

“THE TREE THAT PLAYED CENTER FIELD”
DEFINING SOUTHEASTERN AMERICAN MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PARKS
AS:

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES WORTHY OF PRESERVATION

by

DAVID RIDDLE

(Under the Direction of Mark Reinberger)

ABSTRACT

This thesis will establish a methodology to define southeastern American minor league baseball parks as cultural landscapes worthy of preservation. The process defines applicable ground rules for elements of a ballfield. Historically significant ballparks that illuminate the evolution of the landscape will be identified. Specific ballparks will be used as case studies and analyzed by comparing relevant physical features. Analysis of Rickwood Field will be conducted. Documentation from the Historic American Building Survey along with field research and photo documentation will assess the characteristics of the park demonstrating baseball parks act as physical representations of heritage, memory, and cultural history. This thesis will put forth the concomitant idea that baseball can and should be identified as an American intangible cultural heritage. Memories of place associated with the ballpark and baseball will reinforce the significance of these cultural landscapes, making them worthy of preservation, and perpetuating their legacy.

INDEX WORDS: Atlanta Crackers, Baseball History, Birmingham Barons, Black Birmingham Barons, Cultural Landscape, Duncan Park, Durham Athletic Park, Durham Bulls, Engel Stadium, Field of Dreams, Finch Field, Fleming Stadium, Grayson Stadium, Heritage, Hicks Field, Historic Designed Landscapes, Historic Site, Historic Vernacular Landscape, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Jackie Robinson Stadium, LECOM Park, Legacy, Luther Williams Field, Macon Bacon, McCormick Field, Memories, Minor League Baseball, Nostalgia, Place, Ponce De Leon Ballpark, Rickwood Field, Rounders, Savannah Banana, Southern Association, Tree That Played Centerfield, Wahconah Park,

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Kathryn. Without her unconditional loving support, this compilation would never have happened. Luckily, I have been able to explore, research, and write with her encouragement, blessing, and invaluable advice. Everyone should be so fortunate.

Thank you!

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Many thanks to my father and uncle, both professional minor league baseball players, neither of whom made it to the major leagues or “The Show” as it is known. They both played in some of the ballparks discussed in this thesis, and their recollections of these places was insightful.

Cheers to Dr. Mark Reinberger for assisting me in his retirement, a mentor and comrade with kind and useful advisement shaping my work. Thank you Wayde Brown, Marianne Cramer, and Tom Breedlove for your insight and suggestions. I am grateful to Gerald Watkins, Chairman of The Friends of Rickwood, who took the time to provide an in-depth tour of Rickwood Field, even allowing access to the locker rooms, and Josh McCann, Community Relations & Outside Events Manager for Jackie Robinson Stadium. Your efforts provided access to the playing field of a historic ballpark in the off-season.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Baseball has a special place in my heart as it does with many Americans. According to an article entitled “Baseball History, American History and You:” “We play it as kids, we watch it and listen to it as adults, and we pass down our love of the Game through generations. Baseball is an American family tradition.”¹ As the great writer John Updike stated in his poem titled *Tao in the Yankee Stadium Bleachers*: “Distance brings proportion.”² Sitting in the centerfield grandstands of the original Yankee Stadium, Updike described his feelings and interactions with the components of the ballfield, the players within the ballpark, and the interrelationship between them which is unique about the game of baseball. Reflecting upon the experience seemed to bring it into proportion, literally and metaphorically.

Baseball is a uniquely American phenomenon, dear to our citizens, as cricket is to the British Commonwealth, fútbol (soccer) is to Latin America, or ice skating is to Russia. Again, quoting from “Baseball History, American History and You,” “often referred to as America's National Pastime, baseball has had a very active role in the shaping of this nation.”³ Although

¹ “Baseball History, American History and You,” Baseball Hall of Fame, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://baseballhall.org/baseball-history-american-history-and-you>.

² John Updike, “Tao in the Yankee Stadium Bleachers by John Updike,” Poetry Foundation (Poetry Foundation), accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43490/tao-in-the-yankee-stadium-bleachers>.

³ “Baseball History, American History and You.”

not formally recognized as an intangible cultural heritage⁴ by UNESCO, as camel racing is in Oman⁵ or yoga is in India,⁶ baseball is an American cultural development. It is emblematic of the country's democratic agrarian roots and most often but not always imbedded into the urban experience. The game, baseball, is played in a *place* known as the ballpark, which includes the ballfield and other integral components that make it a significant cultural landscape. This *place* has been referred to as "The Garden in the Machine" in another relevant thesis by Matthew Bolster Bronski about American major league ballparks constructed between 1909-1923.⁷ As described by Kent Ryden who includes a quote by Edward Relph, regarding the significance of place: "Since places are fusions of experience, landscape, and location, they are necessarily bound up with time and memory as well. The experiences which create and establish places recede inevitably into the past, so that one important quality of places is that they are 'the present expressions of past experiences and events.'"⁸ This is what gives places an ineffable quality.

This thesis will examine the significance of ballparks and how these places have uniquely adapted over their history to remain viable today. Specifically, it will methodically analyze these places, namely southeastern American minor league ballparks constructed prior to World War II,

⁴ The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. Definition from [What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? - intangible heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO](#).

⁵ "Camel Racing, a Social Practice and a Festive Heritage Associated with Camels," UNESCO, accessed September 7, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/camel-racing-a-social-practice-and-a-festive-heritage-associated-with-camels-01576>.

⁶ "Yoga," UNESCO, accessed September 7, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/yoga-01163>.

⁷ Matthew Bolster Bronski, "The Garden in the Machine (1995 Edition)," Open Library, January 1, 1995, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23300898M/The_garden_in_the_machine.

⁸ Kent C. Ryden and Wayne Franklin, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 39.

and will attempt to answer the following question: how do we define these extant ballparks as cultural landscapes and what is the value in preserving these places? My research will attempt to illustrate that these ballparks are more than just bleachers around a baseball field with concessions and other elements and will aim to establish their individual character and unique quality, including their coherent integrity.

It will also put forth the notion that American Minor League Ballparks (AMLB's) can be three of the four different types of cultural landscapes defined by the National Park Service. A ballpark can be either an Historic Designed Landscape (HDL), an Historic Site (HS), or an Historic Vernacular Landscape (HVL), but not an Ethnographic Landscape (EL). It may be possible that some ballparks be a combination of all three types of these cultural landscapes.

First, Chapter II will outline the inspirations for this study. Next, definitions or ground rules will be established in Chapter III. Chapter IV will identify historically exemplary baseball parks to establish principles for evaluation of extant ballparks as cultural landscapes. Then, a dozen southeastern American minor league ballparks built prior to World War II will be identified and used as case studies for analysis in Chapters V and VI. Chapter VII takes a lighthearted look at baseball as an American Intangible Heritage. Chapter VIII evaluates and analyzes Rickwood Field, constructed in 1910 in Birmingham, Alabama as an exemplary designed cultural landscape. Finally, Chapter IX will draw conclusions as to how we define southeastern American minor league ballparks as designed cultural landscapes worthy of preservation, specifically Rickwood Field in its current state.

In researching for data to analytically define southeastern American minor league ballparks as cultural landscapes, an embarrassing, yet very real, aspect of southeastern American culture became apparent. The legacy of baseball in the southeastern United States was indicative

of the region's racial segregation. Not until 1954 did the Southern Association League try to integrate baseball in the south with Nat Peeples of the Atlanta Crackers. He lasted a mere two games before being demoted to the Jacksonville, Braves of the South Atlantic League.⁹ He was the one and only African American to play in the Southern Association.¹⁰ Fortunately, baseball is famous for its statistical record keeping, and this record keeping provides documentation for black and white players alike. Otherwise, the accomplishments and histories of scores of African American athletes may have never been known, especially in the deep south, where major league baseball did not come until 1966,¹¹ when the integrated Milwaukee Braves relocated to Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to that time, The Atlanta Crackers (the minor league affiliate of the Milwaukee Braves) were often referred to as the Southern Yankees in reference to their outstanding record, parallel to the legendary New York Yankees.¹² Minor league baseball was an imbedded cultural heritage in the deep south for black and white citizens, albeit segregated, just as major league baseball (segregated in 1947) was for the big cities of the northeast. In 1950, seven of the sixteen major league baseball teams were in the three cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

Segregated baseball teams and their spectators were part of the intangible cultural heritage of minor league play in the southeast up until the mid-nineteen sixties, with a few exceptions which will be detailed later. There were separate leagues, separate teams, and of

⁹ My father claims Peeples was the fastest of his teammates on the integrated 1954 Jacksonville Braves minor league team where they played together.

¹⁰ Kenneth R. Fenster, "Earl Mann, Nat Peeples, and the Failed Attempt of Integration in the Southern Association," *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* (University of Nebraska Press, March 5, 2004), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/52786>.

¹¹ "Persuading the Milwaukee Braves to Become the Atlanta Braves," Omeka RSS, accessed February 16, 2022, <http://allenarchive.iac.gatech.edu/exhibits/show/atlanta-braves/bringing-major-league-baseball>.

¹² Tim Darnell, *Southern Yankees: The Story of the Atlanta Crackers and Baseball in the Minor Leagues* (Atlanta, GA: Timothy Darnell, 1995).

course separate seating areas in the ballparks for blacks and whites. As Tim Darnell describes the formation of the Negro National League by Andrew “Rube” Foster, (known as the father of black baseball)¹³ in 1920, “Only The Ball Was White.”¹⁴ Yet the segregated teams played at the same place, the cultural landscape known as the minor league ballpark, although typically on different days. Each culture was forging memories with events associated with the place, thereby creating histories for the ballpark. The ballpark was instrumental in helping form the gestalt of the cultures.

¹³ Inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981 “Rube Foster,” Baseball Hall of Fame, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/foster-rube>.

¹⁴ Darnell, *Southern Yankees*, 145.

CHAPTER 2

THE INSPIRATION

Ponce De Leon Ballpark, Atlanta, Georgia - Poncey

This thesis was inspired by the demolition of Ponce De Leon Ball Park in Atlanta, Georgia the former playing location of the Atlanta Crackers professional minor league baseball team and a member of the Southern Association League. Demolished in 1966, Ponce de Leon Ballpark had a special aura about it, as I recall from memories of going to games there in the early 1960s as a child with my dad. He would tell me stories of when he once took the field as the first baseman for the Atlanta Crackers in the mid-1950s. Today, only a tree serves as a memorial to the former minor league baseball park, a tree still located across the street from the former Sears and Roebuck Building, now Ponce City Market, behind Whole Foods Market. The tree was in the field of play in deep right center field, and special ground rules applied to it regarding play. In its heyday, both future and current major league players performed at Ponce De Leon Park in front of thousands of spectators and the magnolia tree. The tree's specific location is denoted by the arrow in the following figures.



Fig. #1 - 1955 Aerial photo of Ponce De Leon Park.¹⁵

¹⁵ Photo courtesy UGA library archives.



Fig # 2 - December 2020 aerial photo from Google Earth.



Fig #3 - Superimposition of figures #2 & #3 by author via PowerPoint®.



Fig. #4 - Ground photo of subject tree taken August 11, 2021 by author.

An article published in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and written by the late sports-writer Furman Bisher, and entitled “The Tree That Played Center Field,”¹⁶ refers to the magnolia tree at Poncey and states laconically: “oh there’s a lot you could tell.” His statement begs the question: could, or would the tree tell of the time when legends Babe Ruth and later Eddie Matthews batted balls into its branches? From an article by Paul Crater of the Atlanta History Center entitled “Hope Springs Eternal at Ponce de Leon Park” he claims in: “1951: 18-year-old Eddie Mathews hits a ball into the top of the magnolia tree in centerfield, a feat

¹⁶ Furman Bisher, “Bisher: The Tree That Played Center Field,” *AJC* (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, October 9, 2009), <https://www.ajc.com/sports/bisher-the-tree-that-played-center-field/uwlzoSpclSjiKeKcx15sLP/>.

achieved before only by Babe Ruth.”¹⁷ This staggering distance measured at 464’ from home plate¹⁸ (over one and half football fields). Would it remember when Jackie Robinson successfully stole home in an exhibition game between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Atlanta Crackers in front of a standing room only segregated crowd in April of 1949? Hopefully so, but author Ken Fenster, two-time winner of the SABR¹⁹ research award and professor of history at Georgia State University, has a detailed account of the three-game series which took place on the 8th, 9th & 10th of April 1949, entitled “Earl Mann Beats the Klan.”²⁰

Earl Mann was the owner of the Crackers in 1949 having bought the team from the Coca Cola Company in 1947,²¹ and Fenster recounts that on “January 14, 1949, in his first press conference of the year, Rickey²² officially announced that the Dodgers had scheduled three games against the Crackers for April 8, 9, and 10. Rickey added that Mann had specifically insisted on the appearance of Robinson and the Dodgers’ other African American star, Roy Campanella, in the Brooklyn lineup... These games would be the first interracial sporting event in Atlanta.”²³

¹⁷ From an online article entitled “Hope Springs Eternal at Ponce de Leon Park: a History” by Paul Crater of the Atlanta History Center. “All-Time All-Poncey Team,” accessed September 11, 2021, <https://sacrificefly.blogspot.com/2020/01/all-time-all-poncey-team.html>.

¹⁸ Distance confirmed using AutoCAD software by importing 1950 aerial photograph into program at full scale and measuring with software tools.

¹⁹ SABR is the acronym for Society for American Baseball Research.

²⁰ Kenneth R. Fenster, “Earl Mann Beats the Klan: Jackie Robinson and the First Integrated Games in Atlanta,” *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 21, no. 2 (2013): pp. 1-31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nin.2013.0023>.

²¹ Adam C. Johnson, “Solved: The Case of Midtown's Missing, Historic Magnolias Marker,” *Curbed Atlanta* (Curbed Atlanta, March 31, 2020), <https://atlanta.curbed.com/2020/3/31/21200083/midtown-atlanta-history-baseball-crackers-ponce-springs>.

²² Branch Rickey was the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1949.

²³ Kenneth R. Fenster, “Earl Mann Beats the Klan: Jackie Robinson and the First Integrated Games in Atlanta,” *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 21, no. 2 (2013): pp. 1-31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nin.2013.0023>.

Announcement of the integrated competition dismayed the obstetrician, Dr. Samuel Greene, Grand Dragon of the Klu Klux Klan in Georgia at the time. He was bound and determined to prevent the interracial competition and he snorted “You can bet your life I’ll look up the segregation law and investigate thoroughly. In my opinion it is illegal.”²⁴ But authorities in Atlanta, Fulton County, and Georgia stood behind Mann and the Dodgers’ desire to play an interracial match of baseball in Atlanta at a minor league ballpark. According to Paul Webb, the Fulton County solicitor at the time, he quickly thwarted Greene’s hopes of preventing the games on legal grounds when he declared “I don’t know of any law covering such a situation.” Jack Savage, the City of Atlanta attorney agreed that no city statute prohibited integrated sporting events. And Eugene Cook, the Georgia Attorney General also acknowledged that the state had laws mandating segregation in the schools, public transportation, and marriage, but no laws prohibiting African Americans from playing baseball against whites.²⁵ A bill put forth in the Georgia Legislature in February 1949 after the announcement of the series hoped to prevent the interracial sporting events. And although the bill cleared the Senate’s State of the Republic Committee and was supported by the Talmage administration, it did not become law, and therefore the games went on.²⁶

The historical significance of a series of three baseball games in a minor league ballpark in Atlanta during which the players, owners, and managers (not the spectators), set precedent for the eventual desegregation of the deep south (fifteen years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson), cannot be overstated.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

But all was not so peachy behind the scenes for Jackie Robinson and his Dodger team mates. In the clubhouse before the first game, the Dodgers' manager Burt Shotton read a letter to his team that he received, which threatened Robinson if he took the field. According to Fenster, in response "outfielder Gene Hermanski broke the tension in the morbid locker room with comic relief. He suggested that all Dodgers players wear Robinson's uniform, number forty-two, so that the assassin would not know whom to target."²⁷ Ironically, today no professional ball player is allowed to wear the number 42, as it has been retired forever in honor of the brave man from Cairo, Georgia. There is one exception: on April 15th every year, the day in 1947 when Robinson played his first major league game for the Dodgers, all major league players wear the number 42. Today this tradition is not for the reason his teammate Gene Hermanski remarked in the visiting clubhouse at Poncey, but rather out of respect.

There appeared to be financial reward for Earl Mann defeating the Klan, as attendance for the three-game series set a record. About the third and final game, when Jackie Robinson stole home plate, Fenster remarks:

This game is significant and memorable because of the record-setting attendance. It drew 25,221 fans, including 13,885 African Americans, to Ponce de Leon Park, which seated only 14,500. Baseball enthusiasts had taken every seat in the ballpark long before game time. African American fans had occupied every inch of the left field bleachers before noon, three hours prior to the start of the game. Thousands more formed a deep semicircle in the outfield that extended from the left to the right field bleachers. Still others perched on the branches of the stately magnolia tree that stood in deep right center field about 450 feet from home plate.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

I argue that vivid memories like these, which are shared by many, and which are related to a special place, are the intangible foundations of a cultural landscape. Cumulative personal memories, the ineffable, gives significance to the place by those in the place, regardless of the role of the participant either as a player, spectator, sportswriter, score keeper, umpire, vendor, owner, or manager. The more history recalls the significance of the events that occurred at a place through time, the more the place becomes a historical cultural landscape worthy of preservation. The memory *and* the documentation of Jackie Robinson's role as a player at Poncey certainly are significant. What a shame the place, Poncey the ballpark, no longer exist: But the magnolia tree still does, along with other documented and undocumented memories of events at the ballpark it kept watch over, growing more significant as time passes, year by year, one growth ring at a time.



Fig. #5 – Unknown artist (signature illegible) rendition of Poncey²⁹

²⁹ Autographed artwork gift from Taylor Phillips, former Milwaukee Braves pitcher.

Field of Dreams, Iowa – Fantasia via Nostalgia

Another inspiration for this thesis is a fabrication, a stage set, built adjacent to an existing picturesque farmhouse for the filming of the daydreamlike movie entitled *Field of Dreams*, a fictional baseball field amid a pastoral Iowa cornfield, where the corn is so high it forms a natural fence for the outfield. It is a modern mythical place, conceptually like Elysium (which will be detailed later), where baseball players return from the past to live out a historic sports fantasy drama. The guiding whispered mantra is “if you build it, he will come,”³⁰ inspiring the owners of the farmhouse and cornfield to build the ballfield for no logical reason, except for the son to have a catch with his reincarnated father.

Initially, memories are usually crystal clear and true to fact. However, as time fades away, so can the facts of the memory, not that it is any less real to the beholder of the memory, but rather becomes more nostalgic, fantastical. Field of Dreams, the place, is a physical manifestation of this concept. Visiting the place was an ineffable experience, bringing back childhood memories now faded into fantasy. Even though no real teams play on the stage set ballfield,³¹ the little league size ballfield, is picturesque, set in a pristine environment (illustrated in figures #6, and #7), the idyllic, perfect ballfield, if there is one?

³⁰ Quote from the movie *A Field of Dreams*.

³¹ On August 12th, 2021, MLB scheduled a “throwback” regular season game between the Chicago White Sox and the New York Yankees at the *Field of Dreams* location.



Fig. #6 - Field of Dreams³²

³² Photo by author.



Fig. #7 - Field of Dreams³³



Fig. #8 - Field of Dreams³⁴

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

A modest farmhouse sits sentinel on an adjacent hill side (illustrated in figure #8) keeping watch over the ball field created by its owners (in the movie). It is a simple, pure, idyllic, recreation of the place where memories come to life making for a designed cultural landscape. A place of fantasy via nostalgia, a modern manifestation of a dream from the past. According to John Sexton, former president of New York University and author of the book *Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing beyond the Game*: “Nostalgia is one of baseball’s defining attributes. The game’s past shadows its present – always there to be conjured for instruction, to prod memories, and to revive dormant emotions. Nostalgia is the tribute the present pays to the past.”³⁵

The recollection (or in this case fabrication) of a historic baseball memory, whether real or fantasy, reinforces baseball’s place as an American intangible cultural heritage. For the hardcore baseball fan, to experience this place, the Field of Dreams, is a hierophany. Again, quoting Sexton, “The noun: *hierophany*. Mircea Eliade’s term, derived from the Greek for a manifestation of the sacred or holy. A hierophany produces a moment of spiritual epiphany and connection to a transcendent plane. A heightened sensitivity opens us to this manifestation of the sacred in ordinary life.”³⁶

To set forth a framework for my investigation, it is essential to establish definitions or ground rules as this study will refer to them, for evaluating minor league ballparks as cultural landscapes, which can be found in following chapters.

³⁵ John Edward Sexton, Thomas Oliphant, and Peter J. Schwartz, *Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing beyond the Game* (New York: Avery, 2014). 198.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 211.

CHAPTER 3
THE GROUND RULES



Fig. #9 - Pre-game routine³⁷

The terms ballfield and ballpark are sometimes used synonymously - and for good reason. The ballfield is part of the ballpark, and the ballpark includes the baseball playing field. This integral relationship is key to this unique cultural landscape type and necessitates definition. Therefore, ground rules are required.

³⁷ Meeting of the opposing team managers with the umpiring crew defining the ballpark's ground rules prior to a competitive match between the Savannah Bananas and the Macon Bacon at Luther Williams Field, Macon, GA on Saturday August 21st, 2021. Photo by author.

Literally, specific ground rules relative to each ballpark are established prior to the start of each baseball game. This is part of the routine ritual affiliated with each match, as illustrated in figure #9. In this process, the idiosyncrasies of the unique design and layout of a particular ballpark are revealed as they apply to the universal rules of the game. Take for instance, the tree that played center field at Poncey, unique ground rules would define what happens if a ball were hit into the branches of the tree. There can be no misunderstanding of the rules when the game is on the line. Yet despite the best of efforts, everything is subject to interpretation, ultimately by the umpire, sometimes much to the dismay of a manager, his team, and their fans. This is baseball at its finest, regardless of the level of play. A ballpark's differences, more familiar to the home team, provides them a definite advantage in competition.

Conceptually, this unique set of physical circumstances helps to create the identifiable memory of the place, and the idiosyncrasies help create an associated memory that every participant whether owner, manager, umpire, player, or spectator can relate to and identify within each environ, although most likely in different fashions. This helps to establish the identity of a cultural landscape.

What follows are definitions, essentially the ground rules for this thesis.

Cultural Landscape Definitions:

The National Park Service (NPS) states: “Put simply, a cultural landscape is a historically significant property that shows evidence of human interaction with the physical environment.”³⁸

The NPS goes further to define a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources... ..associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”³⁹ Also, per the NPS, there are four non-mutually exclusive types of cultural landscapes, a Historic Designed Landscape (HDL), a Historic Site (HS), a Historic Vernacular Landscape (HVL), or an Ethnographic Landscape (EL).⁴⁰ This thesis proposes that American Minor League Ballparks (AMLB’s) can be three of the four types above: a HDL, a HS, or an HVL, but not an EL. Later analysis of selected parks will evaluate how these definitions apply specifically and non-mutually.⁴¹

The applicable NPS cultural landscape definitions relative to this thesis are as follows:

“Historic Designed Landscape—a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include *parks*, campuses, and estates.

³⁸ “Understand Cultural Landscapes,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/culturallandscapes/understand-cl.htm>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Historic Vernacular Landscape—a landscape that evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual, family or a *community*, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives. Function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes. They can be a single property such as a farm or a collection of properties such as a district of historic farms along a river valley. Examples include rural villages, industrial complexes, and agricultural landscapes.

Historic Site—a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person. Examples include battlefields and president's house properties.”⁴²

The quoted definitions from Preservation Brief (36) provide guidance for a “step-by-step process for preserving historic designed and vernacular landscapes, two types of cultural landscapes. While this process is ideally applied to an entire landscape, it can address a single feature, such as a perennial garden, family burial plot, or a sentinel oak in an open meadow.”⁴³ For instance, this defined process could be applied conceptually to “The Tree That Played Centerfield,” like a sentinel oak in an open meadow previously mentioned. Fortunately, the magnificent magnolia tree formerly part of Poncey has been identified and nominated as a significant tree of Georgia and named Crackers Magnolia. A list of such special trees can be found at the following web site: <https://significanttreesofgeorgia.uga.edu/List.html> which also includes the English yews on University of Georgia North Campus, and the Tree That Owns

⁴² “Preservation Brief 36: Protecting CULTURAL Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed September 29, 2021, <https://home.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Itself in Athens, Georgia, along with numerous others.⁴⁴ “The Tree that Played Centerfield,” Crackers Magnolia, or Spiller Magnolia (all different names for the same specimen) should live on as Trees Atlanta has propagated new trees from cuttings of the original.⁴⁵

UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee defines cultural landscapes as "cultural properties ... representing the combined works of nature and of man."⁴⁶ The Committee outlines the following three categories of cultural landscapes as extracted from their Operational Guidelines.

Namely:

- i) The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles.
- ii) The second category is the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features.

They fall into two sub-categories:

A relict (or fossil) landscape is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form.

⁴⁴ “Index of Nominated Trees: Significant Trees of Georgia,” Index of Nominated Trees | Significant Trees of Georgia, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://significanttreesofgeorgia.uga.edu/List.html>.

⁴⁵ “Witnessing History: Spiller Field Magnolias: Trees Atlanta,” Witnessing History: Spiller Field Magnolias | Trees Atlanta, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.treesatlanta.org/news/witnessing-history-spiller-field-magnolias/>.

⁴⁶ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Cultural Landscapes,” World Heritage Centre, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>.

A continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time, it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

- iii) The final category is the associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

How these three UNESCO definitions of cultural landscapes apply to selected AMLB's will be investigated later with a focus on how AMLB's are continuing landscapes that have significant cultural associations.

The following is a truncated outline of Cultural Landscape Characteristics. As the NPS proclaims, the characteristics and features of a cultural landscape are historically significant and have integrity, they can contribute to the historic character of the property (refer to the NPS website for full outline).⁴⁷

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION:

- Historical, three-dimensional arrangements of physical forms and visual associations. This might include how other landscape characteristics - like circulation systems, views and vistas, areas of land use, and clusters of structures - define spaces within the landscape.

⁴⁷ "Cultural Landscapes 101 (U.S. National Park Service)," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/cultural-landscapes-101.htm>.

LAND USE:

- Historical activities in the landscape that have formed, modified, shaped, or organized the landscape as a result of human interaction. Examples of land use features include fields, pastures, orchards, open range, terraces, commons, cemeteries, *playing fields*, parks, mining areas, quarries, and logging areas.

CIRCULATION:

- Historical systems for human movement, including the spaces, features, and material finishes. Circulation features are paths, roads, streams, canals, highways, railways, and waterways.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS:

- Historical manifestation of collective cultural identity that have influenced the development of a landscape in terms of land use, patterns of land division, building forms, stylistic preferences, and the use of materials.

TOPOGRAPHY:

- Historical, human-created shape of the ground plane.

VEGETATION:

- Patterns of human-influenced plants, both native and introduced.

CLUSTER ARRANGEMENT

- The location of buildings, structures, and associated spaces in the landscape.

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES:

- Buildings are the elements of a landscape primarily built for sheltering any form of human activities, and structures are the functional elements constructed for other purposes. Engineering systems are also structures.

VIEWS AND VISTAS:

- Historical range of vision, both broad and discrete.

Later chapters will utilize these characteristics and features of a cultural landscape to analyze selected AMLB's to establish their historic character, integrity, and significance worthy of preservation.

Elements of the Ballfield within the Ballpark

Home Plate:

Originally it was a cast iron round plate painted white approximately one foot in diameter,⁴⁸ but now it is a five-sided flat white rubber base next to which the batter stands and over which the pitcher throws the ball for a strike,⁴⁹ 17” square with two 12” truncated sides to create an apex at the rear.

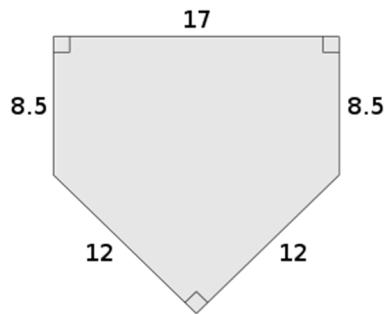


Fig. #10 - Diagram of home plate with dimensions⁵⁰

Fair Territory:

Imagine, two perpendicular lines intersecting at a common point, that point being the rear corner of home plate (shown above), emanating from there and extending outward, conceptually to infinity, ever increasing the area between, originally bound in the distance only by the pastoral landscape beyond.

⁴⁸ Paul Dickson, Skip McAfee, and Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2011). 425.

⁴⁹ Oxford Dictionary definition.

⁵⁰ Diagram by author generated in AutoCAD©.

Foul Territory:

This is the area outside of fair territory, sometimes with a boundary like a grandstand or concession area, but sometimes not bound in a more rural or pastoral setting.

Foul Lines:

These are the lines drawn on the ground, usually with chalk, although originally with lime, defining the boundary between fair and foul territory, the line itself being fair territory.⁵¹

The Baseball Diamond:

Refer to Appendix A for a diagram of the many components of the baseball diamond consistent on all ballfields per the official rules of baseball.⁵²

Components include:

1. Batters' Box
2. Catchers' Box
3. Pitchers' Plate (on a 10" raised mound)
4. Coaches' Box
5. Next Batters' Box (ironically a circle)
6. Base Lines with Dimensions
7. Grass Lines with Dimensions

⁵¹ "2019 Official Baseball Rules 2019 Official ... - Mlb.com," accessed October 1, 2021, https://content.mlb.com/documents/2/2/4/305750224/2019_Official_Baseball_Rules_FINAL_.pdf.

⁵² Ibid.

Outfield Wall:

As baseball evolved and began to take place in more and more urban environments, a separation was needed to define the grass of the playing field from the surrounding urban environment. Therefore, walls or sometimes only fences were erected to establish a boundary to the originally endless open area extending between the foul lines from home plate to infinity. The distance from home plate, the configuration, and the height of this boundary varies in every ballpark.

Foul Pole:

The foul pole is a vertical structure extending upwards at the intersection of the foul line with the outfield wall. Like the foul line, this is a bit of a misnomer as the foul pole itself is in fair territory within the field of play.

Battery:

The pitcher and catcher collectively.⁵³ The use of the word 'battery' in baseball was first coined by Henry Chadwick in the 1860's in reference to the firepower of a team's pitching staff and inspired by the artillery batteries then in use in the American Civil War.⁵⁴ The extension of the alignment between the catcher and the pitcher, essentially the batter's line of sight, will be discussed in future chapters as the battery orientation in terms of a compass bearing.

⁵³ Dickson, et al, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. 86.

⁵⁴ Edward Gruver. "Koufax". BaseballLibrary.com. Archived from the original on July 20, 2008. Retrieved November 11, 2008.

Bullpen:

This term applies to the area where pitchers or potential pitchers warm up prior to entering the match. In it a pitchers' plate (mostly called rubber) and home plate are positioned identically to the configuration of the diamond (60'- 6" apart). Usually there are two of each, parallel to one another, so that a left-handed and right-handed pitcher may warm up simultaneously. The location of the bullpen varies in each ballpark, but it is always outside fair territory, and typically there is one area designated for each team. The origin of the term is somewhat uncertain and there are many theories. Paul Dickson spends over a page and a half on the etymology.⁵⁵ He quotes Michael Gartner, in his nationally syndicated column on baseball language (*Newsday*, April 27th, 1986): "that the bullpen - Bull Durham connection originated in the days when all games were day games and when 'pitchers warming up for relief duty often chose to limber up in the shade of those big signs.' In the early days of the 20th century, the Bull Durham name was, indeed, closely associated with the ballpark."⁵⁶ Following is a photo of the Durham Bulls baseball team in front of a Bull Durham sign.

⁵⁵ Dickson, et al, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. 144-146.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

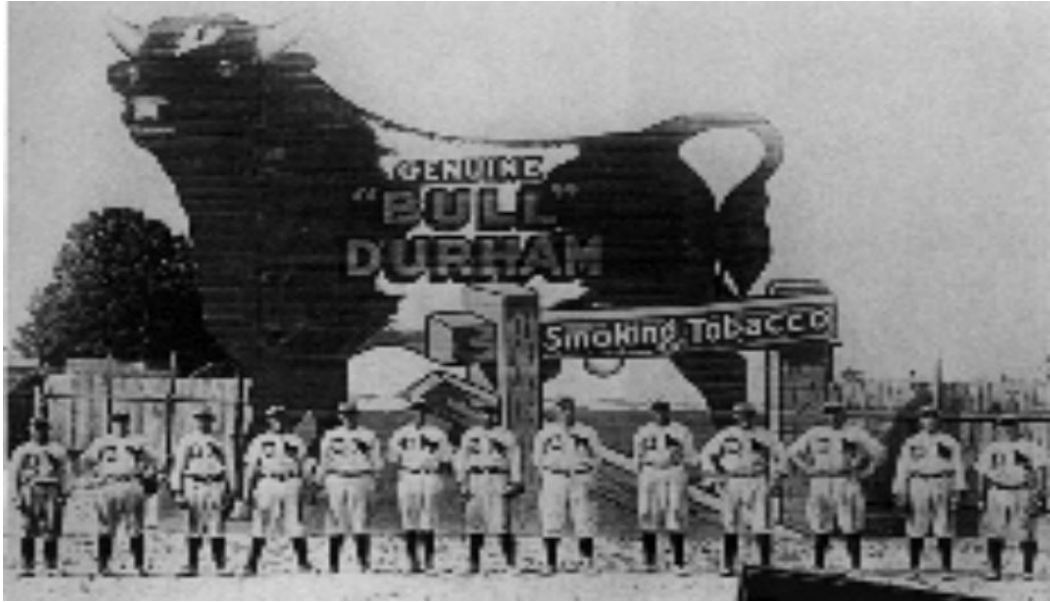


Fig. #11 – Durham Bulls baseball team ⁵⁷



Fig. #12 - Ebbets Field, Flatbush Brooklyn ⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Durham Bull baseball team, E1913. From "Baseball's Hometown Teams: The Story of the Minor Leagues" by Bruce Chadwick

⁵⁸ Photo of Ebbets Field, Library of Congress Archives.

The previous photo is of a major league ballpark, yet it illustrates the location of the Bull Durham sign in right field, a common location for the bull pen in today's ballparks (outside the fence line, of course). Another credible derivation of the term comes from the *Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball*: "The term 'Bullpen' arose when fans were allowed into games for 10 cents if they arrived after the 1st inning in the early years in the National League; latecomers were penned in 'like bulls' behind ropes in foul territory beyond first and third base. Relief pitchers warmed up along the sidelines near these areas."⁵⁹

Power Alleys:

Power alleys are the sections of the field located between left and center field and between right and center field, named thus because it takes power for players to hit balls there. The size of the power alleys varies significantly from one ballpark to another, depending on the configuration of the outfield fence.⁶⁰ These different configurations are key in defining the unique landscape of the ballfield within the ballpark. The origin of the term is attributed to *The Coshocton Tribune* in the 1950's.⁶¹ Paul Dickson expands on a personal conversation with John Pastier: "...all things considered, 'power alley' is a snappy comforting phrase that promises scientific precision, but is in fact vague, misleading, and one of baseball's greatest misnomers. Power alleys are not really tangible

⁵⁹ Jonathan Fraser Light, *The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017). 157.

⁶⁰ "Power Alley," Power alley - BR Bullpen, accessed October 15, 2021, https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Power_alley.

⁶¹ "Power Alley: Meaning & Definition for UK English," Lexico Dictionaries | English (Lexico Dictionaries), accessed October 15, 2021, https://www.lexico.com/definition/power_alley.

places, but rather figures of speech and states of mind.”⁶² This reiterates the intangible cultural heritage of baseball, evolving from pastoral settings into urban street alleys.

In conclusion, this chapter sets forth definitions, both for cultural landscapes in general, but also more specific terms as they relate to ballfields within ballparks.

Synthesizing these definitions will serve as parameters for analysis in later chapters.

Next, is to identify precedent setting historically exemplary ballparks.

⁶² Dickson, et al, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. 666.

CHAPTER 4
HISTORICALLY EXEMPLARY BALLPARKS THAT ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLES FOR
EVALUATION

This chapter will chronicle four historically exemplary ballparks, each significant in its own way. The first is Elysian Fields, the birthplace of organized baseball, significant by virtue of that fact. The next selection is Prospect Park, an Olmsted-Vaux designed park in Brooklyn, New York, where a portion known as the Parade Ground evolved from a military parade ground into multiple ballfields, a continuing vernacular adaptation through use. The third example, the Union Grounds, also in Brooklyn, New York, was a skating ring which was converted to a ballpark and eventually fenced. This enabled the owner to charge admission to spectators capitalizing on entrepreneurial adaptation for profit. The last historic exemplar is a currently utilized ballpark, Wahconah Park, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a city-owned facility. It is a cultural landscape recognized by the Cultural Landscape Foundation with a unique geographic orientation so significant that the host team, the Pittsfield Suns, takes its name from the unusual circumstance occurring at sunset.

To better understand the significance of these historic exemplars, it is necessary to have a fundamental understanding of the origins of the actual game of baseball. The early game appears to be a modification of the English game of rounders.⁶³ It is a bat and ball type game with

⁶³ Matthew Bolster Bronski, “The Garden in the Machine (1995 Edition),” Open Library, January 1, 1995, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23300898M/The_garden_in_the_machine. 4.

numerous players per side. Initially, it appears to be a child's game and there is mention of the game in a book for children, *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*, originally published by John Newberry in 1744. Below are copies of the title page and page forty-three from a reproduction found in the Library of Congress. The book illustrates various games as a method to teach children the alphabet, Base-Ball is associated with the letter “The little k Play.” The verse below the illustration reads: “The ball once struck off, Away flies the Boy, To the next destin'd Post, And then Home with Joy.”

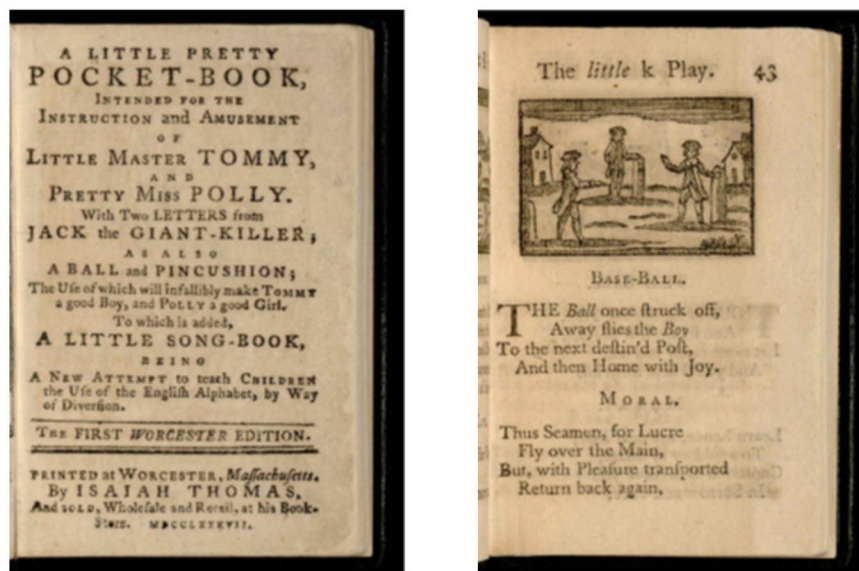


Fig. #13 - *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*, reprint of the London edition originally published by John Newberry in 1744.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ “Library of Congress,” accessed February 12, 2022, <https://memory.loc.gov/service/rbc/rbc0001/2003/2003juv05880/2003juv05880.pdf>.

Incidentally, swimming is illustrated on the previous page as “The great K Play,” and the game of cricket is illustrated on page forty as “The great I Play.” Other children’s games such as “Hop-Scotch, and “Leap-Frog” are also portrayed in this amazing publication. According to *Baseball Before We Knew It: A Search for the Roots of the Game*, the name baseball originates from England, not America, and is a modification of the game of rounders.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ David Block and Tim Wiles, *Baseball before We Knew It a Search for the Roots of the Game* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006). 17

Elysian Fields and the Concept of Elysium

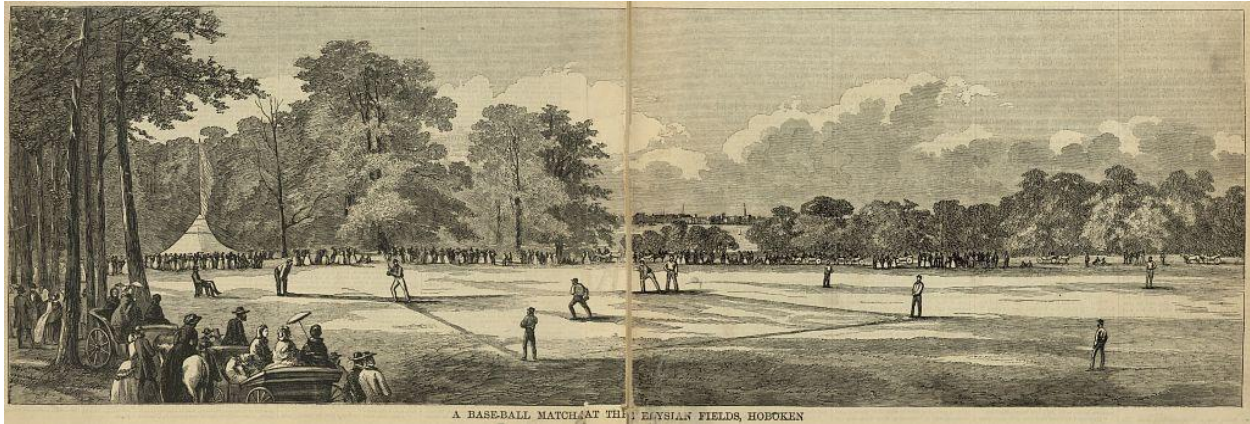


Fig. #14 - Historic depiction of Elysium Fields ⁶⁶

Elysian Fields can be considered as the place where the game of baseball began. The quintessential baseball park, it was an open field in a park in Hoboken, New Jersey. It was located only a short distance from the crowded island of Manhattan, a ferry ride across the Hudson River, a respite from the crowded urban environment. This was a place to relax and put aside the stresses of urban life to recreate either watching or participating in the American game called baseball played between gentlemen clubs. Baseball matches first took place at Elysian Fields in 1846.

The name Elysian Fields stems from Greek Mythology. Elysian Fields were described by Homer, Virgil, and Hesiod as a place where the good and heroic were rewarded in the afterlife

⁶⁶ “A Baseball Match at the Elysian Fields, Hoboken,” The Library of Congress, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2008676716/>.

while the bad were punished in the Underworld by Hades. Elysium was typically described as idyllic, pleasant, and pastoral.⁶⁷ Another interpretation of Elysium Fields according to Greek mythology describes it as a paradise where gods and nobles spent their eternity in the afterlife, like the Christian concept of the Garden of Eden, where they were able to frolic in the luscious meadows making music, singing and playing sport.”⁶⁸ There is also a vivid description of Elysium by the Roman poet Virgil:

...respecting Elysium made it a region blessed with perpetual spring, clothed with continual verdure, beautiful with flowers, shaded by pleasant groves, and refreshed by never failing fountains. Here the righteous lived in perfect felicity, communing with each other, bathed in a flood of light proceeding from their own sun, and with the sky at eve lighted up by their own constellations: *solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.*⁶⁹

For most spectators, baseball is a pleasant game, historically played in a pastoral setting, perhaps not quite as idyllic as described above, but almost. Conceptually, this is important, as it sets the tone for a relaxing pastime within a pastoral setting or place. Unfortunately, all that remains of this actual idyllic place, where the first documented competitive match of baseball occurred between two gentleman baseball clubs, the Knickerbockers and the New Yorks, is the following plaque.

⁶⁷ N.S. Gill, “What Were the Elysian Fields or Ancient Greek ‘Heaven?’”, ThoughtCo, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-were-the-elysian-fields-in-greek-mythology-116736>.

⁶⁸ Prof. Geller - et al., “Elysian Fields - Greek Religious Place of the Afterlife,” Mythology.net, January 20, 2017, <https://mythology.net/greek/greek-concepts/elysian-fields/>.

⁶⁹ “Elysium,” Elysium | Facts, Information, and Mythology, July 19, 1998, <https://pantheon.org/articles/e/elysium.html>.



Fig. #15 - Monument marking the former location of Elysium Fields at 11th and Washington streets, Hoboken, New Jersey⁷⁰

Since it was the first of its kind, this now vanquished ballfield and ballpark all in one serves as the ultimate historic exemplar for reference, including the concept of Elysian or Elysium.

⁷⁰ “Category:Elysian Fields, Hoboken,” Wikimedia Commons, accessed February 12, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Elysian_Fields,_Hoboken.



Fig. #16 Lithograph depicting Elysian Fields ⁷¹

As previously mentioned, the first game played at Elysian Fields was between the gentlemen clubs known as the Knickerbockers and the New Yorks and commenced on June the 19th in 1846. The score ended 23-1 in favor of the New Yorks and the umpire was Alexander Cartwright. The year prior, Cartwright and his club the Knickerbockers, published twenty rules for play: rule #4 defined the dimensions of the diamond (the bases shall be from "home" to second base, forty-two paces; from first to third base, forty-two paces, equidistant): and rule #15

⁷¹ "The American National Game of Base Ball. Grand Match for the Championship at the Elysian Fields, Hoboken, N.J. / Lith. of Currier & Ives.," The Library of Congress, accessed October 16, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90708565/>.

defined three put outs ended your offensive turn at bat (three hands out, all out). The Elysian Fields property was owned by Col. Jacob Stevens. In 1870, pressured by the expansion of New York City, he sold the property, the field was replaced with street grid, and the first known ballpark became non-existent.

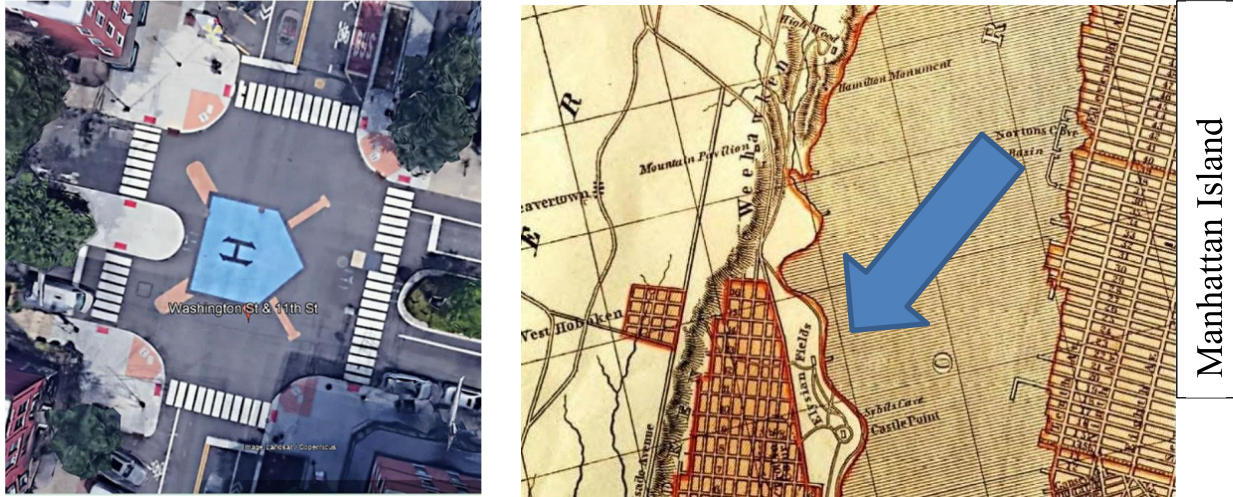


Fig. #17 – Current aerial view of 11th and Washington streets, Hoboken, New Jersey adjacent to an 1841 map of parts of Hudson and New York Counties, and the Hudson River with arrow depicting the historic location of Elysium Fields ^{72 73}

⁷² December 2020 aerial photo from Google Earth

⁷³ “Category:1841 Maps,” Wikimedia Commons, accessed February 12, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:1841_maps.

Parade Ground, Prospect Park of Brooklyn, New York

Adaptation Through Use

Prospect Park is an urban public park in Brooklyn, New York. Below is a brief history of its creation credited to James T. Stranahan, a business and civic leader of Brooklyn in the 1860's.

According to prospectpark.org:

In 1858, designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux completed Central Park in Manhattan. Soon a movement grew in Brooklyn for a park of its own. In 1866, Stranahan and the park commissioners hired Olmsted, Vaux & Company to transform 585 acres of remnant forest and rocky farmland into a landscape whose beauty, though manufactured, would nurture the mind, the body and even the fabric of society. The Park was officially opened in 1867, even though construction continued for another seven years, and it was an unparalleled success.⁷⁴

Following is a drawing of the Parade Grounds portion of the park, approximately forty acres in size.

⁷⁴ "Prospect Park History - Prospect Park Alliance," Prospect Park, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://www.prospectpark.org/learn-more/park-history-slideshow/>.

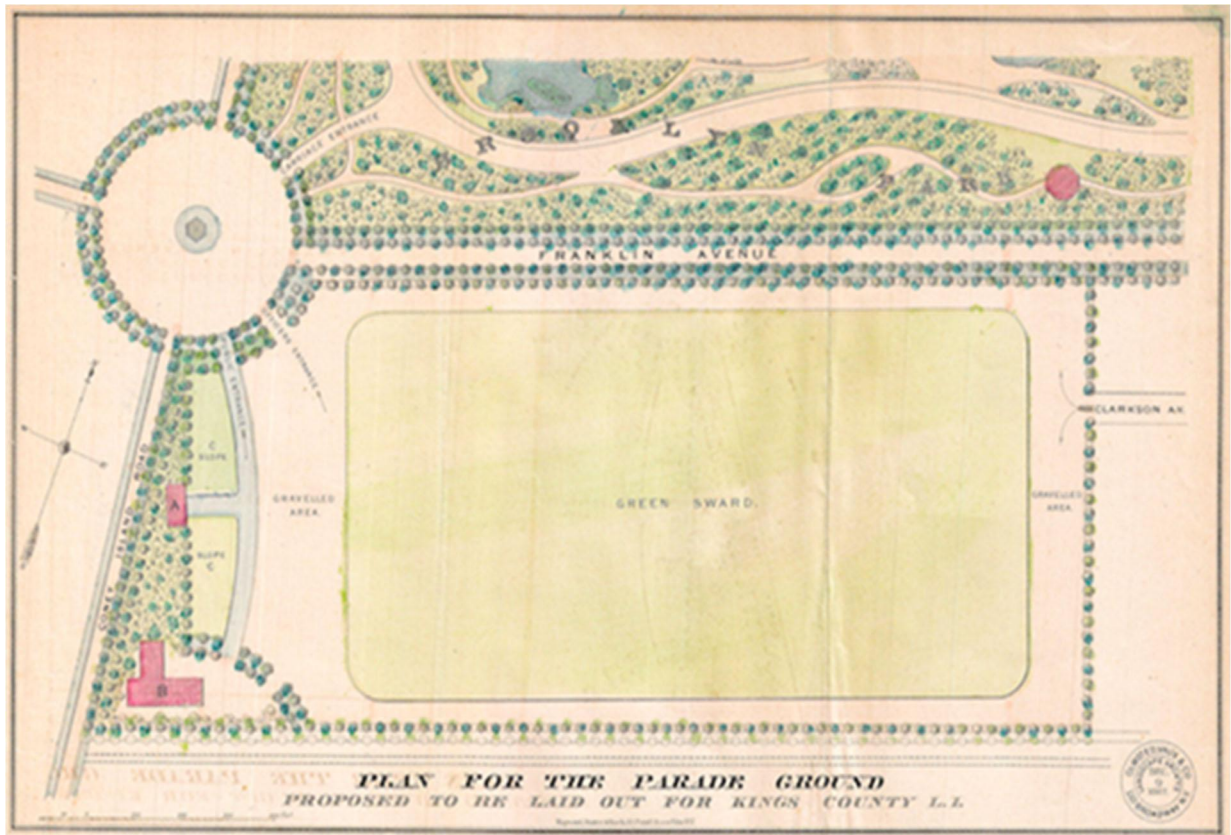


Fig. #18 - An 1868 rendering of Olmsted and Vaux's original Parade Ground plan⁷⁵

The Prospect Park Parade Grounds were also known as the Kings County Parade Ground, as well as the Prospect Park Base Ball Grounds. In 1867 the 11th Brigade's Howitzer Battery marched and fired its first shot there. Later, The State of New York passed an act on April 27th, 1868, allowing for the purchase of the land for the Kings County Parade Grounds and charged the Commissioners of Prospect Park, of the City of Brooklyn with management.⁷⁶ Fortunately, a better purpose was found, and in 1871 the grounds were being used for sport, baseball in fact, on

⁷⁵ "BrooklynBallparks," accessed October 17, 2021, <http://www.brooklynballparks.com/>.

⁷⁶ Brooklyn (New York, NY) Park Commissioners (1873). Annual Reports of the Brooklyn Park Commissioners, 1861–1873: Reprinted by Order of the Board, with Such Acts of the Legislature in Their Amended Form, as Relate to the Brooklyn Parks, and Their Management. 236.

multiple fields of play. Henry Chadwick⁷⁷ described it as the “finest free ball ground in the United States.”⁷⁸ Baseball has a history in the Parade Ground portion of Prospect Park, a public park in an urban environment, it is being used to spectate and participate in the organized sport. By the 1930s the baseball diamonds of the Parade Grounds attracted as many as 20,000 spectators a day.⁷⁹ Today, the Prospect Park Baseball Association in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance, part of the New York City Parks & Recreation Department manage the numerous fields of the Parade Grounds.

⁷⁷ Chadwick, although not a player, was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1938. He pioneered baseball with his pen and is credited with inventing the box score as well as being the author of the first baseball rule book in 1858.

⁷⁸ “Brooklynballparks,” accessed October 17, 2021, <http://www.brooklynballparks.com/>.

⁷⁹ “Parade Ground,” Parade Ground Highlights: NYC Parks, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/parade-ground/history>.

The following illustrations demonstrate multiple fields in use in 1928, defined by spectators.



Fig. #19 - 1928 Baseball Game on the Parade Ground, Prospect Park Alliance Archives⁸⁰



**Fig. #20
Detail of previous photo, Prospect Park Alliance Archives⁸¹**

Notice the umpire beside the pitcher rather than behind home plate

⁸⁰ “Brooklynballparks,” accessed October 17, 2021, <http://www.brooklynballparks.com/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

What is noteworthy here at the Parade Ground, is that we see a Historic Designed Landscape (HDL) transform into a Historic Vernacular Landscape (HVL) by its use as a ballfield, in fact multiple ballfields, all of which creates a unique type of ballpark.⁸² This evolution as a common shared landscape over time by virtue of being a public park, typifies the values of the culture using the park and creating the cultural landscape.⁸³ Each playing field has some of the common elements described and defined in Chapter III, and the boundaries of the ballfield are defined by the gathering of the spectators within the landscape rather than with the physical construction of a grandstand.

The next illustrations denote the “continuing landscape” of the Parade Ground’s march through time consistent with UNESCO’s definition of an organically evolved cultural landscape also outlined in Chapter III. The 1924 photo depicts various playing diamonds of rather consistent dimensions with opposing orientations around the perimeter of the Parade Grounds having shared outfield spaces in the center. Seventy-two years later the 1996 photo illustrates a different diagonal arrangement of the playing fields, where rows of trees begin to define the areas of play. By 2010, some fields have vanished, the playing surface appears to be artificial, the trees are of course larger, and the baseball diamonds themselves are more prominent and clearly defined. Although the dimensions of the diamonds appears rather consistent in all three illustrations, the outfield configurations vary greatly. Only on the center most field in 2010 is an outfield fence discernable.

⁸² A similar transformation occurred at Ft. McPherson in Atlanta where the Army fielded a baseball team on their parade ground.

⁸³ Matthew Bolster Bronski, “The Garden in the Machine (1995 Edition),” Open Library, January 1, 1995, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23300898M/The_garden_in_the_machine. 12.



1924



1996



2010

Fig. #21 – Evolution of the Parade Grounds ballfield through time⁸⁴

⁸⁴ “Brooklynballparks,” accessed October 17, 2021, <http://www.brooklynballparks.com/>.

Here is that landscape in context in 1937:



Fig. #22 – 1937 Aerial photo of Prospect Park⁸⁵

And here in 1910, pretty as a postcard:

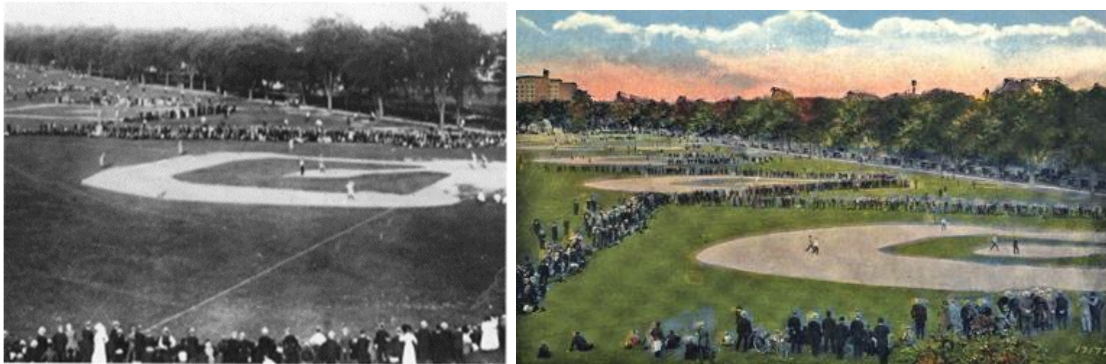


Fig. #23 - 1910 baseball Game on the Parade Ground, Prospect Park Alliance Archives adjacent to a post card illustration⁸⁶

⁸⁵ 1937 aerial photograph.

⁸⁶ “Baseball History Slideshow - Prospect Park Alliance,” Prospect Park, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://www.prospectpark.org/learn-more/archives/baseball-history-slideshow/>.

Union Grounds of Brooklyn, New York – Adaptation for Profit

A brief biography of this now extinct former ballpark is important and forth coming. The Union Grounds were formally known as the “Union Baseball and Cricket Grounds. They were run by an entrepreneur named William Cammeyer, the proprietor of a skating rink in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, New York. Reputedly, after a conversation with Henry Chadwick, they devised a scheme how to make his Union Grounds more profitable. The scheme would convert the Grounds for baseball in the summer of 1862. The existing 1,500 seat capacity could be easily expanded without interfering with play. “An important aspect of the arrangement was to ‘provide a suitable place for ball playing, where ladies can witness the game without being annoyed by the rowdies who attend some of the first-class matches.’”⁸⁷ Rather than charge the home team rent, Cammeyer decided to charge spectators for admission. The original fee was 10 cents. The field is reputed to be the first enclosed baseball park, although this has not been definitely established.⁸⁸

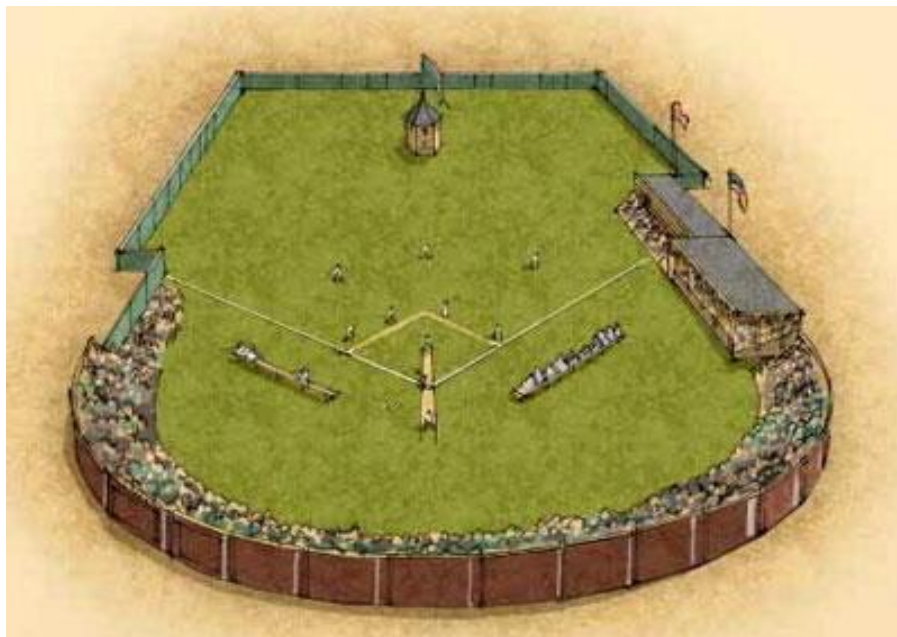
Besides transforming the initial use of a landscape, like the Parade Ground nearby, what is notable about this cultural landscape, is the notion of an enclosure of the ballfield, establishing physical boundaries defining the ballpark. The previously unbound pastoral environment of the ballpark now would have a mechanism for profit. This is a turning point in the sport, whereas spectators who previously enjoyed watching match play between two gentleman baseball clubs would now have to pay for the privilege.

⁸⁷ Brooklynballparks.com - Union grounds, accessed October 17, 2021, <http://www.covehurst.net/ddyte/brooklyn/union.html>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.



Fig. #24 - Union Skate Pond in 1863⁸⁹



**Fig. #25 - An overhead view of the Union Grounds
Drawing courtesy Jeff Suntala, from his Evolution of the Ballpark series⁹⁰**

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

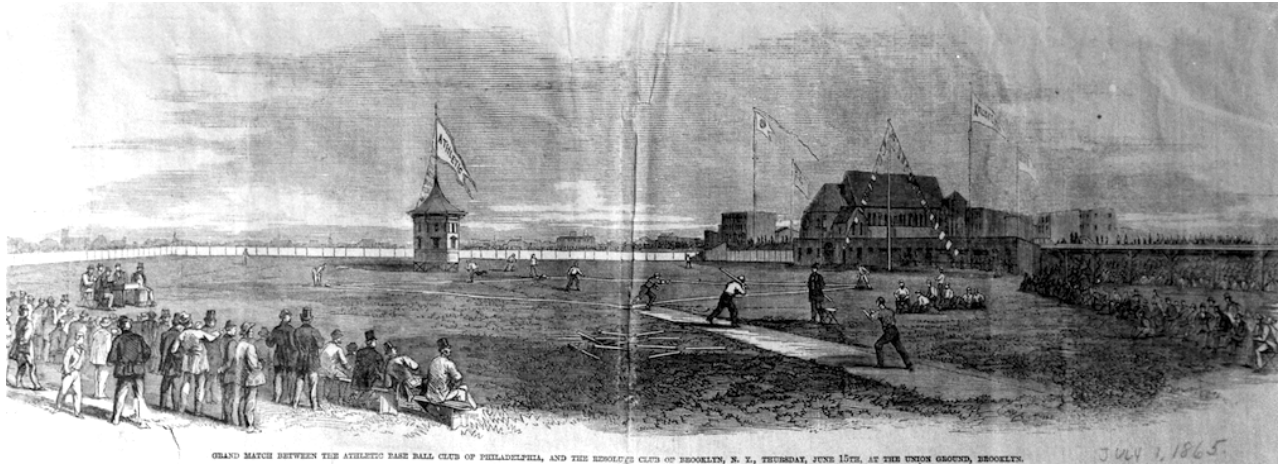


Fig. #26 - Resolute of Brooklyn vs Athletic of Philadelphia in 1865⁹¹



Fig. #27 - Atlantic vs Eckford in 1865⁹²

Details worth noting in the previous illustrations is the location of the gazebo, a centerpiece of the ice rink and in the field of play within fair territory of the ballfield. This is not unlike the “The Tree That Played Center Field” at Ponce de Leon Park in Atlanta. Here we find documentation of a physical feature, a unique item in center field from a nineteenth century ballpark in Brooklyn, New York, precedent for something similar, in a twentieth century minor

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

league ballpark, albeit a tree, in Atlanta. Both parks are no more, but thankfully the magnolia tree still stands. Unfortunately, the Union Grounds were demolished in July 1883, with half of the site making room for the 47th Regiment Armory, which still stands today. The remainder of the site is now a school.⁹³

⁹³ Ibid.

Wahconah Park, Pittsfield, Massachusetts – A Recognized Cultural Landscape

Unlike some of the previous ballparks investigated in this chapter, Wahconah Park still exists and hosts a home baseball team with league play. The Cultural Landscape Foundation lists the site as a designed landscape and a historic site. Wahconah Park, including the ballfield, is owned by the city of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and is in a residential area north of town. Baseball has been played there since 1892 and the current wooden grandstands around the ballfield were built in 1919, designed by architect Joseph McArthur Vance. He also designed the Bascom Lodge, a Masonic Temple in Pittsfield. The wooden grandstands are one of the last of their kind in America. According to the Cultural Landscape Foundation, over 200 former Pittsfield players have played in the Major Leagues.⁹⁴

This ballpark nearly met its demise with the advent of the new millennium. A consortium of corporate powers known as Berkshire Sports & Events (BS&E) assembled \$18.5 million to replace Wahconah Park with a new stadium at a downtown location.⁹⁵ Why would the ‘powers that be’ want to replace the existing historic ballpark that has been described as “the definitive old-time minor-league experience” by *Money* magazine?⁹⁶ Other superlatives such as Berkshire beauty, baseball cathedral, gem in the northeast, and even throw-back to another era have been

⁹⁴ “Wahconah Park,” Wahconah Park | The Cultural Landscape Foundation, accessed October 18, 2021, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/wahconah-park?destination=search-results>.

⁹⁵ Jim Bouton, *Foul Ball: My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark* (North Egremont, MA: Bulldog Pub., 2003). 9-10.

⁹⁶ Paul Lucas. “Minor Pleasures.” *Money* 29, no. 6 (2000): 211.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=bth&AN=3083624&site=eds-live>.

used to describe the ballpark.⁹⁷ Fortunately a grass roots movement in the community rallied to preserve the historic ballpark with its phony owls hanging from the metal roofing of the wooden grandstands to keep roosting pigeons at bay.⁹⁸

Jim Bouton pays tribute to citizen advocacy in the dedication of his book, *Foul Ball - My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark*, when he speaks of “the determined citizens of Pittsfield, Massachusetts - those ‘Marching Veto Warriors’ who pounded the pavement, stood in the rain, trudged through the snow, rang doorbells, passed out flyers, haunted supermarkets, and braved the cold all-night vigils to gather signatures that forced the government to cancel its plan to build the new stadium that would have doomed their beloved old ballpark.”⁹⁹ Thanks to the practice of this fundamental preservation principle the original Wahconah Ballpark still stands.

In addition to its historic integrity, there is something quite unusual about this ballpark, which is the extended orientation of the batter, the line from home plate to the pitcher’s rubber which continues to centerfield and beyond to the horizon. This is the site line of the batter watching for the release of the ball from the hand of the pitcher, with only a split second to decide whether to swing or take the pitch. Examining an aerial photograph¹⁰⁰ of the park with a line diagrammed as described before, analysis of the compass heading is 301.5 degrees. With a latitude of 45.25 degrees north, and the late north-west setting sun, a hitter is looking directly

⁹⁷ Bouton, *Foul Ball*. 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Bouton, *Foul Ball*. Dedication

¹⁰⁰ 2014 Photo taken from Google Earth archive.

into the sun at sunset. This makes it almost impossible to see the ball one is trying to hit. Therefore, a special ground rule applies to this park, the 20-minute sun delay.¹⁰¹



Fig. #28 – Wahconah Park compass heading of 301.5 degrees illustrated in yellow¹⁰²

When the park was designed and built in 1919 baseball matches occurred during the middle of the day, so a setting sun was never a consideration for the orientation of the battery. But with the advent of artificial lighting allowing for games played in the evening, when more people could attend after work, that changed, and brought about the need for the special rule. In fact, the fitting name of the home team is the Pittsfield Suns. This uniquely designed historic cultural

¹⁰¹ Pittsfield Suns: Wahconah history, accessed October 18, 2021, <https://pittsfieldsuns.com/wahconah-park/wahconah-history/>.

¹⁰² Aerial photo extracted from Google earth with compass heading superimposed by author via AutoCAD® software.

landscape has influenced the name of the home team by virtue of its views and vistas into the setting sun.

Below is a superimposition of the previous extended battery orientation compass heading (Fig. # 29) with the sun angle data for the Wahconah Park home plate location which is latitude:42.4625867 and longitude: -73.2531932 derived from SunEarthTools.com for July 7th, 2021 (the date represents the approximate middle of the baseball playing season). This graphically illustrates the peculiar and unique circumstance associated with the ballpark and the necessity for the sun delay.

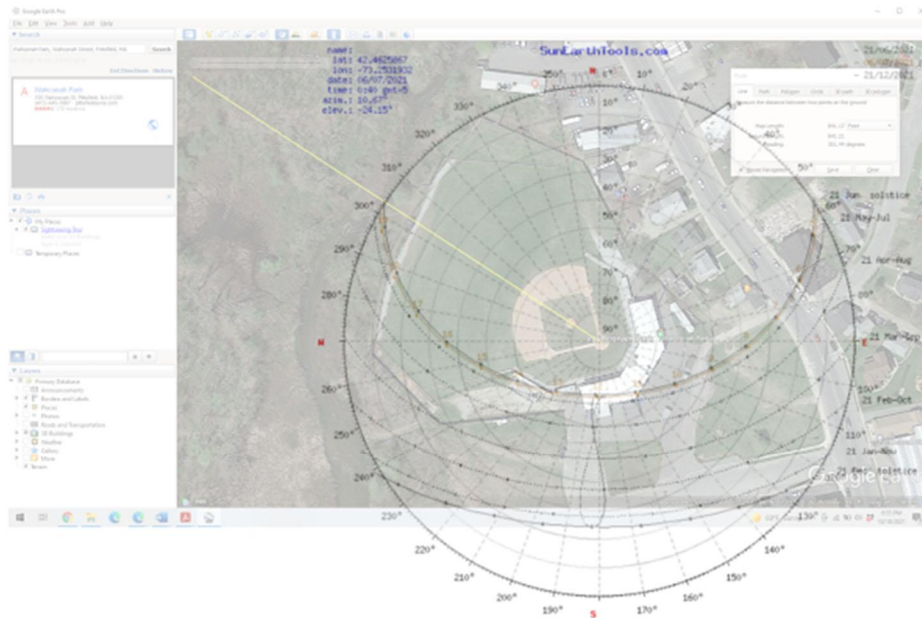


Fig. #29 – Sun angle location at Wahconah Park, Pittsfield, Massachusetts¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Superimposition by author via PowerPoint®

This peculiar geographic circumstance, the park's historic integrity, the grass root efforts which saved it, along with the fact that it is formally recognized as an historic cultural landscape are the reasons for identifying this ballpark an historic exemplar.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING THE TEAM

The focus of this chapter is to determine which of the numerous existing American Minor League Ballparks is deserving of further analysis as a cultural landscape. An initial investigation revealed that there are 31 AMLBs in 18 different states that were constructed more than fifty years ago that host professional minor league baseball teams at different levels in different leagues.¹⁰⁴ The most venerable eleven of these were constructed between 1914 and 1951.¹⁰⁵ Further research indicates that some other existing baseball parks over fifty years old are being used to host non-professional teams playing in collegiate leagues, such as Hicks Field in Edenton, North Carolina, which is the host of a team called the Edenton Steamers. Also known as the Clams, the team is a collection of collegiate level players gaining additional play time in the summer months when school is out (like the Macon Bacon who play at Luther Field¹⁰⁶ in Macon, Georgia and the Savannah Bananas who play at Grayson Stadium¹⁰⁷ in Savannah, Georgia). Hicks Field was built in 1939 and placed on the National Register as of 1995.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ List compiled and updated by Graham Knight. “2019 Professional Baseball Ballparks.” List of Current Major, Minor and Independent League Ballparks. Accessed March 15, 2021. <https://www.baseballpilgrimages.com/ballparks/current.html>.

¹⁰⁵ “Been a While: Oldest Minor League Ballparks.” MiLB.com, February 18, 2021. Accessed March 18, 2021 <https://www.milb.com/news/oldest-11-minor-league-ballparks>.

¹⁰⁶ Placed on the National Historic Register in 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Grayson Stadium is part of the Daffin Park-Parkside Place Historic District.

¹⁰⁸ “National Register Database and Research.” National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm#table.

Another one of the eleven mentioned above, City Island Ball Park in Florida, renamed Jackie Robinson Ball Park in 1990, is also on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁰⁹

Those ballparks hosting amateur-level competition will be referred to as American Amateur League Ballparks (AALB's) for the remainder of this thesis. Sometimes, the same ballpark may have a history of hosting both types of teams, professional minor league and amateur. If so, the designation will correspond to its current use. Therefore, there are two primary designations: AMLB and AALB.

The following criteria is used to limit selection of ballparks for this study.

Geographic Limitation:

The ballparks considered must be in Georgia or a state contiguous to Georgia. Therefore, the parks are accessible within a day's drive from Athens, Georgia. for analysis.

Alphabetically, parks in consideration must be in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, or Tennessee.

Use:

Ballparks must currently host a minor league professional team, wood bat summer collegiate league team, *or* stand free as a historic municipal park or museum example of a ballpark.

¹⁰⁹ "National Register of Historic Places Official Website--Part of the National Park Service," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed April 15, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/highlight/city_island_ball_park.htm.

Construction Date Significance:

Ballparks must have been built prior to America's entry into World War II (WWII), the 7th of December 1941.¹¹⁰ In the summer of 1941 (prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor) there were 338 professional baseball teams in league play, but in 1942 that number had shrunk to 259, and by 1943 the number of professional teams had been reduced to 117 and remained the same throughout the war. This included all professional baseball including the major leagues. This reduction can be attributed to America entering WWII, and the subsequent call for service of so many able bodied young American men, had a significant impact on the reduction of professional baseball players and therefore the number of teams possible in professional play.

In 1941 the major leagues consisted of the American, National, Negro American, and Negro National Leagues. There were also numerous minor league teams; (three) AA leagues, (one) A league, (two) A-1 leagues, (six) B leagues, (ten) C leagues, and (nineteen) D leagues, the quality and prestige of the players decreasing as the list goes on. There were also two foreign leagues: one in Japan and one in Cuba, (four) winter leagues (one each in California, Cuba, Panama, and Puerto Rico), along with two independent leagues, the Quebec Provincial and Mexican Leagues. And there was the Black Baseball League with no formal classification. Not including foreign leagues there were forty-seven professional baseball leagues in America in 1941.

By 1945, when the war ended, the major leagues still consisted of the American, National, Negro American, and Negro National Leagues. But professional minor league teams had reduced to (three) AA leagues, (one) A league, (one) A-1 leagues, (two) negro leagues, (two)

¹¹⁰ This date is chosen as significant as WWII dramatically reduced the number of professional baseball players at all levels reducing demand for new ballpark construction.

B leagues, (one) C league, (four) D leagues, (one) California winter league, a Women's league, and the Black Baseball league still with no classification, a total of only 21 professional leagues in America. This is roughly half the number of leagues prior to the outbreak of WWII and a reduction of teams from 338 to 117. Assuming a typical roster of 25 players per team (and not all teams carried a full roster), this equates to approximately 8,450 professional players in 1941 down to 2,925 professional players in 1945.

Following are the parks which meet the criteria above, presented chronologically by date of construction:

Rickwood Field which open on Thursday August 10th of 1910, is in a suburban neighborhood approximately three miles west of downtown Birmingham, Alabama north of a railway line just beyond its outfield wall. The original structure was designed by the Southeastern Engineering Company of Birmingham. The design is indicative of the “booming iron-and-steel town, the fastest growing city in the nation at the time.”¹¹¹ It has a large grandstand by minor league standards, with a seating capacity of 10,800, constructed of steel and concrete including a 1.64-acre metal roof, supported by bar joist, which shades almost all the seating. The prototype for the design was Forbes Field of Pittsburg, PA, another city known for steel production.¹¹² It was entered in the National Register February 1st of 1993 under Criterion A as a structure for recreation and culture along with ethnic heritage significant for its association with the Negro American League and the Birmingham Black Barons baseball team.¹¹³ Many greats of the game thrilled crowds here, including Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson, Ty Cobb, Burleigh Grimes, Ted Williams, Stan Musiel, Walt Dropo, and Reggie Jackson. Black Barons’ sensation Satchel Paige battled Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, and other legends of the Negro Leagues. It is currently host to the Miles College Baseball team and serves as a municipal park for the City of Birmingham managed by the Fiends of Rickwood and incorporates a small minor league baseball museum.

¹¹¹ “History of Rickwood Field,” Rickwood Field, July 24, 2018, <https://rickwood.com/history-of-rickwood-field/>.

¹¹² “Habs Ala,37-Birm,5- (Sheet 1 of 22) - Rickwood Field, 1137 Second Avenue West, Birmingham, Jefferson County, AL,” Library of Congress, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/al0965.sheet.00001a/resource/>.

¹¹³“NPGallery Asset Detail,” accessed March 25, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/5afae99f-2526-4b68-b2cc-182d49c91df5>.

Jackie Robinson Ballpark, formerly known as City Island Ballpark, in Daytona Beach, Florida opened on June 4, 1914. Located on an island across the Halifax river from the picturesque streetscape of Daytona Beach, Florida, this ballpark is steeped with history. It was designed by Alan J. MacDonough, an architect from Daytona Beach and was listed on the National Register on October 22, 1998, under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Community Planning and Development, primarily because the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and Criterion C for the Mediterranean Revival architecture of MacDonough.¹¹⁴ The park was rechristened Jackie Robinson Ballpark in 1989 honoring Robinson being the first African American major league baseball player as a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers club in 1946, whose spring training camp was at the ballpark. The ballpark has seen many improvements since it first opened during the Woodrow Wilson administration when it initially had wooden grandstands. A vintage type of hand-operated scoreboard remains in left field.¹¹⁵ Most recently, the field of play has been carpeted with a synthetic playing surface eliminating the natural grass and dirt base paths, except for the area directly surrounding home plate and the pitcher's mound. This adaptation for use was initiated to reduce the number of rainouts due to the prevalence of thunderstorms in the semi-tropical environment. According to Josh McCann, Community Relations & Outside Events Manager for Jackie Robinson Stadium, the new playing surface has in fact significantly reduced the number of rainouts.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ "NPGallery Asset Detail," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed March 28, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/59707004-c6dc-42f7-bc03-e35605753429>.

¹¹⁵ "Been a While: Oldest Minor League Ballparks," MiLB.com, February 18, 2021, <https://www.milb.com/news/oldest-11-minor-league-ballparks>.

¹¹⁶ On site discussion with Josh McCann on February 22nd, 2022.

LECOM Park was originally known as City Park, then McKechnie Field, later renamed Ninth Street Park and then Braves Field. It is in a mixed residential and commercial district of Bradenton, Florida approximately one mile south of the Manatee River. Its architectural detailing is Spanish mission in style. Multiple major league teams have used this facility for spring training including the Philadelphia Phillies, the St. Louis Cardinals (known as the “gas house gang” at the time), and the Boston Braves, later becoming the Milwaukee Braves. Major league spring training has been a long-standing tradition at this ballpark as well as regular season minor league play.¹¹⁷ Although originally opening in the spring of 1923, it seems more modern due to improvements required to meet current standards for hosting the spring training camp for a major league ball club, the Pittsburgh Pirates. This is the only ballpark of the twelve case studies hosting a major league team for spring training and the historic integrity of the ballpark suffers due to this fact. The ballpark is not listed on the National Register. The façade of the facility is directly upon Ninth Street, and there is no distinctive entry portal like many of the other ballparks. Although the façade seems architecturally pleasing, it lacks the historic character typical of many of the other parks analyzed, despite its age.

¹¹⁷ “Been a While: Oldest Minor League Ballparks,” MiLB.com, February 18, 2021, <https://www.milb.com/news/oldest-11-minor-league-ballparks>.

McCormick Field has a storied history with city of Asheville where the Tourist team name has been associated with the ballpark and the city since 1914. Set into a hillside which echoes the crack of the bat, it is a very pleasant place to take in a ball game on a cool summer mountain night. The park is walking distance to and from the South Slope Brewery District of downtown Asheville, noted for its craft beer. The facility saw renovations in 1959 as well as 1992. It hosted the Asheville Blues of the Negro Souther League and was briefly featured in the movie *Bull Durham*.¹¹⁸ It is not currently listed on the Nation Historic Register. A quirk of the location is the scoreboard which displays the home team as Tourist (usually visitors) and the Visitors (the visiting ball club). This ballpark is a personal favorite because of its proximity to downtown Asheville while still maintaining an idyllic setting within its confines.



Fig. #30 – Scoreboard at McCormick Field¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ "Ballparks of the Negro Leagues and Barnstorming Black Baseball Teams". Negro League Baseball Players Association. Archived from the original on June 10, 2009. Retrieved June 17, 2009

¹¹⁹ Photo by author.

Duncan Park Stadium is a little-known ballpark in Spartanburg, South Carolina. It is part of the local municipal Duncan Park and is nestled between a residential neighborhood and the mostly wooded park itself approximately one and half miles southeast of downtown Spartanburg on land bequeathed to the city by the heirs of Major David R. Duncan who served in the Confederate Army. There is little onsite parking, however a medium sized church parking lot is nearby. This ballpark opened July 8, 1926 and was designed by Spartanburg architect J. Frank Collins. The ballpark has seen the likes of Joe DiMaggio take the field when the New York Yankees played an exhibition game at the location in 1937. Later, Atlanta Braves stars Dale Murphy and Tom Glavine played at Duncan Park Stadium working their way through the minor leagues on the way to the major leagues. African American players Hank Aaron, Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson have also played at Duncan Park on barnstorming tours.¹²⁰ It is the oldest ballpark in South Carolina.¹²¹ The property was entered in the National Register on January 26, 2016, under Criterion A and is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of our history: primarily, entertainment and recreation in the form of minor league baseball. Some 582 of the existing seats were repurposed from Shibe Park, also known as Connie Mack Stadium in Philadelphia, when it was demolished in 1971.¹²² To describe this ballpark as low key is an understatement, as only the press box of the grandstands are visible from the streetscape with most of the field of play obscured from view. In fact, it is difficult to discern the actual entrance to the ballpark.

¹²⁰ Lavender, Chris (February 19, 2020). "Film explores Negro League baseball players experiences". *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*. Spartanburg, SC. Retrieved September 21, 2020.

¹²¹ "Duncan Park," The Spartanburgers, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://thespartanburgers.com/duncan-park/>.

¹²² "NPGallery Asset Detail," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed March 27, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/15001009>.

Durham Athletic Park was originally opened under the name of El Toro Park and hosted the Durham Bulls minor league baseball team. It was renamed Durham Athletic Park in 1933 and is also known as the DAP. The original wooden grandstands burned in 1939 and were replaced with new ones constructed from steel and concrete. The place is now memorialized as the setting for the movie *Bull Durham* which aired in 1988.¹²³ It was designed by George Watts Carr (1893-1975), architect from Durham, North Carolina¹²⁴ and opened in the spring of 1926. The DAP is a contributing property of the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District which was listed on the National Register on April 23, 2013. The ballpark contributes to the district for its entertainment and recreational significance as the home of the Durham Bulls minor league baseball team.¹²⁵ The ballpark itself is located one-half mile north of the city center and approximately one-half mile east of East Duke Campus. The round ticket office is the most memorable feature located at the corner entrance.¹²⁶ The Durham Bulls have been affiliated with numerous major league teams including the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Boston Red Sox, the Detroit Tigers, and the Atlanta Braves. The city of Durham built a new ballpark for the Bulls in 1993 and they moved there in 1995. Renovations by the city in 2008-2009 allowed for the North Carolina Central University baseball team to call the DAP their home, but the program was discontinued in 2021. The ballpark no longer host a team but is still used as a city park hosting various events.

¹²³ Grace Abels, “The Future of Durham's Old Ballpark: More Baseball,” INDY Week, July 16, 2021, <https://indyweek.com/news/ninth-street-journal/the-future-of-durham-s-old-ballpark-more-baseball/>.

¹²⁴ George Watts Carr Architectural Drawings, MC 00460, Special Collections Research Center, NC State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.

¹²⁵ “Foster and West Geer Streets HD Coverpage.doc - Files.nc.gov,” accessed March 29, 2022, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/DH2864.pdf>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Grayson Stadium, originally known as Municipal Stadium, was constructed in 1926. Located two and one-half miles south, southeast of historic Savannah, Georgia, it is a contributing property of the Daffin Park-Parkside Place Historic District which was entered in the National Register on May 12, 1999. Daffin Park, named after Philip Daffin, Savannah's first chairman of the Savannah Park and Tree Commission was designed by landscape architect John Nolen. The C-shaped stadium design modified the "circular terminus and the radial drives on the east side of the original designed park."¹²⁷ The ballpark has seen the legends Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle, Ty Cobb, and Jackie Robinson all take to its playing field during exhibition games. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke at the ballpark in 1933.¹²⁸ On April 14, 1953, the first integrated game of the South Atlantic League took place at Grayson Stadium when Hank Aaron of the Jacksonville Braves played the hometown Savannah Indians.¹²⁹ Now the ballpark is host to the Savannah Bananas, a wood bat collegiate summer league team.¹³⁰ Prior to the Bananas were the Savannah Sand Gnats (what a great name), who now play in a recently constructed stadium in Columbia, South Carolina under the name the Columbia Fireflies.

¹²⁷ "NPGallery Asset Detail," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed March 29, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/b2613789-71c4-48ee-92b1-4fbb94add45c>.

¹²⁸ "Grayson Stadium," The Savannah Bananas, April 20, 2021, <https://thesavannahbananas.com/grayson-stadium/>.

¹²⁹ Thom Loverro, "Good old Grayson". *The Washington Times*. (May 20, 2005). Retrieved February 25, 2020.

¹³⁰ It should be noted the Bananas sellout all their games a year in advance and have developed an almost cult like following due to their special ground rules and on field antics.

Luther Williams Field opened in the spring of 1929 and was named after the mayor of Macon, Georgia at the time. For more than 50 years it served as the home of the Macon Peaches Class A ball club.¹³¹ This is an outstanding ballpark, part of Central City Park, in a level setting within a flood plain, and is adjacent to a former horse racing and automobile racing track which are all sandwiched between the Ocmulgee River and a railroad line. In 1994, a major flood breached the levee in Central City Park and inundated the entire area. The park itself was established in 1826 and is still utilized for recreation today. The ballpark was entered in the National Register on June 6, 2004. A photo of the unique entry portal is featured in the National Historic Register nomination documentation. Applicable National Register criteria include A & C, with significance in architecture, entertainment/recreation, black ethnic heritage, and social history. The architect was Curran Ellis from Macon along with Watson Walker, engineer. Also, according to the Register application “it appears that Macon's grandstand has one of the finest existing examples in the country of a pre-World War II freestanding ticket office and ornamental triple-arch entry with similar side entries.¹³² The portal is a “gem” architecturally, and the ballpark is a pleasure to experience in person, now hosting the Macon Bacon, a wood bat collegiate summer league baseball team.

¹³¹ Lloyd Brown, “Luther Williams Field – Macon Bacon,” Stadium Journey, September 18, 2019, <https://stadiumjourney.com/stadiums/luther-williams-field-macon-bacon/#:~:text=Luther%20Williams%20Field%20is%20Bringing%20Home%20the%20Bacon,o%20the%20Macon%20Peaches%20Class%20A%20ball%20club.>

¹³² “NPGallery Asset Detail,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed January 24, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/04000627>.

Engel Stadium in Chattanooga, Tennessee, opened on April 15, 1930. On April 2, 1931, Jackie Mitchell, a 17-year-old girl, stunned the nation by striking out Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig before walking Tony Lazzeri in an exhibition game there against the New York Yankees.¹³³ In 1947, 16-year-old Willie Mays debuted in centerfield as a professional in the Negro Southern League, where the outfield dimensions are tremendous, like they were at the Polo Grounds in Brooklyn, New York, where he eventually played and made one of the greatest catches in baseball history. Only one player, Harmon Killebrew, is reputed to have hit a home run over the centerfield wall at 471 feet from home plate. The ballpark was designed by James G. Gauntt, Chattanooga architect, and entered in the National Register on November 11, 2009. Applicable National Register criteria includes category A for its role in entertainment and recreation, category B for its association with Joe Engel, owner and general manager of the Lookouts, and category C for its architecture. According to the application “Engel Stadium has retained a high degree of its physical integrity”¹³⁴ It is located a mile and a third due east of downtown Chattanooga and is adjacent to a major CSX railroad line. There is sloping embankment within the field of play in deep right centerfield where previously large white lettering displayed the team’s name “LOOKOUTS”¹³⁵. Sadly, the ballpark does not currently host a baseball team. On a site visit January 29, 2022, the ballpark was locked up and the ceiling was caving in at the entry lobby (see photo in APPENDIX J). Hopefully, the current owners, the University of Tennessee Chattanooga in conjunction with the non-profit Engel Foundation, can make repairs and baseball will return to the historic place of minor league baseball in the Southeastern United States.

¹³³ “Timeline,” engelfoundation.com, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://engelfoundation.com/Historical-Importance/Timeline/>.

¹³⁴ “NPGallery Asset Detail,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed March 30, 2022, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=384a9b4c-88f>.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Finch Field is located in Thomasville, North Carolina, and opened in 1939. It is located approximately two and a half miles northeast of the Thomasville town center and four miles Southwest of High Point, North Carolina in of region of businesses associated with the furniture and motor industries. The area has a long history associated with the manufacturing of fine furniture and the ballpark was initially constructed as a recreational outlet for the Thomasville Furniture Industries company employees. Many different baseball teams of various levels of play have taken the field here, including American Legion, high school, and recreational leagues. The minor league host team, The HiToms, or Tommies as they are known, emerged in the 1930s and continue to play here today. They are a wood bat collegiate summer league baseball team, and according to their website, they describe the home field as “Generational.”¹³⁶ The covered wooden grandstands seat 3,500 spectators who watched players such as Curt Flood, Eddie Matthews, and Al Rosen take the field. More than thirty former HiToms players have used Finch Field as a springboard to fame into Major League baseball.¹³⁷ Set on a level site, the grandstand is surrounded by an undefined gravel drive. This ultra-low-key facility has no adjacent parking and one can imagine nearby residents walking up to the facility, passing through the entry portal, leaving the past behind, and taking in a game. This ballpark, with an emphasis on park, is not on the historic register, but it should be. It may be one of the best kept secrets for enjoying an authentic minor league baseball experience in the south.

¹³⁶ “History,” High Point-Thomasville HiToms, accessed June 6, 2021,

<https://hitoms.com/finch-field/history/#:~:text=The%20one%20term%20that%20defines%20the%20true%20essence,pace%20with%20the%20speed%20of%20the%20internet%20age>

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Fleming Stadium is in a residential district one and a quarter miles west, southwest of Wilson, North Carolina. Opening in 1939 this stadium and the host team, the Wilson Tobs, are rich with history in North Carolina baseball, winning the pennant in their league three years in a row in 1940-43. From “Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle to Elvis Presley, Kevin Costner, and New York City Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, Historic Fleming Stadium's 81-year history is lined with the heroes of our national pastime and the cultural leaders of our society.”¹³⁸ Despite this history, the facility is not listed on the National Register, but has been individually added to the study list by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.¹³⁹ Within the confines of the ballpark is the North Carolina Baseball Museum. Their collection includes, in part, baseball memorabilia of players from the Negro League as well as women that played professional baseball (AAPL) during WWII from North Carolina.¹⁴⁰ With an immense field of play (3.51 acres), the ballpark currently host the Wilson Tobs of the Coastal Plain League, a wood bat collegiate summer league, whose players must be fast to shag fly balls within foul territory. With a grandstand seating 3,000 persons, the capacity is 1,500 seats less than the average 4,500 seat capacity of all the parks investigated.

¹³⁸ “History,” Wilsontobs, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://wilsontobs.com/stadium/history/>

¹³⁹ ArcGIS web application, accessed April 2, 2022, <https://nc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=79ea671ebdcc45639f0860257d5f5ed7¢er=-8673020%2C4262550%2C102100&scale=4514>.

¹⁴⁰ “North Carolina Baseball Museum,” accessed April 2, 2022, <http://ncbaseballmuseum.gear.host/main.aspx>.

Hicks Field is another classic North Carolina ballpark which was constructed in 1939 as a WPA project in Edenton, North Carolina. It has a wooden grandstand, the oldest in North Carolina, with only a 1,200-seat capacity.¹⁴¹ This is a genuinely intimate place to watch baseball; imagine what it would be like to watch a major league all-star and Hall of Fame member, such as Bob Feller take to the field at this historic stadium, which he did on April 16, 1942.¹⁴² This stadium saw extensive renovations in 1997 “to give Hicks a ‘Fenway Park’ feel,”¹⁴³ *after* it was listed on the National Register in 1995.¹⁴⁴ According to the National Register nomination: “Hicks Field meets Criterion A for local significance in the history of entertainment and recreation, and Criteria Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years.”¹⁴⁵ The ballpark is located adjacent to John A. Holmes High School, just north of the Edenton Historic District which was expanded in size on September 28, 2007. The host team, the Edenton Steamers also known as the “Clams,” are another Coastal Plain League team using wood bats affiliated with the collegiate summer league rules. Hicks Field has the smallest grandstand seating capacity, the least amount of fair territory (1.96 acres), and the smallest field of play (2.5 acres), of the twelve parks selected for study. However, the proportional relationship between the two (fair territory/field of play) is 78%, the average for all the ballparks analyzed.

¹⁴¹ “Hicks Field,” Edenton Steamers Baseball Team, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://edentonsteamers.com/history/hicks-field/>.

¹⁴² Kevin Reichard, “Visiting Edenton's Hicks Field - Ballpark Digest,” Ballpark Digest - Chronicling the Business and Culture of Baseball Ballparks--MLB, MiLB, College, July 23, 2012, <https://ballparkdigest.com/201207235238/college-baseball/news/visiting-edentons-hicks-field?msclkid=aaaadd55b2a311ec9b07b383949e907a>.

¹⁴³ “Hicks Field,” Edenton Steamers Baseball Team.

¹⁴⁴ “National Register Database and Research.” National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm#table.

¹⁴⁵ “SFFPD - NC,” accessed April 2, 2022, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/CO0195.pdf>.

This chapter narrates similarities and differences of twelve different ballparks that “made the team”, so to speak. That is, they all meet specific criteria outlined in the first portion of the chapter having a southeastern American geographic location, are utilized by collegiate or minor league baseball teams, or free stand as a museum or park, and they must have been constructed prior to the Second World War. In terms of similarities, all twelve ballparks exhibit unique entry portals (see appendix). Conceptually, these portals are the places where the spectator transcends from day-to-day life and enters the realm of the ballpark, where a game is played, baseball. This transition is part of the process of embedding memories of place, the ballpark, into the psyche of the participant. The unique architectural characteristics of each portal, or lack thereof in the case of Duncan Park, provides definition for the ballpark as a cultural landscape by association. Eight out of twelve of the ballparks are either listed individually on the National Historic Register or as a contributing property of a historic district on the Register. Those listed individually all cite category A for recreation and entertainment, one list category B, and three list category C. In the case of Hicks Field in Edenton, North Carolina, it was initially listed individually, and later became inclusive of an expanded historic district. In terms of use, half of the ballparks host summer collegiate wood bat teams, all in the Coastal Plain League, and three host professional minor league teams of different major league affiliates. Two ballparks, Engel Stadium and Durham Athletic park are dormant, although the DAP serves as a municipal park. Rickwood Field serves as the home field for the predominantly African American Miles College baseball team, and host various exhibition games. Additionally, Rickwood also has an inclusive museum featuring the Birmingham Black Barons and their players, and Fleming Stadium in Wilson, North Carolina, includes the North Carolina Baseball Museum within its confines. LECOM Park showcases the Pittsburg Pirates, a major league team, spring training camp. All the playing fields

within the ballparks include a consistently dimensioned baseball diamond specifically defined by the rules of baseball, but the geometry and the dimensions of the field of play and portion of foul territory are different at every location. The next chapter will look at these differences in detail.

CHAPTER 6

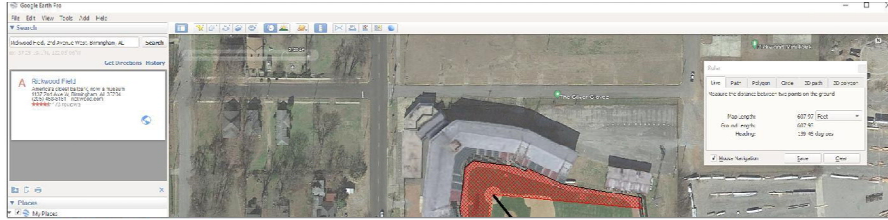
EVALUATION OF THE SELECTED BALLPARKS

This thesis now evaluates the twelve previously outlined places, southeastern American minor league ballparks constructed prior to World War Two, in the following way.

Graphic Analysis:

First, physical characteristics such as battery orientation, areas of the field of play (FOP) and fair territory (FT) are calculated, and the percentage of FT relative to FOP is derived. Current seating capacity and field dimensions are noted. The methodology used imported Google Earth Pro® screenshots of the parks into AutoCAD LT 2019 at full scale. This is possible by knowing the standard dimensions of the baseball diamond as illustrated in Appendix A and adjusting accordingly within the software parameters. Then using the powerful polyline tool command, areas for the field of play (FOP) and fair territory (FT) are calculated, after which the percentage of FT/FOP is derived (foul territory is denoted with red shading in the illustrations). The compass bearing of the battery orientation is also illustrated. This data provides concise consistent graphic illustrations within the context of the selected parks for further analysis.

Following are illustrations based upon the methodology described above (in chronological order by date constructed).



1. (1910) RICKWOOD FIELD:

Location: 1137 2nd Avenue West
Birmingham, AL

Capacity: 10,800 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 140 degrees

Left field: 321 feet

Field of Play (FOP): 132,352 square feet
(3.04 acres)

Left center: 399 feet

Center field: 393 feet

Right center: 392 feet

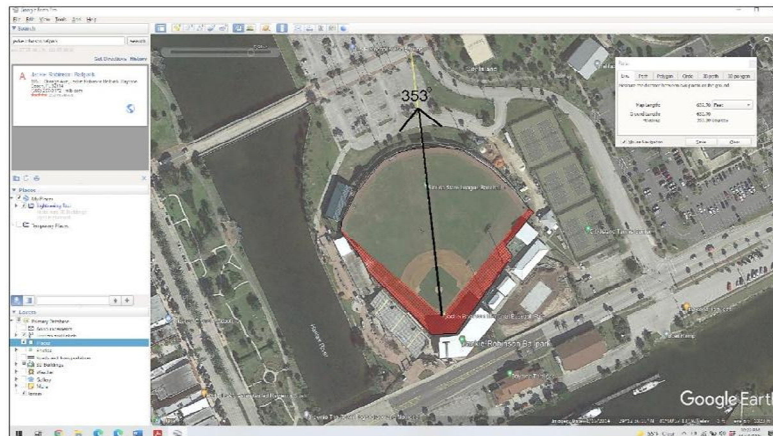
Right field: 332 feet

Fair Territory (FT): 101,738 square feet
(2.34 acres)

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 77%

Fig. #31 – Rickwood Field



2. (1914) JACKIE ROBINSON BALLPARK:

Location: 105 East Orange Avenue
Daytona Beach, FL

Capacity: 4,200 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 353 degrees

Left field: 317 feet

Field of Play (FOP): 126,564 square feet
(2.91 acres)

Left center: 373 feet

Center field: 400 feet

Right center: 385 feet

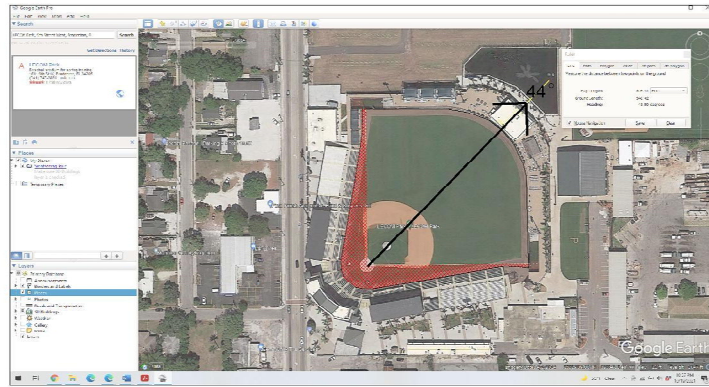
Right field: 325 feet

Fair Territory (FT): 103,882 square feet
(2.38 acres)

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 83%

Fig. #32 – Jackie Robinson Stadium



3. (1923) LECOM PARK: Location: 1611 9th Street West
Bradenton, FL

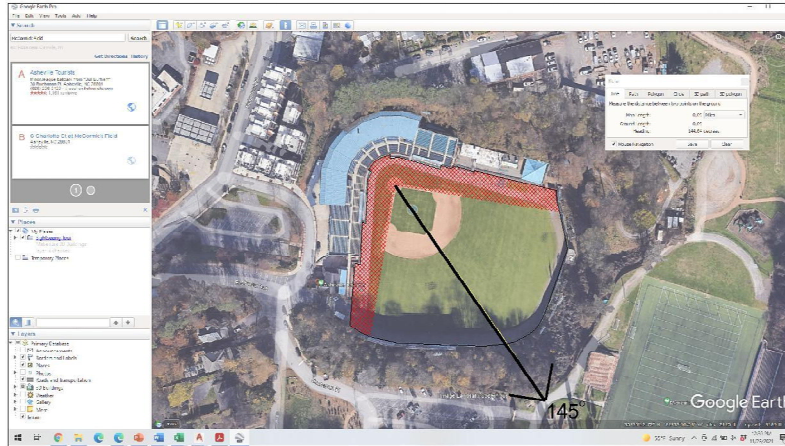
Capacity: 8,500 seats

Left field: 335 feet
Left center: 375 feet
Center field: 400 feet
Right center: 375 feet
Right field: 335 feet

Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 44 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 126,578 square feet
(2.91 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 106,908 square feet
(2.45 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 84%

Fig. #33 – LECOM Park



4. (1924) McCORMICK FIELD: Location: 30 Buchanan Place
Asheville, NC

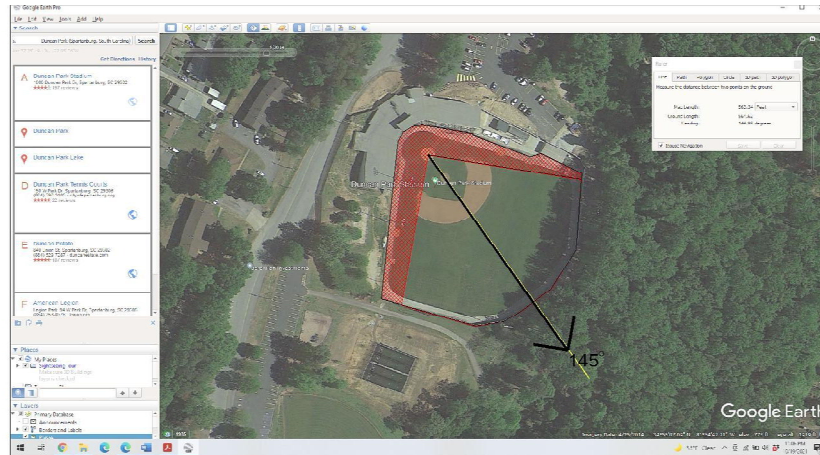
Capacity: 4,000 seats

Left field: 326 feet
Left center: 370 feet
Center field: 373 feet
Right center: 320 feet
Right field: 297 feet

Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 145 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 124,937 square feet
(2.87 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 93,323 square feet
(2.14 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 75%

Fig. #34 – McCormick Field



5. (1926) DUNCAN PARK: Location: 0 West Park Drive
Spartanburg, SC

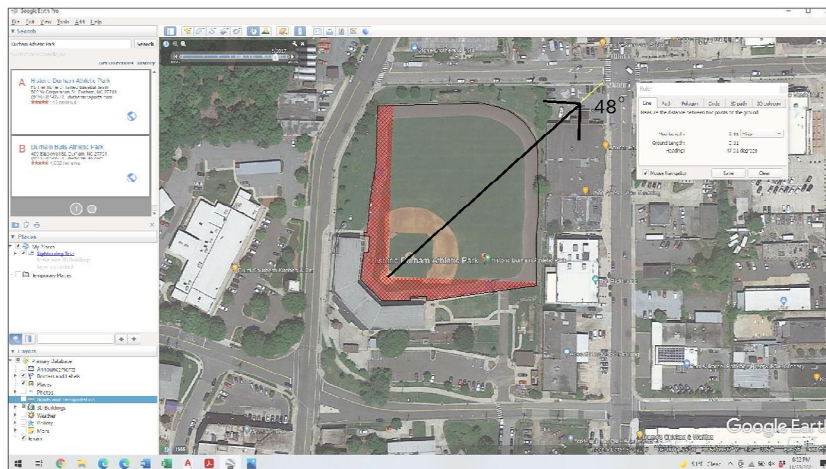
Capacity: 3,000 seats

Left field: 318 feet
Left center: 362 feet
Center field: 372 feet
Right center: 368 feet
Right field: 318 feet

Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 145 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 133,191 square feet
(3.06 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 99,634 square feet
(2.29 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 75%

Fig. #35 – Duncan Park



6. (1926) DURHAM ATHLETIC PARK: Location: 428 Morris St
Durham, NC

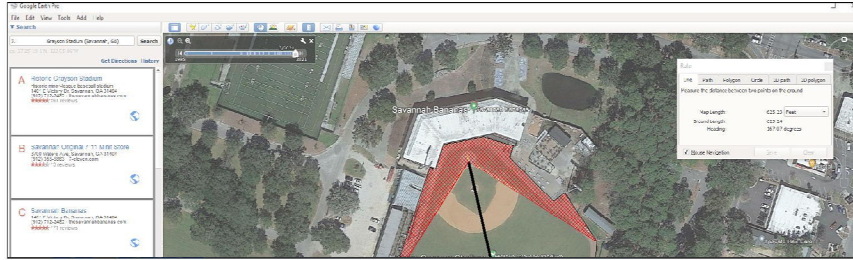
Capacity: 5,000 seats

Left field: 330 feet
Left center: 365 feet
Center field: 405 feet
Right center: 340 feet
Right field: 290 feet

Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 48 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 114,992 square feet
(2.64 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 93,434 square feet
(2.14 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 81%

Fig. #36 – Durham Athletic Park



7. (1926) GRAYSON STADIUM:

Location: 1401 East Victory Drive
Savannah, GA

Capacity: 5,000 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 167 degrees

Left field: 322 feet
Left center: 386 feet
Center field: 400 feet
Right center: 390 feet
Right field: 310 feet

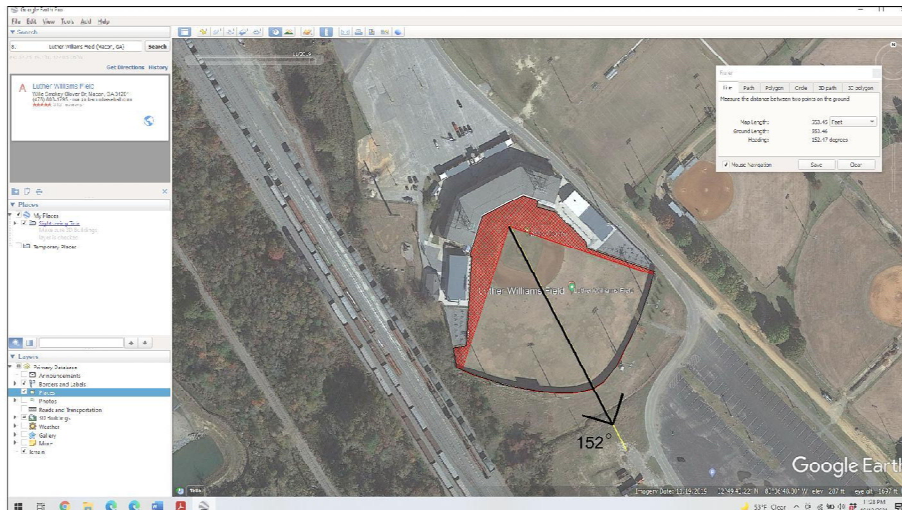
Field of Play (FOP): 135,241 square feet
(3.10 acres)

Fair Territory (FT): 109,294 square feet
(2.51 acres)

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 81%

Fig. #37 – Grayson Stadium



8. (1929) LUTHER WILLIAMS FIELD:

Location: Central City Park
Macon, GA

Capacity: 3,500 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 152 degrees

Left field: 338 feet
Left center: 365 feet
Center field: 402 feet
Right center: 365 feet
Right field: 338 feet

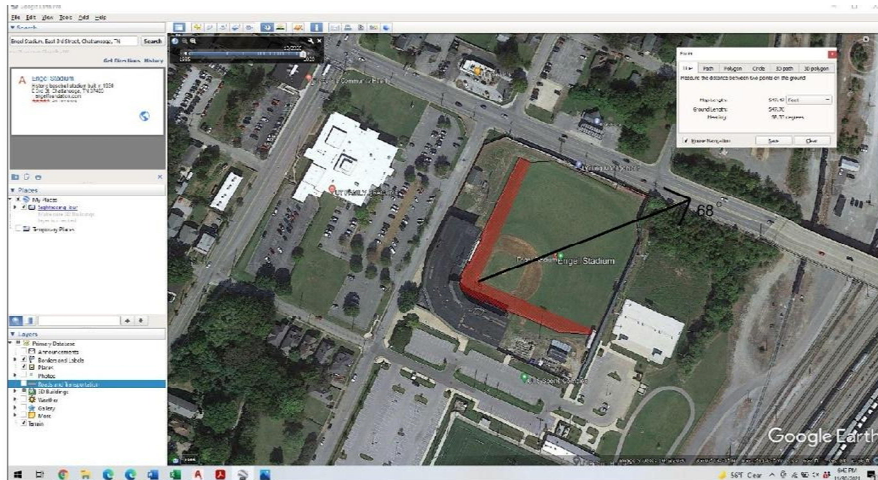
Field of Play (FOP): 133,133 square feet
(3.06 acres)

Fair Territory (FT): 106,694 square feet
(2.45 acres)

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 80%

Fig. #38 – Luther Williams Field



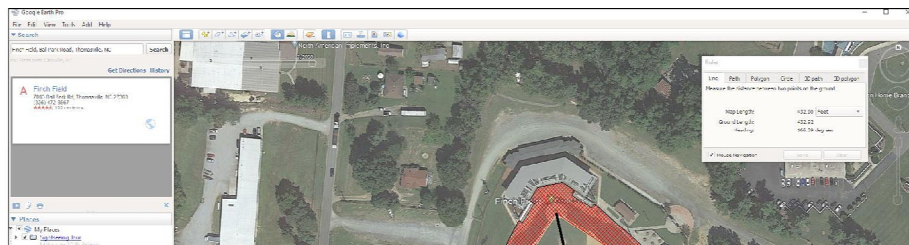
9. (1930) ENGEL STADIUM:

Location: 1130 East Third Street
Chattanooga, TN

Capacity: 5,997 seats
Left field: 325 feet
Left center: 371 feet
Center field: 471 feet
Right center: 338 feet
Right field: 318 feet
Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 68 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 133,284 square feet
(3.06 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 110,030 square feet
(2.53 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 83%

Fig. #39 – Engel Stadium



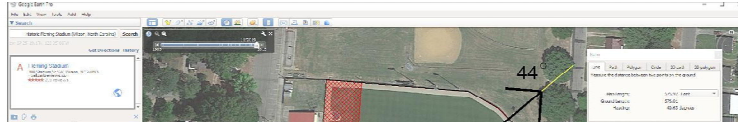
10 (1935) FINCH FIELD:

Location: 1220 National Hwy
Thomasville, NC

Capacity: 2,000 seats
Left field: 325 feet
Left center: 350 feet
Center field: 390 feet
Right center: 365 feet
Right field: 330 feet
Surface: Grass

Battery Compass Heading: 166 degrees
Field of Play (FOP): 120,351 square feet
(2.76 acres)
Fair Territory (FT): 90,577 square feet
(2.08 acres)
Ratio of FT/FOP: 75%

Fig. #40 – Finch Field



11 (1939) FLEMING STADIUM: Location: 300 Stadium St. SW
Wilson, NC

Capacity: 3,000 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 44 degrees

Left field: 332 feet

Field of Play (FOP): 152,976 square feet
(3.51 acres)

Left center: 360 feet

Center field: 405 feet

Right center: 360 feet

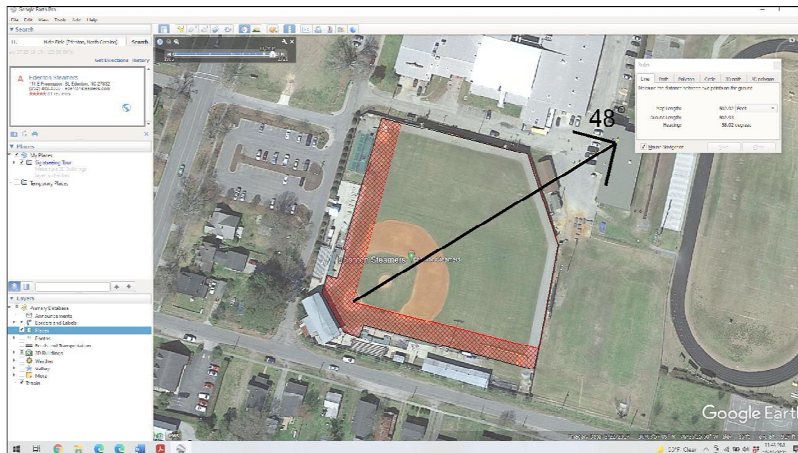
Fair Territory (FT): 104,397 square feet
(2.40 acres)

Right field: 332 feet

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 68%

Fig. #41 – Fleming Stadium



12 (1939) HICKS FIELD: Location: corner of E. Freeman
& Woodward Streets
Edenton, NC

Capacity: 1,200 seats

Battery Compass Heading: 58 degrees

Left field: 302 feet

Field of Play (FOP): 108,935 square feet
(2.50 acres)

Left center: 342 feet

Center field: 355 feet

Right center: 346 feet

Right field: 312 feet

Surface: Grass

Ratio of FT/FOP: 78%

Fig. #42 – Hicks Field

Next, the data acquired in the previous two chapters is imported into an Excel® spreadsheet for comparison. The various data is organized in the following ways: first, the ballparks are listed by number in chronological order of construction, then by name, location, and date of construction. Each park is recognized if it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing property in a historic district. Moving across the grid, the use of the ballpark is established for either spring training by a major league team, the home field for a professional minor league team, a collegiate summer league team, or a NCAA college team. Two of the ballparks are currently not being utilized for baseball and are identified as dormant. Next the tenant, or host team name is identified along with its class in professional play or whether it is a non-professional collegiate team. The college league or major league team affiliate team is also identified. Physical characteristics of the ballparks are then delineated, starting with the seating capacity of the grandstands, then the compass battery heading in degrees, the area of the field of play both in square feet and acres, and the area of fair territory also in terms of square footage and acreage. Finally, the percentage calculation of fair territory (FT) divided by the field of play (FOP) and the reciprocal relationship are posted. This analysis of data is used to establish averages, minimums, and maximums of the physical characteristics. These categories are highlighted by color. Refer to Table #1 on the following page

TABLE #1

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES:

#	BALLPARK NAME	State	Built: NRRHP	Use**	Tenant	Class	Affiliate	Seating Capacity	Battery Heading (degrees)	FOP area (SF)	FOP area (acres)	FT area (SF)	FT area (acres)	FT/FOP	FOP/FT
1	Rickwood Field	AL	1910 yes	NCAA	Miles College	collegiate	Division II - NCAA	10,800	140	132,352	3.04	101,738	2.34	77%	130%
2	Jackie Robinson Ballp	FL	1914 yes	MLB	Daytona Tortugas	low-A	Cincinnati Reds	4,200	353	126,564	2.91	103,882	2.38	82%	122%
3	LECOM Park	FL	1923 no	MLST/MLB	Pittsburg Pirates/Bradenton Marauders	low-A	Pittsburg Pirates	8,500	44	126,578	2.91	106,908	2.45	84%	118%
4	McCormick Field	NC	1924 no	MLB	Asheville Tourists	high-A	Houston Astros	4,000	145	124,937	2.87	93,323	2.14	75%	134%
5	Duncan Park	SC	1926 yes	CSL	Spartanburgers	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	3,000	145	133,191	3.06	99,634	2.29	75%	134%
6	Durham Athletic Park	NC	1926 yes	dormant	none	none	none	5,000	48	114,992	2.64	93,434	2.14	81%	123%
7	Grayson Stadium	GA	1926 yes	CSL	Savannah Bananas	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	5,000	167	135,241	3.10	109,294	2.51	81%	124%
8	Luther Williams Field	GA	1929 yes	CSL	Macon Bacon	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	3,500	152	133,133	3.06	106,694	2.45	80%	125%
9	Engel Stadium	TN	1930 yes	dormant	none	none	none	5,997	68	133,284	3.06	110,030	2.53	83%	121%
10	Finch Field	NC	1935 no	CSL	High Point-Thomasville HiToms	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	2,000	166	120,351	2.76	90,577	2.08	75%	133%
11	Fleming Stadium	NC	1939 no	CSL	Wilson Tobs	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	3,000	44	152,976	3.51	104,397	2.40	68%	147%
12	Hicks Field	NC	1939 yes	CSL	Edenton Steamers	collegiate	Coastal Plain League	1,200	48	108,935	2.50	85,485	1.96	78%	127%
average			1927					4,683	127	128,545	2.95	100,450	2.31	78%	128%

historic exemplar Wauhatchee Park MA 1919 yes*
 *also identified as a cultural landscape by The Cultural Landscape Foundation® (TCLF)

Use** MLST major league spring training
 MLB minor league team
 CSL collegiate summer league
 NCAA NCAA collegiate

color legend

most
 average
 least
 not listed

Additionally, plan stamps of each ballpark (denoted in chronological number) are illustrated below providing concise graphic comparisons.

Plan Stamps

Composite illustrations with foul territory within the field of play is in red:

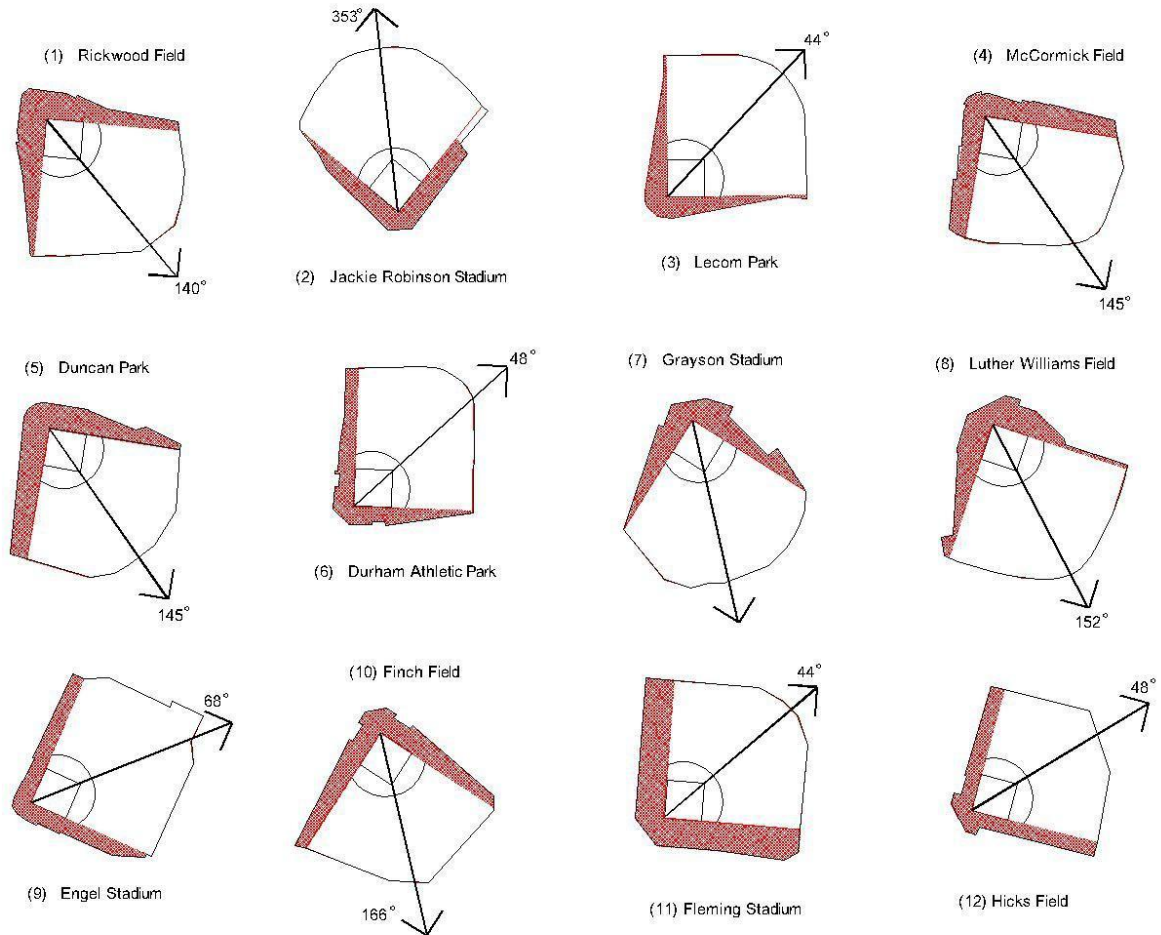


Fig. #43 – Plan Stamps

Recognizing similar orientations, the following patterns are illustrated.

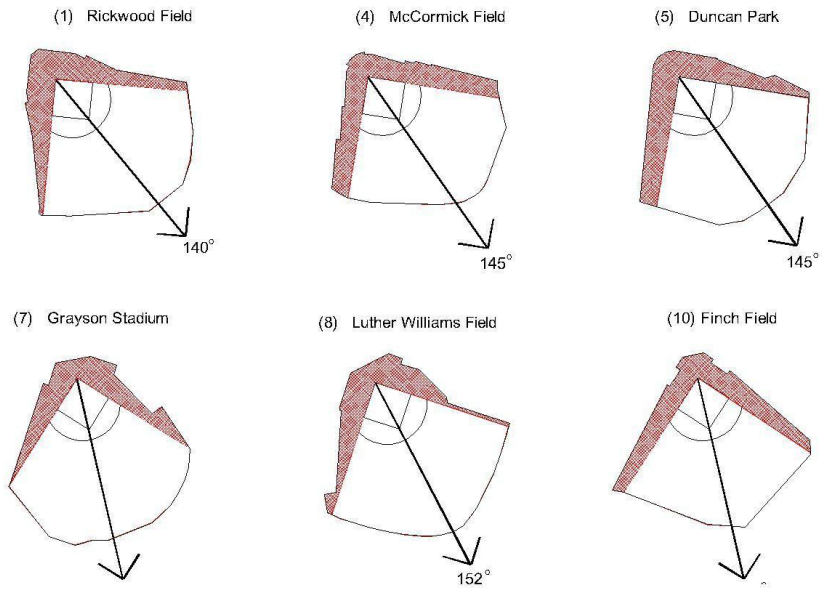


Fig. #44 – Southeast Orientations

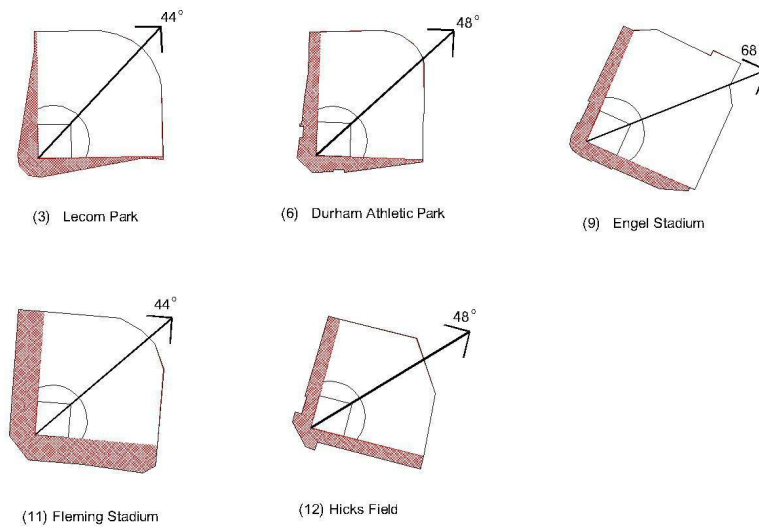


Fig. #45 – Northeast Orientations

Going forward, one of the twelve parks delineated previously will be selected as the most exemplary and worthy of preservation as a designed cultural landscape. This ‘All-Star’ park is Rickwood Field for several reasons.

Firstly, Rickwood Field is the most experienced, it is the oldest ballpark in America, constructed in 1910, older than Fenway Park in Boston and Wrigley Field in Chicago, both of major league fame. It also has a seating capacity of 10,800 persons, the largest of those studied, with grandstands constructed of steel and concrete shaded by a metal roof supported by open web steel bar joists. When most grandstands of the time were rickety wood structures prone to destruction by fire, Rick Woodward, the steel baron of Birmingham, wanted to showcase the material Birmingham was famous for, steel. Secondly, Rickwood’s battery compass heading may have set the precedent for other ballparks to follow facing southeast, like five other southeastern parks, McCormick, Duncan, Grayson, Luther Williams, and Finch Fields (half of the twelve studied). Initially, it had the largest field of play, a massive 4.27 acres bound by an imposing concrete outfield wall, prior to locating a wooden outfield fence inside the existing one in 1938, reducing the field of play to 2.85 acres. A batter had to crush a delivered pitched over 478 feet to clear the centerfield wall.

Paramount to choosing Rickwood Field as the ‘All-Star’ ballpark is its cultural history, referred to as the “Black Baseball Capital” in a publication titled *Rickwood Field - America’s Oldest Ballpark*.¹⁴⁶ The Birmingham Black Barons were revered in the local community when they played at Rickwood and still are today, even though they no longer exist except in memory. The form language of Rickwood Field represents its cultural history imbedded in the landscape,

¹⁴⁶ Publication given to author by Gerald Watkins, Executive Director of Friends of Rickwood Field. Printed by Bo Stanford American Printing, Birmingham, Alabama.

and this will be illustrated in Chapter VIII. Preserving Rickwood helps preserve the cultural significance affiliated with it, including the intangible cultural heritage of baseball. Our idolization of this cultural landscape is what makes preserving it worthy to many citizens, especially in the local community.

Part b) of this chapter will cite criteria for evaluating and reiterating how Rickwood Field illustrates the characteristics of a Designed Historic Landscape (DHL), Historic Vernacular Landscape (HVL), and an Historic Site (HS), all three categories of Cultural Landscapes, criteria previously defined by the ground rules in Chapter III as well as in NPS Preservation Brief #18. Defining these characteristics is essential to a meaningful analysis, and they contribute to stipulate the significance and integrity of Rickwood Field above the other ballparks investigated.

If runners-up were chosen, they would be Jackie Robinson Stadium in Daytona Beach, Florida and Luther Williams Field of Macon, Georgia.

Applied Criteria of Preservation Brief #18 for Defining Worthiness:

Types of designed historic landscapes can usually be described in many ways according to NPS Brief #18. Specifically applicable to this thesis are the following descriptions regarding: “...grounds designed or developed for outdoor recreation and/or sports activities such as country clubs, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens, bridle trails, stadiums, *ball parks*, and racetracks...”¹⁴⁷ Rickwood Field is clearly a ballpark, as are the others researched. Brief #18 further establishes criteria for evaluating a designed historic landscape for the National Register of Historic Places. It states the landscape must “retain integrity of location, design intent, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and meet National Register criteria.”¹⁴⁸ To do this, the significance of the designed landscape must be determined by conducting a systematic investigation, divulging the physical characteristics of the property, and revealing the qualities of its social significance, thereby representing an exemplary type.¹⁴⁹ Later, this systematic investigation will reveal Rickwood Field to be an exemplary example of a ballpark. Investigative steps include obtaining information from previous documentation of its history via collections of available plans and photographs.¹⁵⁰ The functions of the designed historic landscape should be described in a written narrative describing how the aspects of previous chapters apply as required by the brief. The features include spatial relationships, orientations, symmetry, asymmetry, axial alignments, views and vistas, dividers such as walls, fences, or hedges, engineered structures like

¹⁴⁷ “National Register Bulletin 18 - NPS,” accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB18-Complete.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ The Historic American Building Survey (HABS) is an excellent source for both.

grandstands, lighting, signs, and entrances.¹⁵¹ Each of these items apply independently and interdependently at Rickwood Field.

Furthermore, documentary evidence and field observations should be compiled and combined to determine the property's period of significance.”¹⁵² Afterwards, the researcher should determine which of these characteristic features define the property as a good representative of its type. This is critical in separating the selected ballpark from the others studied. Using National Historic Register criteria, the historic landscape must, among other things, “be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past...”¹⁵³

Next, according to the brief, the researcher should seek to answer the following three questions with respect to integrity:

- 1) To what degree does the landscape convey its historic character?
- 2) To what degree has the original fabric been retained?
- 3) Are changes to the landscape irrevocable or can they be corrected so that the property retains integrity?¹⁵⁴

Identifying components of the original design is paramount to establish integrity.¹⁵⁵ Utilization of previous documentations such as HABS drawings and large format photographs from the Library of Congress can be used to evaluate a historic cultural landscape accurately, pertinent to the before-mentioned criteria. Also, on-site field work should be conducted if possible, recording existing

¹⁵¹ “National Register Bulletin 18 - NPS,” accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB18-Complete.pdf>

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

conditions which may have changed over time, and winter may be the best season to truly reveal aspects of the landscape otherwise concealed by summer foliage.¹⁵⁶

Illustrations are a key component of this thesis. Photographs, maps, plans, and graphic analysis concisely represent previous and existing conditions for comparison throughout the historical development of the property or properties to help formulate the period of significance.¹⁵⁷ Ideally, the comparisons should be at the same scale when possible, and overlays and superimpositions are most useful. This methodology of analysis will reveal the best comparisons and reveal which significant features have endured intact and which have evolved into something different or possibly even vanished entirely. The graphics should demonstrate the landscape as it was originally designed, constructed and how it exists today.¹⁵⁸ Documenting the functions and form language that have remained the same are a good indicator of the landscape's integrity. In this regard, Rickwood Field seems to outshine all the other case studies, especially in the way it embraces its connection to the African American community of Birmingham.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Utilization of Historic American Building Survey (HABS):

Fortunately, The FDR administration initiated “The Historic American Building Survey” (HABS) as the nation's first federal preservation program in 1933 to document America's architectural heritage. It was created to mitigate the negative effects that the marching of time was having upon our history and culture, the result being the vanishing of significant architectural resources.¹⁵⁹ It consolidated the resources of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Library of Congress, and the National Park Service (NPS) to create a remarkable archive of significant American architectural accomplishments. This New Deal initiative was the federal government’s first historic preservation program. For the researcher, it is a treasure trove of information related to American historic architecture available via the Library of Congress. “HABS was part of a ground-swell of interest in collecting and preserving information, artifacts, and buildings related to our early history....”¹⁶⁰

For this project, the HABS documentation delineating Rickwood Field is invaluable information. Combined with additional field research, the two resources provide detailed information to help establish Rickwood Field as a designed cultural landscape worthy of preservation. The joint information helps to read the landscape and “the attempt to derive meaning from landscapes possesses overwhelming virtue.”¹⁶¹ This virtue establishes both

¹⁵⁹ “About Habs | Habs/HAER/Hals,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed January 9, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/habs/index.htm>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ “Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed January 16, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

integrity and significance of place. “The significance of the HABS program then as today resides in the scope of the collection and its public accessibility...”¹⁶²

This chapter has outlined various tools for evaluating the selected ballparks. First, a graphic analysis of the selections in context is mapped in chronological order, then a compilation of the obtained data is illustrated in the form of a spread sheet table. Next, same scale plan stamps are created for comparison. This exercise is followed by applying criteria obtained from the National Park Service’s Preservation Brief #18 for defining the worthiness of the ballparks. The brief defines physical characteristics of cultural landscapes and raises questions to evaluate historic integrity. Lastly, the importance of utilizing the documentation from the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) obtained from the Library of Congress combined with field research is identified as a tool to derive meaning from the cultural landscape in terms of the virtues of integrity and significance. Chapter VIII will utilize all the above-mentioned methodology to specifically evaluate Rickwood Field.

¹⁶² “Nps.gov Homepage (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed January 16, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/habs/AmericanPlace.pdf>.

CHAPTER 7

THE SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

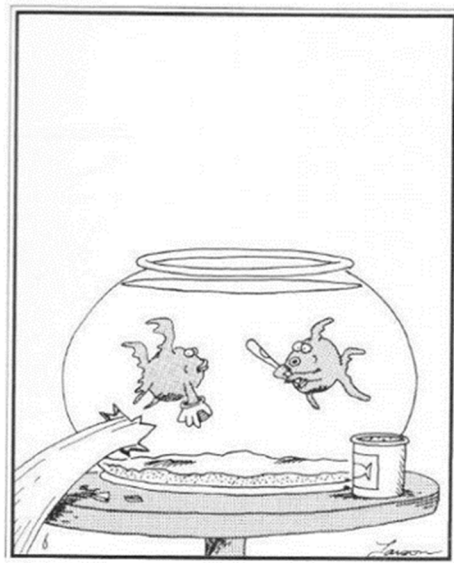


Fig. #46 – Cartoon by Gary Larson¹⁶³

The cartoon above illustrates an abruptly modified vernacular landscape.

This chapter has nothing to do with the statement or theory put forward in this thesis to prove or disprove. Its purpose is to relax and to take a break, like the seventh inning stretch in baseball. Now would be time to refresh. However, this idiosyncrasy of baseball might help explain nuances of the game that contribute to it being viable as an intangible cultural heritage. The origins of the seventh inning stretch in baseball are much disputed, and it is difficult to

¹⁶³ Cartoon by Gary Larson (deceased) Telephone Number of Designated Agent: 816 421-4460.

certify any definite history. Following are various explanations which are relevant to the cultural origins of the tradition.

One of three claims in Cooperstown's Baseball Hall of Fame states that Manhattan's Brother Jasper of Mary, the first athletic director and prefect of discipline, called a timeout before the seventh inning at-bat of a muggy summer game in 1882. Realizing the crowd was restless, he told the students to stand up and stretch until the game resumed. The 'seventh inning stretch' caught on in the majors as the College played the New York Giants into the 1890s and is still practiced by millions of fans annually!¹⁶⁴

Whether a stretch was observed nationwide is not known, but later in 1869 the *Cincinnati Commercial* reported on a game that was played on the West Coast between the Red Stockings and the Eagle Club of San Francisco:¹⁶⁵ "One thing noticeable in this game was a ten minutes' intermission at the end of the sixth inning – a dodge to advertise and have the crowd patronize the bar."¹⁶⁶

However, a letter written in 1869 by Harry Wright (1835–1895), manager of the Cincinnati Red Stockings documented something very similar to a seventh inning stretch, making the following observation about the Cincinnati fans' ballpark behavior: "The spectators all arise between halves of the seventh inning, extend their legs and arms and sometimes walk about. In so doing they enjoy the relief afforded by relaxation from a long posture upon hard benches."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ <http://manhattan.edu/news/top-5-jasper-traditions>

¹⁶⁵ This was a heroic endeavor just making the trip from Cincinnati to San Francisco via rail in 1869.

¹⁶⁶ "Seventh-Inning Stretch," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, October 3, 2021), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-inning_stretch#cite_note-3.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Other tales include that the stretch was invented by a manager stalling for time to warm up a relief pitcher.¹⁶⁸ Also that on October 18, 1889, Game 1 of the 1889 World Series saw a seventh inning stretch after somebody yelled "stretch for luck".¹⁶⁹ Finally, a more popular explanation for the seventh inning stretch is explained in an article in *Sports Illustrated*:

The most popular—and least supportable—tale of how the seventh-inning stretch began dates back to Opening Day in 1910, when President William Howard Taft came to National Park in Washington, D.C., to throw out the first ball. According to legend, between the top and bottom of the seventh, Taft rose in his flag-draped box to stretch his elephantine limbs. Fans thought the President was leaving and stood out of respect. Respectful or otherwise, some nearby fans would certainly have had to get to their feet to see over or around a standing Taft.¹⁷⁰

No matter the origin, it seems the seventh inning stretch respite dominates over the task at hand on the field, regardless of rivalry or score. Just because. Why not? Because it is part of the cultural tradition of the game of baseball. In John Sexton's¹⁷¹ *Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing beyond the Game* he states "...the seventh inning stretch lives on in every baseball congregation. Possibly the most famous pause in American culture..."¹⁷²

Below are other fragments of baseball lore, statements discovered doing research, humorous but not necessarily factual.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Bruce Anderson, "A Pause That Refreshes - Sports Illustrated Vault," SI.com (Sports Illustrated Vault | SI.com, April 16, 1990), <https://vault.si.com/vault/1990/04/16/a-pause-that-refreshes-fans-let-loose-during-baseballs-seventh-inning-stretch>.

¹⁷¹ Former President of New York University (May 17, 2002 – December 31, 2015).

¹⁷² John Edward Sexton, Thomas Oliphant, and Peter J. Schwartz, *Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing beyond the Game* (New York: Avery, 2014), 166.

“I watch a lot of baseball on radio.” Gerald Ford¹⁷³

“Ninety percent of this game is half mental.” Yogi Berra¹⁷⁴

“Like déjà vu all over again.” Yogi Berra¹⁷⁵

“There's no crying in baseball!” Tom Hanks in *A League of Their Own*¹⁷⁶

“Baseball is like church. Many attend, few understand.” Leo Durocher.¹⁷⁷

Praising “Cool Papa Bell,” an African American ball player known for his speed, the great Satchel Paige, one of the best pitchers of all time remarked: “One time he hit a line drive right past my ear. I turned around and saw the ball hit him sliding into second.”¹⁷⁸ Baseball players are notorious for their tall tales and sense of humor, part of the fabric of its intangible cultural heritage. Impossible to explain logically, it is an experiential phenomena. Walt Whitman has been attributed to have once said, “I see great things in baseball. It’s our game, the American game. It will repair our losses and be a blessing to us.”¹⁷⁹ Many believe this quote to have come from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1846 where Whitman was an editor, however there is no definite source for this statement in the publication’s online archives.¹⁸⁰

Whitman may have in fact stated in April 1889:

¹⁷³ Paul Dickson, *Baseball's Greatest Quotations: An Illustrated Treasury of Baseball Quotations and Historical Lore* (New York: Collins, 2008).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ John Edward Sexton, Thomas Oliphant, and Peter J. Schwartz, *Baseball as a Road to God: Seeing beyond the Game* (New York: Avery, 2014), pg. 169. Referring to a repeat of the seventh inning stretch in the middle of the 14th inning in an extra inning game.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ “Baseball Is like Church,” The United Methodist Church, April 5, 2018, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/baseball-is-like-church>.

¹⁷⁸ “Cool Papa Bell,” Baseball Hall of Fame, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/bell-cool-papa>.

¹⁷⁹ Margery Sly, “Walt Whitman and Baseball,” *History News*, November 9, 2018, <https://sites.temple.edu/historynews/2018/10/22/walt-whitman-and-baseball/>.

¹⁸⁰ “Did 'Bull Durham' Misquote Walt Whitman on Baseball?,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles Times, March 28, 2012), <https://www.latimes.com/sports/la-xpm-2012-mar-28-la-sp-sn-bull-durham-baseball-20120328-story.html>.

“Baseball is the hurrah game of the republic! That’s beautiful: the hurrah game! well—it’s our game: that’s the chief fact in connection with it: America’s game: has the snap, go, fling, of the American atmosphere - belongs as much to our institutions, fits into them as significantly, as our constitutions, laws: is just as important in the sum total of our historic life.”¹⁸¹

“You could look it up” says Annie in the movie *Bull Durham*.¹⁸²

True or false, the oral tradition of baseball is part of its intangible cultural heritage. But never mind, more analytical conclusions are forthcoming.

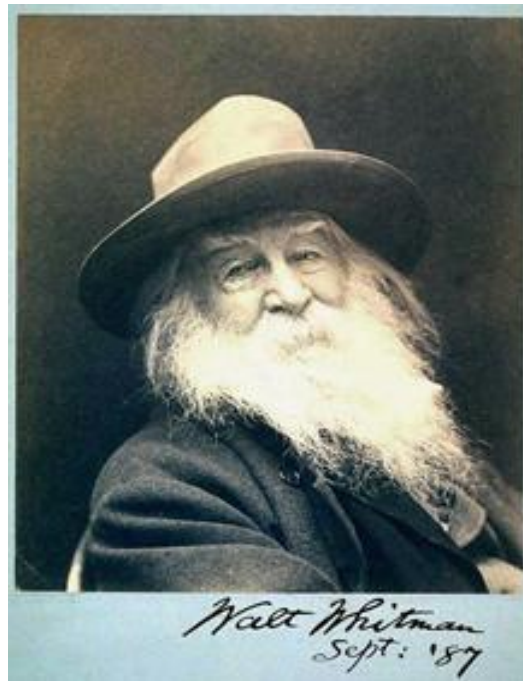


Fig. # 47 – Walt Whitman¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Margery Sly, “Walt Whitman and Baseball,” *History News*, November 9, 2018, <https://sites.temple.edu/historynews/2018/10/22/walt-whitman-and-baseball/>.

¹⁸² Quote by Annie, played by Susan Sarandon in the movie “*Bull Durham*”

¹⁸³ “Smithsonian Libraries’ Image Gallery Collection,” Smithsonian Libraries Image Gallery, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://library.si.edu/image-gallery/ahd-videonablyudeniya>.

CHAPTER 8
RICKWOOD FIELD



Fig. #48 – Plaque at Rickwood Field¹⁸⁴

This chapter will chronicle Rickwood Field as an exemplary historic Southeastern American minor league ballpark, worthy of preservation as a designed cultural landscape. The argument will apply ground rule parameters from Chapter III, provide comparison to historic exemplars from Chapter IV, and evaluate the landscape graphically, additionally outlining criteria from Preservation Brief #18 and utilizing HABS documentation as outlined in Chapter VI.

¹⁸⁴ Photo by author.

From Chapter III, UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee defines cultural landscapes as "cultural properties ... representing the combined works of nature and of man."¹⁸⁵ “The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man.”¹⁸⁶ This includes not just the grandstands at Rickwood, but also the ballfield encompassed by the grandstands and the outfield fence, since the grandstands do not fully surround the ballfield. Next, the evolved landscape, a “continuing landscape...which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life (playing and spectating baseball) and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress.”¹⁸⁷ Some baseball is still being played at Rickwood Field today and has been, on and off, since its inception in 1910.¹⁸⁸

Rickwood also appears to comply with the statement outlined by the NPS: “If the characteristics and features of a cultural landscape are historically significant and have integrity, they can contribute to the historic character of the property.”¹⁸⁹ The first feature is the spatial organization of the ballpark, which includes the three-dimensional arrangements of the physical form, the overall layout of spaces, and the arrangement of physical forms and their visual associations, including circulation systems, views and vistas, areas of land use, and clusters of structures which define spaces within the landscape. The following photos depict these items.

¹⁸⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Cultural Landscapes,” World Heritage Centre, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Miles College NCAA Division II Baseball, now host games at Rickwood Field.

¹⁸⁹ “Cultural Landscapes 101 (U.S. National Park Service),” National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/cultural-landscapes-101.htm>

Circulation Systems:



Fig. #49 – Rows of seating¹⁹⁰

Views and Vistas:



Fig. #50 – Overview of context¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Photo by author.

¹⁹¹ Photo by author.

Areas of Land Use:



Fig. #51 – Land use as playing field¹⁹²

Clusters of Structures which define Spaces within the Landscape:



Fig. #52 – Fencing, billboards, light stanchion, and flagpole¹⁹³

¹⁹² Photo by author.

¹⁹³ Photo by author.

These photographs also illustrate the land use where historical activities (baseball competitions) influence the development or modification of the landscape in the form of the playing field.

There are also historical systems for human movement such as the base paths and the portals and aisles leading to spectator seating.

Collective cultural traditions of the Birmingham area are represented in the outfield wall billboards at Rickwood Field. Below are some examples:



Fig. #53 – Pennant celebration of the home teams¹⁹⁴

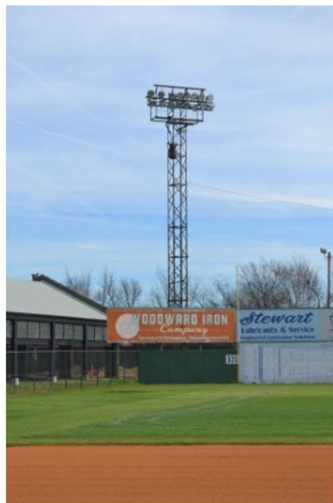


Fig. #54 – Light stanchion¹⁹⁵



Fig. #55 – Detail of billboard¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Photo by author.

¹⁹⁵ Photo by author.

¹⁹⁶ Photo (detail) by author.

It cannot be emphasized enough the cultural significance of baseball as the great American pastime in Birmingham, albeit only minor league team affiliates. This intangible cultural heritage, as described in Chapter VII, has been an integral part of Birmingham society at Rickwood Field since 1910. Not coincidentally, the seventh inning stretch, “possibly the most famous pause in American culture...”¹⁹⁷ is indicative of the laid-back lifestyle of the deep south during the sultry summer months.

Finally, the topography of the ballpark is a historically based, human-created ground plane, specific to the elements of the ballfield within the ballpark, including home plate, fair territory, foul territory, foul lines, the baseball diamond itself, the outfield wall(s), and the foul poles. Within fair territory exist the battery, and within foul territory yet still in the field of play are the bullpens.

Looking at precedents from Chapter IV there are various pertinent applications relevant to Rickwood Field. The concept of Elysium is evident in the peaceful, pastoral, dream like idyllic setting of Rickwood. The place has adapted through use like the Parade Ground at Prospect Park in Brooklyn, to accommodate different tenants (the ball clubs) and spectators alike, in Rickwood’s case evolving with the social changes of the deep south, especially in the 1960s. Following are photographic depictions of the Birmingham Black Barons and the Birmingham Barons ball club members from 1948 and 1912 respectively.

¹⁹⁷ John Edward Sexton, et al, *Baseball as a Road to God*, 166.



Fig. #56 – Photo of Birmingham Black Barons circa 1948¹⁹⁸



Fig. #57 – Photo of Birmingham Barons circa 1912¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸Photo of 1948 Birmingham Black Barons accessed January 18, 2022, <https://www.birminghamprosports.com/birminghamblackbaronsphotos.html>.

¹⁹⁹ Photo of 1912 Birmingham Baseball Club by author from collection on display at Rickwood Field.

Great players such as Satchel Paige, Willie Mays, Cool Papa Bell, Artie Wilson, Reggie Jackson, Ray Caldwell, Dizzie Dean, John McNamara, John Blanchard, and Mayo Smith took the field to the delight of thousands spectators.

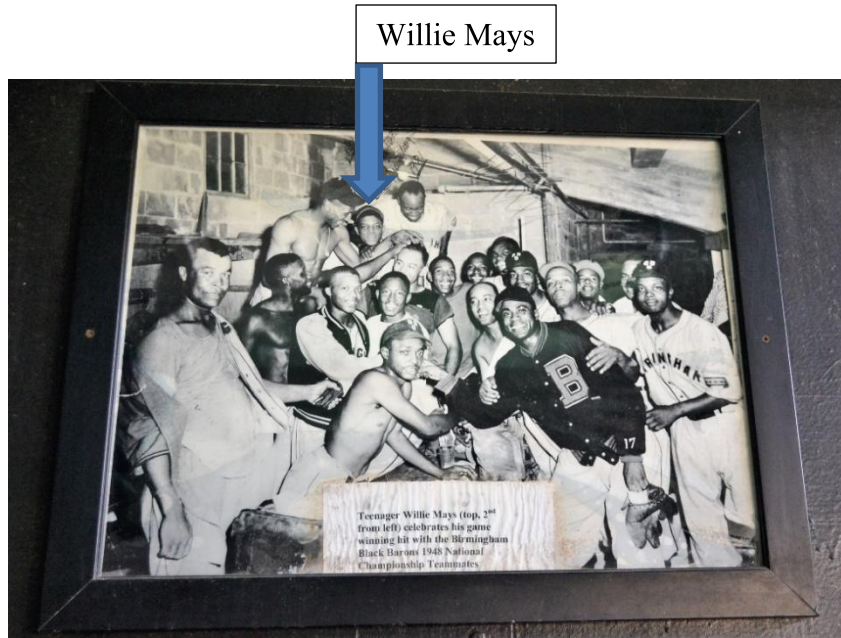


Fig. #58 - A young Willie Mays celebrating in the clubhouse²⁰⁰

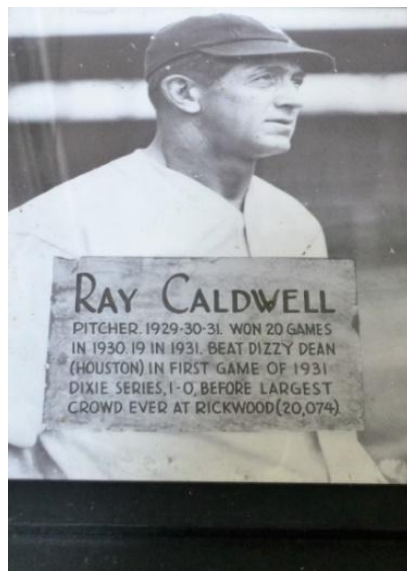


Fig. #59 - A portrait of Ray Caldwell²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Photo by author from collection on display at Rickwood Field.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Like the Union Grounds of Brooklyn, NY, the confines of the outfield were adapted by bringing in the fences thus reducing the size of the playing field and allowing for more home runs to the thrill of the fans bolstering attendance and profits (adaptation for profit).



Fig. #60 – Signage on outfield wall²⁰²



Fig. #61 – Original outfield wall²⁰³

²⁰² Photo by author.

²⁰³ Photo by author illustrating context of original outfield wall behind existing outfield fence.

It seems logical that like Wahconah Park (recognized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation as a historic designed landscape) that Rickwood Field is worthy of the same designation by virtue of its cultural heritage relevant to baseball. Birmingham, Alabama, welcomed teams of the Southern Negro League to the confines of Rickwood Field to compete against their roster of spectacular players in one of the best homefield ballparks in the Southeast to the delight of the overflowing crowds.²⁰⁴

Another parallel with Rickwood is the concept of fantasy via nostalgia, the inspiration being the Field of Dreams (“Is this heaven? No, it’s Iowa”).²⁰⁵ The recollection of a historic baseball memory, whether real or fantasy, reinforces baseball’s place as an American intangible cultural heritage. For some, the experience, or memory of the experience, is what helps to define the essence of place, in this case Rickwood Field. This contributes to making the place a historic designed cultural landscape. The value of experiencing a place in real time is undeniable, since recollection or memory of the experience may be blurred by fantasy, especially as time increases from the actual experience itself. This however does not make the memory of the experience less real, only more fantastic.

The Birmingham Black Barons won three championships at Rickwood Field, the Birmingham Barons nine as evidenced by the pennants painted on the outfield fence (Fig. #53). Yet the memory of the thousands of different fans who witnessed the events is certain to be different, depending on their seat in the ballpark, their age, ethnic background, or even how much money they had riding on the outcome of the game. It is the recollection of which players performed well, who made errors, who stole bases, who hit home runs or made fantastic plays

²⁰⁴ Excerpt from Publication given to author by Gerald Watkins, Executive Director of Friends of Rickwood Field. Printed by Bo Stanford American Printing, Birmingham, Alabama.

²⁰⁵ Quote from the movie “*Field of Dreams*.”



Fig. #62 – Advisory in grandstands²⁰⁶

that is significant. Of course, documented statistics (and baseball is all about statistics) can be verified relevant to score and performance, yet people’s memory will beg to differ. And that memory is a lasting association with an event at a *place*, true or not. This is what makes baseball, and especially the place where it is played, the ballpark so noteworthy. This almost transcendental recollection of an experience in a place is what Mircea Eliade calls a hierophany.²⁰⁷

Specific criteria from NPS Preservation Brief #18 will further help define the worthiness of Rickwood Field for preservation as historic cultural landscape. It was certainly “designed or developed for outdoor recreation and/or sports activities.”²⁰⁸ And it also “retain(s) integrity of location, design intent, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and meet(s) National Register criteria.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Photo by author.

²⁰⁷ John Edward Sexton, et al, *Baseball as a Road to God*. 211.

²⁰⁸ National Register Bulletin 18 - NPS,” accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB18-Complete.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

All the following criteria from Brief #18 are evident in the total landscape:

- “spatial relationships and orientations such as symmetry, asymmetry and axial alignment”
- “views and vistas into and out of the landscape”
- “landscape dividers such as walls, fences, and hedges”
- “engineering structures”
- “lighting”
- “signs delineating entrances, street names, and other features”²¹⁰

And most of all, Rickwood Field has integrity. When evaluating integrity, the “researcher should ask the following questions”

- 1) To what degree does the landscape convey its historic character?
- 2) To what degree has the original fabric been retained?
- 3) Are changes to the landscape irrevocable or can they be corrected so that the property retains integrity?”²¹¹

Rickwood conveys its historic character in its design, its use, and its cultural heritage as a ballpark. The original fabric is almost entirely intact, and what few changes have occurred could be reverted if deemed necessary to maintain integrity. Evaluation of the property reveals almost all components of the original design present promoting its historic integrity.

Research was done with extant drawings, and fortunately these are available via HABS which will be discussed later. I conducted my field work in the winter as suggested in the Preservation Brief, and new photographic evidence is presented throughout this chapter.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Earlier, a plan depicted the relationships of fair vs. foul territory within the field of play at Rickwood in its present confines. This illustrates the function of the landscape as a ballfield. The diagrams below illustrate the field's original design compared to its current confines. This modification allows for more home runs to be hit, which excites fans and improves attendance, which improves profits for the team's owners. This change can be attributed to the fact that in 1938, following the Great Depression, profits were key to financial survival. The area of the field of play pre-1938 was 186,073 square feet (4.27 acres). Post-1938 the area of the field of play was reduced to 124,094 square feet (2.85 acres).²¹² This is a 33% reduction in the field of play, fully one third. This is a significant adaptation to bolster attendance.

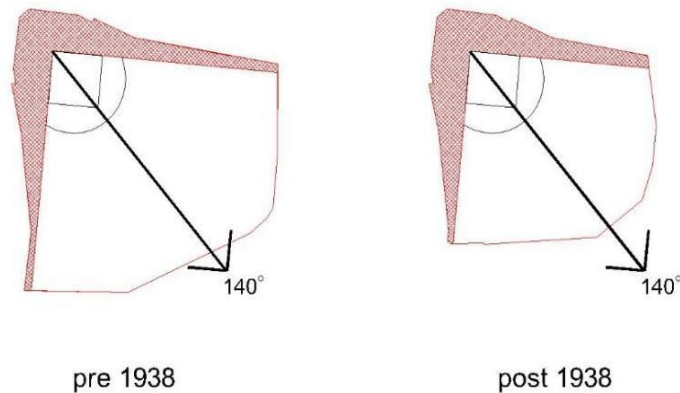


Fig. #63 - Field of play comparison²¹³

Lastly, are the HABS archives. Typically, they are beautifully hand drawn architectural illustrations of Historical American Buildings by architects and students throughout the United States. Fortunately, Rickwood Field is part of this archive. The documentation focus is on the

²¹² Area calculations by author using AutoCAD software at full scale.

²¹³ Comparison illustration by author.

overall architectural elements of the grandstands surrounding the ballfield which encompass the ballpark. However, the architectural elements are just part of the overall historic designed cultural landscape, albeit quite a significant part.

The Rickwood Field HABS documentations were drawn by Thomas W. Williams, Aaron Famosi, and Thomas M. Behrens in 1993.²¹⁴ The following information disclosed is from the cover sheet of that HABS documentation.²¹⁵ Significant aspects of the field's cultural significance are denoted in italics.

Erected in 1910, the original concrete and steel grandstand at Rickwood Field is the oldest baseball grandstand on its original site in the United States. The grandstand forms the core of an historic ballpark which includes a 1928 mission-style entryway and other subsequent additions. Modeled after Pittsburgh's Forbes Field, Rickwood is one of the few grandstands which remain as a testament to the now classic early 20th century style of ballpark construction. The stadium was built by local industrialist A.H. "Rick" Woodward, III for his Birmingham Barons baseball club, and was also home to the Black Barons and the Oakland A's farm teams. *As the center for leisure-time activity, the field was an important social and cultural institution in this southern industrial city.*

Playing in the Southern Association and later the Southern League, Birmingham's minor league franchises won nine pennants during their tenure at Rickwood Field. *Each era produced its own memorable games and favorite players for the community at large.* Rickwood Field holds a place in the heart for the baseball buff and casual fan alike.

In 1920 the Birmingham Black Barons began playing in the negro leagues and Rickwood rapidly became the jewel of southern black baseball. *The field served as a central gathering place for Birmingham's black community as they*

²¹⁴ "Habs Ala,37-Birm,5- (Sheet 1 of 22) - Rickwood Field, 1137 Second Avenue West, Birmingham, Jefferson County, AL," Library of Congress, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/al0965.sheet.00001a/resource/>.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

watched stars such as Mules Suttles, Satchel Paige, and Willie Mays fine tune the skills that launched them into stardom. The Black Barons reached the negro league world series three times in the 1940s and continued playing at Rickwood - alternating field time with the (white) Barons - until 1963.

Like all social institutions in Birmingham prior to 1964, Rickwood remained racially segregated in the stands and on the field. The Barons continued to attract large crowds before folding their club in the face of integration prior to the 1962 season. Integrated professional baseball resumed at Rickwood in 1964 and continued off and on through 1987.

In the 1920s Rickwood underwent major additions to the present grandstand and entryway, as well as the erection of the now defunct drop-in scoreboard in left field. Light towers were added in 1936,²¹⁶ and in the 1940s new fences were built in the outfield reducing Rickwood's mammoth dimensions and allowing more homeruns. Though no longer home to professional baseball Rickwood is used by the public schools and recreational leagues for baseball games, efforts are underway to restore Rickwood to its former grandeur.”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ In an interview with Gerald Watkins (Chairman of Friends of Rickwood), on site at Rickwood Field, January 14th, 2022, he states the lights were brought to Rickwood Field from the “Polo Grounds” in Brooklyn, NY, after it was demolished.

²¹⁷ “Habs Ala,37-Birm,5- (Sheet 1 of 22) - Rickwood Field, 1137 Second Avenue West, Birmingham, Jefferson County, AL,” The Library of Congress, accessed January 16, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.al0965.sheet/?sp=1>.

Following are reproductions of selected drawings from the HABS archive.

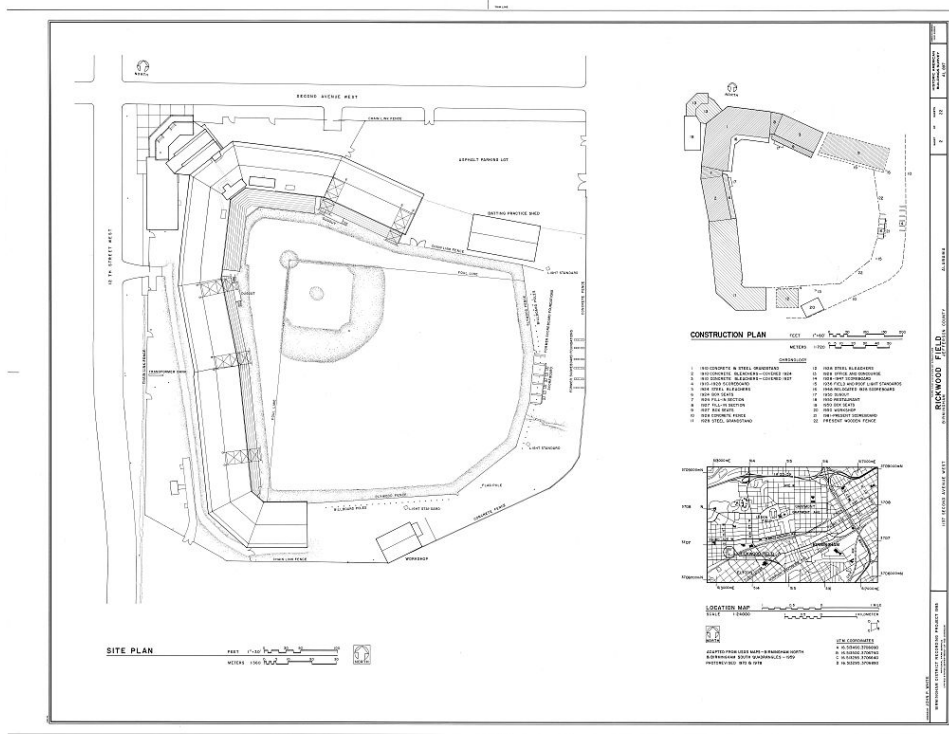


Fig. #64 - Site plan of Rickwood Field from HABS.²¹⁸

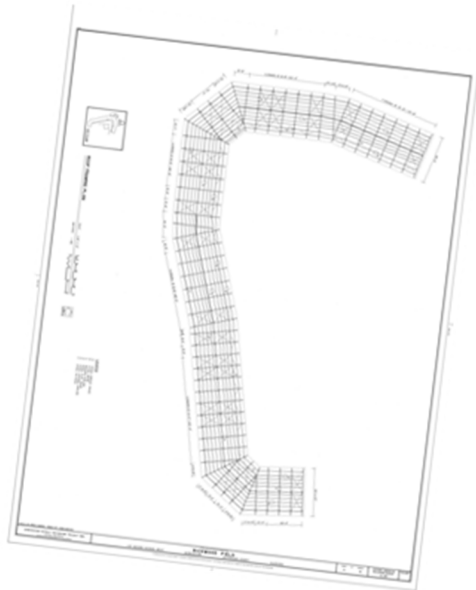


Fig. #65 - Roof framing plan juxtaposed at similar scale with the site plan for reference.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Used by the author to calculate areas within the field of play.

²¹⁹ HABS drawing document reoriented to match site plan.

The approximate area under the roof is 71,389 square feet or 1.64 acres. This provided much needed shade for patrons in the oppressive heat of the deep south when games were played exclusively in the daytime prior to artificial lighting which was installed at Rickwood in 1936, designed and fabricated by the Truscon Steel Company of Youngstown, Ohio.²²⁰

²²⁰ Rickwood Field - history, accessed January 16, 2022, https://www.liquisearch.com/rickwood_field/history.

This is the front elevation of the entrance from HABS, circa 1993:²²¹



Fig. # 66 - HABS northwest elevation (truncated)

Compared with a recent photo:



Fig. #67 – Photo of front entry portal²²²

The sustaining integrity of the structure is self-evident.

²²¹ “Habs Ala,37-Birm,5- (Sheet 16 of 22) - Rickwood Field, 1137 Second Avenue West, Birmingham, Jefferson County, AL,” Library of Congress, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/al0965.sheet.00016a/resource/>.

²²² Comparison photograph by author.

The HABS record also includes large format photography.



Fig. #68 - View from the outfield in 1993 from HABS documentation: ²²³

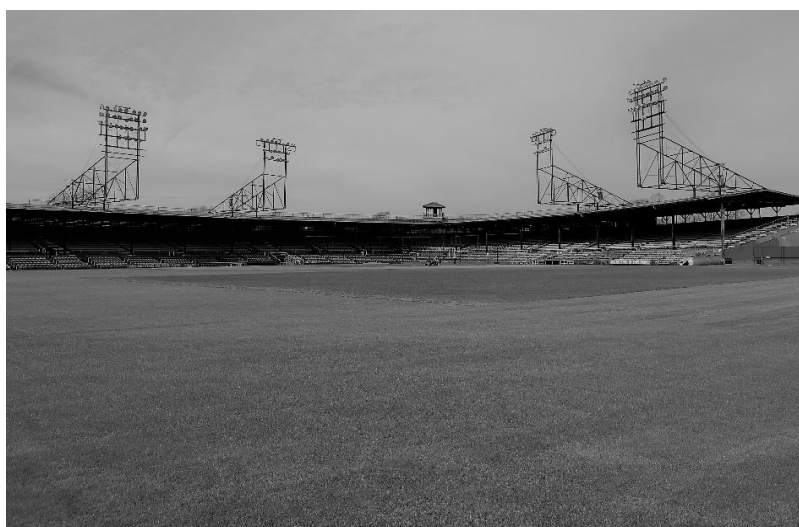


Fig. # 69 – Comparison outfield photograph taken January 14th, 2022. ²²⁴

After 29 years, only the crow's nest press box is different.

²²³ Jet Lowe, "16. General View of Playing Field Looking Southeast, with Press Box to Center - Rickwood Field, 1137 Second Avenue West, Birmingham, Jefferson County, AL," Library of Congress, January 1, 1993, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/al0965.photos.041450p/resource/>.

²²⁴ Photograph by author.

Below is a comparison of the north elevation

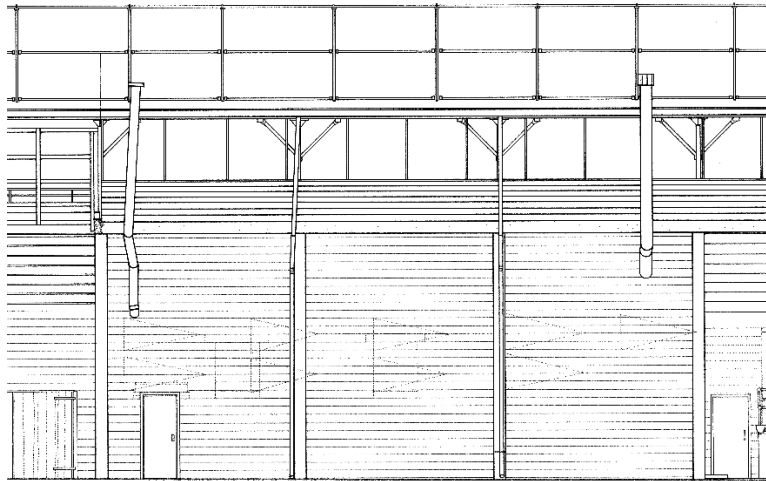


Fig. # 70 – North elevation detail with faintly dotted pennant locations (truncated)²²⁵



Fig. # 71 – Oblique angle photograph of north wall with pennants²²⁶

²²⁵ Detail of HABS drawing sheet #15 of 22 (1993).

²²⁶ Photo by author taken January 14, 2022.

These illustrations help to document the significance and integrity of Rickwood Field as a designed cultural landscape comprised of a regulation professional ballfield bound within a grandstand listed in the National Historic Register, along with the billboard clad outfield fencing indicative of Birmingham's collective cultural traditions.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis, inspired by “The Tree That Played Centerfield”²²⁷ a surviving *Magnolia grandiflora* once in the field of play of the now demolished Ponce DeLeon Ballpark in Atlanta, Georgia, and the “Field of Dreams” in rural Iowa does the following:

First, in Chapter III, research established definitions or ground rules for cultural landscapes in general, along with specific elements of a baseball field within the confines of a ballpark. Definitions for cultural landscapes were sourced from the National Park Service and UNESCO, and the elements of a ballfield were derived from the rules of baseball along with general observations of elements within the field of play. Understanding the interrelationship of the elements of a ballfield within the landscape of a ballpark helps to evaluate a ballpark within the general context of cultural landscapes, primarily as a historic designed landscape but also as a historic site and a vernacular landscape.

Secondly, four historically exemplary ballparks were identified as a basis for evaluating extant ballparks, specifically Rickwood Field. They were Elysium Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey, The Parade Grounds in Brooklyn, New York, The Union Grounds also in Brooklyn, New

²²⁷ Furman Bisher, “Bisher: The Tree That Played Center Field,” *AJC* (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, October 9, 2009), <https://www.ajc.com/sports/bisher-the-tree-that-played-center-field/uwlzoSpc1SjiKeKcx15sLP/>.

York, and Wahconah Park in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, representing the concept of Elysium, vernacular adaptation through use, adaptation for profit, and a recognized cultural landscape, respectively,

Chapter V outlined criteria to narrow down a large list of ballparks that were constructed more than fifty years ago down to just twelve ballparks in the southeastern United States. The criteria identified geographic limitations, use, and construction date to generate the short list.

Next, in Chapter VI a comparative graphic analysis of these twelve ballparks utilizing same scale plan stamps was conducted to illustrate similar and differentiating characteristics of the field of play. NPS Preservation Brief #18 further described types of historic landscapes applicable to baseball ballparks, outlining ways to determine significance, through the investigation of the history, purpose, social significance, qualities, associations, and physical characteristics of the property. Qualities such as spatial relationships, views and vistas, landscape dividers, engineering structures, lighting, and even signs were identified. This analysis helped to answer the question to what degree does the ballpark convey its historic character and original fabric to make it worthy of preservation as a designed cultural landscape?

Chapter VII takes a light-hearted, but important, approach to describing baseball as America's intangible cultural heritage. The association of this heritage with the ballpark is undeniable, therefore reinforcing the ballpark as a cultural landscape.

Chapter VIII narrates how Rickwood Field in Birmingham meets the definition of a cultural landscape worthy of preservation. It attempts to read the landscape in its context of place and time by applying frameworks outlined in the preceding chapters. This process identifies

characteristics associated with the place as paramount, and this is what gives memories (accurate or not) of places intangible qualities associated with specific cultural identities.²²⁸

In conclusion, this thesis recognizes Rickwood Field as an exemplary cultural landscape. It is an amalgamation of a Historic Designed Landscape (HDL), a Historic Vernacular Landscape (HVL), and a Historic Site (HS). The ballpark retains and maintains an active social role in contemporary society in Birmingham alongside the traditional intangible cultural heritage of baseball in America. It embraces the African American community in Birmingham and the Southeast, so much so that baseball's Negro Southern League Museum makes its home in Birmingham. It is emblematic of the paradigm shift that "black lives matter," now and then. These powerful cultural associations make Rickwood Field a significant place from the past and now, and hopefully in the future, provided its integrity is preserved.²²⁹ As we have seen by virtue of this study, adaptation is inevitable, however, and this process of evolution must proceed mindfully, with care, to preserve the physical artifacts representative of the culture associated with them. These cultural associations are preeminent at Rickwood Field which sets a standard for others to follow with undeniable integrity, historic character, and for the most part, original fabric retained. There are obvious identifiable components of the original design, further establishing its historic integrity.²³⁰ These components are evident in the photographic evidence and cultural history.

²²⁸ "Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes," National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed January 16, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ "National Register Bulletin 18 - NPS," accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB18-Complete.pdf>.

Understandably, memories are hard to quantify, but they are very much real. They help to create the intangible cultural heritage experience associated with that place, which accumulate through time, and add to the places' cultural and historic significance.

“There are places I’ll remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever, not for better
Some have gone and some remain”²³¹

Unfortunately for the “Tree That Played Centerfield:”

“They paved paradise and put up a parking lot”²³²



Fig #72 - Superimposition illustrating “The Tree That Played Centerfield” surrounded by paving.

²³¹ Lennon, John and McCartney, Paul “In My Life.” Side two, tract 4 Rubber Soul. Northern Songs, Ltd., 1965, Vinyl.

²³² Mitchell, Joni “Big Yellow Taxi.” Side two, tract 10 . Ladies of the Canyon. Warner Brothers, 1970, Vinyl.

How do we define Southeastern American minor league ballparks as cultural landscapes? Hopefully by preserving the complete environs of Rickwood Field to serve as an historic exemplar, like Wahconah Park and the Parade Grounds at Prospect Park (both publicly owned), so as not to become a mere remnant like the Union Grounds or the Elysian Fields, no matter how pleasant the memory of the idyllic concept of Elysium might be.

“You know they say that when a baseball legend dies his spirit plays on forever. If that is true, then Rickwood Field must be heaven.”²³³

²³³ Publication given to author by Gerald Watkins, Executive Director of Friends of Rickwood Field. Printed by Bo Stanford American Printing, Birmingham, Alabama.

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APPENDIX A:

Diagram No. 1
Diagram of the Playing Field

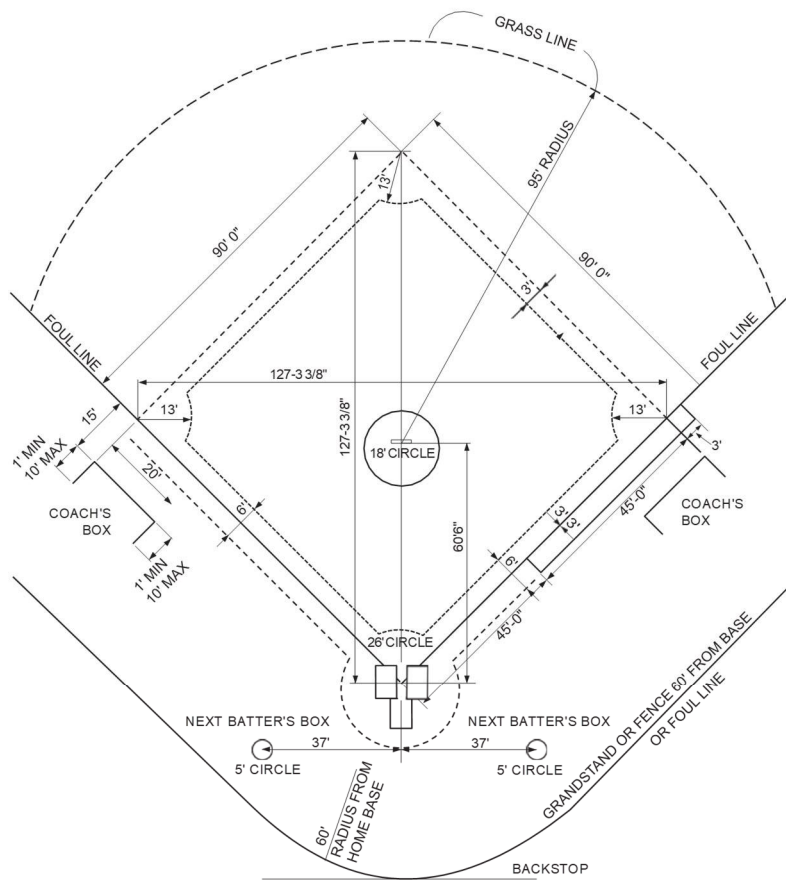


DIAGRAM NO. 1

LEGEND

- BATTER'S BOX, CATCHER'S BOX, FOUL LINE, PITCHER'S PLATE, COACH'S BOX
- NEXT BATTER'S BOX
- BASE LINES
- - - - - GRASS LINES

Rev2018TL

APPENDIX B:

1. Rickwood Field

Location: 1137 2nd Avenue West, Birmingham, Alabama
Opened: August 18, 1910.
Original design: Southeastern Engineering Company of Birmingham
Listed on NRHP: 2/1/1993.
Current Use: Municipal Park and Museum, and host to Miles College Baseball team.



APPENDIX C:

2. Jackie Robinson Ballpark

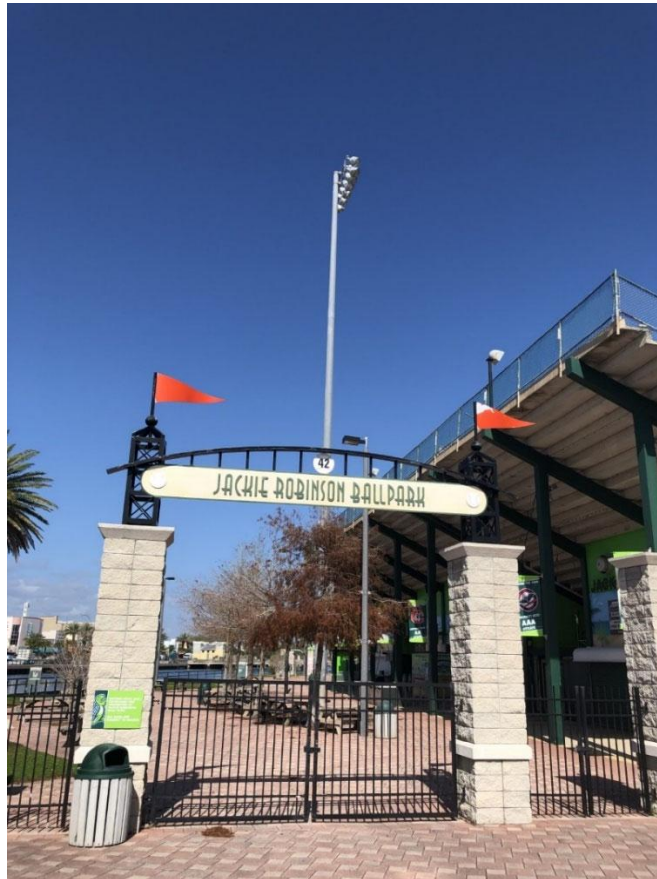
Location: 105 E. Orange Ave, Jackie Robinson Ballpark, Daytona Beach, Florida

Opened: June 4, 1914.

Original design: Alan J. MacDonough, Architect, Daytona Beach, Florida

Listed on NRHP: 10/22/1998.

Current Use: Minor League tenant the Daytona Tortugas (Cincinnati affiliate; Low-A Southeast; established as the Daytona Cubs in 1993).



APPENDIX D:

3. LECOM Park

Location: 1611 9th St W, Bradenton, Florida
Opened: Spring 1923.
Original design: undetermined.
Listed on NRHP: not listed.
Current Use: Bradenton Marauders (Pittsburgh affiliate; Low-A Southeast; established 2010) and Pittsburg Pirates spring training camp.



APPENDIX E:

4. McCormick Field

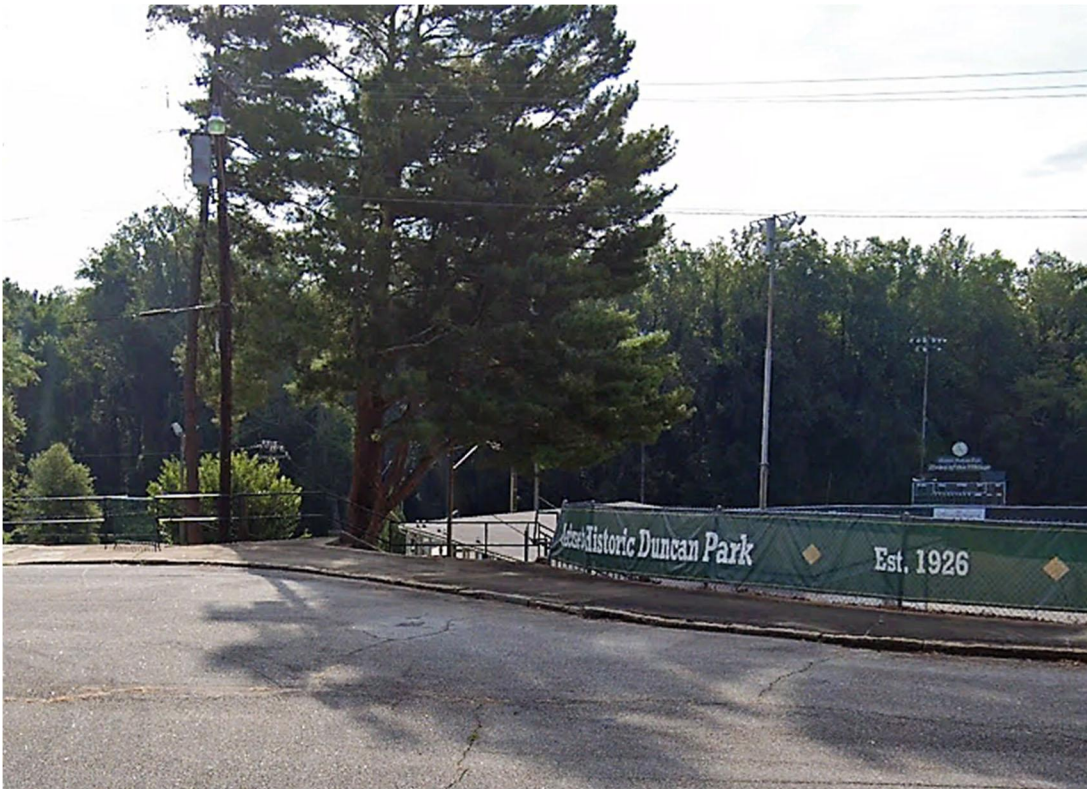
Location: 30 Buchanan Pl, Asheville, North Carolina
Opened: April 3, 1924.
Designed by: undetermined
Listed on NRHP: not listed.
Current Use: Asheville Tourist (High-A affiliate of the Houston Astros)



APPENDIX F:

5. Duncan Park

Location: 1000 Duncan Park Dr, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Opened: July 8, 1926.
Designed by: J. Frank Collins, Architect, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Listed on NRHP: 2016.
Current Use: The Spartanburgers (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)



APPENDIX G:

6. Durham Athletic Park

Location: 428 Morris St., Durham, North Carolina
Opened: Spring 1926.
Designed by: George Watts Carr (1893-1975), Architect, Durham, North Carolina
Listed on NRHP: 2013.
Current Use: Municipal Park (former host for North Carolina Central University baseball discontinued in 2021).



APPENDIX H:

7. Grayson Stadium

Location: 1401 East Victory Drive, Savannah, Georgia
Opened: April 1926.
Designed by: part of Daffin Park design by John Nolen
Listed on NRHP: included in Daffin Park-Parkside historic district May 12, 1999.
Current Use: Savannah Bananas (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)



APPENDIX I:

8. Luther Williams Field

Location: 225 Willie Smokey Glover Dr, Macon, Georgia

Opened: Spring 1929.

Designed by: Curran Ellis, Architect, Macon, Georgia

Listed on NRHP: June 24, 2004.

Current Use: Macon Bacon (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)



APPENDIX J:

9. Engel Stadium

Location: 130 East Third Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee
Opened: March 23, 1930.
Designed by: James G. Gauntt, Architect, Chattanooga, Tennessee
Listed on NRHP: November 19, 2009.
Current Use: Dormant



APPENDIX K:

10. Finch Field

Location: 7003 Ball Park Rd., Thomasville, North Carolina (City owned)
Opened: 1939.
Designed by: undetermined.
Listed on NRHP: No.
Current Use: HiToms (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)



APPENDIX L:

11. Fleming Stadium

Location: 300 Stadium St. SW, Wilson, North Carolina
Opened: 1939
Designed by: undetermined
Listed on NRHP: No
Current Use: Wilson Tobs (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)



APPENDIX M:

12. Hicks Field

Location: 111 E Freemason St., Edenton, NC
Opened: 1939
Designed by: undetermined
Listed on NRHP: 1995.
Current Use: Edenton Steamers also known as the “Clams” (Coastal Plain League – wood bat collegiate summer league)

