

FIELDS OF DREAMS: BIG LEAGUE BALLPARKS

After the success of Phil Alden Robinson's 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*—based upon W.P. Kinsella's terrific novel *Shoeless Joe*—the phrase has become a staple of American vocabulary. Baseball parks are truly fields of dreams, both for those who play there as well as those who root from the stands. They are idiosyncratic, individual, and—when designed and built with care—as much a part of urban life as commercial buildings or government offices. Other sports have their stadiums, but only *baseball* has *ballparks*, a felicitous marriage of two of the most joyous words in the English language.

Since the 1870s, the parks that baseball has been played in have evolved as much as the game itself. Ballparks have always been constructed using the latest technology available, whether they were the wood parks of the game's early days, the concrete- and-steel edifices of the early 1900s, the enormous superstadiums of the 1960s and 1970s, or today's fashionable steel-and-brick retro designs. Many ballparks have been built on a tight budget, from the quickly constructed skeletons of the 1880s to some of the latest retro parks.

Ballparks didn't start out by simply providing cheap seats for the regular guys. Contrary to what many might think, private boxes—constructed to separate the rich from the rest of the crowd—existed almost from the inception of the first ballpark as the moneyed sat apart from their lower-class brethren. Al Spalding, owner of the Chicago White Stockings, had a private telephone line run into his owner's box at Lakefront Park in the 1880s so he could conduct business during the games. At the same time, St. Louis' American Association ballpark had a special seating pavilion devoted just to high society.

There's no such discrimination in this section of the encyclopedia, where low-grade facilities in out-of-the-way cities like Altoona in 1884 rub shoulders with the splendor of modern Meccas like Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore. Each facility served, however briefly, as a venue for big league games and qualifies, therefore, as a major league ballpark. Some parks served as home fields for several teams and will, therefore, have two or more entries.

On the following pages you will see an entry with details on every park that has hosted a major league game since 1871. The section is organized by major league city, with each park in a city shown chronologically by opening year from 1871 to the present. Ballparks are listed under their current (or their last) name, with any earlier (official) names noted in italics. Common nicknames for ballparks are in quotes. Current major league ballparks are shown in bold.

The **Open** column shows the first and last years that a park was used for major league games. Current parks will have only an opening year. Parks that are no longer used by a major league team but which are still standing (e.g., Tiger Stadium) are indicated with an asterisk.

All clubs that called a park home for even one game are included in the **Tenants** column. Current (or last) team names are used for all entries; so the NL Dodgers are called the Dodgers in all entries, even if they were known as the Robins or Superbas at one time. Short-lived St. Paul in the Union Association never played any home games and therefore, has no listing. League abbreviations are the same as in the player registers.

Capacity lists each park's current or final seating capacity along with its initial seating capacity (when known) in parentheses. There were no recorded capacities or dimensions for most nineteenth century ballparks, and such details for early twentieth century parks are frequently lacking.

The next two columns give details on each ballpark's configuration showing its most important **Dimensions**. The **Current** or **Final** dimensions for parks are listed in the fifth column. Each park's **Original** dimensions, if known, are listed in the sixth column. From left to right, the dimensions shown are left field foul line (**LF**), left-center field (**LCF**), center field (**CF**), right-center field (**RCF**), and

right field foul line (**RF**). LF-LCF and RF-RCF are separated by hyphens; CF is delimited by slashes. If the deepest part of the ballpark was *not* straightaway center field, the deepest dimension (if known) is shown in the **Notes** column. Question marks indicate unknown dimensions.

Despite the painstaking research done by Philip Lowry, Michael Benson, Michael Gershman, Larry Ritter, and others, there is still much that we do not know about the parks of the nineteenth century. This is, in part, because no one kept careful records of such things. However, another reason is that, back in the very "old days," baseball fields often did not even *have* dimensions as such—they were essentially big pastures with the playing diamonds laid out on them.

Some of the earliest parks lacked grandstands as well; those that did have grandstands lacked bleachers until the twentieth century. Overflow crowds were typically accommodated by allowing them to stand in foul territory or in fair territory behind the outfielders—in many pictures from the 1890s, horse-drawn carriages, holding fans, still ringed the outfield.

It is very interesting to note how dimensions have changed over the years. In days of yore, ballparks were built on whatever convenient piece of land could hold them, thus rendering most parks asymmetrical. For instance, New York's Polo Grounds, through its demise in 1962, had foul lines of less than 300 feet and a center field fence more than 200 feet deeper. To mitigate somewhat the effects of extremely short fences, the leagues drew up ground rules to eliminate cheap home runs. Finally, in the 1950s, the major leagues instituted minimum outfield fence distances for newly built parks.

From the mid-1960s through the 1980s, new park design involved symmetrical dimensions designed to accommodate football fields. These uniform venues seemed to reflect clean-lined, suburban spaciousness rather than the intimate urban settings of classic ballparks. The paradigm shift caused by the opening of Camden Yards has convinced teams that fans want odd dimensions and asymmetrical features as well as intimate spaces and comfortable seats and amenities. So these retro ballparks are deliberately asymmetrical, though this is now being done mostly for aesthetic reasons.

The **Notes** column includes miscellaneous information about artificial turf; domes or retractable roofs; and when lights were installed (if the park didn't have lights when it opened). No ballpark that closed before 1935 ever had lights; every ballpark built afterward always had lights. A *p* next to a year indicates the information applied for only part of that year.

Finally, if a team played a "home" game in a park that was not located in its hometown, the location of that park is shown in square brackets. In the 1800s, clubs often played official league games at neutral sites, either to benefit from a larger gate or to squeeze in a game—and, thus, a gate—on long road trips.

The last page of the Ballparks section has a list of all spring training sites for AL, NL, and Federal League clubs since 1901. The sites are shown chronologically by franchise, so the original Washington Senators spring training sites from 1901–60 are under Minnesota, and the expansion Senators spring bases from 1961–71 are under Texas.

A few teams will have two spring sites listed for some years. This is either because they trained at one city before moving to another city to play most or all of their home exhibition games, or because split their spring camps into two locations. Neutral sites (where teams sometimes play a game or two on the way home from spring training) are not shown.

In a few rare cases, teams play no or very few home spring games—the Mariners played all of their spring games in other teams' parks in Arizona in 1993 while their new ballpark in Peoria was being built.

BALLPARK	OPEN	TENANTS	CAPACITY	DIMENSIONS LF-LCF/CF/RCF-RF CURRENT/FINAL	ORIGINAL	NOTES
ALTOONA, PA						
Columbia Park	1884	UA Mountain Citys				
ANAHEIM/LOS ANGELES [CALIFORNIA 1966-96]						
Angel Stadium of Anaheim	1966-	AL Angels	45,257 (43,204)	330-387/400/370-330	333-?/406/?-333	Anaheim Stadium 1966-97; <i>Edison International Field of Anaheim</i> 1998-03 "The Big A"; rebuilt 1997-98
ARLINGTON [TEXAS]						
Arlington Stadium	1972-1993	AL Rangers	43,521 (35,185)	330-380/400/380-330		OF configuration different 1974-80
Rangers Ballpark in Arlington	1994-	AL Rangers	48,911 (49,292)	332-390/400/381-325		<i>The Ballpark in Arlington</i> 1994-2004, <i>Ameritrust Field in Arlington</i> 2005-06
ATLANTA						
Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium	1966-1996	NL Braves	52,769 (50,893)	330-385/402/385-330	325-385/402/385-325	
Turner Field	1997-	NL Braves	49,583 (50,528)	335-380/401/390-330		Built for 1996 Olympics; rebuilt for MLB
BALTIMORE						
Newington Park	1872-1874	NA Lord Baltimores				
	1873	NA Maryland				
	1882	AA Orioles				
Oriole Park (I)	1883-1889	AA Orioles				
Oriole Park (II)	1890-1891	AA Orioles			300-?/?/?-350	
Belair Lot	1884	UA Monumentals				
Monumental Park	1884	UA Monumentals				Selected dates
Oriole Park (III)	1891	AA Orioles	11,000 (30,000)	300-?/?/?-350		
	1892-1899	NL Orioles				
Oriole Park (IV)	1901-1902	AL Orioles				
Terrapin Park	1914-1915	FL Terrapins	16,000	300-?/450/?-335		
Memorial Stadium	1954-1991	AL Orioles	53,371 (47,855)	309-385/405/385-309	309-446/445/446-309	
Oriole Park at Camden Yards	1992-	AL Orioles	42,290 (48,041)	333-410/400/373-318		
BOSTON						
South End Grounds (I)	1871-1875	NA Red Stockings				Became NL Braves
	1876-1887	NL Braves				
Hampden Park Race Track	1873	NA Red Stockings				[Springfield MA] 2 games
Dartmouth Grounds	1884	UA Unions				
South End Grounds (II)	1888-1894	NL Braves	6,800			
Congress Street Grounds	1890	PL Red Stockings		250-?/?/?-?		
	1891	AA Red Stockings				
	1894	NL Braves				
South End Grounds (III)	1894-1914	NL Braves		250-450/440/?-255		
Huntington Avenue Grounds	1901-1911	AL Red Sox	9,000	350-440/635/?-320	350-440/530/?-280	
Fenway Park	1912-	AL Red Sox	38,805 (35,000)	310-379/390/380-302	321-?/488/?-314	RCF 420; lights 1947; Day capacity 38,221 28 Sept. games & World Series, 1914 RCF 390 (550); lights 1946 World Series only Sundays
	1914-1915	NL Braves				
Braves Field	1915-1952	NL Braves	37,106 (40,000)	337-355/370/355-318	402-403/440/402-402	
	1915-1916	AL Red Sox				
	1929-1932	AL Red Sox				
BROOKLYN						
Capitoline Grounds	1872	NA Atlantics				
Union Grounds	1872	NA Eckfords	1,500	500-500/500/500-350		
	1873-1875	NA Atlantics				
Washington Park (I)	1884-1889	AA Atlantics	2,000			
Ridgewood Park	1886-1889	AA Atlantics				14 Sunday games 29 games
	1890	AA Gladiators				
Washington Park (II)	1889	AA Atlantics	3,000			
	1890	NL Dodgers				
Long Island Grounds	1890	AA Gladiators				[Maspeth NY] 2 games
Eastern Park	1890	PL Ward's Wonders				
	1891-1897	NL Dodgers				
Washington Park (III)	1898-1912	NL Dodgers		376-444/425/300-302	335-500/445/300-215	
	1914-1915	FL Tip-Tops	18,800	300-?/400/?-275		
West NY Field Club Grounds	1898	NL Dodgers				Rebuilt 1914 for Federal League [West New York NJ] 3 games
Ebbets Field	1913-1957	NL Dodgers	31,902 (18,000)	348-351/393/352-297	419-?/450/?-301	Lights 1938
Roosevelt Stadium	1956-1957	NL Dodgers	24,500 (24,167)	330-397/411/397-330		[Jersey City NJ] 14 games total
BUFFALO						
Riverside Grounds	1879-1883	NL Bisons			210-420/410/420-210	
Olympic Park (I)	1884-1885	NL Bisons				
Maple Avenue Driving Park	1885	NL Bisons				[Elmira NY] 1 game
Olympic Park (II)	1890	PL Bisons				
Federal Field	1914-1915	FL Blues	20,000	290-?/400/?-300		aka Federal League Park
CHICAGO						
Union Base-Ball Grounds	1871	NA White Stockings	7,000			Became NL Cubs; aka <i>Lake Park</i>
23 rd Street Grounds	1874-1875	NA White Stockings				
	1876-1877	NL Cubs				
Lake Front Park (I)	1878-1882	NL Cubs				
Lake Front Park (II)	1883-1884	NL Cubs	5,000	180-280/300/252-196	186-280/300/252-196	
South Side Park (I)	1884	UA Browns				
Belair Lot	1884	UA Browns				[Baltimore MD] 1 game
West Side Park	1885-1891	NL Cubs			216-?/?/?-216	Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 1891
South Side Park (II)	1890	PL Pirates				
	1891-1893	NL Cubs				Tuesdays/Thursdays/Saturdays 1891
West Side Grounds	1893-1915	NL Cubs	16,000 (12,500)	340-441/560/435-316		
South Side Park (III)	1901-1910	AL White Sox	15,000			
Comiskey Park (I)	1910-1990	AL White Sox	43,951 (28,800)	347-382/409/382-347	363-382/420/382-363	Lights 1939; turf IF/grass OF 1969-75 <i>White Sox Park</i> 1967-75 Lights 1988; <i>Weeghman Park</i> 1914-18, <i>Cubs Park</i> 1919-25
Wrigley Field	1914-1915	FL Whales	41,160 (18,000)	355-368/400/368-353	310-?/400/?-350	
	1916-	NL Cubs				
Milwaukee County Stadium	1968-1969	AL White Sox	53,192 (35,911)	315-392/402/392-315	320-397/404/397-320	[Milwaukee WI] 20 games total
U.S. Cellular Field	1991-	AL White Sox	40,615 (44,702)	330-377/400/372-335	347-383/400/383-347	<i>Comiskey Park (II)</i> 1991-2002 <i>"New Comiskey"</i> [Japan] Dome; turf; 1 game
Tokyo Dome*	2000	NL Cubs	55,000	318-360/400/360-318		
CINCINNATI						
Avenue Grounds	1876-1879	NL Reds				
Bank St. Grounds	1880	NL Reds				
	1882-1883	AA Red Stockings				
	1884	UA Outlaw Reds				
League Park (I)	1884-1889	AA Red Stockings				
	1890-1893	NL Reds				