleprompter" and "electronic cheerleader"; it would encourage fans with "cheer direction" in lettering up to forty feet tall. The video board could post cartoon animation. The writer predicted, "When fans set up a call for 'Charge' and the bugle sounds, the electronic cheerleader then will take over."<sup>85</sup>

Ensuing scoreboards were derivative of these types. The Oakland Athletics baseball club boasted that their new Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum would provide its fans with all the latest in animated entertainment and game statistics "through the scientific wonders of the most ultra-modern computerized scoreboard system in the world." "For example," an article in the club's 1968 *Yearbook* explained, Charlie 'O', the A's donkey mascot, could "be



shown rooting for a home run, or braying if the home team has fallen behind.”<sup>86</sup> Scoreboard operators in both Pittsburgh and Cincinnati used rudimentary scanners to project unique still images on the board.<sup>87</sup> The Cincinnati Reds tried to wow customers by boasting, “A celebrity who comes through the gate may sign his name and have his picture taken. Within seconds the picture and his autograph can be flashed on the scoreboard.”<sup>88</sup>

Promoters of Philadelphia’s Veterans Stadium, opened in 1971, pitched their new scoreboard as “the most expensive, largest and most sophisticated scoreboard in the history of sports.”<sup>89</sup> The three-million-dollar scoreboard—a figure the club advertised with pride—was actually a set of four different boards coordinated with enormous animatrons. One of the boards displayed animated cartoons, player pictures, stats, and commercials in two different colors. The two main boards were each one hundred feet long and elevated on “piston type standards that will disappear into the ground for football.”<sup>90</sup> The “fully computerized” scoreboard, was, according to the baseball club, a “magic lantern of incandescence, images, and information; flashing forth with statistics, scores, rulings, group names, ticket information, coming events, and enhancing every game with caricatures, cartoons, commentary, and even commercials to help pay for itself.”<sup>91</sup> It had, according to local sports writers, “the color and excitement of Disneyland,” in stark contrast to the old scoreboard at run-down Connie Mack Stadium.<sup>92</sup>

The main attraction of the “Magic Scoreboard” was the home run spectacular. The Phillies noted some of the more memorable home run celebrations around the league—particularly the “war dance” in Atlanta after a Braves home run and the “cattle stampedes when an Astro puts one in orbit” in Houston. “But nowhere in the history of baseball,” promoters promised, “can one find a greater Homerun Spectacular than right here in

Veterans Stadium.” The Phillies’ celebration featured two fifteen-foot-tall fiberglass animatrons, Philadelphia Phil and sibling Philadelphia Phillis, a fifteen-foot-tall replica of the Liberty Bell, a cannon, and water fountains. As promoters described it,

When a Phillies batter parks one into the far reaches, mighty Phil swings his bat and a light travels across the centerfield structure [scoreboard], activating a replica of the Liberty Bell—which lets loose with resounding bongs—and continuing on to cue Phillis, who fires her cannon—complete with smoke and sound effects. The cannonball seemingly strikes the scoreboard, causing it to explode in a paroxysm of radiating light which culminates in the caricature of a cheering fan. Meanwhile, back at the Bell, a facsimile of the Colonial flag unfurls as the Dancing Waters leap and descend in time to the rousing music of ‘Stars and Stripes Forever.’ And there’s nobody who’s going to top that crescendo of excitement!<sup>93</sup>

These crude replications of Disney animatronics—popularized at the 1964 New York World’s Fair and to feature in the Hall of Presidents at Magic Kingdom later that year—were enough to impress many visitors. Maury Allen of the *New York Post*, mesmerized by the display, claimed, “No more bad jokes about Philadelphia. Any town that can build a \$45 million ball park, featuring a \$3 million scoreboard with Philadelphia Phil, Philadelphia Phillis, the Liberty Bell, a Revolutionary War cannon and Betsy Ross’ original flag, and then add lovely usherettes in hot pants, can’t be all bad...”<sup>94</sup>

While the gimmickry of the Veterans Stadium scoreboard may have elevated Philadelphia’s reputation above “all bad” (at least in the eyes of one), more substantive technological advancements in other new stadiums made the scoreboard increasingly central to the stadium experience. Kansas City’s Arrowhead Stadium—the city’s new football-specific stadium, home of the NFL’s Chiefs—pioneered in 1972 the first legitimate instant replay scoreboard that could immediately show a previous play. A reporter called it the “P.T. Barnum-like scoreboard,” but proceeded to qualify its impact. “On the surface,” he acknowledged, instant replay “sounds about as plush as you can get. In a way it is, but in this

day of astounding technological achievements, one can't get too overly excited about it.”

When the board displayed the Chiefs' mascot horse, Warpaint, “it reminded one of an old sepia western... and out of focus at that.”<sup>95</sup>

Michael Oriard, a player for the Chiefs in the early 1970s, offered a perspective from the field. The Chiefs had moved from the city's Municipal Stadium—a traditional, baseball-first park—into the modern Arrowhead in 1972. The new stadium was more comfortable for both players and fans, he recalled, “but it also meant an altered relationship” between the two. He expanded on how the modern stadium contributed to this altered relationship, beginning with the old grounds:

Municipal Stadium was an intimate park; behind the players' bench the bleachers nearly encroached on the field, bringing the ‘Wolfpack’—the name by which the rabid bleacherites were known—more personally into the game. There were few distractions at the old ballpark to draw attention away from the contest on the field. I felt that we players were the focal point of all our fans' attention. I sensed the fans' presence, felt bound to them by a common passion. When we moved into Arrowhead Stadium the following year, much of this intimacy was lost. The spacious regularity of the perfect oval was very different from the asymmetrical arrangement of the stands in Municipal Stadium around a field that had been laid out for baseball. Arrowhead Stadium was one of the classiest athletic showplaces in the country, but in it I felt remote from the spectators; they seemed less fans than spectators now, having paid ten dollars apiece to be entertained for three hours. The huge electronic scoreboard behind one end zone, with all its showy displays, competed with the players for the spectators' attention...

In Municipal Stadium the game was simpler. It was football without accompanying and competing spectacle. The fans came to see the football, not to spend three hours in the stadium. Playing in Municipal Stadium, I felt the attachment to both the game and the fans that I had grown accustomed to in college. In Municipal Stadium I was less conscious than I would continually be at Arrowhead that professional football was big business and mass entertainment. In Municipal Stadium it still seemed the heroic game I had discovered in my youth.<sup>96</sup>

The passage pivots on the relationship between player and fan—they were intimately connected, “bound,” in the old stadium, but “remote” in the new. Oriard sourced the attenuation of this relationship to both the symmetrical spaciousness of the modern stadium

and the “attention” of its inhabitants. Three times he used that word, twice to note the intense focus (and thus connection) between fans and players at Municipal Stadium, once to mark the impact of the new instant-replay scoreboard at Arrowhead—a device that clipped the cord between player and fan, reducing the latter to a mere spectator and football to meager “entertainment.”<sup>97</sup> (This critique—the disconnection of fans from players and the accompanying trivialization of mythic sport to entertainment—is one I will revisit later in this chapter.)

No modern stadium scoreboard possessed the capacity for distraction and player-fan disconnection like that of the Louisiana Superdome. The stadium itself, opened in 1975, was remarkable for a number of reasons—among them its monumental size (spanning 680 feet and topping out at 273 feet), its extravagant cost (\$163 million), and the well-publicized political intrigue and corruption accompanying its development.<sup>98</sup> One of its most discussed characteristics was its space-age aesthetic: writers called it “a giant spaceship from a distant planetoid” and “Starship Superdome.”<sup>99</sup> The “most futuristic feather of the whole mind-boggling building,” Jep Cadou of the *Saturday Evening Post* claimed, was its “giant-screen television.”

The “television” was in fact six televisions, one for each side of the massive six-sided gondola hung from the roof. The apparatus weighed seventy-five tons and cost \$1.3 million—a veritable bargain when compared to Philadelphia’s three-million-dollar animatronic display, and thus a miracle considering the cost overruns on the rest of the building. In addition to replays, the twenty-six-by-twenty-two-foot screens could also provide “isolated camera” and “slow-motion shots” that “television viewers have become used to.” The screens possessed, a stadium consultant noted, a color image “superior to a

home television set.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, visitors to the Superdome, Cadou claimed, “will have the best of both worlds. They will have the excitement of being present ‘live’ and participating in all the action, without sacrificing the luxury of instant replays, isolation and slow-motion shots.”<sup>101</sup>

The cutting edge televisual technology invited comparisons between the Superdome and the living room, just as the Astrodome had ten years before. Jerry Kirshenbaum of *Sports Illustrated* informed a national audience in 1971 that stadium plans called for screens that “will show spectators instant replays and locker-room interviews just as if they were back in their living rooms.”<sup>102</sup> Promoter Dave Dixon—reputedly the creative mind behind the Superdome, the Louisianan Hofheinz—imagined the space as a fusion of living room and stadium, claiming, “The viewer will have the best of both worlds: all the physical and emotional excitement of being there *and* the best seat in the house.”<sup>103</sup> A reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* reiterated Dixon’s claim, writing

The art of football watching has now come full circle. When the television magicians began to employ more cameras and instant replays, the comment was watching the game at home is better than watching it at the stadium. But now, with the opening of the Louisiana Superdome recently, that comment has turned to—“Watching football in here is just like being at home, only more so.”<sup>104</sup>

Stadium managers planned to use the screens to simulcast the game on the field, for the benefit of those high in the stands, and broadcast other games, attracting crowds to the Dome simply to watch television with others. They also sold advertising spots; ads for car dealers, banks, and resort communities were aired in between plays, prompting disgust from players and coaches.<sup>105</sup> These commercials, many noted, were as invasive as advertisements in one’s living room—they were broadcast so loudly that those on the field were startled and distracted. A lineman for the Saints complained: “When we were calling plays or talking

things over during time outs, it was pretty hard to hear.” Another player called the scoreboard “a damn nuisance.”<sup>106</sup>

J.D. Reed of *Sports Illustrated* was skeptical of the whole endeavor, sarcastically suggesting that the Superdome was a solution to the isolating capacity of television:

For years sociologists have been poor-mouthing television, noting that it separates people. Americans don't gather socially anymore because they are in apartments and in detached houses watching TV. But, for the present at least, man still controls technology, and now tens of thousands can gather in one room on a Sunday afternoon. To watch television.<sup>107</sup>

The Superdome set-up represented the apogee of the scoreboard in the stadium—just as the New Orleans dome itself seemed a high-water mark of modern stadium hubris. Stadium promoters from city-to-city continued to boast that their new scoreboard was the latest in scoreboard technology. When a sportswriter for the *Washington Post* had visited Shea Stadium in 1964, he noted that the scoreboards were a new “status symbol,” observing, “the bigger your scoreboard, the more prestige.” This attitude persisted through the 1970s. Each new stadium featured a new elaborate scoreboard, and the use of the new scoreboards was increasingly routinized from city-to-city. As the television-watching experience of Americans cohered around network television—ninety percent of televisions were tuned into networks in the late 1970s—broadcast on increasingly sophisticated devices, so to was the “television” experience in the stadium more singular and technologically advanced.<sup>108</sup> Operators took their cues from other stadiums, each of which seemed fundamentally derivative of the Astrodome's celebrated scoreboard production. In 1982, Dick Davis was hired to manage the Minneapolis Metrodome scoreboard, after spending the previous ten years operating the one at Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium. Davis explained his scoreboard philosophy in terms that Roy Hofheinz would have appreciated: “In a lot of stadiums, people run video to kill

time. I want to use it as a reward for fans to be there in the first place.”<sup>109</sup> The very idea that customers would have to be bribed to endure the product seems an improbably flawed piece of logic. And yet, this was the pervasive logic of stadium game production in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **The artificial experience: stadium clubs and luxury suites**

The best “rewarded” customers at the stadium were those occupying its private luxury suites and clubs—though these consumers often paid richly for the privilege. Michael Oriard remembered, as a player at Arrowhead Stadium, looking up to the glassed-in suites between the decks of seats: “I knew that behind the glass the social elite of Kansas City were sipping cocktails, nibbling on hors d’oeuvre, and following the game on closed-circuit television sets when it was not convenient to look down on the field—if they followed the play at all.”<sup>110</sup>

Geographer John Bale, in an interpretation that resonated with Oriard’s, argued that there were two important implications with the introduction of the luxury box in the British football stadium—implications I think equally applicable to their American counterparts. First, luxury suites cultivated the image of the spectator who required certain standards of physical and social comfort to watch a game. Second, luxury suites privileged a certain way of watching games: seated, dispassionately critical, and expectant of entertainment (whether that entertainment came from the field or within the box in the form of food, drink, or television).<sup>111</sup> These were spaces where, as a *Los Angeles Times* reporter said of Arrowhead’s suite-holders, “If he or his friends don’t like the way a game is going they can always retire behind the glass-doored suite and shut out the world.”<sup>112</sup> As a customer bloc, luxury-suite consumers particularly expressed the affluent, mixed-gender, and well-mannered character of the idealized modern stadium patron.

Private stadium space achieved its greatest notoriety through Houston's Astrodome, though it existed in various forms throughout the history of organized American sport. Chicago's Lakefront Park, built in 1878 and refurbished in 1883, boasted an early form of the luxury suite. The home of the National League's White Stockings featured eighteen roofed boxes with armchairs and curtains, isolated from stadium riff-raff atop the grandstand.<sup>113</sup> Larry MacPhail's exclusive Stadium Club at Yankee Stadium gained national attention in 1946. It was a "ritzy lounge beneath the stands where a select clientele of season boxholders can sup and sup in comfort far removed from the hoi polloi," in the words of a *Los Angeles Times* columnist, who noted that this was an adaptation of private clubs at horse racing grounds.<sup>114</sup> But, it was Houston's extravagant outlay of themed luxury suites, private clubs, and public restaurants that inspired the envy of other cities' civic leaders and sports businessmen.

The new stadiums in Pittsburgh (1970) and Philadelphia (1971) both employed, though at a smaller scale, the exclusive amenities of the Astrodome. Stadium promoters told elite Pittsburghers that Three Rivers Stadium's restaurants and luxury boxes were "the epitome of spectator luxury."<sup>115</sup> The forty-two private boxes were located on the stadium's fourth level, accessible via elevator. Each eighteen-by-thirteen-foot box accommodated nine visitors in its "completely private domain."<sup>116</sup> Owners were responsible for furnishing their own suite, though a program photo provided a suggestion; it featured a wholly modern lounge, wood-paneled with sliding glass doors, swivel-base chairs and an elevated, metal-framed sofa. Many of those box holders dined in the private Allegheny Club, a three-hundred-seat private restaurant overlooking both the field and downtown Pittsburgh. The stadium also housed a public restaurant for regular Pittsburghers unsatisfied by the stadium's pedestrian "Zum



Zum” and “Wienerstop” concessions stands. Philadelphia’s Veterans stadium boasted a private stadium club for three hundred with views of the field, as well as twenty-eight “Superboxes” on the press level. These air-conditioned, heated, carpeted, wood-paneled lounges with private rest rooms and bars hosted eighteen to twenty-eight visitors each.<sup>117</sup> Private boxes like those at Three Rivers and Veterans Stadium, however, were not yet standard stadium features in the early 1970s. Most stadiums built in the 1960s had private clubs, but not suites—the ultimate expression of domestic exclusivity.

Texas Stadium, the new home of the Dallas Cowboys, thrust the luxury suite back into the national consciousness—as the Astrodome had done six years earlier—when it opened in 1971. The football-specific stadium was located in Irving, a suburb of Dallas that had agreed to partially subsidize the structure. Most of the stadium was paid for, however, by an innovative scheme through which season-ticket holders purchased stadium bonds; fifty thousand of the stadium’s sixty-five thousand seats required the additional purchase of these low-yield bonds. To purchase a ticket between the thirty-yard lines (sixty-three dollars for the season), a Cowboys fan also had to buy a stadium bond at the cost of one thousand dollars. Seats outside the thirty-yard lines required a two-hundred-fifty-dollar bond. Just fifteen thousand seats, located at the tops of the end-zone sections, were sold on a game-by-game basis; these required no bond, but were quickly purchased at a cost of seven dollars per game.

The most high-priced seats of all, commanding the largest bond purchases, were those in the famed “Circle Suites.” Each of the 176 suites—“ranged on two levels... like the promenade decks of some gleaming ocean liner,” as described by a reporter—demanded a \$50,000 bond, plus \$1680 for twelve season tickets and membership privileges in the

“Cowboy Club.” What box-holders got in return was “your own piece of real estate,” a sixteen-by-sixteen foot empty concrete box to outfit as desired. Suite-holders enjoyed easy access to their boxes, from reserved parking places near elevators that escorted them up to soft-lit and carpeted corridors leading to their private rooms. Half of the purchasers were corporations, the other half individuals. All told, the suites brought in about one-quarter of the stadium’s total cost of thirty million dollars.<sup>118</sup>

A commentator anticipated the opening of the stadium “should be something like opening night at the Met.” “The double row of millionaire suites should see a classic contest of one-upmanship as stoutly fought as any in the famed Diamond Horseshoe,” the writer continued, adding as a facetious afterthought, “There will also be football.” Indeed, for some the football took a backseat to the Circle Suite luxury. The most “lavish” of the boxes was arguably that of Frederick Waggoner of Eldorado Oil & Gas. He spent fifty-seven thousand dollars on his suite, outfitting it with blue velvet drapes, empire style chairs, wall-to-wall carpeting, velvet barstools, a glass-topped table with a massive gold vase of artificial roses, and commissioned wall paintings in oval gold frames. Combined, the decorations conspired to create an atmosphere “distinctly boudoir-like and 18<sup>th</sup> century [without] a hint of football in sight,” as a *Los Angeles Times* reporter described it. Other boxes played on other themes, “from the antique to the modern, the businesslike to the sporting.” One holder outfitted his box like a Victorian saloon in old Ireland, with a solid brass bar rail, an old oak table carved with various names, a mirror advertising a whisky distillery, and a sign that warned, “Beware of pickpockets, drunks and loose women.” A financier outfitted his suite like a boardroom, with wood-paneled walls, regency-style leather chairs, and thick green carpet.<sup>119</sup>

For many, the Texas Stadium Circle Suites were conspicuous symbols of a distinctly Texan extravagance. Articles chronicled the design high jinks of wealthy Texans with much of the same fascination that accompanied the opening of the Astrodome six years before. “In true Texas style,” a writer for *Travel* magazine described the setting, “some of these suites, all with great views of the playing field, have elegant furnishings, original oil paintings, crystal chandeliers, walnut paneling and overstuffed chairs.”<sup>120</sup> The Home Editor of the *Dallas Morning News*, after walking her readers through various Circle Suite design choices and details, concluded, “The glamour of the individual boxes carries on the tradition of the free-wheeling, Texas big rich!”<sup>121</sup>

For others, who noted the increasing frequency of the stadium luxury box across the national landscape, the “precious status symbol” of the Circle Suite spoke to a broader economic segregation within the modern stadium—and throughout American society more fully.<sup>122</sup> Stadium operators hoped, one commentator explained, “to increase stadium revenue by soaking the rich for the satisfaction of sitting in opulence, separated from the commoners.”<sup>123</sup> The proliferation of exclusive spaces within the stadium didn’t sit well with some. Charles Maher of the *Los Angeles Times* claimed, “The separation tends to dramatize class distinctions, and much more than the traditional separation between box seats and bleachers.” Unlike the simple spatial segregation of sports space, which had scaled seating by cost since the earliest days of grounds enclosure and admittance fees, “Now the wealthy are separated by real walls, sitting in splendid isolation, presiding like princes at the joust.”<sup>124</sup>

Texas Stadium was a target of complaints from many fans who resented the continued rising prices of NFL tickets across the league. Although professional footballs’ clubs continued to reap the rewards of escalating television contracts, the clubs also repeatedly

raised ticket prices through the 1960s (and would continue to do so through the 1970s), claiming increased operational costs. League averages in 1970 were six dollars per ticket, but most of these were scooped up by season-ticket holders—a system that priced out the young and working classes who couldn't afford to buy an entire season's worth of games.<sup>125</sup> In Dallas, the average reserved season ticket had risen from about \$4.60 per game in 1960, to \$5.50 per game in 1965, to \$7.00 per game in 1970.<sup>126</sup> The additional burden of a ticket bond for the new stadium pushed this expense even higher.

The pricing-out of many of the game's hard-core fans was a troubling sign for many. "Watching the Cowboys play at home," a columnist from Miami wrote, "has become the equivalent of joining a country club—and a darned expensive country club at that."<sup>127</sup> The title of an article in *Esquire* asked, "Wanta Buy Two Seats for the Dallas Cowboys? Struck Oil Lately?"<sup>128</sup> Long-time Cowboys fans were priced out of seeing their beloved team—which many had followed through the club's lesser years in the early 1960s at the old Cotton Bowl. Some took to calling the stadium "a rich man's stadium" and "Millionaires' Meadows."<sup>129</sup> A Cowboys supporter said of the stadium, "It kind of makes the whole thing a private club for the fortunate. You know the Cowboys have a lot of support among people who could never come up with \$1,000, or even \$250 for the privilege of buying season tickets. This is supposed to be a public stadium and yet its cost is well beyond most of the public's reach."<sup>130</sup> Cowboys owner Clint Murchison admitted that because of the financing scheme the club "lost a whole group in the \$12,000-to-\$20,000-a-year salary range who could afford tickets at the Cotton Bowl but couldn't afford to buy bonds. But, all America discriminates against people who don't have enough money to buy everything they want."<sup>131</sup>

Murchison's quasi-philosophical justification certainly didn't calm the class-based angst of those either locked out of the stadium or put under a considerable financial squeeze to be there. The luxury suites were a conspicuous symbol of this new modern order. One Cowboys fan complained: "We keep hearing about those fabulous private boxes with the instant television replay systems. But how many people do you think have \$100,000 to spend to get that kind of service?"<sup>132</sup> The sense of a two-class stadium was only exasperated when the City of Irving, located in a dry county, passed a special law that allowed liquor to be sold only in the Circle Suites and stadium club areas.<sup>133</sup> A fan said, "they don't serve alcohol to us poor slobs in the stands. Let's face it, at Texas Stadium, I'm a second-class citizen."<sup>134</sup>

The luxury suite—the most conspicuous symbol of class difference within the stadium—would continue to be a point of contention for cities building new stadiums or renovating old ones. A proposal to add seventy luxury suites to the Los Angeles Coliseum—a 1920s athletics and football stadium—was postponed in the mid-1970s due in part to public relations problems. An official, explaining the failure of the plans, said of their marketing: "Our biggest problem was that we didn't want people complaining that this was a project for the well-to-do. We emphasized the fact that this was an improvement program for the average fan." That approach, it seemed, had been ineffective. Some corporations—candidates for box leases, thought it was bad public relations to be affiliated with the new suites.<sup>135</sup> This was again a problem when Los Angeles officials tried to lure the NFL's Oakland Raiders to the Coliseum in 1980, in part by promising to build luxury suites there. A city official questioned the use of public funding for suites—suites to be installed in the middle of the stadium, replacing existing spectator seating—that would primarily be purchased by corporations and written off as business expenses. He said, "You will have two

classes of spectators—the privileged, and the ordinary citizens who paid for the suites’ construction but are enjoying none of the tax benefits.”<sup>136</sup> When Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie began planning for a new seventy-thousand-seat stadium north of the city, he explored financing the project by selling fifty-thousand-dollar investment bonds to club supporters—a plan devised from the financing of Texas Stadium earlier that decade. Broward County commissioner George Platt opposed such an approach, calling it “repugnant, because we wouldn’t want to build a facility for the needs of the wealthy.” Robbie defensively claimed that the bond approach didn’t cater to the rich; of his potential buyers, he said: “They’re not corporations or people who have inherited great wealth. They’re mostly upper-middle class people who are making \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year.”<sup>137</sup> The Dolphins owner’s categorization of “upper-middle class” was predictably skewed; less than four percent of households made over \$50,000 per year in 1979, when the median income was \$15,229.<sup>138</sup>

The enhanced sense of class-consciousness, emergent as luxury suites became stadium standards in the 1970s, was most palpable in Minnesota. The Metrodome, opened in 1982, was arguably the last of the artificial modern stadiums. It served as an ironic punctuation mark to the entire genre: while most other modern stadiums were pitched as extravagant symbols of civic know-how, each bigger and better than the last, the Metrodome was regularly celebrated, by its producers, as the most frugal and pedestrian of the lot. Locally, the efficient execution of the stadium, which remarkably was completed at eight million dollars under budget, was important for a politically progressive, civically active city laboring under a three-hundred-million-dollar budget deficit. More broadly, the modest Metrodome seemed a symbolic corrective to the rampant governmental profligacy that had marked so

many other stadium adventures, at a time when governmental spending was under assault nationwide through an ascendant anti-tax, politically conservative discourse.

Those building the stadium tirelessly promoted it as an exercise in frugal, Minnesotan efficiency—the Midwest’s answer to the decadent Louisiana Superdome and other well-publicized “white elephant” stadiums that had been constructed throughout the 1970s.

Dennis Alfton, a member of the Stadium Commission, assured Minnesotans, “In contrast to places like the New Orleans Superdome, this is a modest stadium. We have added color in a few spaces and a few frills, but you don’t have to go to extremes to provide fans with a good facility. What they want are good stands, good views and good access. And I think we have given them that.”<sup>139</sup> A reporter predicted, “In general, fans will find that it is not a luxurious building. That’s the way the stadium commission wanted it.” Jerry Bell, the assistant director of the Stadium Commission, forecast, “if other stadium builders learn anything from the Metrodome they ought to learn how to save money.”<sup>140</sup>

Stadium officials rarely discussed the Metrodome’s luxury suites, perhaps because the official discourse was anchored in the stadium’s material humility. There were 115 private boxes in all, located at the top of the lower concourse. Forty-six eight-seat boxes leased for \$25,000 per year, fifty-six ten-seat boxes leased for \$27,500 per year, and thirteen twelve-seat boxes leased for \$30,000 per year. Each suite had two levels—a lower section, with armchair seating facing the playing field, and an upper section stocked with furniture, built-in cabinetry, a wardrobe, a sink, an under-counter refrigerator, an ice maker, a telephone, and a color television.<sup>141</sup>

In the stadium *Souvenir Book* these luxury suites were pitched domestically as providing “the comforts of home in private boxes.” An accompanying illustration seemed more dinner

party than stadium outing. Four men and four women in tidy but casual fashions—dresses, blouses, blazers, sweaters, and slacks—occupied a suite. Two of the men seemed to be watching the game, or perhaps something in the crowd, as one of them used a pair of binoculars under the direction of the other. One of the group's women sat behind them, clearly enjoying herself, though seemingly not attentive to any action on the field below. The rest of the box occupants were oblivious to any sporting event, chatting with one another, drinks in hand that had been filled at the liquor-bottle festooned countertop. The scene seemed clipped from a gentrified urban apartment—the wood-paneled cabinetry, the abstract art on the wall, the potted plant in the corner. Sport was clearly an afterthought.<sup>142</sup>

The same image ran in the *Minneapolis Tribune* “Souvenir Section” newspaper insert, published before the stadium opened. The accompanying article introduced the boxes, what it called “the so-called ‘private suites,’” with what seemed an apologetic, even self-flagellating tone. Stadium suites, the reporter wrote, had “turned America’s stadiums into athletic condos for corporate salespeople bent on impressing their clients. The Metrodome is no different.” The writer thought it “appropriate that the Vikings control the sales and ownership of the 115 glass-enclosed boxes at the Metrodome, for their product—pro football—clings to the corporate image that boosted it in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s.” This derisive remark—noteworthy for its anti-stadium candor—reflected just how anxious some were about replacing their old outdoor park with a new and polished modern stadium. The subtle critique was further noteworthy for its location: the Minneapolis Star & Tribune Company was the largest investor in the corporate consortium that had donated the land for the stadium site in exchange for development rights around it.<sup>143</sup>

The idea that the stadium was a project pushed by the wealthy, that would ultimately



benefit the wealthy (Minneapolis-based companies, the NFL's Vikings, and baseball's Twins) was one seized upon by project opponents. As commissioners bent over backwards to sandbag the structure, stadium opponents often cast the stadium as a handout to Minneapolis's business class. Upon the Metrodome's opening, Patrick Reusse of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* derided "the elitists for whom it was built" who "took delight in shouting to the fiberglass roof that it was made possible only because of their vision." He complained that sport would be different under the dome than it was outdoors at the old Metropolitan Stadium. He wouldn't be able to smuggle in beer, there was no tailgating in the parking lot (as there was no parking lot), and ushers would stop him from switching to better seats—all these rules conspired "to ensure that saps like me, the guys on the wrong side of the tracks, have a hard time having a good time at the ballpark."<sup>144</sup>

Many stadium opponents, like Reusse, affected a populist voice to articulate their position, by insinuation (or outright designation) framing the stadium's advocates to be an oppressive and privileged elite. For them, the luxury suite—a site justified as a business expense, a place where the "haves" shook hands over business deals—was a convenient symbol of class distinction. Jim Klobuchar of the *Minneapolis Star* referred to the boxes as "tycoon suites" and "tycoon gardens."<sup>145</sup> Columnist Joe Soucheray of the *Minneapolis Tribune* cast those in the luxury suites as indifferent interlopers—an image corroborated by the previously discussed illustration of socializing couples in the *Souvenir Book*. When the fabric roof collapsed during construction, Soucheray speculated that should that happen during a game, "those souls in private boxes might have an obstructed view of the playing field. Or maybe they won't. Maybe they will be playing backgammon."<sup>146</sup> Some writers pointed out that though the stadium wasn't air conditioned, the private suites were.<sup>147</sup> Don Riley of the

*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, undoubtedly the aw-shucksiest of the Twin Cities' populist sportswriters, complained of area laws that barred the sale of beer in the stadium before noon, but allowed liquor consumption in the boxes: "So, you can drink champagne or Bristol Creme in the suites in the morning, but the poor peon surfs [sic] can't have a lick of foam until noon!"<sup>148</sup>

As the Metrodome drew the modern stadium type to a close, the conspicuous display of stadium exclusivity had shifted from an object of widespread fascination to one of populist scorn. This, of course didn't affect their continued proliferation, as stadium designers increasingly stocked stadiums with new private spaces, adding luxury suites to old stadiums and, by the 1990s, demanding new stadiums with greater suite capacities. Oriard called the most recent wave of football stadiums, constructed through the 1990s and 2000s, "expensive theme parks" that "no longer accommodate the democratic masses but are divided into neighborhoods with escalating property values: the end zones and upper decks (already out of the price range of most fans), the club seats, and the 'gated communities' of luxury suites."<sup>149</sup> But this brand of residential, suburban spatiality had been perpetuated through stadium space well before; it had been learned in the 1950s, applied to the stadium in the 1960s, propagated in the 1970s, and naturalized by the 1990s.

### **The artificial experience: "lovely and shapely young ladies" of the stadium**

The "suburbanization" of the stadium in the 1960s had rested heavily on both a suburban spatiality and the feminization of stadium space. Stadium promoters hoped to attract affluent female customers in part by staffing the concourses and lounges with female ushers. These ushers, for most of the 1960s, were used to connote class and refinement. To signify "class" was to embrace decidedly middle-class values of self-possessed behavior, which certainly

included sexual restraint. But the introduction of young, attractive, and fit female service into a largely male and historically indecorous space always threatened to undo this signification. To signify sexuality was to invert bourgeois decorum. Promoters who wanted to use ushers as markers of class thus had to maintain a delicate balance—the sexuality of these women had to be disciplined enough so as to attract the “carriage trade,” but evident enough to remain an attraction to men.

Fears and fantasies about the sexuality of female ushers, and its provocation of male imaginations and behaviors, were long standing. A reporter from the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 wrote that Chicago theaters wouldn’t hire young women as ushers. The primary reason was that managers believed, “unless the women were old as 50, or ugly,” they would distract attention away from the performances. One manager asked: “What man would not rather stop and talk to a pretty girl than look at an ordinary play? They would have their seats changed seven times in one evening just to get a chance to talk to the girls.”<sup>150</sup> When Simpson’s, the “local Carnegie Hall” in Los Angeles, began employing girl ushers in 1910, a writer for the *Los Angeles Times* called the girls “seductive.”<sup>151</sup> A man writing to the *New York Times* in 1915 certainly found female ushers sexually suggestive, recounting: “Last night I went along into a movie show in your town, and as I approached one of the aisles of the theatre I was greeted by two young goddesses, one blonde, the other brunette, who asked me briskly: ‘Single?’” This tale may be apocryphal, yet the very telling explicitly linked female ushers to the prospects of sexual adventure.<sup>152</sup>

By the 1960s, female ushers were largely used to signify class, not to sexually agitate men in the crowd. “Usher King” Andy Frain, whose usher service was known for its conservatively suited, six-foot-tall, and unerringly restrained employees, began hiring women

in the early 1960s. His brand of female usher was rather plain; he claimed, “I hire girls who use soap and water, not a lot of paint and powder.”<sup>153</sup> The Mets, too, embraced a “plainer” look in line with their desire to add “class.” The “Metchicks,” as Robert Lipsyte called the female ushers at Shea Stadium, were mostly college students (many planning to become school teachers). Some were older, married, and mothers. He called them “fetching,” but then clarified, “They seemed to have been selected more for healthy good looks than sex appeal.” The group wore striped blue, orange, and white blazers; bow ties; and bowler hats. One of the directors, Marlene, agreed with Lipsyte that these uniforms “did not add to feminine allure.” She speculated, “It’s better that way. Less wise cracks, less crowds of men hanging around.”<sup>154</sup> This standard—female usher as wholesome—mirrored the image of flight attendants in the early 1960s. It was a restrained sexuality of the “girl-next-door” variety.<sup>155</sup> However, female sexuality would move from background to foreground, as in the airline industry, in late 1960s and into the 1970s.

By the mid-1960s, airlines were beginning to use more sexually provocative uniforms and ad campaigns, utilizing what historian Kathleen Barry called their “ready-made corps of young, single, attractive female bodies with which to eroticize their corporate personalities.” This sexualizing of flight attendants coincided with a more general cultural loosening of sexual mores. Advertising encouraged customers to see flight attendants as something more than just service. A January 1965 Continental Airlines ad featured a view of a stewardess from behind, as she bent slightly forward wearing a snug, above-the-knee skirt and heels. The text informed readers: “Our first run movies are so interesting we hope you’re not missing the other attractions aboard.” Other airlines loaded their advertising with innuendo. National Airlines famously introduced their “Fly Me” campaign in 1971; ads featured a

stewardess head shot with the caption, “I’m Cheryl. Fly Me.” The ads, controversial for their suggestiveness, ran through the mid-1970s and successfully raised the airline’s profile. The success of “Fly Me” encouraged the use of sexual innuendo by other carriers. Continental produced an ad titled, “We Really Move Our Tails for You” in 1974. Months after this, National replaced “Fly Me” with the slogan, “We’ll Fly you Like You’ve Never Been Flown Before.” More risqué advertising was joined with more risqué uniforms. From the 1930s to the mid-1960s, flight attendant uniforms had been tailored skirt-suits and blouses, expressing, in Barry’s words, “formality and respectability.” By the late 1960s, they were no longer restrained. Within a few years, flight attendants were wearing mini-skirts, “wet-look” vinyl, and “hot pants.”<sup>156</sup>

As airlines sexualized their stewardesses, sports clubs began to more overtly sexualize female service in the stadium. By the late 1960s, people were becoming accustomed to, and expecting, a more sexually explicit type of female usher. A reader of the *Washington Post* suggested in a 1968 letter to the editor that the Washington Senators try to boost attendance by hiring women like Francine Gottfried and Geri Stotts; those two, with respective measurements of 43-25-37 and 47-29-38, had nearly caused riots in New York’s financial district when crowds of up to fifteen thousand had stopped to get a glimpse of the pair in their tight-fitting sweaters.<sup>157</sup> The promotions director for Washington’s Robert F. Kennedy Stadium, Oscar Molomot, no doubt disappointed the reader when he announced in 1969 that the Senators wouldn’t be using mini-skirted usherettes, even though the Chicago White Sox and Montreal Expos were. However, Molomot didn’t rule them out for special sections like the stadium club or just inside the main gate. He allowed, “Coming into a stadium should be an exciting experience,” implicitly suggesting just how exciting sexuality in the

stadium could be.<sup>158</sup>

The Philadelphia Phillies took the sexy usher to another level. The baseball club debuted new uniforms in 1970, as part of a re-branding to coincide with the expected move from old Connie Mack Stadium into the new Veterans Stadium sometime that season (the stadium move ultimately was delayed until 1971 due to construction problems). The team also debuted female ushers in white uniforms with micro skirts, naming them the “Fillies.” Over one thousand women applied to be Fillies; the club selected one hundred forty-five women between the ages of eighteen and thirty and paid them \$9.50 a game plus tips.<sup>159</sup>

The dramatic symbolic impact of the new Fillies, who were to suggest a new era of modern service and allure, was lost when the move to Veterans stadium was delayed. The corps had served a whole season at the grimy old baseball park and lost its lustre. Upping the ante, and marking the move to the Vet with a bang, the club selected thirty-six Fillies, outfitted them in red hot pants and calf-high white vinyl boots, and designated them the “Hot Pants Patrol.” A writer for *Travel* magazine called them “an elite usher corps of lovely and shapely young ladies.”<sup>160</sup> A reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, in an article exclusively about the Fillies, opened, “It’s not just the pitchers who will be throwing curves opening day. The Philadelphia Fillies will also be throwing a few curves at the fans.” He added, “The April 10 home opener against Montreal is a sellout. Who’s to say whether it’s the Phillies, the new Veterans Stadium or the hot pants?”<sup>161</sup> A writer for the club’s 1971 *Yearbook*, explaining that the new stadium was eight-sided and not circular, recommended, “if it is curves you want, then you had better check out the nearest Fillie usherette.”<sup>162</sup>

Rosemary Sudders, head of the Fillies, revealed, “We choose the girls on personality, attractiveness and manners.” The club also selected on the basis of figure; Sudders admitted,

“They wouldn’t look very good in our uniforms if they were fat.” In the weeks before the stadium opener, Sudders and two other Fillies had been modeling the hot pants “almost daily... as various photographers came around.” One of the other models, Elaine Strang, said: “There used to be boo birds at Connie Mack Stadium. After they see these, I don’t think there will be so many.”<sup>163</sup>

This line of thinking, that hot pants would squelch the boos, seemed to be the club’s official plan, given its frequent repetition by ushers and the press. The Fillies and Hot Pants Patrol were deployed to pacify the crowd—not by elevating it with their “class,” but by diffusing it with their sexuality. A reporter for the *New York Times*, after noting that the Phillies fans were notorious for booing, wrote, “The Phillies also are hoping that the splendor of the stadium will provide a psychological change in their fans’ behavior.” Sudders promised, “We’re going to teach the boo-birds how to whistle.” The reporter quipped, in response, “It shouldn’t be difficult. In her red-and-white uniform that features hot pants...”<sup>164</sup> Though women were still being used in the stadium for their influence on men, this use—pacification via sexual distraction—marked a distinct departure from the earlier uses of women and their femininity—pacification via refinement.

Photographs of Fillies were sexually suggestive. The *Los Angeles Times* article was accompanied by a photo of Sudders in costume and in action. Shot from ground level, it was nearly an up-skirt shot, with Sudders in her gleaming knee-high white boots, red hot pants, and white top. Two male spectators in the row behind unapologetically sized her up. The caption asked, “This is an usher?”<sup>165</sup> A photo in the *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook* featured four Phillies staff—three men and an usherette. While the men stood erect, straight and professional, the Fillie, in her white mini-skirt and sleeveless white top, pointed a toe

outwards, away from the other, slightly opening up her legs and displaying their lines. She crossed her hands demurely behind her back, one eyebrow raised, seeming to flirt with the camera.<sup>166</sup> Another photo of Sudders, this one in the *1971 Phillies New Stadium Yearbook*, featured her in a white skirt and sleeveless turtleneck, the standard Fillie uniform, leaning on a railing, smiling, and looking dreamily into the distance. This too was shot from below, peeking under her white skirt. It was a shot that wouldn't seem out of place in a *Playboy* spread—the standard shot of the woman in everyday life, clothed before various stages of undress. This photo is notable for its absence of drama—whereas in the *Los Angeles Times* photo she at least pretended to be at work, her purpose here was not to be at work. Her purpose was simply to be looked at.<sup>167</sup>

This last type of photo—woman in the act of posing—visually expressed an attitude toward women in the stadium that others expressed through their language. References to pretty young women as part of the “scenery” were plentiful. William Y. Giles, executive vice president of the Phillies spoke of the successful components of any baseball business: “It can be a fabulous looking scoreboard, good-looking usherettes, nice stadium, easy parking. Anything to make the evening fun.” Giles thus coupled human, female ushers with scoreboards and parking.<sup>168</sup> Writers often used this rhetorical device when describing Giles’s stadium. A reporter for the *Washington Post* wrote of the opening of Veterans Stadium: “Miniskirted and Hot Pants-wearing usherettes and a million dollar electronic scoreboard are part of the scene.”<sup>169</sup> The *Phillies New Stadium Yearbook 1971* referred to the “mini-skirted usherettes” as “extra scenery.”<sup>170</sup> A writer for *Time* informed readers, “The stadium has parking for 12,000, wall-to-wall artificial turf, escalators, theater-type seats, air-conditioned boxes and usherettes called the Hot Pants Patrol.”<sup>171</sup> While women were objectified sexually



as models in hot pants, they were also objectified rhetorically, of a piece with the stadium's inanimate characteristics.

The changing use of female service workers in the stadium—exemplified in Philadelphia's Hot Pants Patrol—reflected shifting cultural norms of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Shifting standards of sexuality allowed for displays of the female body that some would find liberating, others exploitative, and many would view ambivalently. A generally looser code of conduct across society was reflected in more casual modes of behavior that challenged older conceptions of civility and restraint, more informal clothing styles, and more permissive attitudes about sexuality and its exhibition. For most of the 1960s, the producers of the modern stadium experience had privileged a 1950s-era brand of domesticity, with its clearly defined gender roles and an idealized masculinity that some viewed as soft and feminine. This would change at the end of the decade: the modern stadium remained a prominent site of gender construction and maintenance; however, the uses of femininity changed, revealing something too about shifting standards of masculinity. The women's liberation movement forced many men to reconsider their own masculinity, making feminists of many; figures like Alan Alda became symbols of a new, sensitive, even "androgynous" masculinity that combined strengths traditionally associated with both men and women.<sup>172</sup> But just as the sexy usherette was no feminist ideal, the androgynous man was not featured in the modern stadium. Professional football would provide a stage for more oppositional and clearly defined gender ideals—the archetypal macho sports warrior and the sexually "liberated" showgirl cheerleader.

The female usher in baseball had a corresponding figure in football: the cheerleader. Though professional football's cheerleaders were never used to express "class" as female

ushers did at major-league baseball games in the 1960s, they did represent an acceptably restrained, wholesome, and well-intentioned femininity. By the 1970s, however, these two figures—the female usher and the cheerleader—were being used in roughly the same way. They were openly sexualized, reflecting new and controversial social mores regarding public displays of sexuality and the female body.

Football was a space of, as Michael Oriard put it, “unambiguous gender roles.”<sup>173</sup> Oriard argued that college football became “spectacle” after World War II, by which he meant the sport was defined by the spectating experience as much as the game on the field. Gender was central to the culture and pageantry of college football. Women, as cheerleaders and majorettes, were elevated as sex symbols. Players and coaches were portrayed as sons or fathers alongside their mothers or girlfriends. The twin figures of the football hero and the sideline beauty were dominant in the collegiate game through the 1950s. Even as outsiders, Oriard claimed, “women played a key role in defining the center,” providing an essential contrast to masculinity during a period of social anxieties about the “softness” of men as they enjoyed the fruits of postwar prosperity. They helped define football, an arena where men could emotionally bond without suspicions of homoeroticism, while at the same time reaffirming their masculinity.

In contrast to the pageantry of the college game, professional football was a Spartan, and wholly masculine affair—on the field, on the sidelines, and in the crowd—without many of the auxiliary accents of femininity. One of the first football clubs to try to inject collegiate spirit into the professional game was the Washington Redskins. George Marshall, the Redskins owner, was the first to use a marching band at halftime, in 1936, cultivating the sort of atmosphere popular in college football stadiums. In the early 1960s, the team began

outfitting a group of young women as Indian princesses; they performed pom-pom routines on the sidelines and marched with the band at halftime.<sup>174</sup> The “Redskinettes,” as they were known, were originally conceived by two women who approached the club in 1961, offering female support from the sidelines. By the late 1960s, the Redskinettes were barely changed from their initial incarnation, and included many of their original members. There were forty women in all, ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-five. To be a Redskinettes, one needed to be, according to co-director Ann Bittenbender, a “nice looking girl who caught [sic] on quickly to routines.” Sex appeal was certainly not the priority, though Joe Margolis, director of Redskins halftime activities, clarified, “We can’t have any 200-pound girls out there.”<sup>175</sup> The group wore short skirts with flesh-colored tights, white boots, vests, and headbands with protruding feathers.<sup>176</sup> To appear more “Indian,” all members had to wear black wigs with long pigtails, which some of the women, “especially the blondes,” reporter Kenneth Turan wrote, “are not overjoyed about.”<sup>177</sup> The women also painted themselves tan. They performed at halftime shows, during timeouts, and after touchdowns at all home games and one away game each season. In the case of a touchdown, reporter Laura Kiernan described, “a dance number keyed to the Redskins march is played and the women bow and stoop like they are dancing for rain or preparing for a pow wow.”<sup>178</sup>

The Redskinettes were amateur dancers, not traditional cheerleaders. They were unpaid; each member received two free game passes per season. Bittenbender and Margolis were particularly anxious about public perception of the group. Speaking to a writer, Bittenbender reiterated, “Please emphasize that we have nothing to do with the team. This is definitely not a job for girls who want to meet Redskins.”<sup>179</sup> In another article, one of the dancers elaborated a bit: “I think if a single Redskinettes and a single Redskin met outside privately

and wanted to date it would be O.K. But your married ones, forget about it.” This anxiety about public perceptions that the dancers might be in relationships with players permeated much of the local coverage of the Redskinettes. In a 1969 article, *Washington Post* reporter Sally Quinn informed readers, “almost all of them are married, many with children, and the ones who aren’t have steady beaux.”<sup>180</sup> So, even as professional baseball teams were outfitting their female ushers in mini-skirts, the Redskinettes went to great efforts—no doubt at the insistence of the notoriously conservative club—to squelch any public perceptions of sexual impropriety in the stadium.<sup>181</sup> But while the Redskins attempted to maintain a wholesome appearance in its sideline dance group into the late 1970s, the Dallas Cowboys most certainly didn’t.

Tex Schramm, general manager of the Dallas Cowboys, hoped to use cheerleaders to promote his NFL expansion franchise in 1960. He hired Dee Brock to organize a team. Schramm had planned to use attractive models, but Brock thought that models with no background in cheering wouldn’t sustain fan interest. Instead the “Belles and the Beaux,” a coed group of thirty high school students, became the Cowboys cheerleaders from 1961 to 1971. The group tried to lead Cotton Bowl crowds in traditional collegiate cheers, but was largely ignored by fans.<sup>182</sup>

A year after moving into their new, modern football stadium in Irving in 1971, the Cowboys adopted Schramm’s original idea, forming a team of attractive dancers and giving birth to the soon-to-be-famous Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. Schramm told *Playboy* in 1978 that the club, on moving to the new stadium, assessed their fans’ response to their cheerleaders and decided to go in a new direction, making “our cheerleaders more or less atmosphere producers.” The team brought in a Broadway choreographer. A designer

produced a uniform with a bare midriff and hot pants that would become iconic and remain relatively unchanged for twenty years. When the Cowboys reached the Super Bowl in 1976, television cameras caught one cheerleader winking at the camera. From there, the group quickly became a national craze—a universal symbol of the glamorous, sexy professional cheerleader.<sup>183</sup>

The Cowboys cheerleaders changed the way the sport was watched, shifting attention from the field to the sidelines. Joan Ryan of the *Washington Post* assessed their impact in 1977: “Thanks to the wandering eye of the television camera, every football fan worth his family room six-pack has intimate, close-up knowledge of those women who wear the blue halter blouses and hip-hugging short white shorts. They are the object of male fantasy and female envy.” She called them “pro football’s first female sex symbols.” Pam Davis, one of the Cowboys cheerleaders, tried to defend the group against charges that it was over-sexualized, claiming, “A lot of people have the wrong idea about us until they meet us. We do try to be a little sexy, but in a pure sort of way. We’re not just trying to impress men. We’re trying to perform for the children and grandfathers.”<sup>184</sup> But few would have believed that assertion. Pam Seal, a former member of the Cowboys cheerleaders, contended: “The image now is not so much the nice, attractive, energetic cheerleader, but a sex object.” *New York Times* reporter Neil Amdur observed, “The surge in status for cheerleaders has come at a time when women’s liberation groups have denounced them as sexist tools. With their short shorts, crop top, vest and white boots, the Cowboy cheerleaders hardly resemble the spirited State U. coeds of the past in long skirts and bobby socks.” Though the thirty-two-girl group averaged twenty-one years old, to many they seemed older, possessing perhaps more worldly experience. Al Wright, the director of bands at Purdue University, noted the difference

between professional football's dance groups and the college cheerleaders he worked with: "They look tougher and more mature... There is more of that thing [sex appeal], but it fits that type of crowd more."<sup>185</sup>

The Cowboys cheerleaders had become "almost as famous as their winning football team," Amdur claimed. The group was indeed so popular that it was an attraction and money-maker itself. The sexuality of the Cowboys cheerleaders was visually abundant nationwide—on posters, in magazines, on televisions, in newspapers. A photo in the *New York Times* featured three cheerleaders "in action." The women seemed all smiles, breasts, stomachs, and thighs, as they raised their pom-poms overhead. In 1977 they were on the cover of *Esquire* and, Amdur contended, their "splashy poster is the hottest seller since Farah Fawcett-Majors hit the store." It was expected to sell five hundred thousand copies that season. A former Cowboys cheerleader said of it: "That doesn't look like cheerleading. That's sexy. Their shirts are open and you see a lot. My mother saw that picture and said, 'Dear, I'm sure glad you're not a cheerleader now.'" A male cheerleader from Yale was less measured in his assessment: "The Cowboy cheerleaders are simply hard-core porn."<sup>186</sup>

Though there were plenty of negative reactions to the Cowboys' sexualization of their cheerleaders, the publicity of the group drove other teams to follow suit. Even the Redskinettes abandoned their relatively homely outfits in 1978, provoking much comment; a headline in the *Washington Post* read, "The Redskinettes' New Look Raising Eyebrows and Cheers." The group traded in its jumpers for what were essentially sheer, one-piece swimsuits with plunging necklines and a diamond cut out of the midriff, exposing the bellybutton. There were bits of fringe about the neck, the waist, and at the top of the knee-high white boots.<sup>187</sup>

When they debuted their new outfits by dropping their capes, the crowd at RFK Stadium whistled. As the game progressed, many realized that the outfits revealed more than they wanted to see, including, as reporter Henry Allen put it, “twin triangles of untanned tushie in view.” Allen overheard “double-taken matrons” in the mezzanine boxes who “wielded their most crushing sighs, one of them even warning: ‘I certainly hope we won’t see those costumes again next week.’” Bill Allen, who had previously headed the Dolphin Dolls, a conservatively dressed teenage-girl dance team for the Miami Dolphins, remarked, “Cheerleading is becoming nothing more than a battle of bellybuttons, b—bs and bottoms.” The wife of *Post* columnist Dave Kindred told him she hoped that the cheerleaders would “all grow up and have daughters who think it’s wonderful to dance for lecherous old men.”<sup>188</sup>

The Redskins publicly backtracked on the Redskinettes’ new uniform. Its bottoms were expanded and the diamond-shaped hole in the midriff was covered with mesh for the following game. Halftime director Margolis, who at first claimed, “In today’s market, the old uniforms were conservative. We’re not going to be left behind,” pledged the following week, “We don’t want a sex show.”<sup>189</sup> Redskins president, Edward Bennett Williams, apologized in a letter to a fan, calling the outfits “inappropriate.”<sup>190</sup> However the Redskins had, like so many other clubs in the league, decided to chase the Cowboys. The Redskinettes joined the ranks of the Denver Broncos’ Pony Express, the L.A. Rams’ Embraceable Ewes, the Buffalo Bills’ Jills, the Miami Dolphins’ Starbrites, the Chicago Bears’ Honey Bears, and the Oakland Raiderettes. Though the club played innocent in what reporter Leonard Shapiro called “the Great Redskinettes Cover-up,” Dick Garrison, boss of the Redskinettes, observed after considering the stadium response to the uniforms: “Those certainly weren’t boos.”<sup>191</sup>

The shifting displays of gender in the modern stadium reflected a conflicted social context encompassing it. While many people were distressed over the objectification of women as sexy ushers or cheerleaders, most customers in the stadium were not. Had the increasing sexualization of cheerleaders and female ushers been unpopular, it would have ceased. The use of women in the stadium was entwined with shifting conceptions of masculinity. Historian Michael Kimmel noted that white, middle-class men faced many challenges to their manhood and authority in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the women’s movement, civil rights, and gay liberation among them. These movements scathingly critiqued traditional conceptions of manhood, and these critiques were expressed in the spaces of men’s daily lives—often at home and in the workplace.<sup>192</sup>

The stadium of the 1970s emerged as a sort of counter-countercultural space where ostracized men could openly celebrate a masculinity that was expressively and unapologetically heterosexual. Don Meredith, the color commentator for *Monday Night Football*, said as much to announcer Howard Cosell on air in 1978, “We’re giving people what they want from football—sex and violence.”<sup>193</sup> While the colorful Meredith was hardly a unitary spokesman for sports culture, this belief was commonly held. Though women were still there, as customers and service, and many of the features used by promoters to attract women remained—the clubs, the comforts, the conveniences—the atmosphere itself shifted from a more domesticated, middle-class space to a rowdier, more masculine, even reactionary one—an expression of Nixon’s Silent Majority, Americans dismayed by the social upheavals of the preceding years. The stadium of the 1970s celebrated male physical prowess on the field and female sexuality on the margins, in the aisles and along the sidelines.



And yet, masculine violence wasn't always constrained to the playing field. The stands were also the site of increased "rowdyism," as it was long called in baseball, in the 1970s. Steve Cady of the *New York Times* wrote in 1975, "Unruly fans practicing what one psychiatrist calls 'recreational violence' are turning America's sports events into an outlet for vulgarity and rowdyism."<sup>194</sup> Sportswriter George Vecsey noted in 1978 that it was clear crowds were "less pleasant than a decade ago."<sup>195</sup> Fan behavior ranged from the shouting of obscenities and the display of crude banners to more violently threatening practices like fistfights, throwing objects onto the field, and entering the field. The increased stadium rowdyism was linked, most agreed, to stadiums' highly profitable beer sales and pre-game drinking. Some anticipated a need for fences around the field, as at Latin American and European soccer grounds. The rowdy atmosphere of the stadium did produce enhanced security—as much for display value as function. Officials in Kansas City assured customers: "Mainly the increased security is not because we have severe problems. They're there for people's peace of mind."<sup>196</sup> Many in baseball thought that "the old-style flare up" had stemmed from events on the field, but "today's fans" became rowdy "for no apparent reason."<sup>197</sup> Stadium rowdyism—a signifier of fan authenticity for Roger Angell in 1964—seemed different in the 1970s, disconnected from the game, a violence for its own sake.<sup>198</sup>

If the modern stadiums of the early to middle 1960s represented a feminization of stadium space, then the stadium culture of the 1970s represented a re-masculinization, encouraging a more clearly defined brand of masculinity distinct from both the soft and feminized masculinity of the postwar era and the sensitive masculinity of the 1970s. Like the gender on display in the popular magazine *Playboy*, this was a masculinity grounded not in work, but sex and play, and a femininity given over to pleasing men.<sup>199</sup> The modern stadium

of the 1970s could thus serve as a critique of not only the feminization of the stadium of the 1960s, but of the perceived feminization of culture more broadly in the 1970s.

The elevation of the sexy cheerleader to stadium icon in the 1970s was just another example of a shifting stadium culture. The artificial stadium cast the traditional aside in a pursuit of new solutions. The structures themselves dismissed traditional layouts and natural materials. Promoters within the stadium perpetuated and expanded a Hofheinzian vision of the stadium experience, in which auxiliary entertainments competed with, or compensated for, the games on the field. The stadium and television, competitors since the early 1950s, had adopted essentially the same approaches to sports production—each packing the sports experience with constant noise, chatter, and visual stimulation. By the late 1970s this strategy, which seemed to work in the reductive medium of television, had gutted the stadium of much of its personality and pleasure.

### **“Stadiums have become television studios”: the convergence of sports experience**

The experiences of sports spectators—within the material spaces of the modern stadium and on the virtual spaces of television—had largely converged by the mid-1970s. A landmark in this convergence was the debut of *Monday Night Football* on ABC in 1970. The program was under the steerage of Roone Arledge, who had also produced the network’s coverage of the “Battle of the Sexes.” He had honed his football production skills on college football broadcasts throughout the 1960s, developing an idiom that, in his words, brought “the viewer to the game rather than the game to the viewer.”<sup>200</sup> To do this, Arledge and ABC shot the game in innovative ways—from blimps, cranes, and helicopters, using hand-held cameras to capture close-ups of cheerleaders and coaches and rifle microphones to record the smashing of pads on the field and the buzz of the stands. His philosophy was to fill dead

time, constantly engaging the television viewer with shots of the scene and commentary from broadcasters. *Monday Night Football* enhanced the televisual spectacle of ABC's football production with nine different cameras, cutting-edge slow motion technologies, and commentators who were stars in their own right—the opinionated Howard Cosell, the irreverent good-old-boy Don Meredith, and the winning Frank Gifford. *Monday Night Football* became the standard for televised professional football, and by the mid-1970s, NBC and CBS had embraced the Roone approach as well.<sup>201</sup> In his history of the NFL, Oriard claimed that the invention of *Monday Night Football* was the “first decisive shift from treating football as sport to treating it as an entertainment product.” Under this approach, “the show, not the game, was what mattered.”<sup>202</sup>

The precedence of the show over the game went hand-in-hand with the sense that the stadium itself hardly mattered, except as a stage set for television drama. Some had anticipated, or at least speculated about, such a development since the late 1950s. An American League official had told sportswriter Roger Kahn in 1959 that baseball would survive competition from television by making ballparks “TV studios,” asking rhetorically, “Do you know a better way to sell cigarettes and beer?” When a critic suggested that this plan seemed “unromantic,” the official responded, “It’s too late to worry about that now. The mistakes have been made. We went into the television business and now we have to make a living in the only way we can.”<sup>203</sup> Frank Lane, an executive for the Baltimore Orioles baseball club, had told *Newsweek* in 1965, “Within ten years, the baseball parks of America will be mere studios for pay television.”<sup>204</sup> Professor and novelist Mark Harris argued this in a 1969 article in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* (an essay I will revisit shortly) when he claimed football stadiums were nothing more than a stage set for made-for-television drama,

and the fans there were simply studio audiences.<sup>205</sup> Most knowledgeable observers, like television critic Ron Powers, thought that stadiums had become “vast super-studios” by the 1970s, filled with fans who were no more than “paying extras”; by then, most club revenue came from television rights fees, not stadium gate receipts.<sup>206</sup> When the NFL’s Jets were considering moving from Shea Stadium to the New Jersey Meadowlands in 1983, sportswriter George Vecsey wrote, “Some people will argue it doesn’t matter that the Jets move a few miles across the river. In Marshall McLuhan’s global village, football stadiums have become television studios, and fans drink beer and fight in the aisles as paying extras for the benefit of millions of viewers.”<sup>207</sup> Venerable sports historian Allen Guttman, considering the influence of television money in sport, concluded, “At best, ballpark spectators have become the equivalent of studio guests; at worst, they are background, mere television props.”<sup>208</sup> There was a persistent and escalating sense that the stadium was of thoroughly secondary importance to the television and that the stadium customer (who had paid for the privilege) was secondary to the television customer (who received the game without cost)—a sense that degraded the significance of the stadium. The ballpark seemed even further removed from its traditional status as an urban landmark, as an anchor of community identity, and as a site where great players did great things.

Modern stadiums were appropriate analogues to television’s placeless artifice. Each sports medium pitched itself to the casual fan over the committed one through a combination of comforts and entertainments extraneous to the game on the field. This approach to sports production in the stadium began with the multi-use enhancements of Norman Bel Geddes’s futuristic stadium plans in the late 1940s and early 1950s, then was embodied in Roy Hofheinz’s Astrodome in 1965. In television, it started with Roone Arledge’s re-engineered

television production practiced in the 1960s and enhanced through the 1970s.<sup>209</sup> By the opening of the Metrodome in 1982, the dialogic engagement of the stadium and the television had produced a stadium experience broadly flattened, from stadium to stadium, from stadium to living room. The stadium had reached the apex of its artificiality, a stage for the virtual space of the television first and a stage for the actual game second.

### **“From mythic game to ostentatious spectacle”: sporting jeremiads**

Many commentators believed that the influence of television and development of the modern stadium reflected the degradation of sport—its decline from a once heroic practice of real social importance to a cheapened spectacle infested by television’s economic influence, the alteration of rules to make games more attractive to casual customers, and the in-stadium gimmicks that provided constant stimulation for an audience socialized to expect it. Historian Benjamin Rader argued that television had divided American sports history into two periods, split in the mid-1960s. On one side of this divide was a pre-television era of “Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, Joe DiMaggio, Knute Rockne, Ebbets Field, and the Polo Grounds; of simple-minded athletes, benevolent owners, and play for its own sake.” He continued,

On the other side of the barrier is our own era, a time of division and strife; of player unions, strikes, and George Steinbrenner; of Pete Rozelle, Reggie Jackson, and Jackie Sherrill; of Texas Stadium and the Astrodome. Clearly on one side is radio, Red Barber, and boys playing baseball on empty lots or cow pastures; on the other side lies television, Howard Cosell, and pre-adolescent boys playing on Pop Warner football teams, complete with plastic helmets, adult coaches, and briefly clad nine-year-old cheerleaders.<sup>210</sup>

Rader’s account of the impact of television on sport, published in 1984, was very much of its time. His complaint, which posited a pre-television golden age of sport and post-television era of degraded entertainment, resonated with a series of complaints made throughout the

1970s. In some way each of these jeremiads lamented the trivialization of sport, which seemed to have fallen in status from the mythological to just another cheap entertainment in a crowded landscape of easy stimulation.

These anxieties were not limited to the sports world. Novelist Norman Mailer complained in 1979, “The ‘70s was the decade in which people put emphasis on the skin, on the surface, rather than on the root of things. It was the decade in which image became preeminent because nothing deeper was going on.”<sup>211</sup> If there was something deeper going on, it was occurring in smaller, more circumscribed circles. The “Me Decade,” as Tom Wolfe called it, was notorious for its supposed narcissism exhibited through people’s detachment from broader social goals and their commitment to personal and private fulfillment—a whimpering sequel to the ambitious 1960s.

De-industrialization provided a telling economic context for cultural expressions of anxiety. An economy that had long been oriented around production shifted to one grounded in consumption and leisure. White-collar workers first outnumbered their blue-collar counterparts in 1956.<sup>212</sup> By the early 1970s, a Fordist system of mass production—highly rationalized and centralized—had been broadly replaced by more flexible modes of production, with substantial implications for American cities, their suburbs, and, of course, their residents.<sup>213</sup> This economic reorientation—exemplified in the re-authoring of downtown St. Louis from industrial landscape to a white-collar corporate center and consumer-oriented entertainment space, as outlined in the previous chapter—was bound up with shifting modes of cultural expression. Anxieties about economic insecurity, exacerbated as companies continued to adapt to more flexible modes of production, were culturally expressed through a prevailing nostalgia, the recovery of traditions, and the widespread

exploration of racial and ethnic heritage. The seeming stability of the past provided reassurance against the shifting contours and alienation of modern life.<sup>214</sup>

A sense of alienation, and a compensatory longing for the traditional and authentic, was particularly prevalent in professional sports cultures.<sup>215</sup> Soaring television revenues and salaries through the late 1960s and 1970s highlighted an increasingly distinct divide between owners and players on one side and fans on the other.<sup>216</sup> Cultural theorist Fredric Jameson, considering the relationship between cultural “authenticity” and capitalism, wrote in 1979, “the only authentic cultural production today” was that which had “not yet been fully penetrated by the market and by the commodity system.”<sup>217</sup> Professional baseball and football had been fully and comprehensibly penetrated by the late 1970s. Jameson’s contempt for the seemingly corrosive effects of the market on cultural expression was certainly shared by many in the late 1970s—sports purists and intellectuals alike. While football and baseball had long been professionalized, the great influx of money into sports business seemed to strip it of whatever “authenticity” it had once enjoyed as a sometime refuge for colorful misfits staged in idiosyncratic stadiums. Calls for a return to roots—some more historically naïve than others—imagined a time when markets were less implicated in the games and sports seemed determined by their essence, not market expedience.

Mark Harris, a professor of English and author of a series of baseball-themed novels, offered one such critique of the direction of sport, in “Maybe What Baseball Needs Is a Henry David Thoreau,” published in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* in 1969. Harris’s combative essay blasted the modern approach of baseball’s “proprietors,” marking changes in the game augured by Angell’s 1966 interpretation of the Astrodome experience. Those proprietors saw baseball as “Show Business,” and as such it required alteration to make it a

better spectacle for consumers. The game had made rules changes “to increase scoring, generally upon the theory that most people who watch baseball games prefer big scores to small ones, as do mesmerized people who linger at pinball machines.” “Like any manufacturer of patented commercial games, of shoes or a thousand instantly obsolete items,” Harris wrote, “the proprietors of baseball have made various ‘scientific’ studies of their product.” These studies found that only five percent of the game was devoted to actual play. “To anyone with a passion for continuous, ceaseless action these are very bad numbers,” he sarcastically noted, “like those that show us that we sleep away one-third of our lives and spend most of the remainder eating, shaving, dressing, undressing and parking our cars, except, perhaps, for an infinitesimal minimum spent in love.” Harris pointed to the “freedom from tradition and precedent” of postwar sports entertainers: “No century’s weight hung about their necks.” Clubs used to be family owned, Harris claimed, passed down from generation to generation. The new group of owners were interested solely in making money, and thus not the integrity of the old game and its traditions.

Football was a frequent target for baseball purists, as it was for Harris. He saw it as a perfect fit for television, because “the medium was the message. The game was fast, never stopping... and bereft of all subtlety—quite like the blunt drama presented by the same eye during other hours.” According to Harris, “the event was fake.” While football’s proprietors accepted fans into their stadiums, their real interest was “the unseen millions in parlors, dens, family rooms and taverns, lulled by the illusion that they were spying upon an actual game, at no cost to themselves.” The stadiums had been constructed “primarily to situate the camera, and only incidentally to seat real people—sprinkling them about to give the illusion of a crowd enthralled, as canned laughter gives the illusion of humor.” Football fans, Harris



claimed, paid to be props in a made-for-television drama.

“But baseball,” Harris concluded, “is slow. It always was. It was slow in 1869.” He appealed to baseball owners on the basis of practicality, writing, “The man you need may be Henry David Thoreau, and what you need may be, not expansion but contraction, not speed but the nourishment of old roots, not closer fences or lowered scoreboards but a renewed connection between the game and its essential followers, not the eye of the camera but the vision of Time Past and Time to Come.” The alteration of baseball’s rules and production to fit a seemingly faster, televised age was a mistake. “The velocity will abate,” he promised. The problem with baseball was not that it was too slow, but that it had been distorted and cheapened by proprietors trying to speed it up. Harris argued, invoking a pastoral nostalgia, “Baseball can be transfused by speed and expansion, but only a wise obedience to Nature can save it.”<sup>218</sup>

This was an argument that gained steam in the 1970s—and not just for baseball’s loyal traditionalists. Michael Oriard, just three years after concluding his playing career in the NFL, published an essay in the geography journal *Landscape* in 1976 that also lamented sport’s modern disconnection with the natural. In it he argued that the ballpark and stadium were traditionally sources of psychic compensation for the loss of the frontier, antidotes to the worst effects of industrialization and urbanization. Sports like baseball and football were “symbolic reenactments of our struggle to survive in wild nature and vestigial clings to our intimate relationship to pastoral nature.” This psychological need and relationship was undermined by the “artificiality of modern stadiums.”

The standardization and artificiality of stadiums degraded the quality of experience there, for both players and fans. As a player, Oriard recalled the “non-experience” of playing in

artificial spaces like Busch Stadium, the partially roofed Texas Stadium, and, most of all, the enclosed Astrodome, which provoked a sense of “constriction” and “unreality.” In the monumental modern stadiums like Three Rivers Stadium and Riverfront Stadium, he felt remote from the spectators. Conversely, “In the less pretentious stadiums,” he remembered, “we players seemed the focal point... We were bound to our fans in a common undertaking. We were not merely ornaments or objects of the spectators’ amusement.”

Television and the modern stadiums worked together, in his opinion, to “demythologize” sport. Television was an instrument of reduction, squeezing large fields onto small screens, deconstructing heroic plays with slow-motion replays and analysis. Artificial stadiums too “reduced the mythic possibilities of American sport,” Oriard ventured. He concluded,

The stadium is becoming less a source of psychic regeneration and more a theater in which the spectator demands to be entertained by showmanship and victories, and where the player simply earns a salary. The commercial and pastoral aspects of sports have coexisted since the 1920’s in relative equilibrium. But the recent trend toward dominance by technology signals a fundamental revision of American sport—a shift from mythic game to ostentatious spectacle.<sup>219</sup>

Oriard’s fundamental premise—that sport was being trivialized and thus losing its social consequence—was taken up by Christopher Lasch in 1979 in his best-selling work, *The Culture of Narcissism*.

Lasch devoted an entire chapter of his book to what he called “the degradation of sport.” This degradation stemmed from the alteration of sport’s traditional conventions. Pointing to Johan Huizenga’s classic analysis of the secularization of sport, Lasch claimed that athletic events became degraded when they lost their element of ritual. But while Huizenga sourced this degradation to “over-seriousness,” Lasch believed “the degradation of sport... consists not in its being taken too seriously but in its trivialization.”<sup>220</sup> Lasch suggested that the increased violence of crowds was evidence of this trivialization. Though the violence of

crowds was “routinely blamed on the violence of modern sports and the habit of taking them too seriously,” Lasch argued that it derived “on the contrary, out of a failure to take them seriously enough—to abide by the conventions that should bind spectators as well as players.”<sup>221</sup>

Lasch claimed that the trivialization of sport emanated from multiple sources. Franchise relocation and expansion undermined local attachment to players and teams, and thus the ritualistic practices of committed fandom. The increased money and salaries—due largely to ever-increasing television contracts—made it difficult to think of athletes as heroes—based on class, race, or ethnic affiliation—as they had previously been. Recipients of and apologists for these high salaries justified them by re-framing sport as entertainment, rather than ritual; Lasch cited announcer Howard Cosell, who said that sports couldn’t be promoted “as just sports or as religion... Sports aren’t life and death. They’re entertainment.” However, Lasch pointed out, resentment against athletes for their high salaries and advertising deals suggested that people wanted them to be something more than just entertainers, and thus athletes weren’t satisfying a broader psychic need that they had once fulfilled.<sup>222</sup>

Television played a fundamental role in the trivialization of sport. It “enlarged the audience for sports while lowering the level of its understanding.” Televised sports productions addressed spectators as though they were imbeciles. Lasch pointed to sports commentators “who direct at the audience an interminable stream of tutelage in the basics of the game, and of the promoters who reshape one game after another to conform to the tastes of an audience supposedly incapable of grasping their finer points.” Rules changes—such as the use of the designated hitter in the American League to boost scoring—exemplified sports’ show-business sensibility, at the expense of the traditional.<sup>223</sup>

Demythologized sport-as-show-business was a useful symbol for an age in which “spectacle” had emerged “as the dominant form of cultural expression.”<sup>224</sup>

Oriard weighed in again in 1981 in an anti-NFL polemic that channeled both his earlier piece and the position of Lasch. He described what he thought was the transformation of professional football in the 1970s from a cultural practice with mythical functions to an empty form of entertainment. In 1976, he had used the artificial stadium as his evidence; in 1981, he connected this demythologization more fully to the prominence of television and the impact television had on the stadium experience. He argued, “What television does to football at the most fundamental level is emphasize the spectacle of the game. By replaying the most exciting plays, by filling all lulls between plays with ‘honey shots’ or banter and supposedly ‘expert’ commentary by a team of announcers, television transforms the game in subtle ways to fit the capabilities of the medium.” Television producers, Oriard figured, knew that they had to pack their product with excitement, “constant action and sensory stimulation,” lest living room viewers leave the room or change the channel. This was a reasonable approach, Oriard allowed.

The production of football games in the stadium in this vein, on the other hand, was not. The NFL “curiously seems to be trying to recreate if possible the experience of watching the game on TV,” he claimed. Theater seats were used to “duplicate the comfort of the living room.” Electronic scoreboards led cheers, provided statistics, and displayed replays, “as do announcers on TV.” The stadium’s aping of television was “increasingly transforming heroes into mere celebrities and moving the game away from sport to spectacle, from mythic contest in which the true fan is involved to sensory overload which is viewed from the outside.” Oriard recalled fan involvement of a different age, when collegiate supporters

organized and practiced cheers before games in order to intimidate opposing players during them. “This sort of intimate involvement,” Oriard concluded, “is not possible for fans when the game is packaged in such a way that plays seem to them not a sequence of carefully executed maneuvers planned between downs, but merely part of a continuously distracting spectacle.” Exhibit A in this transformation was the “showgirl” cheerleader. For Oriard, she signified “neither the moral degeneration nor the sexism of the NFL, but the NFL’s loss of faith in the appeal of its own game” to satisfy visitors to the stadium.<sup>225</sup>

The complaints of Harris, Lasch, and Oriard were not dirges, but jeremiads—lamentations with an eye on renewal.<sup>226</sup> Each measured the new unfavorably against the old. Like Rader’s television divide, they contrasted a sporting past—marked by words like mythic, slow, regeneration, roots, pastoral, tradition, Nature—with a sporting present of degradation, illusion, velocity, trivialization, artificiality, reduction, constriction, show business, amusement, spectacle, and entertainment. These sporting jeremiads implicitly, when not explicitly, called for a return to roots, a reclamation of sport that was, if not pure, at least authentic. They called for an end to a postwar, modern way of thinking that dismissed the traditional as out-dated; that always privileged the new over the old; that assumed if home runs are exciting, even more home runs would be more exciting; that figured if a technology existed, it must be used. This was the kind of thinking that produced a modern stadium that was a machine rather than a playground. These critics—and others as well—suggested a return to, as Angell put it, the “slow, green time” of sport.<sup>227</sup>

**“Going back to baseball’s essence”: an anti-modern, modern stadium**

The strongest indictment against the modern stadium came in 1989, when Baltimore unveiled plans for a new, downtown, baseball-specific stadium. Having surveyed the plans, *New York Times* architectural critic Paul Goldberger rejoiced, writing,

If it is half as good as the models and renderings suggest, it will represent a return to baseball as it should be; a game played on grass, not turf; under the sky, not a dome; in the middle of a city, not out on an interstate highway. This is a building capable of wiping out in a single gesture 50 years of wretched stadium design, and of restoring the joyous possibility that a ball park might actually enhance the experience of watching the game of baseball.<sup>228</sup>

Goldberger's reading of the planned ballpark perfectly channeled the intention of stadium designers—to build the anti-modern, anti-artificial stadium. An article in the *Washington Post* provided ample room for the stadium's future tenant, the Orioles, to explain their vision. Janet Marie Smith, Orioles vice president for planning and development, explained, "We studied the old ballparks to see what made them special." Plans called for a structure dominated by arched brick and steel trusses; the architects would avoid what a reporter called the "mausoleum effect of unrelieved concrete," as expressed in the modern stadiums. Smith specified that the designers wanted an intimate setting, with seats closer to the field than those at modern, multipurpose structures. They planned to blend the stadium into the cityscape, rather than place it distinctly apart. The continual subtext, in describing the plans, was that the ballpark would *not* be another modern stadium, but one that seemed to be from baseball's past—the era of Ebbets Field, the Polo Grounds, and Sportsman's Park. Orioles president Larry Lucchino emphasized this point, claiming, "We refer to it as 'the ballpark,' not a stadium. We try not to use the S-word."<sup>229</sup>

An architectural rendering from HOK Sport, architects for the project, accompanied both Goldberger's assessment and the *Washington Post* article. It featured a low-rise ballpark snugly fixed against the urban landscape on one side and flanked by parking spaces on the

other (the display value of parking was key for *Post* readers who had labored against the congestion around old Memorial Stadium). The future park was ringed with massive, heavy arches; behind these, trussed banks of seats emerged. The right-field stands seemed to bisect a massive warehouse—an early twentieth century structure integrated into the design. Beyond the stadium was the cluster of downtown modern towers, their bland horizontal lines contrasting with the visual variety of the new park.<sup>230</sup>

Oriole Park at Camden Yards—a name that managed two pastoral references in five words—was the official title of the new stadium when it opened in 1992.<sup>231</sup> Roundly celebrated, “Camden Yards,” as it was commonly known, was located in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, near the city’s Harborplace festival marketplace. Harborplace, designed by influential developer James Rouse, was one of the first historically themed, consumption-oriented, gentrified urban spaces when opened in the early 1980s. Such developments were what Goldberger, writing seven years after his enthusiastic reception of the Camden Yards plans, would term “urbanoid environments”—private spaces that masqueraded as public ones. Pitched to middle-class, often suburban, consumers, these urbanoid spaces mediated between what sociologist John Hannigan called “the middle-class desire for experience and [its] parallel reluctance to take risks.”<sup>232</sup> People gleaned a sense of the authentic from gentrified urban spaces—festival marketplaces like Harborplace among them. Visitors were afforded a simulated city experience in a built environment that signified authenticity and tradition through a historicist aesthetic.<sup>233</sup>

This was the new postmodern stadium that embraced a postmodern urban idiom.<sup>234</sup> Camden Yards featured heavy brick arches and revealed steel trusses. Its irregular dimensions fit into the existing streetscape. It integrated the adjacent railroad warehouse into

the design, which seemed to stitch the park into the urban fabric. It employed a whole range of accents to signify pastness—ironwork details, retro-styled advertising, sand-blasted signage painted on brick, costumed service workers. Camden Yards expressed, in the words of cultural historian Daniel Rosensweig, “the fundamental and magical simplicity of an earlier era.”<sup>235</sup>

Camden Yards seemed to be everything the modern stadium wasn't. It was a return to roots, recalling the early twentieth-century baseball parks that the modern stadiums had replaced. Comparisons to these old parks seemed endless. One commentator claimed, “Left field. . . is a homage to Yankee Stadium's most memorable features. . . Center field is an obvious nod to Wrigley. . . Right field is pure Ebbets Field.”<sup>236</sup> Another argued, “the asymmetrical playing field contains nooks and crannies in the outfield that will make playing defense there a thoughtful and artful vocation, in the mold of trying to learn all the angles at Boston's Fenway Park.”<sup>237</sup> A third wrote, “To most, the huge brick B&O Warehouse provided the park's signature touch, looming large behind a sign-festooned right field fence reminiscent of Ebbets Field's.”<sup>238</sup> Though brand new, the park seemed well-worn, well-used, and thus more real and authentic. Baltimore Orioles General Manager Roland Hemond admitted, “I feel like there's already history here. It's like we transported the tradition and didn't lose it.”<sup>239</sup> Baltimore star Cal Ripken said, “This may be the first game, but it feels like baseball has been played here before. It's kind of strange. And really beautiful.”<sup>240</sup>

Many celebrated the connection of the park to the city around it. Physically and visually, Camden Yards seemed a sibling of the old traditional ballparks locked in their urban landscapes—parks like Ebbets Field and Fenway Park. Orioles owner Eli Jacobs claimed, “This is the city. The park is an integral part of the whole experience. It's a natural part of



the cityscape. It feels like it's been here a long time."<sup>241</sup> HOK Sport, the architectural firm, claimed that parks like Camden Yards "provide authenticity and symbolism, forging a bond between community and resident by illustrating a city's best features."<sup>242</sup> Of the Baltimore park particularly, Tim Kurkjian of *Sports Illustrated* wrote, "It's a real ballpark built into a real downtown of a real city."<sup>243</sup>

The new park wasn't just celebrated as a physical fit with the city, but a spiritual and ideological one as well. Kirkjian argued, "It's fitting that the new age of retro park is being celebrated already in Baltimore, a provincial, blue-collar, crab-cakes-and-beer town with thick roots and a thicker accent." Orioles pitcher Mike Flanagan also linked the city's blue-collar identity with a new stadium that seemed blue-collar as well, claiming, "It's a working-class park in a working-class town."<sup>244</sup> *Washington Post* writer Eve Zibert called it "the most embracing, class-leveling, elbow-rubbing baseball stadium of our dreams" and an expression of "democracy."<sup>245</sup>

For all its seeming traditionalism and hard-scrabble lineage, however, Camden Yards was luxurious—and in many ways quite modern—compared to its predecessor. Memorial Stadium was a single-decked horseshoe football stadium that had been expanded with a second deck for the arrival of the St. Louis Browns, who moved there from Sportsman's Park after the 1953 season. While the stadiums of the 1960s and 1970s evoked an engineered functionalist modernism, Memorial Stadium expressed a modernism of an earlier time; Thomas Boswell of the *Washington Post* thought it "looked like the worst of stark Socialist Realism." The stadium, also known as "The Old Gray Lady of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street," featured a smooth, brick façade punched out with windows and accented with narrow glimpses of concrete ramps, flush with the brick. The monumental main entrance, distinguished by

concrete facing, was dramatically covered with metal letters, memorializing the dead from the two World Wars and topped with a somber “Memorial Stadium” in machine-age lettering. Boswell noted of the stadium, “No attempt at grace is possible. None is tried.”<sup>246</sup>

At first glance, Camden Yards seemed a sibling of the early twentieth century ballparks. But when compared to Memorial Stadium—a structure that was more 1910s than 1960s—it became clear that the new ballpark had internalized many of the characteristics of the mid-century modern stadiums it was promised to defy. Though downtown, Camden Yards was adjacent to a freeway, convenient to suburban visitors; Memorial Stadium was lodged into a residential neighborhood, and notorious for its post-game traffic jams. The upper deck at Camden Yards was cantilevered; at Memorial Stadium, the second deck sat atop two-foot-wide support posts that obstructed plenty of sightlines. Camden Yards allowed its visitors more personal space; leg room for spectators in the new grounds varied between thirty-two to thirty-three inches, compared to the twenty-four to twenty-six inches at Memorial Stadium, and seats were nineteen-to twenty-one inches wide, compared to sixteen-to-nineteen at the old place. Camden Yards featured luxury suites and a video screen. It was perhaps the best “stadium-as-studio” in the nation, boasting thirty-seven television camera locations staged throughout (compared to six at most parks), along with a television production studio. Herb Belgrad, chairman of the Maryland Stadium Authority, asserted, “In the end we came up with state of art facilities and amenities as well as a traditional stadium”—a claim that suggested the meaning of “traditional” applied only to visual semiotics.<sup>247</sup>

Camden Yards became a national fixation and the envy of baseball executives and civic leaders across the country. Baseball commissioner Bud Selig would later call it “one of the

two or three most powerful developments in the history of baseball,” after a number of cities had adopted its style to profitable results.<sup>248</sup> HOK Sport designed retro baseball parks, and even some retro football stadiums, in city-after-city through the 1990s and into the 2000s, including Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and San Diego. The firm designed Enron Field (now Minute Maid Park) for Houston, a downtown retro ballpark opened in 2000 that, in most modern fashion, featured a retractable roof. (HOK Sport also conceived the city’s new retractable roof football stadium, the futuristic Reliant Stadium, next door to the Astrodome.) In 2006, a new Busch Stadium, also designed by HOK Sport, opened adjacent the old modern one in St. Louis. Featuring massive brick towers—supposed references to the landmark Eads Bridge—this historicist park opened up to the city, providing most fans views of the iconic Gateway Arch. HOK Sport—renamed “Populous” in 2009—also devised Citi Field for a lot adjacent Shea Stadium in Queens. Opened in 2009, the retro park was “a blend of modern-day amenities and historic charm,” masquerading as Brooklyn’s old Ebbets Field.<sup>249</sup>

In spite of these fields’ ballyhooed departure from the modern idiom, closer inspection reveals that they hardly turned their backs on the modern stadiums they replaced. Though they seemed a radical break from the modern, a “going back to baseball’s essence,” as Goldberger phrased it, they retained many of the signature features of that earlier, but much-maligned generation of stadium.<sup>250</sup> Massive, loaded with luxury suites, dominated by elaborate scoreboards and relentless sound systems, publicly funded, and pitched towards affluent suburbanites, the new stadiums didn’t seem so different from the old ones in Queens, Houston, and St. Louis once you scratched the surface. Like modern stadiums thirty years before, these ballparks reconfigured stadium space for the more decorous and affluent

middle classes that had become disenchanted with older structures. That they seemed so different speaks to the power of visual signifiers and the intense lure of the seemingly traditional after decades of modernism that so eagerly turned its back on the past.

Compared to the old stadiums like Ebbets Field, considered “classic” by the 1990s, Camden Yards and its ilk were urbanoid ballparks, mediating between experience and risk for those on urban “leisure safaris.”<sup>251</sup> The postmodern, historicist stadium united a 1970s impulse towards the “authentic” and traditional with a 1950s and 1960s desire for the comfortable, technologized, and consumerist. The artificiality of the late modern stadiums was punctured by a turn back to real grass, open vistas, traditional materials like brick and steel, and asymmetrical formats. The new parks employed an artificiality of a different order, exemplified in a thematic recovery of the authentic—a hyperreal, Disneyfied, sanitized version of raucous old Brooklyn—for an affluent suburban audience. The modern stadium had not been, as Goldberger had hoped, wiped out. It had mutated.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 161.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Goodman, “How King Rained on Riggs’ Parade,” *Time*, October 1, 1973, 110. Neil Amdur, “Mrs. King Defeats Riggs, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, Amid a Circus Atmosphere,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1973. Charles Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It.”

<sup>4</sup> King and Riggs were both guaranteed one hundred thousand dollars to play, with that figure doubled for the winner. The winning share of two hundred thousand dollars would nearly double King’s yearly earnings, which were tops in women’s tennis. Las Vegas oddsmaker Jimmy the Greek Snyder put the odds at five-to-two for Riggs. One press pool had twenty-two of thirty-two reporters picking Riggs. Heavyweight boxer George Foreman, who was to deliver the ceremonial winner’s check at the match conclusion, thought King would do the job. Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It.” Grace Lichtenstein, “Mrs. King Calls Victory ‘Culmination’ of Career,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Goodman, “How King Rained on Riggs’ Parade,” 110. Curry Kirkpatrick, “There She Is, Ms. America,” *Sports Illustrated*, October 1, 1973, 31. Amdur, “Mrs. King Defeats Riggs, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, Amid a Circus Atmosphere.” Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It.”

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<sup>6</sup> The iconic and controversial Howard Cosell called the match for ABC. Player Rosie Casals, who would defeat King in a tournament just days later, was equally controversial on this occasion, playing the role of anti-Riggs feminist, no doubt encouraged by Arledge and his sense of television theater. The Arledge-produced *Monday Night Football*, debuted in 1970 featuring Cosell, crystallized the reinvention of the commentator as star entertainer, something more than mere facilitator to understanding the game—an elaboration of earlier colorful pundits like Dizzy Dean. See James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Winning Is the Only Thing: Sports in America Since 1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

As King entered the arena, Cosell commented on her appearance, revealing the cognitive dissonance many experienced when confronted with people both female and athletic: “Billie Jean is an attractive young woman. Sometimes you get the feeling that if she would only let her hair grow down to her shoulders and take her glasses off we would have a star vying for a Hollywood screenplay.” As King proceeded to thump Riggs, Cosell changed his tune, noting her masculine style of play and claiming, “She looks more like a man than a lady.” Schulman, *The Seventies*, 160-61. The editor for the *Time* cover story on the match, a senior editor of the magazine, engaged this brand of discourse as well, joking, “Billie Jean is a hell of a player—and a good guy besides.” Ralph P. Davidson, “A Letter from the Publisher,” *Time*, October 1, 1973, 1. King would invert this figure, referring to Riggs as “Roberta” after the match. Lichtenstein, “Mrs. King Calls Victory ‘Culmination’ of Career.” For more on cultural perceptions of the twentieth-century female athlete, see Susan K. Cahn’s *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

King feasted on Riggs’ gimmicky lobs during the match, overpowering him. When Riggs began cramping in the final set, boos floated down from the Astrodome stands. Sportswriter Bud Collins noted, “He’d been the crowd’s darling when he came on, but now he was going down—and they were turning thumbs down like Romans in the Coliseum.” By the end of the straight-set victory (6-4, 6-3, 6-3), Cosell seemed convinced (or at least pretended to be), proclaiming, “Equality for women!” Schulman, *The Seventies*, 161.

<sup>7</sup> Goodman, “How King Rained on Riggs’ Parade,” 110. This interpretive gesture seemed to undermine the event as a commentary on sexual difference, while at the same time accepting as a given that top female athletes could compete with men. Or at least men like the aging Riggs, who embraced the role of adorable hustler whose chauvinism, to many, was less threatening than endearing. The editor for the *Time* cover story claimed he was tempted to pull for Riggs “because of the humor he injects into the terribly serious business of sexism.” Davidson, “A Letter from the Publisher.”

<sup>8</sup> Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It.”

<sup>9</sup> Kirkpatrick, “There She Is, Ms. America,” 32.

<sup>10</sup> Amdur, “Mrs. King Defeats Riggs, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, Amid a Circus Atmosphere.”

<sup>11</sup> Maher, “Barnum Would Have Loved It.” Lichtenstein, “Mrs. King Calls Victory ‘Culmination’ of Career.”

<sup>12</sup> “Leaders in Senate Acclaim Mrs. King,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1973.

<sup>13</sup> Kirkpatrick, “There She Is, Ms. America,” 31, 32, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 252.

<sup>15</sup> Goodman, “How King Rained on Riggs’ Parade,” 111.

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<sup>16</sup> David Quentin Voigt, *American Baseball, Volume III: From Postwar Expansion to the Electronic Age* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 118. Michael V. Oriard “Sports & Space,” *Landscape* 21:1 (Autumn 1976): 33.

<sup>17</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “artificial,”

<http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/cgi/entry/>

50012568?single=1&query\_type=word&queryword=artificial&first=1&max\_to\_show=10 (accessed March 2, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Not only were the materials of the stadium—from plastic seats to artificial grasses—more synthetic, but so too were the uniforms worn by players. Many baseball clubs adopted polyester pullover tops and stretch pants in the 1970s, replacing the traditional button-up uniforms. When the Pirates debuted their new outfits with the new stadium, one commentator wrote, “The Pirates’ new uniforms looked like the designer had crossed a softball outfit with a pair of Carol Burnett’s old pajamas.” Phil Musick, “Bing Gets Bang Out of It... So Do Fans,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 17, 1970. Pirates pitcher Dock Ellis, called “an adventurous dresser off the field” by a reporter, thought they were “outta sight.” Tony Perez of the visiting Cincinnati Reds called them “not too bad,” though added that the Pirates “look like sissies in them.” Roy McHugh, “Strangers in Paradise,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, July 17, 1970.

<sup>19</sup> Geographer Edward Relph makes the point that the problem with modern landscapes wasn’t that they were dehumanized, but that they were excessively rational (and thus excessively humanized). They expressed “the failed possibilities of humanism.” Edward Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Gershman, *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), 191.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 8-10.

<sup>22</sup> Clinton Page, “The Stadium: All-American Monument,” *Progressive Architecture* 52 (Nov 1971), 78, quoted in 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), 316.

<sup>23</sup> Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape*, 199.

<sup>24</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 214.

<sup>25</sup> Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape*, 190, 212.

<sup>26</sup> “Modern Living: The Biggest Dome,” *Time*, August 25, 1975.

<sup>27</sup> Structurally, enclosure allowed designers to pack more seats into the stadium bowl. Enclosure also largely blocked spectators’ vision of the area around the stadium; it is perhaps no coincidence that most downtown stadiums were enclosed (and often roofed), blocking out urban contexts that had not yet responded to the efforts of urban renewal.

<sup>28</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 202.

<sup>29</sup> Norman Bel Geddes, “New Dodger Stadium to Replace Ebbets Field,” May 9, 1952, box 45, folder 577.2, “Dodger Stadium—Data and Correspondence 1953-1957,” Norman Bel Geddes papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>30</sup> “What a Wonder! What a Blunder!” *Life*, April 23, 1965, 76A.

<sup>31</sup> “Daymares in the Dome,” *Time*, April 16, 1965, 97.

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- <sup>32</sup> Roger Angell, "The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble," *The New Yorker*, May 14, 1966, 125. Artificial turf was installed in the Astrodome outfield later in the season.
- <sup>33</sup> Houston Sports Association, Inc. *Astrodome: 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder of the World!* (Houston, 1966), 24-25.
- <sup>34</sup> William Johnson, "Goodby to Three Yards and a Cloud of Dust," *Sports Illustrated*, January 27, 1969, 37.
- <sup>35</sup> At the University of Wisconsin, the Tartan Turf stadium was used for football games, football practices, soccer, and band practices. Officials estimated that the maintenance savings would be twenty thousand dollars per year, plus another ten thousand in decreased laundry costs due to the absence of mud stains. The ability to use the primary stadium as a practice facility allowed the university to develop two of the five acres of practice fields adjacent the stadium, four hundred fifty thousand dollars worth of real estate.
- <sup>36</sup> Johnson, "Goodby to Three Yards and a Cloud of Dust," 37-39.
- <sup>37</sup> It shortly became clear that artificial surfaces resulted in more injuries, not fewer. See Lawrence K. Altman, "Football Injuries Are Linked to Synthetic Turf," *New York Times*, September 1, 1971.
- <sup>38</sup> Johnson, "Goodby to Three Yards and a Cloud of Dust," 37.
- <sup>39</sup> Peter Carry, "A Surface Case of Bugs In the Rugs," *Sports Illustrated*, September 14, 1970, 40.
- <sup>40</sup> Carry, "A Surface Case of Bugs In the Rugs," 40.
- <sup>41</sup> Carry, "A Surface Case of Bugs In the Rugs," 45.
- <sup>42</sup> *Pittsburgh Pirate 1969 Yearbook*, 1969, 4. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>43</sup> Roger Angell, "The Baltimore Vermeers," in *The Summer Game* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 243.
- <sup>44</sup> Reyner Banham, *Age of the Masters: A Personal View of Modern Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 19.
- <sup>45</sup> Coincidentally (or not), the Reds became known as the "Big Red Machine" during their 1970 campaign.
- <sup>46</sup> Angell, "The Baltimore Vermeers," 245. Angell added that baseball players were "unanimous in their praise of these new surfaces, which improve their fielding averages by eliminating the bad bounce." This was the standard baseball-insider defense of the synthetic grass. Carry's *Sports Illustrated* article complicates Angell's assessment.
- <sup>47</sup> Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: Waiting for the Stars," *New York Times*, July 14, 1970.
- <sup>48</sup> Arthur Daley, "Sports of The Times: Shape of the Future," *New York Times*, July 17, 1970.
- <sup>49</sup> Shirley Povich, "This Morning...", *Washington Post*, July 16, 1970.
- <sup>50</sup> Dave Anderson, "Sports of the Times: Personality," *New York Times*, July 11, 1970.
- <sup>51</sup> The NFL expanded to a sixteen-game season in 1978, and thus eight home games per season.
- <sup>52</sup> George Vass, "New Parks Have Symmetry; Old Ones Had Color," *Baseball Digest*, May 1967, 77-84.
- <sup>53</sup> Steve Cady, "Demolition Teams Take Yanks' Place at Stadium," *New York Times*, September 30, 1973.
- <sup>54</sup> "Call it Yankee Stadium—but just isn't same," *The Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, Washington, March 7, 1976.
- <sup>55</sup> Red Smith, "The House That Ruth Built—Rebuilt," *New York Times*, April 11, 1976.

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- <sup>56</sup> “Call it Yankee Stadium—but just isn’t same,” *The Spokesman-Review*.
- <sup>57</sup> William J. Kerr, Jr., “A Cookie-Cutter Stadium and Dull Announcers,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 31, 1978.
- <sup>58</sup> Thomas Boswell, “Certain Ballparks Have Their Own Special Charm,” *Baseball Digest*, August 1979, 66, 67.
- <sup>59</sup> Vass wrote after the introduction of the Metrodome, at a time when professional baseball was being played in three domes (the Astrodome and Seattle’s Kingdome, opened in 1976, being the others).
- <sup>60</sup> George Vass, “Old-Time Baseball Parks Had a Charm of Their Own,” *Baseball Digest*, September 1982, 94.
- <sup>61</sup> Karl B. Raitz, *The Theater of Sport* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xiv, 28.
- <sup>62</sup> Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” 130.
- <sup>63</sup> Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” 132.
- <sup>64</sup> Angell, “The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble,” 141-42.
- <sup>65</sup> “Fighting Sunlight – Yankees’ giant non-glare scoreboard helps batters make hits as well as records them,” *Baseball Digest*, reprinted from *The New Yorker*, August 1950, 43-44.
- <sup>66</sup> “Yankees to Get Biggest Scoreboard for \$300,000,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1959.
- <sup>67</sup> Til Ferdenzi, “A Real Push-Button Manager!” *Baseball Digest*, December-January 1960, 97-98.
- <sup>68</sup> Harold Rosenthal, “Saluting hardiest of all fans – YOU,” *Baseball Digest*, May 1960, 60.
- <sup>69</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 97.
- <sup>70</sup> “Scoreboard ‘Adds Insult to Injury,’” *Washington Post*, May 22, 1960.
- <sup>71</sup> “Scoreboard ‘Adds Insult to Injury.’”
- <sup>72</sup> “Piersall’s Tantrum Costs Him \$250 Fine,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 1960.
- <sup>73</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 97.
- <sup>74</sup> *District of Columbia Stadium Official Dedication Magazine* (R.W. Kelly Pub. Corp., 1961), George Washington University special collections.
- <sup>75</sup> Charlie Park, “Newest Stadium Baseball Marvel,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1962.
- <sup>76</sup> Angell, “A Tale of Three Cities,” in *The Summer Game*, 73.
- <sup>77</sup> New York Mets, *New York National League Baseball Club Final Revised Official 1963 Year Book*, 1963, A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame. The City of New York Department of Parks, *Dedication: Shea Stadium*, 1964, folder P4.0—Opening Day—1964 Special Events, Box 380, New York World’s Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, New York Public Library.
- <sup>78</sup> Jerry Levine, “Shea, Fair Run Dead-Heat,” *New York Journal American*, April 4, 1964. “Mets to Use Giant Movie Screen to Introduce Stars,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1964.
- <sup>79</sup> *Inside the Astrodome* (Houston: Houston Sports Association, Inc., 1965), 80-82.
- <sup>80</sup> *Inside the Astrodome*, 82.
- <sup>81</sup> Larry McMurtry, “Love, Death, and the Astrodome,” *The Texas Observer*, October 1, 1964, 4. “The Business of Baseball,” *Newsweek*, April 26, 1965, 66-70. Dick Young, “Roy’s Shack The Greatest,” *Houston Post*, April 30. Edgar W. Ray, *The Grand Huckster: Houston’s Judge Roy Hofbeinz, Genius of the Astrodome* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1980), 351. Ed Rumill, “When Play Is On, Scoreboard Should Be Seen, Not Heard,” *Baseball Digest*, August 1966, 65-66.



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- <sup>82</sup> John Hall, "Halo in the Sky," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1965.
- <sup>83</sup> Hall, "Halo in the Sky."
- <sup>84</sup> Sid Ziff, "Anaheim Success," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1966.
- <sup>85</sup> "Angel Scoreboard: A 23-Story Giant," *The Sporting News*, September 11, 1965.
- <sup>86</sup> *1968 Oakland A's Premier Yearbook*, 1968, 49. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>87</sup> *Three Rivers Stadium Souvenir Book*, 1970, 17. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>88</sup> *Reds Review/1970 Yearbook*, 1970, 4. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>89</sup> *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook*, 1970, 52. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>90</sup> *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook*, 52.
- <sup>91</sup> *Phillies 1972 Yearbook*, 1972, 5. A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame.
- <sup>92</sup> *Phillies 1972 Yearbook*, 5.
- <sup>93</sup> *Phillies 1972 Yearbook*, 6.
- <sup>94</sup> *Phillies 1972 Yearbook*, 6.
- <sup>95</sup> Chuck Woodling, "KC's Disneyland Arrives, But Don't Look at Lights," *Lawrence Daily Journal*, August 14, 1972. Instant replay in the stadium was a feature that worried NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle, who said, "there could be some serious consequences... football is a highly volatile sport. If a replay shown on a scoreboard should indicate a play had been called incorrectly, and if you have 60,000 or 70,000 persons in the stands, there could be bad effects. Unlike soccer stadium in South America, we do not have moats around our playing fields." "Sudden Death Endings Supported by Rozelle," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 16, 1972.
- <sup>96</sup> Michael Oriard, *The End of Autumn: Reflections On My Life In Football* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982), 197-98.
- <sup>97</sup> It's worth noting that Oriard's memoir of his football career was published in 1982, at a time when the modern stadium was being more widely questioned (and by Oriard himself, in his academic articles). I don't mean to suggest that these memories were manufactured retroactively—he registers a similar interpretation of the Astrodome in a 1976 article in *Landscape*—but that they were part of a broader, emergent critical outlook.
- <sup>98</sup> The Astrodome spanned 642 feet and rose 218 feet. Superdome promoters were fond of comparing their structure to Houston's.
- <sup>99</sup> Jep Cadou, "New Orleans' Dome Sweet Dome," *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 1975, 62. J.D. Reed, "The Louisiana Purchase," *Sports Illustrated*, July 22, 1974, 68.
- <sup>100</sup> Real Estate Research Corporation, *Analysis of Stadium Alternatives: Twin Cities Metropolitan Area*, 1974, 67-71.
- <sup>101</sup> Cadou, "New Orleans' Dome Sweet Dome," 79.
- <sup>102</sup> Jerry Kirshenbaum, "Let Me Make One Thing Clear," *Sports Illustrated*, June 7, 1971, 39.
- <sup>103</sup> Reed, "The Louisiana Purchase," 72.
- <sup>104</sup> "Superdome Commercials Draw Player Complaints," *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1975.
- <sup>105</sup> "Superdome Commercials Draw Player Complaints."

- <sup>106</sup> Red Smith, "Sports 'Fringe Benefits' Are Not Unprecedented," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, August 16, 1975. The massive screens also interfered with play. Because of poor design, people at the back of the lower level couldn't see the gondola screens. The gondola was then lowered ten feet. After it was lowered, punter Ray Guy hit the screen with a ball, forcing the creation of a ground rule: re-kicks if one hit the screen. The NFL would bar simulcasts of the game on the field, believing it distracted players and officials. This was a bit unfair to those sitting at the top, who were so far away from the action. The NFL also censored replays involving questionable calls by officials, worried about their safety should their errors be displayed on slow motion to rowdy fans. See note #96. J.D. Reed, "Really Running in the Red," *Sports Illustrated*, March 15, 1976, 26-30.
- <sup>107</sup> Reed, "The Louisiana Purchase," 72.
- <sup>108</sup> James L. Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 106, 143.
- <sup>109</sup> *Metrodome: A Souvenir Section* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Tribune, 1982), 28.
- <sup>110</sup> Oriard, *The End of Autumn*, 197-98.
- <sup>111</sup> John Bale, *Sport, Space and the City* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- <sup>112</sup> Mal Florence, "Building Better Fantraps," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1972.
- <sup>113</sup> Gershman, *Diamonds*, 30-31. Daniel Rosensweig, *Retro Ball Parks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 77-78.
- <sup>114</sup> Al Wolf, "Sportraits," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1946. "Another MacPhail First—Baseball's Biggest Bar Room," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 22, 1946.
- <sup>115</sup> *Three Rivers Stadium Souvenir Book*, 1970, 7.
- <sup>116</sup> *Pittsburgh Pirate 1969 Yearbook*, 1969, 4.
- <sup>117</sup> *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook*, 1970, 52.
- <sup>118</sup> John Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan: struck oil lately?" *The Miami News*, August 14, 1972. Charles Maher, "Stadium Suite: A Room With a View and a Bar (Only the Rich Need Apply)," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1973. "Millionaires' Row: Rich Texans to Live It Up in \$50,000 Stadium Suites," *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 1971.
- <sup>119</sup> "Millionaires' Row: Rich Texans to Live It Up in \$50,000 Stadium Suites."
- <sup>120</sup> James H. Winchester, "Superdomes!" *Travel*, November 1972, 65.
- <sup>121</sup> Jeanne Barnes, "Spectators Sport Luxury," *Dallas Morning News*, October 23, 1971.
- <sup>122</sup> "Millionaires' Row: Rich Texans to Live It Up in \$50,000 Stadium Suites." Bruce J. Schulman writes of the increasing privatization of American lives during the 1970s in *The Seventies*.
- <sup>123</sup> Maher, "Stadium Suite."
- <sup>124</sup> Maher, "Stadium Suite."
- <sup>125</sup> William N. Wallace, "Pangs of Prosperity," *New York Times*, February 8, 1970.
- <sup>126</sup> "Season-Ticket Sales Start Tomorrow for Cowboys," *Dallas Morning News*, April 24, 1960. "Cowboy Season-Ticket Option Deadline April 1," *Dallas Morning News*, Feb 5, 1965. "Cowboy Season Ticket Sales Open Saturday," *Dallas Morning News*, April 23, 1970.
- <sup>127</sup> Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan."
- <sup>128</sup> Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan."
- <sup>129</sup> Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan."
- <sup>130</sup> Marlyn Schwartz, "Cowboy Fans Voice Complaints," *Dallas Morning News*, November 21, 1971.

- <sup>131</sup> Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan." The median family income in 1970 was \$18,440 per year. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1979," Report P-60 No. 129, 2, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/p60.html> (accessed March 27, 2010).
- <sup>132</sup> Schwartz, "Cowboy Fans Voice Complaints."
- <sup>133</sup> Schwartz, "Cowboy Fans Voice Complaints."
- <sup>134</sup> Crittenden, "Cowboy ticket plan."
- <sup>135</sup> Skip Bayless, "Suites at Coliseum Will Have to Wait," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1976.
- <sup>136</sup> Bill Boyarsky and Henry Weinstein, "Bid for Raiders Hits New Snags," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1980.
- <sup>137</sup> "Arvida in Talks For Stadium," *Boca Raton News*, November 14, 1979.
- <sup>138</sup> Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1979," 2.
- <sup>139</sup> *Metrodome: A Souvenir Section*, 15.
- <sup>140</sup> *Metrodome: A Souvenir Section*, 20.
- <sup>141</sup> Dave Mona, *The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome Souvenir Book: A Pictorial History of the Twins, Vikings, Gophers, Millers, Saints--and Metrodome!* (Minneapolis: MSP Publications, Inc., 1982), 21.
- <sup>142</sup> Mona, 21.
- <sup>143</sup> *Metrodome: A Souvenir Section*, 46. Jeff Brown, "The dome deal: City gave developers rights to 50-block area," *Minneapolis Star*, October 9, 1981.
- <sup>144</sup> Patrick Reusse, "Metrodome soon may be a 'spitting' image," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 4. The lack of parking lots was a problem for many, not because they wanted to park their cars there, but because of Minnesota's robust tailgating culture. Visitors were expected to use the existing parking garages about downtown, but were generally barred from tailgating there by garage owners. Neal St. Anthony, "City Police Plan to Be Firm with Metrodome Revelers," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, April 1, 1982.
- <sup>145</sup> Jim Klobuchar, "He urges resident shrink for the Dome," *Minneapolis Star*, April 1, 1982.
- <sup>146</sup> Unlike the rigid roofs of the Astrodome, Superdome, and Kingdome, the Metrodome featured a soft top—a fiberglass fabric supported by air pressure. The Silverdome, in Pontiac, Michigan, opened in 1975 with a similar roof design. Joe Soucheray, "Collapse of dome lets the air out of a lot of promises," *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 20, 1981.
- <sup>147</sup> *Metrodome: A Souvenir Section*, 46. Joe Soucheray, "'This place isn't done yet,' Max Winter said," *Minneapolis Tribune*, August 22, 1982.
- <sup>148</sup> Don Riley, "Remember, peons, you read it here first," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 9, 1982.
- <sup>149</sup> Michael Oriard, *Brand NFL: Making & Selling America's Favorite Sport* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 4.
- <sup>150</sup> Mary L. Sherman, "Breezy Bigness," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1893.
- <sup>151</sup> "Uncle Ira Has Girl Ushers," *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1910.
- <sup>152</sup> "The Girl Ushers' Question," *New York Times*, September 28, 1915.
- <sup>153</sup> "Andy Frain, 'Usher King,' Dies; Supervisor of Crowds was 59," *New York Times*, March 26, 1964.
- <sup>154</sup> Lipsyte, "'Fabulous' Stadium" and "Metchicks."
- <sup>155</sup> Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 49.

- <sup>156</sup> Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 100, 176-79.
- <sup>157</sup> Wayne Willson, "Letters to the Editor," *Washington Post*, October 13, 1968. For stories of Gottfried and Stotts, see "Bulls' and 'Bears' Become 'Wolves,'" *Washington Post*, September 21, 1968 and "The Bedlam Over Busts," *Washington Post*, October 5, 1968.
- <sup>158</sup> George E. Minot, Jr., "Legal Maze Delays Ted Williams Pact," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1969. "Cards Upset In Montreal Opener, 8-7," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1969.
- <sup>159</sup> "Philly Fillies Organize Hot Pants Patrol," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1971. Rich Westcott, *Veterans Stadium* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 108.
- <sup>160</sup> Winchester, "Superdomes!"
- <sup>161</sup> "Philly Fillies Organize Hot Pants Patrol."
- <sup>162</sup> *Phillies New Stadium Yearbook 1971*, 7.
- <sup>163</sup> "Philly Fillies Organize Hot Pants Patrol."
- <sup>164</sup> Dave Anderson, "Philadelphia Stadium Has High Winds, Hot Pants and, They Hope, Few Boos," *New York Times*, April 4, 1971. It's worth noting that many of these women enjoyed their role in the stadium. Sudders claimed, "Most of the women felt it was a nice, prestigious job. We considered ourselves like a sorority. It was a happy job, and we all really liked each other." Westcott, *Veterans Stadium*, 108.
- <sup>165</sup> "Philly Fillies Organize Hot Pants Patrol."
- <sup>166</sup> *Phillies Official 1970 Yearbook*.
- <sup>167</sup> *Phillies New Stadium Yearbook 1971*.
- <sup>168</sup> George Solomon, "D.C. Padres Would Stay in West," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1973.
- <sup>169</sup> "Phillies Open New \$45 Million Stadium Today," *Washington Post*, April 10, 1971.
- <sup>170</sup> *Phillies New Stadium Yearbook 1971*, 6.
- <sup>171</sup> "Sport: A Bolt of Blue Lightning," *Time*, August 23, 1971.
- <sup>172</sup> Schulman, *The Seventies*, 178.
- <sup>173</sup> Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & Daily Press* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 198, 351.
- <sup>174</sup> Mary Ellen Hanson, *Go! Fight! Win! Cheerleading in American Culture* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1995), 50.
- <sup>175</sup> Kenneth Turan, "Some of the Most Dedicated of Redskins Remain on the Field During Halftime," *Washington Post*, August 31, 1969.
- <sup>176</sup> Sally Quinn, "Watching 40 Pairs of Legs Kick for the Joy of the Game," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1969.
- <sup>177</sup> Turan, "Some of the Most Dedicated of Redskins Remain on the Field During Halftime."
- <sup>178</sup> Laura A. Kiernan, "Redskinettes Share Accolades at RFK," *Washington Post*, November 7, 1972.
- <sup>179</sup> Turan, "Some of the Most Dedicated of Redskins Remain on the Field During Halftime."
- <sup>180</sup> Quinn, "Watching 40 Pairs of Legs Kick for the Joy of the Game."
- <sup>181</sup> Redskins owner George Marshall was the last in the NFL to desegregate his roster, doing so in 1962. The first African American Redskinettes joined the group in 1968, after pressure from black leaders. See Quinn, "Watching 40 Pairs of Legs Kick for the Joy of the Game."
- <sup>182</sup> Hanson, *Go! Fight! Win!*, 50.
- <sup>183</sup> Hanson, *Go! Fight! Win!*, 52.
- <sup>184</sup> Joan Ryan, "The Eyes of Texas Popping," *Washington Post*, September 24, 1977.

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- <sup>185</sup> Neil Amdur, “Cowboy Cheerleaders: Sexist or Just Sparkling?” *New York Times*, December 26, 1977.
- <sup>186</sup> Amdur, “Cowboy Cheerleaders: Sexist or Just Sparkling?” Ryan, “The Eyes of Texas Popping.”
- <sup>187</sup> Henry Allen, “Stepping High With The Stars of the Sidelines,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1978.
- <sup>188</sup> Allen, “Stepping High With The Stars of the Sidelines.” Dave Kindred, “‘Role Models’ and Cheers: Bare Facts Deserve Boos,” *Washington Post*, September 21, 1978.
- <sup>189</sup> Allen, “Stepping High With The Stars of the Sidelines.”
- <sup>190</sup> Leonard Shapiro, “Redskins Lose ‘Skin’ For Sunday,” *Washington Post*, September 19, 1978.
- <sup>191</sup> Kindred, “‘Role Models’ and Cheers: Bare Facts Deserve Boos.”
- <sup>192</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 179.
- <sup>193</sup> Kindred, “‘Role Models’ and Cheers: Bare Facts Deserve Boos.”
- <sup>194</sup> Steve Cady, “Rowdyism: Games Fans Play,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1975.
- <sup>195</sup> George Vecsey, “Rowdyism Afflicts the Pastime,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1978.
- <sup>196</sup> “Royals Add Security in Wake of Violence,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1977. “Royals Tighten Crowd Defense,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1977.
- <sup>197</sup> Vecsey, “Rowdyism Afflicts the Pastime.”
- <sup>198</sup> A fight at the new Shea Stadium in 1964 suggested to Angell that the spirit of the Polo Grounds still lived. He thought that World’s Fair visitors attending a game “must have been startled... when a dozen or so of the New Breed—the *old* New Breed—staged a rousing fistfight in the lower right-field stands, attracting roars of encouragement and subsequent boos for the fuzz.” Roger Angell, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Cellar,” in *The Summer Game*, 66.
- <sup>199</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 168.
- <sup>200</sup> Benjamin G. Rader, *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 116.
- <sup>201</sup> Ron Powers, *Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1984), 145.
- <sup>202</sup> Oriard, *Brand NFL*, 25.
- <sup>203</sup> Roger Kahn, “Something’s Changing About Baseball,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1959.
- <sup>204</sup> “The Business of Baseball,” 68.
- <sup>205</sup> Mark Harris, “Maybe What Baseball Needs Is a Henry David Thoreau,” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, May 4, 1969, 66-73.
- <sup>206</sup> Powers, *Supertube*, 154.
- <sup>207</sup> George Vecsey, “New Jersey, New Jersey,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1983.
- <sup>208</sup> Allen Guttman, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 141.
- <sup>209</sup> Each of these strategies pivoted on the attraction of the casual customer—gendered female. Arledge, in the 1960 memo to ABC Sports executive Ed Scherik that sold his vision for a new type of production for college football, theorized: “To improve upon the audience... we must gain and hold the interest of women and others who are not fanatic followers of the sport we happen to be televising. Women come to football games, not so much to marvel at the adeptness of the quarterback in calling an end sweep or a lineman pulling out to lead a play, but to sit in a crowd, see what everyone else is wearing, watch the

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cheerleaders and experience the countless things that make up the feeling of the game.” Powers, *Supertube*, 145-46.

<sup>210</sup> Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 3. Rader’s cast of characters included Steinbrenner, who was the blowhard and meddling owner of the New York Yankees. Pete Rozelle was the commissioner of the NFL, a public relations man by trade, who led the league to prominence on the back of masterfully negotiated television contracts. Professional baseball player Reggie Jackson was notorious for his self-promotion. Jackie Sherrill was a college football coach of dubious ethics, who would later have a bull castrated during a team practice to inspire his Mississippi State club against the Texas Longhorns. Red Barber was a widely beloved figure, best known as the long-time radio voice of the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Yankees. Kenesaw Mountain Landis was the federal-judge-turned-baseball-commissioner who most famously meted out punishment for the 1919 Black Sox World Series scandal.

<sup>211</sup> Schulman, *The Seventies*, 145.

<sup>212</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 112.

<sup>213</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>214</sup> For examinations of this phenomenon, see Christine Boyer, “Cities for Sale: Merchandising History at South Street Seaport,” in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 181-204. John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit In the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998). Steven D. Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America’s Little Switzerland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). Rosensweig, *Retro Ball Parks*.

<sup>215</sup> Sport is a particularly interesting site through which to examine a postmodern lament for the authentic, given how these sporting practices straddle the modern and seemingly anti-modern. Organized sport was born of a mid-eighteenth-century modern ethos that rationalized sporting activities through rules codification and league organization. Allen Guttman proposed this in *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978). At the same time, the rise of sports like baseball and football also expressed an anti-modern anxiety, their pastoralism and physicality increasingly important, in particular for white-collar men, to preserve manly vigor in a period when white-collar, bureaucratic labor was alienated from the body. Football and baseball, then, are both powerfully modern and anti-modern.

<sup>216</sup> Television rights for the NFL went from \$4.65 million (1962-63) to \$46.25 million in the first season of the NFL-AFL merger (1970). The league signed a \$656-million, four-year contract in 1977. Each club received \$5.8 million per season in 1981; in 1982, that number escalated to \$14.2 million per club per season. NBC signed a \$70-million, four-year contract with major league baseball beginning in 1972, which replaced a \$50-million, three-year deal. By 1981, the league received \$41.5 million annually from network contracts and \$48.4 million from local stations. The networks paid one billion dollars for a five-year contract in 1983 for major league baseball. The average baseball salary in 1976 was \$51,000; by 1981, it was estimated to be \$185,000. The average football salary in 1977 was \$50,000; by 1980 it was nearly \$80,000. Fan antipathy would only grow when disputes between owners and

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players for these millions stopped season play in 1974 and 1982 for football, 1981 and 1985 for baseball. Oriard, *Brand NFL*, 12. Rader, *In Its Own Image*, 119-122. "Night Schedule Will Grow For World Series in 1971," *New York Times*, May 7, 1971. George Vecsey, "In Sports, Money Is the Main Issue," *New York Times*, March 16, 1981.

<sup>217</sup> Jameson thought that authentic cultural production stemmed from "the collective experience of marginal pockets" of society, examples being black literature and blues, British working-class rock, women's literature, gay literature, and the literature of the developing world. Frederic Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 23-24.

<sup>218</sup> Harris, "Maybe What Baseball Needs Is a Henry David Thoreau."

<sup>219</sup> Oriard, "Sports & Space."

<sup>220</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 108-9.

<sup>221</sup> Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 109-10.

<sup>222</sup> Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 119.

<sup>223</sup> Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 106.

<sup>224</sup> Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 124.

<sup>225</sup> Michael Oriard, "Professional Football as Cultural Myth," *Journal of American Culture* 4:3 (Fall 1981): 27-41.

<sup>226</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch distinguished between a traditional European type of jeremiad, which was a "lament over the ways of the world," with an American one that was used by the Puritans to motivate social change. It joined "social criticism to spiritual renewal." Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 7, xi.

<sup>227</sup> Angell, "The Sporting Scene: The Cool Bubble," 141-42.

<sup>228</sup> Paul Goldberger, "Architecture View: A Radical Idea: Baseball As It Used to Be," *New York Times*, November 19, 1989.

<sup>229</sup> Robert Facht, "Orioles' Ballpark Takes Shape," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1989.

<sup>230</sup> Facht, "Orioles' Ballpark Takes Shape."

<sup>231</sup> The "yards" technically referred to the shipyards, as the park was located adjacent the city's harbor.

<sup>232</sup> Hannigan, *Fantasy City*, 7.

<sup>233</sup> Michael Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park" and "See You in Disneyland," in *Variations on a Theme Park*, xiv, 226.

<sup>234</sup> Buffalo's Pilot Field is sometimes noted as the original "retro" park, though most accounts of the stadium upon its opening in 1988 didn't celebrate it as such. The new Comiskey Park (replacing the older version) opened in Chicago in 1991. It suggested the direction of future ballparks, fusing historical allusions to the old park with a modern look. HOK Sport designed both.

<sup>235</sup> Rosensweig, *Retro Ball Parks*, 5.

<sup>236</sup> Thomas Boswell, "Now That's the Way to Build a Ballpark," *Washington Post*, April 4, 1992.

<sup>237</sup> Mark Maske, "For Players, Park Will Need Figuring," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1992.

<sup>238</sup> William Gildea, "It's a Grand Opening for Camden Yards," *Washington Post*, April 7, 1992.

<sup>239</sup> Boswell, "Now That's the Way to Build a Ballpark."

<sup>240</sup> Boswell, "Now That's the Way to Build a Ballpark."

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<sup>241</sup> William Gildea, “Friendly and Familiar Confines,” *Washington Post*, April 12, 1992.

<sup>242</sup> HOK Sport + Venue + Event, *HOK Sport + Venue + Event: 20 Years of Great Architecture, Colleagues, Clients and Community* (Australia: Pesaro Publishing, 2003), 61.

<sup>243</sup> Tim Kurkjian, “A Splendid Nest,” *Sports Illustrated*, April 13, 1992, 34.

<sup>244</sup> Kurkjian, “A Splendid Nest,” 36, 41. In his study of Cleveland’s retro ballpark, Rosensweig argued that older stadiums became increasingly “democratic” as they aged. They offered fewer amenities than the retro parks and exercised less spatial control between sections, opening space for more organic fan behavior. While there certainly would seem to be some truth in this—the beer-fueled rowdiness of the late 1970s suggests as much—I think Rosensweig’s argument is over-reliant on certain stadiums (that had a more horizontal scale of consumer options, like Cleveland Stadium) at the exclusion of others (like Three Rivers) and a presentist perspective that compared the consumption options of the 1970s to those that would follow rather than those that preceded them. That said, his important broader point—that the retro parks offered a more socio-economically stratified entertainment experience outfitted in a working-class authenticity—remains convincing.

<sup>245</sup> Not everyone bought into this discourse of democracy that, on the face of it, seemed absurd given the rough-and-tumble conditions of old Memorial Stadium. A seventy-one-year-old Orioles fan complained, “There’s not a thing wrong with that ballpark [Memorial Stadium]. It’s one of the best. The parking won’t be better down in the Inner Harbor, maybe worse. And the seats for us fans won’t be better, either. They’re building it so that lawyer owner and his politician friends can sit in them lounge chairs in their sky boxes with their feet up, get served champagne and watch the game on TV.” Eve Zibert, “In & Around The Ballpark,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 1992. Boswell, “Just Around the Corner: Memorial as Memory,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 1987.

<sup>246</sup> Boswell, “Just Around the Corner: Memorial as Memory.”

<sup>247</sup> Facht, “Orioles’ Ballpark Takes Shape.”

<sup>248</sup> HOK Sport + Venue + Event, 11.

<sup>249</sup> “Projects: Citi Field,” Populous, <http://portfolio.populous.com/projects/citifield.html> (accessed March 29, 2010).

<sup>250</sup> Goldberger, “Architecture View: A Radical Idea: Baseball As It Used to Be.”

<sup>251</sup> Hannigan, *Fantasy City*, 200.



## Conclusion

### **Modern stadium, modern city, modern experience**

A close examination of the modern stadium—one of the most visible, celebrated, and expensive components of the modern urban landscape—reveals a range of shifting and persistent meanings of the “modern” in the decades following World War II. “Modern” was a vague term universally applied throughout this era—a pliable descriptor various in meaning, depending on its contexts. But it was also a term, an idea, a way of living that converged around certain virtues and discourses. The design, construction, representation, and use of the modern stadium suggests that to be “modern” in the 1950s and 1960s was to be consumption-oriented, technologically advanced, comfortable and spacious, white and affluent. Modern space, then, was one that evoked, embraced, and ratified this amorphous but identifiable modern ideology.

This process—the postwar modernization of the city, the stadium, the sports experience, and the sports consumer—began in the late 1940s as Brooklyn Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley and celebrity designer Norman Bel Geddes tried to redefine what the stadium in the city could be. Though these two figures were years ahead of most in the reconception of sports space, their efforts marked the beginning of a new geography of sport—from the interiors of new stadiums to the national distribution of major-league teams—staged throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Owners of major-league baseball clubs looked anxiously at their ballparks—structures that were often forty years old and had endured a decade-and-a-half of neglect through the Depression and war years. For many, the old ballparks seemed relics of a time past, with their musty concourses, cramped grandstands, and obstructed views. They were pre-modern components of a pre-modern cityscape, located in dense old

neighborhoods that lacked parking and whose demographic make-up was changing. In Northeastern and Midwestern cities—the homes of baseball’s major-league franchises—white middle-class residents, soon joined by white working-class residents, took advantage of booming wages and federal housing and highway subsidies to retreat from the city to new and spacious suburban developments. Working-class people of color—African Americans who had migrated from the South or immigrants from abroad—often replaced them in city neighborhoods. These new city residents, looking for work, arrived just as many cities began de-industrializing.

In city after city, the ballpark physically deteriorated in a physically deteriorating urban environment. The old ballpark was a structure that predated a postwar and modern mentality, inappropriate to a new postwar and modern landscape that privileged spaciousness—the open yards and floor plans of suburban homes, the setback plazas of corporate office towers, the green spaces between urban housing slabs—and private mobility through automobiles on new freeways. Owners like Lou Perini of the Boston Braves and O’Malley sought different solutions to these problems. Perini moved his club out of Boston—where it was the unfavored team in a shrinking city—to Milwaukee, lured by the prospects of a functional, new, municipally-owned ballpark, at little cost, located along freeways outside the city center. O’Malley, employing high-profile designers like Bel Geddes and Buckminster Fuller, tried to reinvent the ballpark in Brooklyn. Bel Geddes in particular produced visionary schemes to make the stadium a social center, a stage not only for a range of sports entertainment, but also a site of casual consumption and postwar comfort—ideas that resonated with Victor Gruen’s plans for new shopping centers that would replace the town square as quasi-public sites of civic, consumerist engagement in the mid-1950s.

Though the Bel Geddes and Fuller plans weren't realized—and O'Malley would ultimately follow Perini's lead, moving his club to the sunny and untapped markets of Southern California in 1957—they were early and influential attempts to rethink the design and role of the stadium. They proposed a stadium that catered to the private automobile; a spacious and comfortable space that appealed to a consumption-oriented, suburban, and affluent audience; a heavily technologized space that functioned as a celebration of modern progress; a “democratically” luxurious space, as amenable to casual fans (imagined as female) as serious ones. The stadiums of the 1960s and 1970s would express these ideas in a number of ways—dramatic reinventions of their out-dated, prewar counterparts.

These became standard responses to the old ballparks—the relocation to new stadiums tapped by freeways, sometimes located in different cities altogether. The major sports leagues—both baseball and the increasingly popular and prosperous professional football—spilled across the country, to the West and to the South. Modern stadiums were constructed across the national landscape. First, functional new ballparks—more “modern” than the earlier generations of ballparks, but not as modern as those immediately succeeding them—were built in the mid-1950s in places like Baltimore, suburban Milwaukee, and suburban Minneapolis, to attract baseball clubs there. Then, more elaborate modern baseball parks were erected in San Francisco and Los Angeles in the early 1960s. Washington D.C. established the model for the enclosed modern bowl, when the federally-funded, multi-purpose District of Columbia Stadium opened in 1961 in an open lot on the Anacostia River, east of the Capitol; it was a replacement for the private Griffith Stadium, located in the heart of the city's black cultural district. D.C. Stadium was the first of what commentators of the 1970s would disparagingly call the “cookie cutters”—those stadiums

that seemed punched out of a modern mold and plopped onto the landscape regardless of context. But in the early 1960s, of course, it was a pioneer—a dramatically new stage for baseball and football whose modern character would be further developed in the multi-purpose stadiums that followed it.

Shea Stadium, opened in 1964 in Queens' Flushing Meadows Park, at New York City's "gateway to the suburbs," elaborated on Washington's model. A replacement to Brooklyn's Ebbets Field and the Harlem's Polo Grounds, this modern stadium expressed postwar suburban ideologies regarding white escape from the city and domesticated comfort and consumption. The suburban spatiality of the stadium—which privileged mobility, spaciousness, and economic distinction—combined with a discourse that framed Shea as an analogue to the suburban home, sports' equivalent of the American Dream. Like the suburban home that replaced the urban tenement, modern stadiums like Shea replaced old city stadiums like the Polo Grounds that were traditional and iconic sites of mixed-class, mixed-race masculinity. The new stadiums extended a suburban ideology into an archetypal urban space. In the process, they further severed the relationship between the city and its suburbs, eliminating what was a final form of urban experience for many of the city's recent emigrants.

The urban experience in New York was dramatically different from that of Houston, where a suburban spaciousness was nothing new in the 1950s. When it opened in 1965, the Astrodome was less an expression of new ways of modern living than the tactile reinforcement of that mode of existence. Like Shea, it celebrated and embodied suburban virtues of newness, spaciousness, comfort, consumption, mobility, and domestication. But unlike Shea, the context for these values was an upstart Sunbelt city eager to elbow its way

into the national consciousness. The Astrodome, in the imaginations of politicians, promoters, and citizens, became an exemplar of modern progressive living—a symbol of scientific and technological expertise in the service of consumerist convenience and comfort. Its masculine inventiveness allowed for a feminine luxuriousness; climate control and technological gadgetry facilitated a stadium space that was domesticated like no other—marked by constantly cool temperatures that allowed women to wear the latest fashions, cushioned theater seats that made average fans feel pampered, a range of themed restaurants and clubs for those more interested in socializing than sport, and exclusive luxury suites for Houston’s power brokers and social set. The most important of the modern stadiums—and arguably the most influential stadium ever built—the Astrodome became the gold standard in stadium luxury and an inspiration that other modern stadium designers and stadium experience producers would ape, though never successfully duplicate.

The urban modern stadium—first expressed through St. Louis’s Busch Stadium in 1966—introduced many of the same suburban virtues celebrated in Shea and the Astrodome into a downtown context. A replacement to old Sportsman’s Park, which was located along a commercial strip in the city’s residential north side, Busch represented a suburbanization of the urban—an affluent white claim on the downtown as part of its reinvention from a site of industrial production to one of corporate bureaucratic control and upscale entertainment. The postwar city—rhetorically and visually represented as a diseased body, blackened aesthetically and functionally by impoverishment and crime, as well as racially by discriminatory social and real estate practices—required dramatic measures. Associations of business leaders, planners, construction workers, and business-friendly public officials intervened, promising to revitalize urban areas through a combination of public funds,

governmental powers, and private investments. The downtown municipal stadium as an anchor to urban renaissance was a model replicated in other cities—Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Seattle among them. Through these plans, cities were reinvented in the image of the suburbs, as new, spacious, consumerist, affluent spaces amenable to the private automobile and cleansed of the idiosyncrasies of the traditionally unpredictable city. The modern stadium was thus an ideal launching point for writing a suburban ethos onto the city. Busch Stadium presented a clean, white, glowing vision of modernity—a rejoinder to the postwar city blackened by age and demographics.

These cases together—New York, Houston, and St. Louis—suggest the pliability of the modern in all its discrepancies and continuities. The discourse of the modern stadium varied in each context, not surprisingly, given each city’s distinctiveness—historically, geographically, materially—from the others. In New York, the meaning of the “modern” really related to spaciousness and mobility—a suburban spatiality. In Houston, conceptions of the “modern” were yoked to scientific progress in the service of material comfort and civic status. And in St. Louis, “modern” was a cleansing reclamation of the city, a postindustrial rationalization of the city from a site of production to one of bureaucratic intellectual work and entertainment. The modern experience was different in different places.

At the same time, there were also significant convergent meanings of these modern built spaces, which similarly expressed and impacted people’s behaviors and experiences from city to city. The modern experience, inflected in different places, still cohered around a broader modern ideology that contained them all. This ideology rationalized spaces, cleansed them, automated them, technologized them, segregated them, stratified them, and made them

more comfortable. In each city, the “modern,” as revealed through the stadium, was really the writing of an affluent white, consumption-oriented, comfort-oriented, technology-oriented postwar ideology onto public space. Though many studies of the late twentieth century imply that the gentrified landscapes of the post-industrial, post-modern city were spawned in the wake of 1970s economic crises, this examination suggests that this rewriting of urban space was very much a modern phenomenon, with roots stretching back even to Norman Bel Geddes’s earliest formulations for a new stadium in downtown Brooklyn.

The meaning of the modern shifted for some as the modern stadium was replicated in city after city across the national landscape; the novel modern stadium of the 1960s became the routine modern stadium of the 1970s. The hyper-rationalized artificiality of the form—articulated through its increasing enclosure that separated the stadium experience from its environmental contexts; its increasing use of synthetic materials like plastics and artificial grass; its increasingly hyper-produced game presentation that relied on music, video boards, and sexually suggestive cheerleaders and female ushers; its increasing socioeconomic stratification of space through private restaurants and luxury suites for the most wealthy patrons—produced growing ranks of dissenters. Many were discontented with the modern stadium as a site of entertainment and spectacle, no longer a place of mythic ritual and significant cultural practice. The natural world and the naturalized traditions of old sport seemed irretrievably lost to some. This was particularly true for baseball’s purists, many of whom looked on the collaboration of television and football—that ascendant, corporately bureaucratic, sporting arriviste—as the source of these stadium changes. But in fact, as an examination of the broader history of the modern stadium suggests, television and the stadium were engaged in a dialectical relationship, each borrowing from the others’

innovations in targeting the broadest base of casual spectators possible, seducing and pacifying them with constant stimulation.

The discontent with the modern stadium was most forcibly expressed through the wave of new “retro” ballparks, beginning in the late 1980s. These explicitly anti-modern parks—the most important being Baltimore’s Oriole Park at Camden Yards, planned in the late 1980s—expressed authenticity and tradition through their historicist architectural idiom. Brick, exposed steel trusses, sandblasted signage, asymmetrical configurations, and open vistas to the city made them seem contemporary updates to the classic ballparks of the early twentieth century. The historicist ballpark was just the most visible departure from the modern idiom in stadium design. New football stadiums in the 1990s and 2000s sometimes affected a retro aspect as well; structures like M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore (opened in 1998) and Pittsburgh’s Heinz Field (2001) evoked some of college football’s stadiums—sites that, unlike professional football’s venues, often cultivated a rich sense of place.

The new stadiums of the late twentieth century were fundamentally distinguished from their modern predecessors by their purpose—that is, they were designed as single-sport, not multi-sport venues. The greatest successes of the modern form—those few that have endured into the twenty-first century, like Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles and the neighboring structures of Kaufmann (Royals) and Arrowhead Stadium outside of Kansas City—were notably sport-specific facilities. They did not, like most of their sibling stadiums, cater to both baseball and football. This, at a very basic level, is the “lesson” of the modern stadium: universal sports spaces, though they perhaps are more economical, are generally unpleasant compromises in terms of the stadium experience. Indeed, the multi-purpose



stadium is a thing of the past, to the point that even a young and marginal professional league like Major League Soccer has made soccer-specific venues its developmental priority.

Beyond this functional change, beyond the broken bowl enclosure, beyond the aesthetic differences between the modern and the post-modern historicist stadiums, the structural continuities between the modern and post-modern, the old and the new, are many. The stadiums of the 1990s and 2000s are, like the modern stadiums that preceded them, thoroughly rationalized, self-consciously designed, highly technologized, consumption oriented, and economically segregated and stratified. Likewise, the *experience* of the stadium remains very modern. Anthropologist Eduardo P. Archetti, in a study of Argentinian football supporters, claimed,

The stadium full of spectators silently watching the performance and not taking part in the drama, who consequently cannot change the result, comes to be the ideal image of modern sport.... The ideal of modernity is built on the clear separation between representation and performance, between players and spectators, between activity and passivity.<sup>1</sup>

Though the stadium cultures of Argentina are historically quite distinct from those of the United States, Archetti's broad observation articulates the modern orientation of American stadium culture. The gap has never been greater between players and spectators, nor between spectators themselves, as stadium designers increasingly devise ways to fit more exclusive restaurants and suites into their structures. Never has less been asked of the spectator, who is barraged with artificial sounds and sights—from brief clips of music as each batter steps to the plate to the constant replays interspersed with video-board advertising. Of course, some active stadium cultures remain—remnants of long-cultivated fan traditions. But each new stadium seems to bring with it a more affluent and mannered sports consumer, whose presence in the stadium is less an expression of fanatical

commitment than ability to pay. The rationalization of the stadium, and the rationalization of its audience, has never been greater. This suggests that the post-modern cityscape is less “post” than modern—a thoroughly ideological space whose modern resilience is remarkable and influence is nearly total.

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo P. Archetti, “Argentinian Football: a Ritual of Violence?” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 9:2 (1992): 214.

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