

BASEBALL AS COMMUNITY IDENTITY: CLEVELAND, OHIO—1891-2012

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ABSTRACT

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Matt Ferguson argues in “Baseball as Community Identity: Cleveland, Ohio—1891-2012,” that through studying key flashpoints in Cleveland baseball history by focusing on the history of League Park, Cleveland Municipal Stadium, and Jacobs/Progressive Field, the positive memories of Cleveland Indians fans, circulated among generations of the team’s boosters, have functioned as a shared myth that conceals the negative realities of professional baseball as big business. Fans past and present have created a story of the stadium as a place of civic worship, the team members as familiar neighbors, and the game as an event where gender and race cease to divide. Fans have passed on their characterization of baseball as the great social leveler, providing an emotional glue to secure succeeding generations of loyal supporters, thus effectively disguising the hard and unromantic business of sport and community identity.

To my dad, Dean Ferguson and grandfather, Fred Ferguson who took me to my first
Indians game in 1993 at Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In some ways this thesis has been in the works since 1999 when I discovered a book on baseball stadiums in the basement of my Grandpa and Grandma Ferguson's house. Naturally, I looked for the stadiums of my favorite baseball team, The Cleveland Indians. While searching the book, I was amazed to discover the history of League Park, the first stadium used by the Indians. I had attended games at Cleveland Municipal Stadium and Jacobs Field; so naturally, I thought that those were the only two stadiums in Cleveland baseball history. Eventually, I also was surprised to learn that my Grandpa on my mom's side of the family had even attended games at League Park and that parts of the stadium were still standing. Thus, a trip was arranged by my Uncle Mike and Grandpa Rae to visit the ruins of League Park. Ostensibly, the ruins of the former stadium might not have stirred every twelve year old. However, I was in Heaven climbing over the old bleachers and discovering a piece of history that had been left untouched for so many years.

Because both sides of my family have been instrumental in shaping this project, I am grateful to them both. However, I am specifically thankful for my parents, Dean and Barb Ferguson, who have always been supportive and encouraging. I would also like to thank the professors at BGSU who have been influential through both my undergraduate and graduate career. First of all, Dr. Edmund Danziger helped develop my passion for local and Ohio history in his American Environmental and Ohio history courses. He encouraged me frequently to write about Ohio history, which I feel this paper is an example of. However, many thanks are due to my advisers for this project: Drs. Rebecca Mancuso and Ruth Herndon. Dr. Mancuso helped me craft this thesis, which began as a

seminar paper in her local history graduate seminar during the fall of 2011. From there, her support and advice has helped give this paper a critical, scholarly tone. Additionally, Dr. Herndon has helped make me a better writer not only through this project, but also during the classes I have taken with her as a student at BGSU.

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INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY CLEVELAND BASEBALL?

Thesis Statement

Through studying key flashpoints in Cleveland baseball history by focusing on the history of League Park, Cleveland Municipal Stadium, and Jacobs/Progressive Field, I argue that the positive memories of Cleveland Indians fans, circulated among generations of the team's boosters, have functioned as a shared myth that conceals the negative realities of professional baseball as big business. Fans past and present have created a story of the stadium as a place of civic worship, the team members as familiar neighbors, and the game as an event where gender and race cease to divide. Fans have passed on their characterization of baseball as the great social leveler, providing an emotional glue to secure succeeding generations of loyal supporters, thus effectively disguising the hard and unromantic business of sport and community identity.

Baseball: National or Local Pastime?

Baseball has been a large piece of the American narrative—the sport has been even called the United States' national pastime. However, what makes baseball distinctive? Why does baseball loom large in the collective memory of the American public? Ultimately, is baseball best studied by focusing on the nation or by studying local baseball communities individually? As the American people forge deeper into the 21st century, baseball continues to captivate audiences despite new technology and other recreational or amusement offerings that compete for an individual's disposable income. Sports columnist for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Terry Pluto, noted that he is surprised at how baseball has had longevity in today's culture, advocating, "Baseball goes against

everything in our society—immediate gratification—baseball takes time, you have to be patient, like the quiet—quite the opposite of e-mail and Twitter.”¹ Perhaps, as Pluto advocates, baseball fans find a unique, religious experience that makes following the sport special. However, the question remains—why does baseball hold a unique place in national memory, and what does this uniqueness mean specifically for local communities as a whole, where local teams take up residence and draw their fans?

Since baseball is considered to be America’s national pastime, the sport itself is not rooted around one national symbol or document like the American Flag or United States Constitution; rather baseball’s roots are found in multiple municipalities across the country. Whether it is Major League Baseball in cities such as Boston, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, or Los Angeles or minor-league baseball in cities like Lansing, Toledo, Indianapolis, and Buffalo, having a professional baseball team in one’s hometown gives citizens a sense of pride—the team, the stadium, and the fans provide history, connectedness, essentially, civic pride for a particular locality. While baseball as a whole is a national phenomenon, the actual meaning of national pastime and why baseball has had longevity in the 21st century, is best answered by studying baseball at the local level. According to local historian Joseph Amato, “In an era when national and international forces hold sway everywhere, I try to foster a passion for the local, for reviving those particular people, places, and events past that don’t demand but nevertheless need our careful attention.”² Amato’s assertion that big picture national and international issues oftentimes guide historical studies is a key point, especially in regards

¹ Interview of Terry Pluto conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 13, 2012, Perrysburg, Ohio (via phone).

² Joseph A. Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 1.

to attempts by historians to answer the question, Why study local history? One such reason for studying local history is that it helps define place, and thus local and regional identity. Local history helps us understand the history of people, places, and events that are more often than not left out of the history books by carefully looking beneath the surface. By studying local phenomena, we can bring to life stories that are impactful and filled with meaning for the citizens of any given city. These stories give local citizens an identity—they craft who they are as a community, why their proverbial dot on a map is significant.

Baseball teams exist in various cities across the United States. Each city has its own unique traditions as to how they celebrate the local team. Yet, when added together, these traditions often have common themes regarding local identity because of shared memories centered on one's hometown and hometeam. For example, the local stories contained within the history of baseball in Cleveland, Ohio can often be compared similarly to other cities with professional baseball teams like New York, Detroit, and Chicago. Still, the stories from one locality are often very powerful for an individual with ties to a specific city. A baseball fan in Cleveland, Ohio would argue that the Cleveland Indians' former stadium, League Park, has more historical significance than Detroit's Tiger Stadium, because of personal attachment to their local institution/stadium. Baseball historian James Hardy noted, "Though constant, the change of memory and myth moves always in the same direction, around to the beginning. The moment itself may be lost, and for all but the most exceptional and dramatic it usually is, but reflection on the memory replaces the moment, and the persistence of reflection leads to mythic

meaning...”³ The idea of mythic meaning, helps explain why the public memory of baseball in one particular city can be so powerful—stories attached to the game, the players, the stadium, and the fans, are told over and over until they reach mythic proportions—connecting fans from one locality, but also papering over more pressing local issues such as divisions over social class, race, and ethnicity. Rather, baseball helps create nostalgic memories for fans, helping provide a balm for local communities dealing with more controversial issues.

Using the idea of baseball fans being connected across generations because of a particular team in a particular city, it is important to delve into the history of one baseball city and focus on the local phenomena. These stories can then be extrapolated or compared to other baseball cities in the United States. Focusing on one city or one team adds to our understanding of memory, a specific case study that helps us understand how complex memory is for a local community. Exploring the local memory helps create continuity among stories that might otherwise seem haphazard and messy when compiled together with stories from other baseball towns. Since every baseball town has its own unique traditions and way of doing things, studying baseball history at the local level gets at issues that might not normally be told when attempting to write a master narrative of baseball in the United States. Baseball historian Lee Congdon notes, “...Baseball memories are widely shared by those who revere the game. ‘I love to be with people who have the same memories I have,’ New York Mets’ fan Dana Brand has written, ‘people who share these things with me are not entirely strangers, even if I have never seen them

³ James D. Hardy, Jr., *Baseball and the Mythic Moment* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2007), 21-22.

before, even if I will never meet them.”⁴ As Congdon conveys, baseball has special meaning and provides unique insights when studied at the local level, a Mets fan in New York might seem like a confederate among Indians fans in Cleveland and vice versa. While it is important to never lose sight of the big picture, studying baseball at the local level is where one can gather the raw feelings, emotions, and memories of baseball fans—giving the local historian the full picture and an effective unit of analysis when compared against the national baseball narrative and even American history as a whole.

Studying any baseball towns and teams in the United States has merit. Historians can study the unique memories of baseball fans from Maine to California. However, this paper will focus mainly on Cleveland, Ohio and the Cleveland Indians. The reason for focusing on Cleveland is because of a current event, the City of Cleveland, along with various historical groups have pledged to resurrect a former ballpark of the Cleveland Indians called League Park. As a historian, I want my work to have wavelengths into current events and debates, allowing a connection to be made between past and present. This allows history as a field to be useful to modern readers, whether the reader is inside or outside of the academy. Noteworthy, is that League Park never fully died. Parts of the stadium still exist at East 66th Street and Lexington in Cleveland, and overall, the land has remained relatively unchanged since 1946 when professional baseball was last played there. Various baseball historians have noted that the presence the stadium still exists on the tract of land. Many baseball enthusiasts have fond memories of League Park and argue that perhaps it was a simpler time in sports—no high-priced athletes, low ticket prices, and intimate stadiums (League Park held roughly 27,000 fans). While this era

⁴ Lee Congdon, *Baseball and Memory* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), 122.

might be long-gone, elements are beginning to creep back into modern-day parlance, as evidenced by the restoration efforts at League Park. However, baseball still had modern vices in the early days of the game, and there never was a nostalgic time in professional baseball. Considering the debate between a simpler time in baseball versus the alleged corruption of sports in the 21st century, baseball in Cleveland has always been tragic, controversial, and business-driven, but fans have also consistently placed hope in a golden or nostalgic time as seen by the restoration of League Park.

Methodology/Historiography

This paper analyzes selected noteworthy events from the history of the Cleveland Indians and the City of Cleveland, in order to contrast fan devotion and enthusiasm with the negative business realities of the sport and city history. Identifying these key events was a project in itself. I read journalists' books which described what they considered key moments in Cleveland baseball history: Terry Pluto's *Our Tribe*, Jack Torrey's *Endless Summers*, and Lawrence Ritter's *Lost Ballparks*. All three journalists placed emphasis on the following events:

- League Park Opens, 1891
- Joss All-Star Game, 1911
- World Series, 1920
- Cleveland Municipal Stadium Opens, 1932
- Bill Veeck buys the Cleveland Indians, 1946
- World Series, 1948

- Larry Doby becomes the first African American to play in the American League, 1947
- Frank Lane trades Rocky Colavito, 1960
- Deterioration of Municipal Stadium, 1970s

I added three more events, selected because they all made banner headlines in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and help supplement the events listed above:

- Hough Riots, 1966
- Developments at Jacobs/Progressive Field , 1994-Present
- League Park Renovations, 2012-Present

I then analyzed each of the twelve key historical events, using primary evidence (see Sources and Annotations for further information on the evidentiary basis of this paper) in the form of articles from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *New York Times*; an autobiography from team owner Bill Veeck; two memoirs by Terry Pluto and Doris Kearns Goodwin; and five personal interviews I conducted with long-time Cleveland baseball fans by phone and in-person in 2012 and early 2013 (Human Subject Review Board approved).

To avoid writing a hagiography of team and city history, I drew on the insights of sociologist Tim Jurkovic, linguist Michael Butterworth, and urban planner Daniel Rosensweig. Jurkovic argues that stadium construction is economically and politically irrational, draining money away from investing in students in public schools. Butterworth argues that politicians cozy up to fans and use the idea of “pure” national baseball pastime as a way to get elected. Rosensweig argues that cities use baseball

stadiums as urban playgrounds, supposedly to restore their tattered urban cores, but in fact the neighborhoods around the stadiums remain blighted. These three scholars enabled me to put in better context the nostalgia expressed in memoirs, autobiographies, and interviews.

“Baseball as Community Identity: Cleveland, Ohio—1891-2012” is unique to the scholarly dialogue in sports history because it considers three stadiums Cleveland Indians have used during this time period: League Park, Cleveland Municipal Stadium, and Jacobs/Progressive Field. While other books discuss nostalgia/myth and baseball including Hardy’s *Baseball and the Mythic Moment* and Curt Smith’s *Storied Stadiums*, this project is scholarly and specific to Cleveland. Its analysis is timely, new renovations to League Park have revived old debates regarding the effectiveness of using baseball to help restore and revitalize rundown areas of the city including its downtown and eastern neighborhoods, a topic explored in Rosensweig’s *Retro Ball Parks*. While other works have focused mainly on the events surrounding the team, the players, or the fans, this project systematically analyzes the history of each stadium in the context of business realities of the sport. It also remains mindful of the history of the City of Cleveland and shows how city politics and the business end of running the baseball franchise have often intermingled. This paper acknowledges the commonly held notion of the baseball stadium as a cathedral or house of worship and a place where while fan devotion runs deep. But it argues that the construction of these stadiums comes down to dollars and cents. Ultimately, I show that there is dissonance between public fan memory of the team and the historical record of Cleveland baseball as big business.

I have organized this thesis chronologically and thematically. Chapter one compares Cleveland to other cities in the United States like Detroit, where similar debates regarding the use of nostalgia and baseball to restore urban areas through stadium construction/restoration have been considered by city leaders. This chapter helps give context to that while baseball is considered a national pastime, it is best studied on the local level as local historian Joseph Amato suggests. Chapter two explores the history of Cleveland's first ballpark, League Park. While fans attach nostalgic meanings to this stadium, considering League Park as the epitome of a golden age in baseball history, especially when studied against the modern era, the actual record of League Park is darker, with business and ethnic tensions quietly building in the background during League Park's heyday, 1891-1946. Chapter three looks at the history of Cleveland Municipal Stadium by arguing that this time in Cleveland (1932-1993) was when the darker side of baseball and Cleveland history, which had been quietly building at League Park, exploded on scene, with business interests becoming front and center in how fans viewed and interacted with Cleveland baseball. Chapter four sums up the tensions between the histories of League Park and Municipal Stadium by looking at how fans and city leaders have attempted to use the myth or balm of baseball and various nostalgic elements associated with the sport to help ease the business, ethnic, and racial tensions that exploded in Cleveland, mainly by constructing Jacobs/Progressive Field and restoring League Park (1994-present). The attempts to use the nostalgic elements of baseball have been viewed largely an attempt to revitalize sections of the city that had been ravaged by years of white flight and the decline of the city's urban neighborhoods. The conclusion indicates the usefulness of this project for understanding current attitudes

towards baseball, especially as the League Park renovation project gets underway in 2013 as an attempt to revitalize Cleveland's Hough Neighborhood.

CHAPTER I: CLEVELAND WITHIN THE NATIONAL STORY

Former Detroit Tigers' radio broadcaster Ernie Harwell once observed that the opening day of the baseball season was like Easter, the Fourth of July, and Christmas all rolled into one big holiday. Harwell elaborated that the first game of the season was like opening presents on Christmas, a civic celebration on the Fourth of July, and most notably like Easter, because, "Baseball's birth of spring with some fans, like churchgoers, showing up for only that one time [Easter] in the year."⁵ Just as many head to church on Easter Sunday, some out of a sense of duty and as a traditional way to mark the holiday, opening day at baseball stadiums across the country also brings out the masses—whether because of pure devotion or as a duty, as Harwell seemingly implied. Overall, many see opening day as a renewal, not unlike church on Easter, with the promise of warmer weather after a long winter, and as well as an opportunity to connect with the sport, other fans, and the city. Baseball's opening day in cities across the country, as advocated by Harwell, evokes both civic pride and a sort of religious fidelity. Using the sense of renewal and faith the sport provides for a city, Harwell began his first broadcast of the each baseball season with a passage from *The Bible*, reciting, "For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land..."⁶ While opening day may bring out the spotty attenders, it also brings out the diehards, and whether one is not fully committed to the team, baseball nonetheless connects city dwellers to their community as

⁵ Ernie Harwell, "Count on this, for openers," in *Ernie Harwell: Stories From My Life in Baseball* (Detroit: Detroit Free Press, 2001), 202.

⁶ "Song of Solomon 2:11-12 (King James Version)." In *Bible Gateway*. <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=song%20of%20soloman%202:11-12&version=KJVb> (accessed January 8, 2013).

they worship at the local stadium together—showing just how deep seeded baseball can be in a local community.

Baseball fans connect with their favorite players and even their favorite announcers like Ernie Harwell, as they listen to games via the radio or television, yet the pinnacle of the baseball experience is usually considered to be attending a game in-person at the stadium—whether it be opening day or the middle of summer. Like Harwell, another sports reporter Thomas Boswell also noted the “bandwagon” fans that arrive on opening day, but continued the thought by expounding on the notion that after the excitement, the faithful have the stadium to themselves. Boswell writes, “Sure, opening day is baseball’s bandwagon. Pundits and politicians and every prose poet on the continent jumps on board for a few days. But they’re gone soon... Then, once more, all those long, slow months of baseball are left to us. And our time can begin again.”⁷ The connection between time and baseball gives the sport deep meaning, as fans pass time in their house of worship, alongside the players, the announcers, and fellow fans, creating a unique, holistic experience that draws people together at the stadium. The stadium embodies the essence of one’s hometown and while city dwellers draw their heritage and place sentimental value on their local team and stadium, baseball is a business. Many times there have been debates between fans wanting to preserve their nostalgic memories and baseball team owners and city politicians who see baseball as more than a simple game, but one with dollar signs attached.

⁷ Thomas Boswell, *Why Time Begins on Opening Day* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 300.

Part of the deep connection towards baseball stems from the physical stadium where one's favorite team plays their home games, and the notion that fans practically consider the stadium a house of worship, it is ironic that some commentators have even gone as far to call baseball stadiums not simply a house of worship but rather, "cathedrals of the game."⁸ Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin grew up a Brooklyn Dodgers fan in New York, attending games at the fabled Ebbets Field. Goodwin states in her book *Wait Till Next Year*, about her experiences making her first pilgrimage, again the religious theme, to Ebbets after originally listening to Dodgers games on the radio:

As my father and I walked up the cobblestone slope of Bedford Avenue and approached the arched windows of the legendary brick stadium, he explained how, as a boy, he had watched the ballpark being built, since the place he had been sent to live after his parents died was only two blocks away...And now my now own pilgrimage was about to begin. The marble rotunda at the entrance to the shrine looked like a train station in a dream, with dozens of gilded ticket windows scattered around the floor.⁹

Once inside the shrine to Brooklyn baseball, Kearns-Goodwin was surrounded by the environs of the stadium which gave it a sacred-like quality, but she also met many of her fellow parishioners—many of whom helped make Ebbets Field special and memorable to fans of the Brooklyn Dodgers by creating various traditions. Some of these traditions and unique fans included: A fan ringing a cowbell repeatedly during the game to bother opposing players, as well as a group named the "Sym-Phony," whose members played appropriate band tunes to parallel with important events transpiring on the field. Band members would play "Three Blind Mice" when they felt an umpire made a bad call, additionally, when the visiting's team pitcher would be taken out of the game, the band

⁸ "Stadiums as Cathedrals." *Pennsylvania Inside Out*. WPSU. State College, PA: WPSU-TV, July 9, 2009.

⁹ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 46-48.

used the musical number, “Somebody Else Is Taking My Place.”¹⁰ Goodwin writes of these traditions, “As opposing teams grew increasingly irate at these antics, a sense of camaraderie grew among Dodger fans that made the experience of going to Ebbets Field unforgettable.”¹¹

By reviewing the camaraderie and passions at Ebbets Field, Goodwin argues that the sense of community that could be found at Dodgers’ games in the 1950s was not uncommon throughout the rest of the country. Goodwin notes that while she is a presidential historian by trade, frequently writing on Lyndon Johnson, John F. Kennedy, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, after she appeared as a commentator on Ken Burns’ documentary *Baseball*, the reaction by history-buffs across the country was astounding—they wanted to hear less about former presidents and more about her recollections on baseball. Goodwin notes, “The enthusiastic intensity of their [those attending her talks/lectures] recollections revealed that they were remembering not simply the history of a team or a group of athletes but their own history, and especially their youthful days.”¹² While these memories were from a nostalgic era, they still remained at the forefront of many baseball fans’ minds in the 21st century. Mindful that baseball fans see the sport as analogous to a belief system, it is not as though all of these memories are pleasant—sometimes baseball fans must muster the patience of Job, all the while having faith in their team, and the possibility that the baseball gods still will provide hope even when the outlook might not be so good.

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹² Ibid., 9.

Drawing off the notion of less than ideal circumstances, especially when baseball nostalgia intermingles with local financial interests, sacred ballparks do get demolished despite the fans' religious devotion. In 1957, the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles after Dodgers' owner Walter O'Malley was promised by Los Angeles' city officials that they would build his team a new stadium. With the move to Los Angeles, Ebbets Field was deemed a relic of the past, and the ballpark was demolished in 1960 and replaced with nondescript apartments. Yet, left behind in the ashes were millions of fans and their memories of their former team and ballpark.¹³ These memories, derived from a sport with religious-like devotion, as evidenced by the analysis from commentators like Harwell, Boswell, and Kearns-Goodwin, helps create strong, community-based attachments that never quite fade away, leading to a strong connection to the past and a faith in one's team that is passed on through generations.

Cleveland journalist Terry Pluto hints at the faith in Cleveland baseball fans by advocating that in Cleveland, an outsider might notice that the city is more of a "football town," meaning that practically *everyone* follows the Cleveland Browns, the city's professional football franchise. Cleveland even serves, per Pluto, as a satellite city for Ohio State University football fans. For the fans of the Cleveland Indians, Pluto notes, "Fans that follow the Tribe are hardcore, the passion is deeper, they are hard, battle tested, especially because from 1959 to 1995, there was nothing really [positive] to talk about."¹⁴ With the dichotomy between positive nostalgia and teams relocating or stadium

¹³ Bob McGee, *The Greatest Ballpark Ever* (Piscataway, NJ: Rivergate Books, 2005), 275-276.

¹⁴ Interview of Terry Pluto conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 13, 2012, Perrysburg, Ohio (via phone).

demolition, baseball fans stick with their team because the connections or bonds are deep, iconic, and religious—producing meaningful memories.

Negative circumstances aside, many baseball fans are often willing to find the glass half full in negative situations—even if there is nothing particular to cheer about. In 1999, the Detroit Tigers ended a relationship with their home for eighty-seven years, Tiger Stadium, ahead of a move to a modern ballpark, one that could compete for the entertainment dollars of baseball fans, unlike the seemingly ancient Tiger Stadium. The new stadium even featured a Ferris wheel, carousel, and a private dining room and suites for local corporations to entertain clients.¹⁵ For many Tigers fans the end was not unlike the painful departure of Brooklyn Dodgers forty-two years before. To mark the end of an era in Detroit baseball, journalist Tom Stanton embarked a mission to attend all 81 Tiger home games during the last year at the stadium. Stanton eventually wrote a book about his experience called *The Final Season*, chronicling not only the last games at the stadium, but also his family's connection to the ballpark over the years and the communal bonds shared with both family members and neighbors who went to the stadium to cheer on the hometown team. Stanton writes of the seemingly mystical force that guided him to complete the mission:

There are places on earth that mean more than words and pictures can explain. Writer Willie Morris called them ‘terrains of the heart.’ They are the points on our personal maps where we find our treasured memories and replenish our hungering souls. For me, that was Tiger Stadium. If

¹⁵ Detroit Tigers, “Comerica Park Attractions,” Detroit Tigers, <http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/ballpark/information/index.jsp?content=attractions>, (accessed January 17, 2013).

you're lucky, you have such a place, too, and perhaps you will understand.¹⁶

The deep connection to Tiger Stadium for Stanton went beyond a team winning and losing, as the stadium was a place where his family shared reunions, birthdays, and anniversaries. Oftentimes, the game itself was simply a backdrop. During ceremonies to mark the end of the stadium's run, a journalist remarked to fans, "We're losing our ballpark, and it's sad. But it's time." However, the journalist's comments were met with 'boos' from the fans assembled at the stadium's farewell gala. For Stanton, seated with the press corps, he felt beside himself as a fellow colleague made those comments. Noting that he wanted to join the fans in the stands to mark disapproval as well, yet, as a member of the press, Stanton had to remain restrained, and simply thought to himself, "Who is he to tell us it's time?"¹⁷

From the idea that it is not for media members or those in powerful places to tell fans when it was time to say goodbye to a beloved landmark, Detroit fans themselves are still deciding when it will be appropriate to say goodbye to Tiger Stadium—a process ongoing nearly fourteen years after the final out was recorded. While city officials ordered the demolition the entire stadium in 2009, fans still visit the site of the ballpark hoping to conjure up memories of their former cathedral. However, since the stadium is entirely gone, some fans avoid the site all together, considering it sore subject. Former player, Willie Horton, who also grew up in Detroit, said, "All my life is there...I don't go there [speaking of the now vacant lot]...It's very emotional."¹⁸ Part of Horton's sadness

¹⁶ Tom Stanton, *The Final Season* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸ Eric Adelson, "Tiger Stadium opened 100 years ago just like Fenway Park, but it's ignored in Detroit," Yahoo! Sports, <http://sports.yahoo.com/news/tiger-stadium-opened->

and hesitancy to visit the site stems from the ten years the stadium was vacant between 1999 and 2009. During this time, city officials promised to save the site—even pumping four million dollars of maintenance funds into the mothballed stadium, hoping to better preserve it for revitalization. Today, the corner of Michigan and Trumbull sits empty, city officials even rejected an offer from General Motors to revitalize the vacant lot to better memorialize the stadium. Rumors persist that the city’s failure to save the stadium, but also hear talks from outside groups willing to fund the site’s revitalization, were rooted around a backroom deal by city officials to allow Wal-Mart to build a store on the site of the former ballpark.¹⁹ Noting what the destruction did for civic pride, community identity, and the memories of many Detroit Tiger fans, former Tiger Stadium hot dog vendor, Charley Marcuse, stated about the situation, “It was the most famous address in Michigan. Not the number, but everyone knows the location. The corner of Michigan and Trumbull was a connection for everyone all over Michigan to the city of Detroit. Once that connection is gone, it’s hard to get it back.”²⁰

The struggles of Detroit residents to restore their lost stadium and preserve their memories, another Midwestern city, sensing the power of baseball in shaping community memory and identity, has attempted to ensure that some of these traditions never become quite as a hotly of a contested issue, regardless of the changing nature of professional baseball, such as new stadiums being built and teams moving west, as seen in the cases of both Detroit and Brooklyn. Professional baseball in Cleveland, Ohio began in 1891, originating in a neighborhood ballpark, not unlike Ebbets Field or Tiger Stadium.

100-years-ago-just-like-fenway-park--but-it-s-ignored-in-detroit.html (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Baseball in Cleveland has gone through three distinct eras, beginning in a neighborhood ballpark named League Park, moving to an 80,000 seat superstructure in the 1940s, and in the 1990s transitioning to a ballpark that combined elements of both. Despite the changes, community has always been at the heart, like other cities, of Cleveland baseball fans. Recently, the City of Cleveland began the process of restoring the city's original ballpark, League Park, located in one of the city's eastern neighborhoods. While the Indians last played in the stadium in 1946, it was never completely demolished like Tiger Stadium, nor was another structure built on the site, like the apartments that now sit on the site of Ebbets Field. City leaders, sensing the historical gem their city possessed recently made plans hoping to restore the elements that brought Cleveland baseball fans together, but also bring economic activity to the neighborhood.

Clearly, while some, including journalist Terry Pluto have advocated that League Park was nothing “special” because it did not have the longevity of Boston's Fenway Park, which was built around the same time, it is important to note that ballparks, regardless if they have notable architecture or are one-hundred years old like Fenway, are special because of the attachments fans make to the structure.²¹ Terry Pluto points out, in his Cleveland baseball memoir, that if one were to view his family's photo album, they would turn the pages to find pictures of League Park, Municipal Stadium, and Jacobs Field—all Cleveland ballparks or as Pluto calls them “houses of baseball.”²² Just as Pluto's family photo album marks the passage of time via the construction of new ballparks in Cleveland,

²¹ Interview of Terry Pluto conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 13, 2012, Perrysburg, Ohio (via phone).

²² Terry Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 81.

League Park and its foothold in the memory of baseball fans have ensured that the ballpark has never quite disappeared from the landscape, even if it was “nothing special.” Paula Gist, chair of the League Park Heritage Committee stated regarding the restoration, “This [League Park] used to be the hub of the east-side, and we have gone through many years of transition, and it’s still standing, and it’s kind of like this community.”²³ While there have been changes to the Cleveland landscape between 1891 and 2012, a sense of community and tradition from the city’s baseball team has always remained paramount, and while other cities have seen these traditions somewhat erode, Cleveland has taken a different path—helping to cultivate these traditions, despite massive upheaval and change, but still ensuring that the original ideals of baseball that began in 1891 at League Park, have been evident whether the game was being played in its birthplace at League Park, Cleveland Municipal Stadium, or Jacobs Field—even if part of the reason for preserving these memories and fueling the nostalgic side of the sport, was made from purely business-oriented decisions.

²³ “City to Implement League Park Renovation Project.” *Fox 8 News at Five*. Fox 8 News. Cleveland, OH: WJW-TV, January 26, 2012.

CHAPTER II: MEMORIES OF A SUPPOSED NOSTALGIC TIME

On Tuesday, October 12, 1920, 27,525 fans jammed into a ballpark in a residential neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio. These statistics are quite insignificant when cast against how professional baseball is played in the modern-era. When baseball teams play in October today, it means the postseason, primetime televised games, and a huge payout for any team that achieves baseball's biggest prize—a World Series championship. However, if we look at those numbers from 1920 against the realities of how baseball was played in the early to mid-20th century, we can see that nearly 28,000 fans crowding into a ballpark was the zenith of professional baseball at a time when the game was played in ballparks that were built right into the fabric of a neighborhood—well before baseball became a big business—yet business decisions still drove the baseball world in 1920, even if it was not readily apparent as it is in the 21st century.

Drawing back to Tuesday, October 12, 1920, fans of the Cleveland Indians headed to the corner of East 66th and Lexington to see their hometown team play in the seventh game of the World Series. Some arrived by way of a streetcar. Others simply stepped out from their front porches and walked over to the park. Fans arrived at the corner anticipating great things; the Indians were up four games to two in the best of nine 1920 World Series. A victory on October 12 meant the Indians would win the series and take possession of the title World Champions. As game seven of the 1920 World Series was about to unfold, the venue where fans arrived to see the action was at a ballpark simply known as League Park. No corporate nameplate attached, no excessively paid athletes inside—the winning players of the 1920 series would be paid roughly 4,200 dollars each and the losing side 2,400 dollars apiece. Former Cleveland sports journalist,

Hal Lebovitz said about League Park, “It was such a great place. To me, it wasn’t just a ballpark, it was heaven.”²⁴ For Lebovitz and many other fans, League Park was simple because it was where the community gathered, where memories were made and passed down from generation to generation. However, despite the simplicity attached to League Park and baseball in general during this era, there was a more business driven side to the event of the early days of baseball in Cleveland, as well as other cities.

The Neighborhood

League Park was a special ballpark for Cleveland baseball fans because it represented the pulse of the community. When game seven finished with the final score of Cleveland: three, Brooklyn: zero, the stadium erupted with jubilation. Indians’ owner James Dunn was surrounded by congratulatory fans and addressed the crowd from his box seat. Dunn stated, “I am the happiest man in the whole world today. I know you are happy too. After all, it is your team; it is Cleveland’s team more than it is mine.”²⁵ Dunn’s statement clearly highlights the deep connection a baseball team had with the community it represented. These ties were strengthened by the fact that baseball in 1920 was more personal—the ballpark was located in one’s neighborhood, the players were one’s neighbors. Today, baseball is a multi-million dollar industry that stretches from coast to coast in the United States. Still, this was not always the case. Professional baseball was once a neighborhood sport epitomized by ballparks like League Park—which helped build the identity of a community, and specifically in this case, Cleveland’s Hough Neighborhood. Hough is a clearly defined Cleveland neighborhood because it

²⁴ Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir*, 91.

²⁵ Russell Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 418.

started as its own entity from the city. Eventually, as the city of Cleveland grew eastward towards the neighborhood, it incorporated the tight-knit community into the city in 1872. By the early 1900s, Hough had a population of 55,927 that was largely white, working class. There was also a degree of wealth in the neighborhood, with pockets of Hough being known as Little Hollywood for its opulent homes. It was not until the 1950s, that the demographics of the neighborhood began to change—switching from a predominately all white population to one that was heavily African American.²⁶ Because of the unique, community orientation of baseball at League Park, League Park has oftentimes evoked emotional responses both during the stadium's heyday and nearly 100 years later.

League Park: A Biography

Fans of Cleveland's professional baseball team, whether the team was called the Spiders, Blues, Broncos, Naps, and finally—the Indians, could count on one consistency between 1891 and 1946, that the team would be play their home games at East 66th Street and Lexington. The stadium was wedged into the city's street grid. Fans wishing to attend a game would head to the stadium's main ticket office, located at the corner of East 66th and Lexington. To the north of the stadium, Linwood Avenue ran parallel to League Park's third base line.²⁷ The stadium's street grid boundaries led to some creative arrangements both in terms of fan seating and the ball diamond. League Park could hold roughly 21,000 fans, but when necessary, the stadium's capacity could be increased to 28,000 by erecting temporary bleachers in the outfield. No seating was found in right

²⁶ Marvin B. Sussman and R. Clyde White, *Hough, Cleveland, Ohio: A Study of Social Life and Change* (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1959), 12.

²⁷ The Cleveland Memory Project, League Park: Cleveland's Original Ballpark, league044-- <http://www.clevelandmemory.org>, Drawing of League Park Boundaries, 1959.

field because Lexington Avenue was directly behind to the stadium's right field wall. The distance from home plate to right field was one of the shortest distances in all of professional baseball at the time. In order to prevent balls being easily hit onto nearby Lexington Avenue, the stadium featured a right field wall that was twenty foot high and cast out of cement. Additionally, another twenty-five foot high wire fence was attached to the top of the cement portion.²⁸

Prior to the 1920 World Series, *The New York Times* ran an article comparing League Park to Ebbets Field, home of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Indians' opponent in the World Series. Interestingly, the paper's editors might have been worried that the odd configurations at League Park would pose some sort of advantage to the hometeam. The *Times* noted, "The Cleveland fly chasers may be expected to show better judgment in fielding drives off the high wall and its higher screen."²⁹ The interesting configuration at League Park was what endeared fans to the ballpark and made the stadium memorable. Baseball historian Lawrence Ritter noted that neighborhood connection was what made ballparks like League Park and others from the same era "classics":

By and large these ballparks were good neighbors, bringing activity, commerce, and enhanced property values to the areas where they were built. By contrast, today's ballparks—or stadiums, as they are usually called, because the pastoral image conveyed by "ballparks" hardly fits massive mega-structures—are located not in a populated part of a city...but are more likely near a major-highway...³⁰

Certainly, while modern ballparks might attempt to incorporate elements from old ballparks like League Park, they are not built in residential neighborhoods. Philip Bess,

²⁸ "League Park Has Short Right Field," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1920, 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Lawrence S. Ritter, *Lost Ballparks: A Celebration of Baseball's Legendary Fields* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1992), 4.

associate director of the Division of Architecture at Andrews University has loudly proclaimed, “The Old Ballparks Were Better,” noting the old ballparks were: “...Part of normal neighborhood life...it was possible to go to school or to church within a quarter-mile of second base...they had smaller seating capacities and fans sat closer to the game...fans could see a home run go into the street...old ballpark quirks and asymmetries were site-determined and dramatic.”³¹ While League Park definitely had a strong connection to the neighborhood, considering the street grid alone, which remained consistent throughout the ballpark’s fifty-five year history, the structure of the stadium did not.

When League Park originally opened in 1891, it was perhaps not entirely representative of the supposedly simpler time in baseball—considering that many fans today argue that baseball is too business driven and all about profits. In 1891, business interests drove the construction of Cleveland’s original baseball cathedral. Frank DeHass Robison, owner of the Indians in 1891, then called the Spiders, and also the owner of a streetcar line in the city, wanted a place to build a new ballpark that also intersected with his streetcar line. Clearly, Robison was employing a form of vertical integration in Cleveland, albeit simpler, like steel magnate Andrew Carnegie in nearby Pittsburgh. Ironically, the corner of East 66th and Lexington proved to be the perfect spot, as Robison’s trolley cars would be able to drop fans just twenty feet away from the main entrance of League Park.³² Robison was then provided with revenue from fans paying for

³¹ Curt Smith, *Storied Stadiums: Baseball’s History Through Its Ballparks* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2001), 485-486.

³² Peter Jedick, *League Park* (Cleveland, OH: P. Jedick, 1992), 3.

baseball tickets and the trolley tickets required to get to the stadium—it was not as though ballparks like League Park innocently sprung up, jammed into the street grid.

While League Park might not have had the inconspicuous origins as some hold in their minds today, when the ballpark eventually opened on May 1, 1891, 9,000 fans attended the first game to see Denton “Cy” Young pitch the Cleveland team to victory over the Cincinnati Reds in a less-structured fashion than fans who might attend a baseball game today. On League Park’s first day of business, lines began to form around 2:30 p.m. Observers noted that the stadium’s two ticket windows were not able to handle the rush of fans. When the actual game started at 4:00, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* pointed out that fans were packed into League Park like the “proverbial sardines in a box.” In stark contrast to today, fans had nearly free range over the new stadium. The openness of League Park led some fans to create a few interesting solutions in order to alleviate the cramped quarters. Fans wandered onto the playing field, some stood near right field, while others viewed the action along the foul lines. Every so often, a fan or two even waded into the middle of the game action—obstructing the players.³³ Clearly, the game itself was a reflection of the neighborhood. Just like League Park was wedged into the city street grid, fans wedged themselves into the ballpark and found creative ways to view the game, similar to how League Park’s architects constructed high fences to make amends for the fact right field was directly in front of Lexington Avenue.

Because of the cramped quarters at League Park at its inaugural game in 1891, plans were drawn up prior to the 1910 baseball season to remodel and enlarge the stadium. Professional baseball was beginning to take on a stronger organization in the

³³ “A Grand Opening,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 2, 1891, 4.

early part of the 20th century. The restructuring of professional baseball was notably marked by the formation of two individual leagues, the American and National. In Cleveland, the Indians were a charter member of the American League, and team officials wanted to ensure the city had the finest ballpark in all of the American League. Hence, a new stadium composed of concrete and steel was erected at East 66th and Lexington. The new League Park could seat 21,000 fans and according to some, Cleveland achieved their goal of creating the “jewel” stadium of the entire American League. The *Plain Dealer*’s headline on April 21, 1910 gleefully announced that Cleveland, “[Would] open the finest plant in the league.”³⁴ Festivities on April 21 were marked by a capacity crowd. Even the American League’s president was on-hand to toss out the ceremonial first pitch. Unlike League Park’s original opening day in 1891, fans had no need to wander into right field to find a more comfortable place to watch the game. Prior to the 1910 remodel, the “old” League Park played host to a record 20,729 fans in 1908 to see Cleveland and the Chicago White Sox battle for the American League pennant, leaving thousands of fans to watch the game from the field.³⁵ While League Park was changing to adapt to the new realities of professional baseball, its role in the Hough Neighborhood did not change—even though the stadium now was made out of concrete and steel and had more seats to handle overflow crowds, the connection between neighborhood residents and their neighborhood ballpark only became stronger as Clevelanders began to transition into a new era with their professional baseball team.

Hometown Heroes

³⁴ “To Open Finest Plant in League,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1910, 9.

³⁵ “Cleveland’s New Park to Open Today,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1910, 9.

The bond that tied locals with their ballpark in Cleveland was oftentimes strengthened by the team playing inside. The team itself frequently offered a psychological boost to the community either by how well the team was playing or if a particular player achieved a record-breaking feat. Baseball historian Peter Jedick stated it this way, “In those days players weren’t traded like baseball cards. Most of them lived in the town[s] they played [in] and they stuck around long enough for the fans to know their backgrounds like one of the family.”³⁶ Homer Rae, for instance, grew up just south of League Park on East 91st Street and Walker Avenue. Rae, who was born in 1925, attended many a game at League Park, and shared a favorite player with *Plain Dealer* sports columnist Terry Pluto’s father, Tom. Their favorite player: Indians first baseman Hal Trosky. In 1936, Trosky drove in 162 runs, an Indians’ franchise record to this day. Tom Pluto stated, “[Trosky was] another Lou Gehrig. I played first base, and I wanted to be just like him.”³⁷ Rae also loved Trosky and as Jedick claimed, this connection between the fans and the players was perhaps similar to how one treats their family. While growing up near League Park, Rae lived across the street from a fire station—oftentimes hanging out with the fire fighters. Rae stated that he learned how to read at the fire station by perusing the fire fighters’ copies of three Cleveland daily newspapers, the *Plain Dealer*, *Press*, and *News*. In August of 1940, Rae, then fifteen years old, came across some startling news while getting his daily reading lesson at the fire station. Reading the headline, “*Trotsky Killed*,” Rae immediately broke down sobbing, misinterpreting the headline to mean that his favorite player, Hal *Trosky*, had been killed. Mr. Rae would

³⁶ Jedick, *League Park*, 13.

³⁷ Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir*, 87.

later learn that it was Soviet leader, and Joseph Stalin's rival, Leon Trotsky, who had been killed, not his beloved Hal Trosky.³⁸

Much like Trosky, another first baseman captured the attention of Indian fans during the League Park era. George Burns played for the Indians on two separate occasions, 1920 to 1921 and 1924 to 1928. In 1926, Burns, using League Park's short dimensions to right field, created his own home field advantage by hitting 64 doubles over the course of the 1926 baseball campaign. Today, Burns' feat of 64 doubles still ranks as the second most doubles hit in a single baseball season.³⁹ If one was to go visit League Park in 2013, an Ohio Historical Marker sits on the site of the former right field wall that Burns used to record many of his hits during his years playing for the Indians. And while the marker notes that Cy Young pitched League Park's first game in 1891, as well as the Indians' 1920 World Series victory, it fails to mention players like Trosky and Burns—instead opting to note that Babe Ruth hit his 500th home run over the ballpark's right field wall in 1929. Perhaps, the tablet's focus on Ruth rather than the players for the hometown team might be derived in the notion that League Park is now a tourist site for baseball fans from across the country. The stadium is no longer simply a shrine for Cleveland fans, baseball fans in general want to know about the stadium's history in relation to the overall history of baseball. While Babe Ruth was the premier player of his day and is still remembered fondly in the 21st century, Clevelanders made sure their hometown heroes were given the recognition they deserved when League Park was home

³⁸ Interview of Homer Rae conducted by Michael Rae, July 17, 2001, Eastlake, Ohio (via tape-recording).

³⁹ Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 129.

to the Indians during the 1920s. These fans might even scoff today if they read the historical marker that currently designates the site of their former neighborhood ballpark.

On May 21st, 1927, Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees arrived at League Park for a game against the Indians. While Babe Ruth was often a big draw when he played on the road, Cleveland fans decided that the focus would not be on Ruth that day, but instead, George Burns. Considering that Burns had hit sixty-four doubles the previous season, the loyal Indian fans decided to hold Burns Day at League Park in honor of Burns' accomplishment. According to the *Painesville Telegraph*, Ruth was a main attraction at any baseball yard, but for the game on May 21st, the paper reported, "...Dyed-in-the-wool Indian fans will tell you the main attraction tomorrow is 'Burns Day'—an occasion in honor of the Tribe's field captain and brilliant first baseman." Burns Day would include recognition of the first baseman for being the Indians most valuable player, as well as his positive attitude, which earned him the nickname Smiling George. Cleveland fans stated that the special day would be a "civic celebration."⁴⁰ These fans wanted the focus to be on a local hero, one who was part of the community and a player the locals could identify with rather than the more distant, national figure Babe Ruth.

When League Park was home to the Cleveland Indians, players were viewed as an extension of the ballpark, and similar to fans like Homer Rae, the connection between the fans and players was often personal. However, perhaps one of the most personal stories between the fans and a player concerns Addie Joss. Joss pitched for Cleveland from 1902 to 1910 and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1978, despite not meeting the

⁴⁰ "Clevelanders Will Celebrate 'Burns Day'," *Painesville Telegraph*, May 20, 1927, 10.

minimum Hall of Fame requirement that a player must play for at least ten seasons in order to be considered for membership into the Baseball Hall of Fame. One of Joss' career highlights was when he pitched a perfect game at League Park in 1908. In 1911, Joss was just days away from pitching the season opener for Cleveland when he died suddenly of spinal meningitis.⁴¹ Struck with sadness, fans in Cleveland responded in earnest to the tragic death of one of their best pitchers.

In what baseball journalist Lawrence Ritter labeled as one League Park's most memorable moments, both the fans and players rallied around the memory of Addie Joss to host a benefit game for the late pitcher's family.⁴² This game was the forerunner to today's modern baseball mid-summer classic, The All-Star Game, where the best players from both the American and National Leagues are elected by the fans to represent their respective league in a game featuring the best of the best. In 1911, the benefit game for Joss' family was notable for the fact newspapers around the country described the game as featuring the "all stars" versus Cleveland. Popular players from both leagues traveled to Cleveland to play against the home team in a special exhibition game to raise money for the Joss Family. This precedent help establish the framework for future all-star games, but on July 24, 1911, the first all-star game was attended by 15,270 fans at League Park and helped raise 12,914 dollars for Addie Joss' wife and children.⁴³

Just as 1911 was a year where the Cleveland community rallied around a common cause at League Park, in 1920, arguably the Indians best year at League Park, the season

⁴¹ Larry MacPhail, "Addie Joss chosen for Hall of Fame," *The Spokane Spokesman-Review*, January 13, 1978, 13.

⁴² Ritter, *Lost Ballparks*, 109.

⁴³ "Addie Joss Day Game Draws \$12,914," *The New York Times*, July 25, 1911, 1.

was marked again by tragedy, but also a community coming together—however, while memories of 1920 are described as positive in fans’ minds today, 1920 was perhaps not the epitome of a simpler time in baseball as many believe. In the 1995 Cleveland Indians yearbook, an official publication of the Cleveland Indians organization, a full-length article about the 1920 team was included for present-day fans to consume, beginning with following statement, “In the ashes of a scandal and in the wake of tragedy, the 1920 Cleveland Indians had shown the baseball world the true measure of champion.”⁴⁴ While the Cleveland team in 1920 did not intentionally throw the World Series as the scandal-ridden Chicago White Sox did in 1919, the 1920 season for Cleveland was also riddled with just as much gluttony and pride as the championship team that preceded them as baseball’s champions. Despite memories of today’s fans who evoke a sense of pride in the year 1920, especially when considering that baseball today features controversy about performance enhancing drugs and cheating as opposed to the golden age of baseball, where players respected the game, the early days of baseball also featured plenty of controversy. While many want to believe that the past was positive, as that is where baseball fans construct heritage, many times, the real history of the early days of baseball is not as simple as we like to perceive.

During the 1919 baseball season, eight players on the Chicago White Sox chose to purposely lose games for a payout of 10,000 dollars. Driving the players’ motives to purposely lose was a hidden desire to seek revenge against White Sox’ owner, Charles Comiskey, who many players on the White Sox perceived as being too cheap regarding player remuneration. When eight star players on the team ensured their team would lose

⁴⁴ Jack De Vries, “The 1920 Cleveland Indians: A Summer of Tragedy and Triumph,” *1995 Cleveland Indians Yearbook*, April 1995, 54-57.

the series, thus earning the nickname the Black Sox for tarnishing the sport, the ringleaders behind the 1919 Black Sox were eventually banned from baseball for life. Reflecting thirty-seven years after the scandal, the ringleader-in-chief behind the scheme, first baseman Arnold Gandil stated:

...There was Charles Comiskey, the White Sox owner. He was a sarcastic and belittling man who was the tightest owner in baseball...I recall only one act of generosity on Comiskey's part. After we won the World Series in 1917, he splurged with a case of champagne...I would like to blame the trouble we got into on Comiskey's cheapness, but my conscience won't let me. We had no one to blame except ourselves.⁴⁵

Gandil's statement that the players could only blame themselves for their behavior, confirms that the 1919 baseball season was tarnished by the actions of eight players, yet, while the heroics of the 1920 Cleveland Indians might have restored trust in the sport, players on the Indians also got into trouble of their own, providing evidence that the 1919 incident was not an isolated event in the simpler time of baseball and neighborhood stadiums.

Overall, the 1920 season for fans of the Cleveland Indians is remembered as one of the best in team history. During the season, one of the poignant moments came when fans mourned the death of a popular player, and while the community rallied together during this time, what went on behind the scenes brought controversy just as the 1919 Black Sox had done. On a game played on August 17th, 1920 shortstop Ray Chapman was killed when a pitch was thrown at his head by Yankees' pitcher Carl Mays. Notably, during this supposed simpler time of baseball, the pitch that killed Chapman was largely declared as an unintentional or unavoidable act. While no concrete evidence was ever

⁴⁵ Arnold Gandil, "This is my story of The Black Sox Series," *Sports Illustrated*, September 17, 1956, 1-2.

found to directly indict Mays as causing Chapman's death, it is important to note that despite being a standout pitcher for his time, Mays was never elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame.⁴⁶ Detroit Tigers' outfielder, Ty Cobb even remarked about the situation, "If it was within my power, I would have inscribed on Chapman's tombstone these words: Here lies the victim of arrogance, viciousness and greed."⁴⁷ Still, while the initial reports that Mays did not intentionally throw a pitch at Chapman's head, Mays' reputation was sullied by the incident, especially considering Mays' denial into the Hall of Fame and a key player like Ty Cobb arguing that Chapman's death was essentially "avoidable," there is some evidence that even in the era of neighborhood ballparks and good feelings, some players were not entirely neighborly.

Aside from details around the cause of Chapman's death, the actual mourning period for Cleveland fans was just as contentious. Chapman was described as the life of the Cleveland Indians in both victory and defeat. Fans loved the second-baseman and considered him as one of their own. So devastating was the death of Chapman that an American League umpire writing about the ordeal noted, "In his death Cleveland loses a real citizen; the Indians a great ball player; and baseball one of its finest characters."⁴⁸ Players during this time were citizens of the city they played for, not just an individual who played for the local baseball team. Once again, with the death of a player many considered part of their family, fans responded in a heartfelt way, pushing the League Park neighborhood into a period of mourning. After the tragic event, 26,623 fans donated

⁴⁶ Robert Duffy, "Carl Mays' Biography Describes How One Errant Pitch Clouded An Entire Career," *Sports Illustrated*, October 2, 1972, 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Billy Evans, "Umpire Billy Evans Declares Ray Chapman Never Protested When Not Right," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 18, 1920, 14.

ten cents apiece to the “Flower from a Fan Fund,” which helped raise money to provide flowers at Chapman’s funeral. A committee was even organized to create a permanent memorial to Chapman at League Park.⁴⁹ At Chapman’s funeral service, held in Cleveland, the pastor officiating stated that Chapman was an “idol” to the city.⁵⁰

Based on Chapman’s idol status, on the day of the funeral, one could look not only to the fan flower fund or memorial committee as an example of how much Chapman meant to the fans, but also to the crowd that assembled around Cleveland’s Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Prior to the service, crowds had grown so big that the police had to be called in to handle traffic and the overflow crowd. Every window in the church was opened up so fans unable to get a seat inside could still view the service. Chapman’s death dealt a psychological blow to both the players and fans. Journalists reported that Indians’ centerfielder and manager Tris Speaker was grief stricken, collapsing the night before Chapman’s funeral, leaving him unable to attend the service because of his debilitating grief.⁵¹ However, Speaker’s absence from the funeral was not out of a period of deep mourning, but rather personal religious beliefs. Chapman, whose wife was Catholic, arranged for the funeral service to be held at Cleveland’s Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist—despite the deceased baseball player being Protestant. Speaker, a Protestant as well, did not like the idea of his friend’s funeral being held in a Catholic church and got into a brawl with two other players on the team who were Catholic after arguing about the funeral arrangements. Ironically, the ensuing injuries inflicted on Speaker from the fight were what kept Speaker from the funeral—not a deep period of

⁴⁹ “Chapman Services to Be Held Today,” *The New York Times*, August 20, 1920, 1.

⁵⁰ “Ray Chapman Laid to Rest in Cleveland,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 20, 1920, 1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

mourning as newspapers reported. Second baseman Bill Wambsganss recalled the following about Speaker and the 1920 season, “Speaker was a very bigoted man at the time. He was a 32nd degree Mason of the South. And he couldn’t see the idea of Chapman being buried in the Cathedral.”⁵² While the notion of mourning and a city coming together appeals to baseball fans in the 21st century, this was not the full story of Cleveland baseball in 1920, simply, there was controversy, albeit unreported and not readily told in the recollections of baseball fans today. Certainly, while the past saw ethnic and religious divisions, hindering the notion of a simpler time in baseball invalid, the past was essentially riddled with just as much impurity as baseball today considering debates regarding performance enhancing drugs and whether these players who used these drugs should be allowed in Baseball’s Hall of Fame.

Despite the death of Chapman and ensuing conflict between the players, the Indians went on to win the American League Pennant, earning the team its first World Series bid. The editor for the sports section of the *Plain Dealer* wrote, “With the spirit of Chapman among them, the Cleveland ball players cannot fall down.”⁵³ The notion of Chapman’s spirit among both the players and even the fans, even if it did cause divisive prejudicial feelings to surface regarding religious beliefs, was further enforced when the Chapman memorial committee finalized their plans for a permanent monument to Chapman at League Park during the month of September—just as the Indians were about

⁵² Mike Sowell, *The Pitch That Killed: The Story of Carl Mays, Ray Chapman, and the Pennant Race of 1920* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989), 205-206.

⁵³ James H. Lanyon, “Raymond Chapman,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 18, 1920, 14.

to start the month of October and begin play in the World Series.⁵⁴ The 1920 World Series started in Brooklyn with the Indians playing the Brooklyn Dodgers. With the first three games of the series played in New York, the Dodgers won two of those games, but when the series moved to Cleveland and League Park, the neighborhood and fans that had witnessed the Ray Chapman tragedy, saw the mood of the entire ballpark community shift to one of celebration. Mary Kolb lived just a block away from League Park, but also worked at the stadium and felt a deep connection to the players. Kolb noted that she prayed for the players while they were in Brooklyn at the beginning of the World Series. As the players returned to League Park, Kolb stated, “And I am still praying for them. They are such fine boys.”⁵⁵ With League Park being part of the fabric of the neighborhood, fans not only felt connected by living nearby the stadium, but they also worked at the stadium, and felt a deep familial bond with the players—which might explain why fans do not recall stories like Tris Speaker’s real reason for missing Ray Chapman’s funeral in August of 1920 as part of local baseball lore, as families can be fiercely loyal to their own.

As the series switched venues from Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field to League Park, the League Park neighborhood was transformed dramatically. Fans unable to view the action from inside the stadium held vigil at the offices of the *Plain Dealer*, getting updates direct from League Park via a makeshift scoreboard attached to the building. On the day of the most pivotal game of the series, Sunday, October 10, 1920, 27,000 fans piled into League Park, while an additional 7,000 fans stood outside the *Plain Dealer*’s offices

⁵⁴ “Decide on Bronze Tablet for Chapman Memorial,” *Providence Evening Tribune*, September 12, 1920, 5.

⁵⁵ Fred Charles, “Fans In Ecstasies as Tribe Triumphs,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1920, 1 & 3.

hoping for good news. Churches within the vicinity of League Park were also brought into the celebratory mood of the day's events, as pastors delivering Sunday morning messages to their congregations were interrupted by fans heading to the ballpark shouting, "Hooray for Tris!" in honor of Cleveland's player-manager, quite an ironic facet to the 1920 season, especially concerning Speaker's religious prejudices.⁵⁶ As the game on October 10 got underway, fans in attendance witnessed two World Series' firsts, and according to various baseball historians, some of the finest moments in all of League Park's existence. During the game, not only did Cleveland's Elmer Smith hit the first World Series' grand slam, but born and bred Clevelander Bill Wambsganss executed the only unassisted triple play in World Series' history. Wambsganss, the Indians' second baseman, simply went by the name "Wamby." So rare was his feat that the fans at League Park did not at first respond to the fact Wambsganss had singlehandedly ended the Dodgers' chance to score in the inning. Wambsganss, recalling the mood at League Park as he approached the dugout after completing the play, pointed out:

They [the fans] had to stop and figure out just how many were out. So there was dead silence for a few seconds. Then, as I approached the dugout, it began to dawn on them what they had just seen, and the cheering started and quickly got louder and louder and louder. By the time I got to the bench it was bedlam, straw hats flying onto the field, people yelling themselves hoarse, my teammates pounding me on the back.⁵⁷

Starting with the energy provided by Wambsganss' unlikely play during game five, the Indians took the energy and commitment of the League Park fans to propel their way to victory, proceeding to win the next two games and hence, the entire series. On October

⁵⁶ "7,000 Fans See Game Played on Scoreboard," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1920, 1 & 3.

⁵⁷ Lawrence S. Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1984) 237-239.

12, 1920, the Indians won game seven of the series and became World Series champions. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* was proud to note that the city was now home to a “champion.” At the conclusion of the game, 15,000 of the faithful at League Park stormed owner James Dunn’s viewing box. Dunn thanked the fans for their loyalty and signed autographs for the excited fans—many of whom hugged the owner. Even after Dunn departed his seat, nearly 4,000 fans waited outside the ballpark on East 66th Street and Lexington hoping to catch a last glimpse of the world champions.⁵⁸

The World Series victory in 1920 was an event that fans took pride in because the players they cherished were their neighbors and League Park represented the pulse of the community. In 1920, fans and players alike mourned and celebrated together, many were held together by a common bond. Still, prejudices did creep into the community dynamics of the time. Despite controversy of the 1919 and 1920 seasons, one thing remains paramount in comparison to today’s baseball players—there were no high-priced athletes when League Park ruled the baseball world. In stark contrast to the pay-out for baseball’s champions today, checks in the amount of 3,986.84 dollars were written to each member of the 1920 Indians. The players also ensured part of their winnings would go to the League Park groundskeeper and secretary, as well as the widow of Ray Chapman. Additionally, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* alerted fans that their hometown heroes were really part of the “hometown.” World Series’ heroes Bill Wambsganss and Elmer Smith remained in Cleveland at the conclusion of the season, because they called the city their home. Other teammates also stayed in the city, picking up jobs like car salesmen and billiard hall managers to help augment their incomes, since playing

⁵⁸ Fred Charles, “15,000 Fans Swarm Field, Enshrine Dunn and Tris,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 13, 1920, 1 & 5.

professional baseball in 1920 did not pay all the bills.⁵⁹ If anything, the dedication of players, despite low pay, conveys to current fans the notion that there was a simpler time in baseball—even if there truly never was a simpler time in the history of professional baseball.

League Park: Closing Time

Following the conclusion of the 1920 season, Jim Dunn, the owner of the Indians, partly emboldened by alcohol, walked into the middle of League Park, yelling, “I own the best damn baseball team in all the world!”⁶⁰ However, the celebration would quickly end for Clevelanders. Dunn died in 1922 and the Indians’ fortunes began to decline without him at the helm of the team until Bill Veeck bought the team in 1946 from an ownership group that never seemed able to put together a good business model that produced a winning team.⁶¹ As the new owner, Veeck sought to bring an exciting brand of baseball to Cleveland. The ownership group that bought the team was headed not only by Veeck, but also celebrity Bob Hope.⁶² Veeck was known for sitting with fans in the bleachers, shaking hands at the turnstiles, and preaching that the fan was always right. Veeck’s unconventional style encouraged more people to attend Indians games, hence, providing a larger pool of revenue for the franchise. Since League Park could only hold roughly 27,000 fans, Veeck moved the team to Cleveland’s Municipal Stadium, which had a

⁵⁹ Henry P. Edwards., “Indians, Drawing Divvy for World Series, Prepare for Passing the Winter,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 14, 1920, 18.

⁶⁰ Sowell, *The Pitch That Killed*, 289-290.

⁶¹ Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir*, 132.

⁶² “Griffith Welcomes Bob Hope Into Big League Baseball,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 22, 1946, 14.

capacity of 70,000 and behind the large number of seats, was the perchance for more revenue, as Veeck believed he could sell 70,000 tickets on a daily basis.⁶³

When Veeck bought the Indians franchise in 1946, baseball and America were both changing as the United States exited World War II. The need to satisfy the demands of the times led to many changes both on and off the baseball field, which meant the sport had to become more business driven. One major change following the conclusion of World War II was the advent of the car culture in the United States. League Park was never able to offer fans a place to park their cars because it was wedged into a residential neighborhood and constructed well before mass produced automobiles became the norm in the United States. Fans accessed the ballpark by walking or taking the streetcar, but with fans now driving cars to watch their favorite team, they needed a place to park, and Municipal Stadium in downtown Cleveland provided motorists plenty of parking spaces to park their cars. Hence, as baseball historians Morris Eckhouse and Greg Crouse note, the final nail in the coffin for League Park was both Bill Veeck and the *automobile*.⁶⁴

League Park would cease to be home to the Cleveland Indians following the 1946 baseball season, it did not mean that the memory of what the fans considered to be a sacred ballpark would quietly recede into the minds of Cleveland baseball fans. Edna Jameson, who was the Indians' secretary at League Park, and notably included in the divvying of the winnings from the 1920 World Series, remembered being in a state of shock the day she prepared to move with the team to the new Municipal Stadium. As

⁶³ Bill Veeck, *Veeck—As in Wreck: The Autobiography of Bill Veeck with Ed Linn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 108-109.

⁶⁴ Morris Eckhouse and Greg Crouse, *Where Cleveland Played: Sports Shrines From League Park To The Coliseum* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010), 29 & 92.

Jameson packed books and photographs in preparation for the move, the commissioner of baseball, Judge Landis, stopped by her office to ask her a question. Overcome with emotion about leaving League Park, Jameson completely ignored baseball's highest ranking officer. The next day, Jameson recalled, "...When I had regained my composure, I saw Judge Landis again and apologized for my brusqueness...but the Judge interrupted me and said, 'I'm glad, Miss Jameson, that there still is such a thing as sentiment left in baseball.'"⁶⁵ As baseball was undergoing a profound change, fans still held dear the memory of a simpler time in baseball—a memory that continues to be built on even today—even if there truly never was a nostalgic in baseball, as the notion of every fan drawing from the same traditional heritage continues to knit together baseball fans in the seemingly more controversial modern era.

⁶⁵ Al Silverman, "Sports Profiles: Old League Park Holds Many Fond Memories for Edna Jameson, Indian Officials' Efficient Aid," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 23, 1932, 16.

CHAPTER III: THE BUSINESS OF BASEBALL VERSUS NOSTALGIC MEMORIES

When Bill Veeck bought the Cleveland Indians in 1946 and moved the team out of League Park to the 70,000 seat Cleveland Municipal Stadium, the city-owned superstructure was already fourteen years old. Ironically, the stadium first played host to an Indians game in 1932. By 1933, the Indians abandoned the stadium, moving back to League Park because they could not fill all the seats with spectators. With Veeck's arrival in Cleveland—he jumped at the opportunity to draw huge profits from the stadium, which had been largely unused between its opening and 1946. Because of the opening of Municipal Stadium, Clevelanders could boast of having the largest stadium in the United States, allowing residents to draw a sense of pride from its distinction, as the pinnacle of success and industry. The stadium's size was something that was celebrated in 1932, but, by the middle part of the 1970s, fans found the stadium too big. Even when 30,000 fans attended a game, the stadium was barely full. This was quite a contrast to League Park, which was quaint and part of Cleveland's Hough Neighborhood. Municipal Stadium, located along Lake Erie in downtown Cleveland, eventually became known as the Mistake on the Lake for its emptiness and for baseball fans' overall negative attitudes towards the structure. However, despite the simplistic, feel good connotations associated with League Park, the Indians moved to Municipal Stadium because baseball's management structure was becoming more business driven, with team owners needing to commercialize the sport to keep their franchises financially viable. These changes led fans to eventually clamor for the days of League Park, even though baseball still had a degree of controversy and business-oriented operating procedures in the halcyon days of neighborhood ballparks.

Business and Baseball

Despite Municipal Stadium's negative moniker, some baseball fans continued to draw fond memories from the structure just like they did from League Park. Certainly, the new stadium would usher in a more business driven side to baseball between 1932 and 1993, fans continued to place their trust in the virtue of Cleveland baseball by connecting the distant memories of League Park with their new memories, formed on the shores of Lake Erie at Municipal Stadium.

Just as League Park was constructed in 1891 on a plot of land favorable to then-team owner Frank DeHass Robison's business interests, Municipal Stadium was also built with dollar signs in mind. Because Municipal Stadium was built after the passage of a tax levy in 1928, the stadium was financed by Clevelanders and eventually managed by the city after its construction.⁶⁶ Teams wishing to sign a lease to play games at Municipal Stadium were required not only to pay a rental fee, but also share revenue from game day ticket sales with the city.⁶⁷ Around 1932, cities across the country recognized the value of having a professional team located within city limits, and eventually by the 1950s cities without a professional baseball team began to poach existing teams in other cities by promising team owners new stadiums. For example, the Brooklyn Dodgers relocated to Los Angeles, the New York Giants to San Francisco, and the Boston Braves moved not once but twice—first to Milwaukee and finally to Atlanta. While baseball teams provide fans with memories, they also provide revenue to cash-strapped municipalities, allowing city leaders to capitalize on America's national pastime. Even though fans draw deep religious sentiments from their favorite stadium and team, team owners and local

⁶⁶ "Stadium Bonds Start off Well," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 7, 1928, 1.

⁶⁷ "Estimates Opener Brings in \$80,000," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1932, 5.

politicians often place profits over the preferences of fans, believing if they are an owner, they have a business to run and if a politician, a city—baseball to them can sometimes be a conduit to make money.⁶⁸

During what was believed to be the last game at League Park on July 30, 1932, a deal was struck at home plate of the newly built Municipal Stadium to move the Indians from the Hough Neighborhood to Cleveland's downtown lakefront. Cleveland Mayor Ray Miller and the President of the Cleveland Indians Baseball Company, Alva Bradley agreed to the terms of a lease between the city and the Indians. Distinctively, at the end of the business transaction Bradley was given the pen as a memento of the occasion.⁶⁹ Similar to a smoke-filled backroom deal at political conventions of the 1920s, the baseball and the political worlds collided in July of 1932 on Cleveland's lakefront. While fans might find the purity of baseball an alluring ideal and disdain the seemingly corrupt political world, the two are very much related. Indirectly noting that the fans were left out of the deal-making, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* stated, "Four men sat at a small wooden table placed directly over home plate at Cleveland Stadium at 3 p.m. yesterday, as the Indians were starting their last game in League Park, and signed the Tribe out of the old home and into the new."⁷⁰ Simply, baseball and municipal political dealings became increasingly common as the Indians left League Park in 1932 and fans were expected to move with the team from one stadium or "house of worship" to the next—regardless of any emotional attachment.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Knight, *Opening Day: Cleveland, the Indians, and a New Beginning* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2004), 17.

⁶⁹ "Lease is Signed at Home Plate," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 31, 1932, 7-A.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

When Cleveland's new stadium opened to baseball fans on July 31, 1932, 80,184 people attended the day's festivities. At the time, it was the largest crowd ever to attend a baseball game. On the front page of the *Plain Dealer* the day after the game there were headlines about not only the large crowd but also the business and nostalgic side of the grand opening. Headlines read, "...80,184 hearts beat as one in Uncle Moses' new stadium."⁷¹ Noting the founder of Cleveland, Moses Cleaveland, as giving his blessing on the stadium, fans could also link past and present by visiting with various former players who were also in attendance at the game. Former stars Bill Wambsganss and Elmer Smith from the 1920 World Series, which was a key moment in League Park history, were on hand. Even the pitcher from the first game at League Park, Cy Young made an appearance. These former players provided a touch of nostalgia to the new stadium, which can oftentimes be powerful tool in helping to sell a new product.⁷²

Aside from the celebratory reunion of past players, the political side of the day's events did not go unnoticed. Baseball in 1932, as well as the 21st century, is more than a game of nine innings; baseball also exists to make money for team owners, the players, and politicians seeking to bring in new forms of revenue for their cities.⁷³ On the first day of operations at Municipal Stadium, 80,000 dollars was made in ticket sales, which was to be divided between the Indians, their opponent, the Philadelphia Athletics, and the federal government.⁷⁴ Furthermore, city officials also cut a deal with parking lot operators to manage and create parking lots around the stadium. While the League Park

⁷¹ "80,184 Fill Stadium to See The Indians," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1932, 1.

⁷² John W. Vance, "Set Baseball Crowd Record and See Tribe Lose Hard Battle, 1-0," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1932, 5.

⁷³ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 193-194.

⁷⁴ "Estimates Opener Brings in \$80,000," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1932, 5.

neighborhood did not have much room for motorists to park their cars during the burgeoning days of the car culture in the United States, there was plenty of room for cars to be parked near Municipal Stadium. On day one of stadium operations, 3,306 cars were parked near the stadium. Motorists paid twenty-five cents to park their car, for a grand total a total of 826.50 dollars.⁷⁵ While there was celebration about the stadium opening, the celebratory mood did not mean people simply forgot their business interests.

One business interest group, parking lot operators, whose deal with the City of Cleveland to manage parking lots was only good for opening day, were worried that the city would eventually take over parking lot operations—leaving them out of the potential to turn a profit from the new stadium. City-assigned stadium manager, E.E. Adams attempted to calm fears stating, “If we did that [take over parking management], we’d have all the parking people in the city on our neck.”⁷⁶ Clearly, the notion of city leaders being politically adroit in handling business contracts surrounding the new stadium was a carefully handled issue, as mismanaging business deals could have been politically hazardous for local politicians hoping to capitalize on the success of the stadium in future campaigns for higher office.

Aside from local politics, national politics also came into play at the opening of Municipal Stadium. 1932 was also a presidential election year, with President Herbert Hoover facing New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. The pressing issue of the 1932 election was the Great Depression and considering the celebratory tone for opening day, it was quite a contrast to the economic climate of 1932. While many local politicians were present at the new stadium, most notable among all the politicians at the game was a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

national figure, Louisiana Senator Huey Long. Senator Long was probably not interested in the Cleveland baseball team, but rather in the fans themselves, hoping to persuade a few Cleveland fans towards his candidate of choice in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt, by aligning himself with the popular local team—providing evidence that all politics is local—even in the midst of a national presidential election.⁷⁷

Too Big to Fail

Since over 80,000 fans that arrived for the first game at Municipal Stadium, League Park was cast aside as nothing more than an ancient artifact sitting vacant at the corner of East 66th and Lexington. As fans flocked to Municipal Stadium, writers at the *Plain Dealer* pondered the future of the former ballpark. A column ran with the title, “Old Ghosts Hover as Taps Sound for League Park,” calling upon the memories of the past as the old stadium closed its doors for the last time:

League Park looked fine then as the sun fell on the outfield. It looked as if Tris Speaker were [sic] out in centerfield chewing blades of grass. It recalled to some fans the days when Bill Wambsganss cavorted so pleasantly around second base...Far out above the bleachers were the soap, ice cream and beverage signs and the Cleveland Railway Co.’s wise-crack—‘You don’t have to park a street car.’⁷⁸

As League Park was being deemed obsolete in the summer of 1932 for being quaint and also for its inability to accommodate automobiles, it did not simply fade into complete obscurity as some had predicted in 1932. Rather, the stadium’s use would be dictated by the turbulent events of the 1930s and 1940s. Municipal Stadium hosted its opening game in the middle of the Great Depression, an economic malady that that had plagued the country since October of 1929, the opening of the stadium *seemed* to temporarily propel

⁷⁷ “Notables Coming to Ball Game,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 31, 1932, 7-A.

⁷⁸ Lynn Heinzerling, “Old Ghosts Hover as Taps Sound for League Park,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 31, 1932, 7-A.

the city toward prosperity in the face of the economic downtown. On the front page of the *Plain Dealer* following the first game at the stadium, the stark contrast was noted, “The Cleveland Indians came home to the \$3,000,000 stadium yesterday and found 80,184 friends and relations standing on the figurative steps to cry them welcome, to set a new world’s record for baseball crowds and to toss the depression, yelping feebly, over the wall into Lake Erie.”⁷⁹ However, the large crowds were only temporary, as the second game attracted only 21,218 fans and by 1933, the Indians first full season at Municipal Stadium, an average of only 6,000 fans showed up per game.⁸⁰ With the country in the midst of the Depression, it was not feasible for a team to play in front of a nearly empty stadium.

Cleveland’s Great Depression experience was apparently rougher than the rest of the nation, as modern historians have advocated that the city never fully recovered from the economic malaise.⁸¹ When the Depression hit the United States, Cleveland was the country’s sixth largest city and third largest metro area behind only New York and Chicago. In the decade leading up the Depression, Cleveland’s leading businessmen, the Van Sweringen brothers built the Cleveland Union Terminal and Terminal Tower, a one-hundred-fifty million dollar commercial center that became the symbol of the city.⁸² Cleveland was known for being a beacon in the 1920s for its industrial and economic power, but also for city planning and beautification, highlighted ironically by the

⁷⁹ John W. Vance, “Set Baseball Crowd Record and See Tribe Lose Hard Battle, 1-0,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1932, 1.

⁸⁰ Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir*, 190.

⁸¹ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 131.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 129.

construction of Municipal Stadium.⁸³ When the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, the progress of the 1920s quickly came to a halt. By January 1931, 100,000 Clevelanders or 31 percent of the population was out of work.⁸⁴ While many fans attended the grand opening of Municipal Stadium, Cleveland's economic situation dictated that the new stadium's use would be limited, so the Indians moved back to League Park, an easier stadium to fill with fans, except for games played on the weekends, when the crowds were traditionally bigger.

Despite Municipal Stadium originally being feted for its sheer size, the trends of the time, signified by Great Depression, led to Clevelanders not having money to attend games and hence, a mostly vacant stadium.⁸⁵ Just as the Depression hurt attendance figures, when the United States entered World War II in December of 1941, many professional players enlisted, including Cleveland's star pitcher, Bob Feller. The absence of star players, as well as the distraction of a major crisis led to a decrease in fan interest. Between the years 1932 and 1945, there was an interruption to the rhythm of baseball, leading to a few modifications as to how fans interacted with the sport. In 1942, the first season of baseball with the U.S. involved in World War II, 125,000 fewer Clevelanders attended Indians games.⁸⁶ As men's professional baseball took a leave of absence during this turbulent period in American history, women left on the homefront during World War II found an interest in the sport. This phenomenon was romanticized in the 1992 film *A League of Their Own*, featuring the story of women baseball players who formed their

⁸³ Ibid., 130.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 134, 136.

⁸⁵ Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 326.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 127.

own professional league during the war. The director of *A League of Their Own*, Penny Marshall, reflected on the historical significance of this time period advocating:

What impressed us most about these women was not just that they had played or had played well, but that, in a time when most young girls were given a very narrow range of dreams from which to choose, these young girls overcame all manner of cultural oppression to follow their dream that a woman's place is at home—sliding, not cooking.⁸⁷

As women contributed to the war effort by taking jobs traditionally held by men, such as on the assembly line, they also entered the sporting world and provided wartime entertainment for the American public, oftentimes attracting larger crowds than men's games. Once World War II ended in 1945 and players like Feller returned, there was a decreased interest in women's baseball.⁸⁸ Still, despite the traditional notion that by the 1950s women returned to their natural role as a stay at home mom, displaced women did not simply go back to the kitchen; rather they became some of the country's leading baseball fans—especially in Cleveland.⁸⁹

With the end of World War II in 1945 and the arrival of Bill Veeck in 1946, Municipal Stadium was officially called upon to be the “new” home of the Cleveland Indians. Veeck was known as the “P.T. Barnum of baseball,” learning the art of showmanship under the tutelage of his father, the president of the

⁸⁷ Penny Marshall, Lowell Ganz, and Babaloo Mandel, “A League of Our Own,” in *Baseball as America: Seeing Ourselves Through Our National Game*, ed. Kevin Mulroy (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2002), 232.

⁸⁸ Gai Ingham Berlage, “Women, Baseball, and The American Dream,” in *Baseball and the American Dream: Race, Class, Gender and the National Pastime*, ed. Robert Elias (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 244.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 245.

Chicago Cubs.⁹⁰ Russell Schneider, a writer who has written extensively on the Indians, noted that during Veeck's tenure as owner only the fans had more fun than Veeck himself.⁹¹ Still, not everyone saw Veeck's ownership as a positive time in baseball history. The previous Indians' owner, Alva Bradley was part of the old guard of baseball owners later lamented that Veeck commercialized the sport. Bradley believed that Veeck's only goal was to get people to attend baseball games and in doing so, make money. During this time of commercialization owners used sideshows like clowns and orchestras, presenting the shows concurrently with the game to keep the fans interested and coming back to the stadium for more.⁹² By using gimmicks and promotions attention was diverted away from the simplicity of baseball. Owners realized they needed keep fans entertained, or else they would have no desire to return to the stadium.

Veronica Hughes, a nostalgic Indians fan who grew up in Cleveland following the end of World War II, noted that this time period was special to her for its collectiveness, "Everyone was coming home from the war, the team was getting better, following the Indians was blue collar. Cleveland was a melting pot. People from different ethnic groups loved each other, hated each other, were related, and all of the above—but baseball connected everyone."⁹³ As Americans and Clevelanders looked to a period of peace following World War II, they returned to the country's national pastime, and hence, a bigger venue like

⁹⁰ Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 327.

⁹¹ Ibid., 327.

⁹² Ibid., 327.

⁹³ Interview of Veronica Hughes conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 17, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Municipal Stadium was needed to host the scores of fans. And women who filled the void on the baseball diamond in the early 1940s also helped to fill the emptiness of Municipal Stadium following the war.

Women, Their Favorite Players, and Larry Doby

Lifelong Clevelander, Lucy DiFranco, remembered the late 1940s Indians as the “best.” “I knew everyone on the team...Lou Boudreau, Joe Gordon, Jim Hegan. I even had nine by five glossy, black and white pictures of each player...and so did every other girl in Cleveland.”⁹⁴ Like DiFranco, Hughes also had a personal list of favorite players such as: Larry Doby, Rocky Colavito, and Minnie Minoso. Noting her personal story and other girlfriends who were all baseball fans, Hughes stated, “It’s something about women—whether a maternal instinct or something else—they just make better baseball fans.”⁹⁵ Hughes’ assertion that women make better baseball fans was not simply a blanket statement. The notion of women making better baseball fans is drawn from the collective memory of post-World War II Cleveland baseball fans, like Hughes and DiFranco, but also one with a strong basis in ticket sales. Bill Veeck actively courted women to fill Municipal Stadium. Veeck even went as far to say, “Once a woman becomes a fan, she is the best fan in the world. A woman fan focuses her interest, not surprisingly, on one individual player and follows him with a fierce and commendable loyalty.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Interview of Lucy DiFranco conducted by Matt Ferguson, January 20, 2013, Perrysburg, Ohio (via telephone).

⁹⁵ Interview of Veronica Hughes conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 17, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio.

⁹⁶ Veeck, *Veeck—As in Wreck*, 126.

To Veeck, it did not matter whether the favorite player was Doby, Boudreau, Gordon, or Minoso—rather the importance laid in the fact that this loyalty brought women to the stadium. Speaking of attendance, Veeck noted the impact of women on the 1948 attendance figures, “In 1948, we had an unbelievably high ratio of women *customers*. In fact, if you add the number of women who came on Ladies’ Day...our attendance that year was close to 4,000,000.”⁹⁷ While fans draw fond memories from attachments to their favorite players, as well as on the surface unity among Italian, Polish, and Irish Clevelanders because of baseball, owners like Bill Veeck did not care perhaps so much about ethnic and gender diversity, but rather, the fact they needed to attract the fans to the stadium in order to keep their teams financially viable.

Beginning with an attempt to attract more fans in hopes of enlarging the fan-base, Bill Veeck did not simply stop with women—he also courted African Americans. Prior to the Indians’ final departure from League Park in 1946, Veeck noticed that interesting games took place at League Park on Sundays when the Indians were playing away games. The park was also the home of the Cleveland Buckeyes. The Buckeyes were a member of the Negro Baseball League and were considered to be one of the premier teams in the all-African American league.⁹⁸ In 1945, the Cleveland Buckeyes even won the Negro League equivalent of the World Series, playing a portion of the series at League Park.⁹⁹ Veeck, while described as a showman, was ultimately a shrewd businessman. According to

⁹⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁸ Jedick, *League Park*, 20-22.

⁹⁹ “World Series Opening is Set for Cleveland, Thurs.,” *The Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), September 15, 1945, 22.

baseball historian Peter Jedick, the thousands of spectators who arrived on Sundays at League Park to watch Negro League baseball was not lost on the Veeck. Jedick advocates that Veeck saw the fans arriving at League Park for Negro League Baseball as a lucrative, untapped source of new fans. This potential for new fans or customers led Veeck to sign Larry Doby as the American League's first black baseball player in 1947, the same year after he ended the Indians' fifty-five year relationship League Park.¹⁰⁰ Veeck was not one to be underestimated in his attempts to bring more attention to his baseball team, including signing an African American as part of his business model as once such way to draw the nation's eyes to Cleveland.

In 1947, Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby both helped to break Major League Baseball's color barrier, with Robinson and Doby becoming the first African Americans to play for a major league team. Robinson, who entered Major League Baseball first with the National League's Brooklyn Dodgers, faced much backlash from players and fans who wanted him to fail because of the color of his skin. However, in his unique situation as a trailblazer for African Americans, baseball historian Jim Mollenkopf advocated, "For he [Robinson] was not only carrying his own hopes and dreams, he was carrying those of Negro League Players and about 14 million African American citizens."¹⁰¹ Well before the Civil Rights Movement, baseball was helping to transform America's troubled history on issues of race, even if it was partly based on shrewd business decisions. Bill

¹⁰⁰ Jedick, *League Park*, 22.

¹⁰¹ Jim Mollenkopf, *One Summer Day In America: July 13, 1954* (Toledo, OH: Lake of the Cat Publishing, 2010), 32.

Veeck himself even encountered the prejudicial views that the marred the United States in the 1940s during an Indians spring training game in Florida when he attempted to court African American fans in the bleachers. As Veeck tried courting his new fans he was asked by Ocala, Florida city leaders to leave the bleacher section because he was breaking the separate-but-equal color barrier of the American south by speaking with the new fans.¹⁰²

Undeterred by his experience in Florida, Veeck signed Larry Doby, an African American outfielder—making Doby the first African American player in baseball’s American League and the second overall to break baseball’s color barrier. Veeck recalled Doby’s impact on the Indians years later, pointing out that the addition of Doby was not originally well received until a significant amount of money was involved, “Some of the players who had not seemed overjoyed at having at having Larry on the team became increasingly fond of him as it became apparent that he was going to help them slice a cut of that World Series money [in 1948]. The economics of prejudice, as I have discovered, many times cuts both ways.”¹⁰³ Today, the historical record of prejudice in baseball is largely ignored and replaced with lore surrounding Doby’s historic arrival in Cleveland, so much that some fans have created stories about Larry Doby’s difficult entry into the league.

One story suggests that during Doby’s first at-bat as an Indian, he struck out, leaving the outfielder feeling dejected about his horrible and infamous debut in the major leagues. As Doby let his disappointment sink in, legend holds that the

¹⁰² Veeck, *Veeck—As in Wreck*, 177.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 176.

next batter, second baseman, Joe Gordon, purposely struck out in order to make Doby feel better. While Doby did strike out in his first at-bat in the big leagues, Joe Gordon did not follow Gordon in the lineup and strike-out. Apparently, the legend began out of the fact that Gordon was one of the few players to befriend Doby upon his arrival in Cleveland.¹⁰⁴ When Doby died in 2003, Major League Baseball purchased a full-length page advertisement in *USA Today* honoring Doby. In the ad baseball commissioner Allan “Bud” Selig wrote, “He [Doby] changed baseball and the course of history. A legend on and off the field, Larry was a pioneer and a gentleman. His legacy will endure forever.”¹⁰⁵ While some fans have applied mythic stories to Doby’s debut in Cleveland, partly due to the notions of purity and fairness surrounding baseball, Doby’s introduction to the sport was not without prejudice and discrimination. Even though Veeck might have had more of a monetary reason to bring Doby to Cleveland, his entrance did change the sport and baseball history in Cleveland, but it was not one without the racial prejudice that marked American history in the 1940s. Baseball was riddled with racial and ethnic controversies during this time period. For example, Ben Chapman, a baseball manager in the 1940s was known for his open hatred toward Jewish people and blacks. Also, Jackie Robinson received death threats and other teams even attempted to boycott games where they would play against Robinson.¹⁰⁶ Baseball was not a special piece of diversity in an overall turbulent

¹⁰⁴ Chuck Murr, “2008 Indians Hall of Fame Inductee: Joe Gordon,” *Indians: 2008 Yearbook*, March 2008, 19-20.

¹⁰⁵ Allan H. “Bud” Selig, *Larry Doby: 1923-2003*, July 23, 2003, newspaper advertisement, *USA Today*, 5C.

¹⁰⁶ Mollenkopf, *One Sumer Day in America: July 13, 1954*, 32-33.

period of race relations—even if the integration of the sport was seven years ahead of the historic 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court Case which abolished black and white segregation in the southern United States.

1948: World Series Memories

Bill Veeck's business model centered on enlarging the fan base and adding new players like Larry Doby, helped to make attending an Indians game at Municipal Stadium the popular thing to do in the 1940s. Crowds were especially large in 1948 when the Indians competed for their first World Series title since 1920. Part of the excitement arose because Veeck challenged the norms of the previous baseball business model that basically told fans, regardless if they lived in Cleveland, Detroit, New York, or Boston, take it or leave it, in regards to attending a baseball game. Owners prior to Veeck did not think it mattered if attending the game was a positive experience. They believed that fans should simply be thankful they had a team to watch and cheer for.¹⁰⁷ However, when Bill Veeck bought the Indians he proceeded to change that notion and went on a listening tour of Cleveland, intermingling with fans by riding in cabs and hanging out at the local bar, asking them what they thought about the Indians. After his tour was finished, Veeck was shocked because, as Cleveland journalist Terry Pluto put it, he learned ownership had failed to understand its customers.¹⁰⁸ Following this discovery, Veeck implemented initiatives at Municipal Stadium to make attending a baseball game better for the fans—such as hiring ushers to clean seats before every game, cleaning women's restrooms every two innings, and

¹⁰⁷ Pluto, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir*, 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

setting up a direct phone line to his office for fans to call and voice concerns.

Veeck even started some games at 8:30 a.m. to accommodate fans who worked the night shift at local factories. The combination of a competitive baseball team and positive improvements to the stadium meant that fans attended Cleveland games in hordes, breaking Major League Baseball attendance records in the process.¹⁰⁹

The attendance records in 1948 show that fans want to cheer for a winning team, but part of prodding fans to attend a game is based in masterful public relations—something Bill Veeck understood—as sometimes fans need more than emotional attachment to a player or fond recollections concerning their team’s history to truly cheer for the hometown favorites. Aside from the business driven aspect of Bill Veeck’s tenure as owner of the Indians, fans still connected emotionally with the team not unlike they did during the early days of baseball in Cleveland at League Park. In 1948, when the Indians would again play in the World Series, the Indians drew two point six million fans over the course of the season Municipal Stadium. However, while only 27,000 witnessed the historic game five of the 1920 World Series at League Park, game five of the 1948 World Series attracted 86,288 fans, a record crowd, that was hailed by the *Plain Dealer* for “setting marks” both in terms of the crowd size and “cash box.”¹¹⁰

Despite the crowds and receipts were much larger during the 1948 incarnation of the World Series than 1920, the fan response held just as much

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 133-134.

¹¹⁰ Roelif Loveland, “Crowd and Cash Box at Stadium Set Marks,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1948, 1.

religious devotion as the response during the 1920 season. Even though the Indians lost game five, sending the series back to Boston, fans lined up Cleveland's Terminal Tower to wish their favorite players off with good cheer. One ticket taker at the train terminal noted, "The terminal's never known anything like it since the Jehovah's Witnesses!"¹¹¹ *Plain Dealer* writers praised the Indians using religious terms by adding, "Yet it had to be a religion of some special kind to bring out the fanatical mob of at least 10,000—some said 15,000—'Tribopaliens' who hailed and farewelled [sic] our Indians off to Boston."¹¹² Apparently, the prayers of all Clevelanders must have been answered following the euphoric sendoff, as the Indians escaped from Boston with a four to three victory over the Boston Braves making them victors of the World Series for the first time since the days of League Park. Meanwhile, back in Cleveland when word spread that the Indians had won the game and hence, the World Series, fans descended on Cleveland's Public Square in the center of the city's business district to celebrate. This celebration was a sort of group catharsis, where fans could be religiously rejuvenated after the tense World Series, but also the turbulent years of the Great Depression and World War II.¹¹³ Both young and old fans transformed the normally nondescript center of the city into a party—with some believing that "some sort of strange alchemy" had played a part for the

¹¹¹ Peter B. Greenough, "Thousands at Terminal Cheer Indians Onward," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1948, 1.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Michael L. Butterworth, *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity During the War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 38.

boisterous celebration featuring car horns, whistles, firecrackers, and cheering from open windows from the buildings surrounding the square.¹¹⁴

Even though baseball was not as parochial as it had been during the era of neighborhood ballparks, Cleveland fans still celebrated the 1948 World Series as a civic celebration because the victory was an event that transformed the city. Aside from the impromptu gathering on Cleveland's Public Square, the city's official celebration for the team occurred the day after the World Series victory, with a five-mile parade route that stretched from Public Square to Cleveland's University Circle, passing various neighborhoods along the route.¹¹⁵ Considering Cleveland's ethnic and racial diversity of the 1940s, baseball was something that many people, whether they were black or white or lived in Cleveland's Little Italy or Slavic Village, allowed them to temporarily set aside their differences. Perhaps, considering tensions between races and ethnic groups of the 1940s, it might explain why people whitewash stories and memories concerning Larry Doby's controversial entry into Major League Baseball, or ignore the fact that the sport is often controversial with political and business decisions many times driving the debate concerning where stadiums are built or where a team relocates. Baseball is something from which city dwellers can draw a common heritage from and come together in the face of more pressing issues.

In October of 1948, this exclamation of multiple Clevelanders rallying around a common theme was evident. Following the victory parade, one

¹¹⁴ Roelif Loveland, "Joyful Fans Pack Time Bomb Punch," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 12, 1948, 1.

¹¹⁵ "Tribe Welcome Parade Is Set for 8:30 A.M.," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 12, 1948, 1.

commentator wrote, “Each nationality and racial group in a great metropolitan center had someone on the Cleveland baseball club who was the embodiment of his own ideals and aspirations and dreams. Each person on the sidelines felt that he personally had contributed to the victory.”¹¹⁶ Lucy DiFranco, who grew up near Cleveland’s Little Italy neighborhood, was sixteen years old in 1948 and remembers being let out of school early to see the victory parade pass by her high school. Recalling this vivid memory DiFranco stated, “My school was the last stop on the parade route, all the players came by in convertibles. It was a special day because we hadn’t won a pennant in so long. My school was integrated and despite growing up where black and white skating rinks were separate, we all watched the parade together.”¹¹⁷ The notion of baseball as a uniting force, to the religious-like devotion fans have to the sport, and why stories surrounding players and stadiums are mythical—these aspects of the game are *not as* controversial as other world events like economic depressions, world wars, and segregation, because on the surface baseball seems innocent—even if the sport contained the elements that troubled the country as well.

Veeck’s Exit

Although the 1948 season was filled with euphoria for Cleveland fans, the celebration for Bill Veeck was short lived. During the 1948 season, Veeck’s wife, Eleanor, filed for divorce from the Indians’ owner. Since his wife owned half of the team, Veeck was forced to sell the team, as he had no other assets to equal the

¹¹⁶ Alvin Silverman, “Indians Leaves For Homes in Echoes of Joy,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 13, 1948, 1.

¹¹⁷ Interview of Lucy DiFranco conducted by Matt Ferguson, January 20, 2013, Perrysburg, Ohio (via telephone).

value of the Indians. Eleanor Veeck's lawyer agreed to delay the divorce proceedings until after the Indians had won the World Series to make the team more attractive to potential buyers, as well as drive up the price.¹¹⁸ While Bill Veeck might have always preached that the fans were always right and did anything to please them, he ultimately needed them to run a business. After Bill Veeck left Cleveland, there was a series of team owners and managers who ran the Indians, many of whom did not have Veeck's talent to court the fans. Without Veeck this set off a string of declining interest in the team—making Municipal Stadium an unpopular place. With this change in business practices, along with racial and ethnic tensions that exploded in Cleveland after years of quietly building in the background, Cleveland fans started to yearn for a nostalgic in baseball to help heal the wounds of these tensions, especially focusing in on the League Park era, even if the notion of business, ethnic, and racial tensions were also evident during the earlier days of Cleveland baseball.

¹¹⁸ Veeck, *Veeck—As in Wreck*, 208.

CHAPTER IV: USING THE MEMORY OF BASEBALL AS A CIVIC BALM

In the 1940s, millions of Cleveland baseball fans trekked to Municipal Stadium because they wanted to see the Indians play baseball. Whether this desire to attend a game was because of the integration of African Americans into the sport, the cohesiveness among baseball fans, clever marketing strategies, or a winning baseball team, baseball was a balm that appeared to unite many Clevelanders. Cleveland baseball was popular enough to inspire some Ohio political leaders to court Indians owner Bill Veeck to run for the United States Senate seat against powerful Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft. Ultimately, Veeck chose not to run, he was sure he could have beaten Taft, arguing in his autobiography:

You still don't think I'd have a chance against Taft? Well then, you weren't in Cleveland during those three and a half years when the Indians pushed world news from the front pages. You weren't in Cleveland in those years when the Indians brought the people of the city so close together that it was as if everybody was living in everybody else's parlor. You weren't in Cleveland in those days of cheer and triumph when every day was Mardi Gras and every fan a king.¹¹⁹

Baseball in Cleveland during this time period helped create a *feeling* of cohesiveness and unity, whether one was black or white or belonged to a another ethnic group. Baseball gave fans positive feelings about their hometown—whether they enjoyed watching the sport at League Park or Municipal Stadium. However, baseball did not make Cleveland's racial or ethnic tensions simply disappear. Rather, the memories of a more positive piece of history—the local baseball team—helped cover up tensions both outside and inside the sport itself, especially if one considers the death of Ray Chapman or the arrival of Larry

¹¹⁹ Veeck, *Veeck—As in Wreck*, 132.

Doby. After the 1948 season, sustained success for the Cleveland Indians was elusive and when the issues of race and ethnicity that had been quietly middling in the background exploded in Cleveland—fans began to yearn for a nostalgic time in baseball—even if there truly never was one. Fans wanted to recall a time when the hot button issues of the modern era were not so pressing or prevalent in the news, hoping that the balm of baseball would help these issues once again disappear from the front page of the newspaper.¹²⁰

Troubled Owners, Bad Ticket Receipts

The Indians were owned by various syndicates following Bill Veeck's ownership of the team. The first of these syndicates to lead the Indians was known as the Big Seven. This group obtained their name because it was led by seven business leaders in Cleveland with ties to investment banking firms and insurance companies. From the outset, the new ownership group found they could not fill Municipal Stadium with fans. Part of the reason was that just as the arrival of the mass-produced automobile rendered League Park obsolete, another mass-produced item started to change the way fans interacted with Cleveland's baseball stadium—the household television set.¹²¹ While the Indians had some success in the 1950s, including competing in the 1954 World Series, the franchise began to see a decrease in attendance partly because fans began watching televised baseball games, rather than making a pilgrimage to the stadium. Still, the main factor for

¹²⁰ Robert Elias, "A Fit for a Fractured Society: Baseball and the American Promise," in *Baseball and the American Dream*, ed. Robert Elias (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 9.

¹²¹ Jack Torrey, *Endless Summers: The Fall and Rise of the Cleveland Indians* (South Bend, IN: Diamond Communications, 1996), 48-49.

the decrease in fan attendance was due to the fact that the Indians were not competitive on the baseball diamond.

Fans want to see a winning team, or they will not support the product put on the baseball field with their disposable income. Ownership is often quick to appease fans, as well as the local media, by claiming that they have the ability and financial means to make the team a winner. By 1957, fans and media members began to grow critical of the owners because the team was not competing at a championship level. One member of the ownership syndicate, former baseball player Hank Greenberg, was bothered by the criticism of the fans and media so much that he pushed for retribution on the Cleveland fans by attempting to persuade other members of the syndicate to move the Indians to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Greenberg believed the Minneapolis media would be kinder and the fans would be more enthusiastic, as opposed to the negativity surrounding the team in Cleveland.¹²² Other members of the group were not easily convinced by Greenberg's proposal, believing that they could still right the ship in Cleveland. The remaining board members argued that it was not the negative fans or media hurting the team, but it was Greenberg's open hostility towards the press and fan base as the main factor behind the anemic attendance figures. Using Greenberg's problems with the fans and media, the ownership group decided to dismiss Greenberg and bring in another showman, Frank Lane, to help manage the Indians' affairs. Lane was brash and bold; he believed that doing *anything* to improve the Indians was better than simply doing *nothing*—even if the plans were rather ill-advised. Lane was known for constantly trading players, engaging in fights with umpires, and even yelling at the players on the field. However, the ownership

¹²² Ibid., 49.

group thought Lane was exactly the man they needed to bring the fans back—perhaps sensing they had found their own version of Bill Veeck.¹²³

Upon Lane's arrival in Cleveland, fans and members of the ownership team thought Lane was on the right track after taking over for Greenberg in 1957. By 1959, the Indians were competitive for the first time since 1954, as well as attracting large crowds at Municipal Stadium to see the winning team. When the Indians did not make the World Series in 1959, Lane believed he would ensure that the Indians would compete for the World Series in 1960 by trading fan favorite, outfielder Rocky Colavito, to the Detroit Tigers, since according to Lane, making *any* trade was better than making *no* trade. Lane's strategy backfired, as Colavito was so popular that Indians franchise officials banked on attracting one-million fans to Municipal Stadium in 1960 on the sheer fact that the fans simply wanted to see Rocky or The Rock play baseball.¹²⁴ When Colavito was traded fans did not respond to the news lightly. Indians fan Veronica Hughes, recalling memories some fifty-two years after the fact, was still heated about Lane's actions, "Frank Lane became known as 'Trader Lane' for trading Colavito. We felt we would have had a [baseball] dynasty [with Colavito]. It was not a good trade. There were editorials in the local papers about how bad the deal was for Cleveland."¹²⁵

While baseball teams traditionally want to make front-page news for winning the World Series, the Indians made front-page news in April of 1960 for an infamous reason—trading Colavito. Writers at the *Plain Dealer* noted, "...Yesterday the Rocky

¹²³ Ibid., 58.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 56.

¹²⁵ Interview of Veronica Hughes conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 17, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Colavito Fan Club was dissolved. In its place came the Lane Haters Club.”¹²⁶ Aside from mentioning the development of clubs devoted to the hatred of Frank Lane, the paper simply ran responses from fans who called the *Plain Dealer* to complain. Some fans vowed never to return to Municipal Stadium. A female fan stated that the members of her Rocky Colavito fan club were rebranding themselves as the “Lane Haters.”¹²⁷ Other fans were rather blunt in their assessments of the trade mentioning, “Lane has just lost himself 250,000 nickels,” and finally, one fan simply stated that it was, “The most stupid thing I ever heard.”¹²⁸

While Rocky Colavito was loved by many Cleveland fans both for his homerun hitting prowess and Italian heritage, trading Colavito was not the only disappointment among Cleveland fans caused by Frank Lane. He also traded Roger Maris to the New York Yankees in 1958. Maris broke Babe Ruth’s record for number of homeruns in a season in 1961 and went on to become an icon in baseball history for breaking the illustrious record. From the trades of both Colavito and Maris alone, journalist Jack Torry reflected on Lane’s legacy in Cleveland stating, “The panic-stricken Big Seven had foolishly turned over the Indians in 1957 to an emotional gambler... They wanted a sharp contrast to Hank Greenberg, and in that, they succeeded. Frank Lane’s trades set the team back for years.”¹²⁹ Lane’s management of selecting and trading players was ultimately not successful and did indeed set the team back in terms of being competitive, larger issues within the Cleveland community would ultimately damage the Indians fortunes.

¹²⁶ “Lane Blasted for ‘Pulling Rock’ With Rocky,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 18, 1960, 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹²⁹ Torry, *Endless Summers: The Fall and Rise of the Cleveland Indians*, 58.

1960s/1970s: Cleveland Unravels

By the 1960s, Municipal Stadium was already thirty years old. New stadiums were being constructed across the country. Political leaders in New Orleans even attempted to lure the Indians away from Cleveland by promising franchise officials huge crowds in the soon to be finished Superdome.¹³⁰ At the time, Cleveland city leaders could not afford to construct a new stadium for the Indians—as the city was engulfed with larger problems concerning race and neighborhood identity. In the 1940s and 50s, Cleveland politicians started an urban renewal program aimed at cleaning up tenement housing in the central city that had originally attracted immigrants from Europe and African Americans migrating from the south during the early part of the 20th century.¹³¹ Many displaced European immigrants moved from the tenement housing to newly expanding suburbs like Euclid, Parma, and Garfield Heights, African Americans funneled heavily into less expensive housing in Cleveland’s eastern neighborhood of Hough, home to League Park and once a predominately working to upper class, white neighborhood.¹³²

In Hough, following the urban renewal program, nearly 15,000 African Americans arrived in the neighborhood—exacerbating the tensions between upper and middle class whites and middle-class and poor blacks. During this time of changing demographics, many African Americans crowded into houses originally designed for single families, which landlords had subdivided into multi-family apartments. These hastily made living conditions, which were managed by slumlords, with many charging

¹³⁰ Schneider, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*, 334.

¹³¹ Doris O’Donnell, “Hough Fuse Has Sputtered for Years,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 27, 1966, 1.

¹³² Ibid.

exorbitant rental rates, helped to quickly reduce the overall standard of living in Hough. All the while, as Hough changed, whites fled the neighborhood to the expanding suburbs fearing lower property values because of the ramshackle nature of the remodeled houses that now dotted the streets of Hough. Left behind as whites moved to Parma and Euclid was an angry populace, with many believing they were being discriminated against because of the living conditions and alleged exploitative prices they were being charged at neighborhood eating and shopping establishments which were owned predominately by whites.¹³³

After many years of these conditions in Hough, tensions were high, with neighborhood residents ready to explode over the substandard living conditions and lack of economic opportunity. On July 18, 1966, after an African American male was refused water at a bar on East 79th Street and Hough Avenue, just a few blocks east of League Park, the neighborhood erupted in violence.¹³⁴ While the violence was not supported by all Hough residents, it was a microcosm of the tensions between blacks and whites in Cleveland, mainly concerning the lack of quality housing and the average six thousand dollar income gap between city families and suburban families.¹³⁵ During the riots, which lasted over a six day period, stores were looted in full daylight, homes were burned, four people were killed, and the Ohio National Guard was called in to restore order. Cleveland Mayor Ralph S. Locher, who had previously been derided for failing to see the warning signs in Hough, called the events a “tragic day in the life of our city.”¹³⁶ Various

¹³³ Todd M. Michney, “Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland’s Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising,” *Journal of Urban History* 32, no. 3 (2006): 415.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 171.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 167.

historians have noted that the mood in Cleveland during this time period was one of “fear and futility,” noting that it would take fifteen years for Cleveland to “regroup and survive.”¹³⁷ Some neighborhood merchants quit and left Hough entirely.¹³⁸ Earl Garner, the owner of meat market in the neighborhood stated, “They [blacks of Hough] say we are capitalizing on them. Well that’s not true. When I first moved in here 19 years ago, there were very few Negroes. They came to me. I didn’t come to them.”¹³⁹ Garner’s quotation reveals the lack of understanding of white residents in Cleveland regarding the tensions that had been quietly building in Cleveland, which eventually led to the Hough Riots, and left Cleveland drastically changed. Cleveland’s unity over baseball was not the end-all solution to the societal ills that plagued the city.

The Hough Riots could be studied simply within the neighborhood itself, yet an interesting facet of the Hough Riots was that while four people were killed over the six days of rioting, one of the deaths occurred not in Hough, but in Cleveland’s Little Italy neighborhood, forty blocks east of Hough. Residents in Little Italy saw the events in Hough as a direct result of the demographic change that had been underway since the 1940s in Cleveland. Residents of Little Italy desired to keep their neighborhood from experiencing the same sort of upheaval and disturbance that occurred in Hough. Some Little Italy citizens believed they had a duty to protect their largely white neighborhood from encroachment by African Americans out of fear that if blacks entered Little Italy, the same sort of neighborhood disintegration would occur in their community as it did in Hough. During the course of the six days of rioting in Hough, an African American male

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Michael D. Roberts and James Van Vilet, “Plunderers Profit; Merchants Quit,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966, 1.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

was killed in Little Italy after dropping a coworker off at his home in the neighborhood. The murder was not over anything he had personally done, but rather a symbolic gesture towards other blacks not to make it a habit of entering the neighborhood in the future.¹⁴⁰ This death, while included in the death toll from the Hough Riots, notably did not take place in the neighborhood where the actual rioting occurred, but an entirely different section of Cleveland, providing evidence that while Clevelanders celebrated unity during the Indians 1948 World Series championship and enjoyed the nostalgia surrounding baseball at League Park, racial and ethnic tensions had been quietly building in the city during these nostalgic times, ultimately, ending in a explosion of violence in the city.

The 1960s and eventually the 1970s, proved to be a dark spot in Cleveland's history because of the divisive issues of race and neighborhood identity. However, while baseball might have been a balm for building tensions prior to the critical year of 1966, city leaders like City Council members Fannie Lewis and John Cimperman and residents once again looked to memories of baseball fans to help the city move forward, especially as Cleveland businesses moved to the suburbs. One business, located near League Park, the National Screw and Manufacturing Company, moved to the Cleveland suburb of Mentor, taking 1,000 jobs with them to the outskirts of the Cleveland-metro area.¹⁴¹ With the loss of tax revenues from businesses and residents, Cleveland faced a financial crisis and in 1978 became the first city in the United States to default on its loans since the Great Depression.¹⁴² The mood of "fear and futility" that began with the 1966 Hough

¹⁴⁰ Todd M. Michney, "Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland's Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising," 404-405.

¹⁴¹ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 171.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 178.

Riots deepened throughout the 1970s, with Cleveland, once America's sixth largest city, becoming its tenth largest by the 1980 census.¹⁴³

A Return to League Park

In August of 1979, thirteen years after the Hough Riots, the League Park Restoration Committee was formed to restore the remnants of League Park in the Hough Neighborhood.¹⁴⁴ Certainly, the history of League Park looms large in local lore, especially the focus on the players who played at the former stadium. Perhaps the most intriguing piece of League Park lore is that the structure or shell of League Park remains untouched at East 66th and Lexington, as the stadium was never entirely torn down after the Indians abandoned it in 1946. Today, if anyone visits the corner where League Park once stood, they will find relics of the former ballpark, including the ticket office. Most importantly according to some, is that the actual field where the game was played on survives, untouched since 1946. Considering that the League Park site has not been drastically changed or built on since the final game was played there, the site has a unique historical quality. Tim Wiles, a baseball historian for the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, visited the remains of League Park with twenty other historians and stated about his visit, "I just got out there and felt a very powerful historical-slash-archaeological presence."¹⁴⁵ The memory and legacy of League Park had faded into the background, but the stadium still had a faint heartbeat, waiting for a revival

¹⁴³ Ibid., 179.

¹⁴⁴ Tony Grossi, "League Park Day recalls past's best," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 25, 1979, 1-C.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Ott, "Restoration of League Park finally set to Begin this Year," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 26, 2012, B6.

and Hough residents saw the restoration of League Park after the Hough Riots as not only restoring a piece of baseball history, but also their neighborhood.

Beginning with the first restoration efforts in 1979, multiple attempts have been made to restore League Park, ultimately in hopes of spurring a renaissance in the scarred neighborhood. One of the original leaders of the restoration effort, John Cimperman, a Cleveland City Councilman, hoped to build on the memory of League Park, advocating the benefit of the restoration could stir a positive change in Hough, "...We want to use the nostalgia of the park to possibly serve as inspiration to young athletes."¹⁴⁶ Even though nostalgia can be a powerful force in rallying the community around a goal, money has always been front and center in the efforts to bring League Park back to working order. Many times the lack of money has hindered the many different attempts to resuscitate League Park. After the first efforts in 1979 failed, Cleveland City Councilwoman, Fannie Lewis got involved, making the restoration efforts a goal of her political career until she died in 2008.¹⁴⁷ In 1988, Lewis spoke out: "I'm angry about this [failure to get League Park restored]. We have the plans to fix it up, but we have not been able to get the city to move. The deterioration is bad, but it's not beyond repair. League Park is a memorable place for people from all over the city."¹⁴⁸ Lewis, who represented the Hough neighborhood on Cleveland City Council, saw the restored park as a showpiece for the neighborhood and the entire city. However, getting people to support the efforts, including the City of Cleveland, was a hard sell because city leaders were

¹⁴⁶ Tony Grossi, "League Park Day recalls past's best," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 25, 1979, 1C.

¹⁴⁷ Michael O'Malley and Jim Nichols, "Neighborhood mourns loss of its 'warrior'," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 12, 2008, A1.

¹⁴⁸ Brent Larkin, "League Park should be more than asterisk in Indians' history," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 12, 1988, 2-B.

trying to keep the Indians from moving to another town by raising money to build a new stadium to replace Municipal Stadium.¹⁴⁹

The Politics and Business of Memory

By the 1970s, Municipal Stadium was also badly deteriorating and the City of Cleveland could not afford to renovate the ballpark after dealing with the Hough Riots and the ensuing departure of 100,000 city residents to the suburbs.¹⁵⁰ If the city did not have the money to efficiently run Municipal Stadium, which might have compelled the Indians to leave the city because of the decrepit conditions of the stadium, clearly, they did not have the money to restore League Park. As such, the City of Cleveland worked out a deal with the Cleveland Browns football franchise to run Municipal Stadium. The Browns, who used the stadium during the winter football season for home games, subleased the stadium from the city under the condition the Browns would renovate it. In exchange for spending money to fix Municipal Stadium, the Browns were allowed to collect the revenue from ticket sales sold for newly constructed luxury lodges that they agreed to build, as well as most of the money brought in through food and beverage sales, leaving the Indians largely unable to reap benefits from the new lease arrangement.¹⁵¹ This new arrangement frustrated various owners of the Indians because they felt they could not properly run their business without new revenue streams. Many times, different owners threatened to move the team unless a better deal was worked out to include the Indians in the distribution of profits from ticket and food sales.

¹⁴⁹ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 178-179.

¹⁵⁰ Torry, *Endless Summers: The Fall and Rise of the Cleveland Indians*, 148-149.

¹⁵¹ Torry, *Endless Summers: The Fall and Rise of the Cleveland Indians*, 150.

The debate over the inclusion of the Indians in dividing Municipal Stadium profits finally came to an impasse in 1986 when Dick Jacobs, a Cleveland businessman, who built his business empire by developing shopping malls, bought the Indians and demanded a new stadium for his team. Tim Jurkovic, a sociology professor at Bowling Green State University Firelands, who has written extensively on ballparks, noted, “Dick Jacobs and Fay Vincent [former Baseball Commissioner] put a gun to Cleveland’s head—threatening ‘build us’ a new stadium or else we won’t be playing baseball in Cleveland by the 21st century.”¹⁵² Motivated regarding the potential that Indians might become another city’s civic treasure, a deal between the city, the Indians, and Cuyahoga County, where Cleveland is located, was arranged to put a sin tax on beer and wine before the voters of Cuyahoga County in May of 1990. If the measure passed, the extra revenue would go towards the construction of a new ballpark.¹⁵³ While the ballot measure passed, it did so very narrowly, with Cleveland’s central city, like the Hough Neighborhood, voting largely against the measure and Cuyahoga County’s wealthier suburbs voting in-favor of the new tax.¹⁵⁴ The tensions that bubbled in the 1966 Hough Riots were on-display with the vote on the sin tax. Jurkovic noted:

The campaign was a scam. They [politicians and Dick Jacobs] exploited fears concerning the Indians moving and the nostalgia and myth surrounding the team. When the new stadium was built it got people feeling proud and nostalgic because of the stadium’s exposed steel [harkening back to Cleveland’s days as a leading steel producer in the country]...but ultimately building new stadiums is irrational, priorities get

¹⁵² Interview of Tim Jurkovic conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 5, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio (via phone).

¹⁵³ Torry, *Endless Summers: The Fall and Rise of the Cleveland Indians*, 224.

¹⁵⁴ Interview of Tim Jurkovic conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 5, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio (via phone).

out of whack...the tax abatements given for the new stadium has cost Cleveland City Schools nearly nine million dollars.¹⁵⁵

The notion that the building of Cleveland's new baseball stadium, which would become known as Jacobs Field after Indians owner, Dick Jacobs, was a bad deal for the city clearly highlights the business side of baseball and the power of nostalgia in helping to facilitate a business deal. Indians franchise officials and politicians preyed on fans' emotional attachment to the team to get a deal done—even if it came at the expense at the most disadvantaged residents of the city. During this time, many of the city's least prosperous neighborhoods saw cuts in the social safety net and little to no investments in the public school system. Some commentators have even advocated that the negative moniker applied to African Americans as “welfare kings and queens” should instead be applied to the fans who now occupy the box seats, luxury and owner's suites at the subsidized stadium.¹⁵⁶

However, when Jacobs Field opened in 1994, fans embraced the new stadium because it incorporated nostalgic elements from Cleveland's past, such as the stadium's steel frame. Aside from the critical aspects of the stadium's construction, media members and politicians felt that the new ballpark helped transition Cleveland from a city marred by racial issues to America's “comeback city.” Observers noted that the ballpark brought fans (and their money) to the downtown area—helping to bolster the region's economic footprint.¹⁵⁷ Notably, fans did bring their money downtown, being so enamored with the ballpark, whether because of the exposed steel or the abundance of bleacher seats

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Rosensweig, *Retro Ballparks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 141.

¹⁵⁷ Miller and Wheeler, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, 192-193.

designed to appeal to Cleveland's working-class roots, that between 1995 and 2001 they purchased enough tickets to sellout 455 games straight. Because of the number of sellouts, Jacobs Field now features the number 455 next to the names of favorite Indians players like Doby, Speaker, and Feller—an homage to the fans who helped build the stadium and fill its seats on a nightly basis for six years.¹⁵⁸ By placing the fans alongside the memory of notable players, the fans have been embodied in the narrative of Cleveland baseball—giving them ownership of the story literally and figuratively—considering they helped to finance Municipal Stadium, but also more recently, Jacobs Field.

From the nostalgic elements incorporated at Jacobs Field, one of the centerpieces of the franchise's efforts to connect fans with the memory of Cleveland baseball was the development of a portion of the ballpark called Heritage Park, which tells the history of the Cleveland Indians and notable players who played for the team from its inception. One notable facet of Heritage Park is a relic from League Park. When the Indians permanently left League Park in 1946, a plaque that was dedicated to memory Ray Chapman in 1920 at League Park was also brought to Municipal Stadium to remind future generations of the former Indian who lost his life during a game. Sometime during the time the Indians played at Municipal Stadium, the plaque was taken down and placed in storage. Eventually, the plaque was rediscovered in 1994, as the Indians prepared to move to Jacobs Field. With the rediscovery of the memorial, plans were arranged to hang it up in the new ballpark, but mysteriously, the plaque was misplaced during the move and presumed lost to history. In 2007, when Indians officials were cleaning out a storage

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 169.

room at Jacobs Field, the plaque was found, albeit badly damaged. Considering the tragic story of Chapman, leaders within the Indians organization decided to restore it and hang it up in the Heritage Park section of Jacobs Field.¹⁵⁹ Certainly, if some were upset regarding the public financing of a stadium, the heritage of baseball in Cleveland was on full display at Jacobs Field—helping fans to better connect with the ballpark to a time when the public did not finance baseball stadiums, as was the case with League Park.

Aside from using the power of nostalgia to make the public financing of Jacobs Field more palatable to the fans and city residents, the memory of League Park was again used in 2008 to help fans better adjust to the renaming of Jacobs Field to Progressive Field, the first time in city history that a Cleveland ballpark would have a corporate nameplate. Ironically, while Progressive Insurance purchased the naming rights to the county-owned stadium for three point six million dollars per year over the course of a sixteen year contract, the owners of the Indians themselves pocketed the profits of the naming rights deal—not the taxpayers who helped finance the stadium.¹⁶⁰ While fans might grumble at the intermingling of business and baseball, evidenced most notably by politicians and business leaders arranging for the construction of new ballparks, Progressive Insurance issued a press release to tell fans they were a part of the fabric of Cleveland after purchasing the naming rights—seemingly to imply the corporate connection with the sport would not ruin baseball:

In March of 1937, Steve O'Neill was managing the Cleveland Indians, the team was at spring training in New Orleans and preparing for another

¹⁵⁹ Associated Press, “Indians Uncover Lost Chapman Plaque,” ESPN: MLB, <http://sports.espn.go/mlb/news/story?id=2818187> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁶⁰ Bill Lubinger, “Goodbye ‘Jake’ Say Hello to Progressive Field,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 12, 2008, A1.

season at League Park at Lexington and East 66th Street in Cleveland. At the same time, just a few blocks away on Euclid Avenue, two young Clevelanders, Jack Lewis and Joe Green, were starting a car insurance company known as Progressive. Now, 70 years later, two Cleveland institutions—the Cleveland Indians and Progressive—are joining forces.¹⁶¹

Progressive Insurance's purchasing of the naming rights was just another piece of the story to the larger connection between business and baseball, something that even dictated the construction of League Park in 1891. However, even the business side to baseball and the potential to draw huge profits off the sport, similar to Bill Veeck's tenure as Indians owner in the 1940s, would be the catalyst to a successful effort to actually restore League Park, not just implement elements of the former ballpark at Jacobs/Progressive Field.

Back to the Future

Much time has elapsed between the time of League Park and today, yet fans still have strong emotional attachments to the former ballpark, as evidenced by the many different attempts to restore the ballpark, and because a piece of League Park is interwoven within the Indians' current home. Prior to the start of 2010 Cleveland Indians' baseball season, Cleveland news station WEWS-TV profiled League Park, and in the report, journalist Leon Bibb noted:

At the old League Park, the wind blows toward the right field corner. Other than a plaque marking the field, here are not mementos of what happened there all those decades ago. But it is a historical fact; Major

¹⁶¹ Progressive Insurance, "Progressive Buys Naming Rights to Cleveland Indians' Ballpark," Insurance Journal, <http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2008/01/11/86337.htm> (accessed February 6, 2013).

League Baseball saw great baseball at the corner of East 66th and Lexington Avenue. The players are gone, but for those old enough to remember or who care to read history, the memories abound there. On a quiet afternoon, if you listen intently, you can almost hear the crack of the wooden bat on a leather-wrapped ball, sending the sphere far to the outfield. League Park is not dead yet, just sleeping through a long night.¹⁶²

The history associated with League Park has been a major factor in reviving the stadium. However, business has also played a major role. In January of 2012, the City of Cleveland finalized plans to begin restoration work on League Park after many years of failed projects, which began with the first restoration efforts in 1979. Fans and current Hough Neighborhood residents applauded the move—sensing a return of the elements that made League Park an iconic landmark in the minds of city residents and baseball fans alike.¹⁶³ The restoration of League Park was not simply about recreating feel good memories, but bringing tourism and business dollars to the city and specifically to the much maligned Hough Neighborhood. When ground was broken in October 2012 to restore League Park, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson said:

And when people come to Cleveland, they want to visit where those historical events happened; they can come here [to League Park]. [League Park] had the connectivity between past and present. There will be an active ballfield here, not only will it [the site] be a museum, but it will a ballfield so children, young people will play on this field.¹⁶⁴

Jackson's remarks advance the idea that while the renovated League Park will serve as a focal point for young children in the community, one of the larger reasons for the League

¹⁶² "Old Cleveland Indians Baseball Park is a Forgotten Corner of the City." *Live at Five*. News Channel 5. Cleveland, OH: WEWS, April 5, 2010.

¹⁶³ Thomas Ott, "Restoration of League Park finally set to Begin this Year," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 26, 2012, B6.

¹⁶⁴ Bob Fenner, "Cleveland's historic League Park to be restored," WEWS-TV: Newsnet 5, http://www.newsnet5.com/dpp/news/local_news/cleveland_metro/clevelands-historic-league-park-to-be-restored (accessed February 8, 2013).

Park restoration is rooted around history-based tourism. Just as businesses and team owners have attempted to use the balm of baseball to sell the public on stadiums financed by tax-payer dollars, tourism centered on nostalgia and memories can be used to bring outside money into a city, something that is already being done in Cleveland by the Baseball Heritage Museum, a museum dedicated to the history of baseball. The museum, located in former retail space, has helped revitalize a once blighted spot of Cleveland's Euclid Avenue, not unlike Jacobs/Progressive Field helped to restore another section of Cleveland's downtown core.¹⁶⁵

Essentially, through the rebirth of League Park, city leaders see the efforts as the cornerstone to the overall rebirth of the Hough neighborhood; much like their efforts have done in other parts of the city. In early 2013, the efforts of city leaders concerning League Park caught the attention of writers at *The New York Times*. Running an article titled, "Bringing Back History and a Neighborhood," the *Times* spotlighted not only the restoration efforts, but also the impact the repairs League Park was having on the neighborhood. Aside from renovations to League Park, improvements are currently being made to streets and landscaping, expensive houses are being constructed, and businesses are being encouraged to set up shop near the ballpark. Additionally, many of the construction jobs in the neighborhood are being subcontracted out to Cleveland small businesses, with some firms recruiting Hough residents to work the construction jobs.¹⁶⁶

Paul Gist, chairman of the League Park Heritage Committee, said, "This is important to

¹⁶⁵ Rosensweig, *Retro Ballparks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City*, 172.

¹⁶⁶ Hillel Kuttler, "Bringing Back History and a Neighborhood," *New York Times*, page 1, February 5, 2013.

us, to our neighborhood. We don't want just a ballpark; we want a revitalization.”¹⁶⁷ The restoration of League Park is a focal point for community members seeking urban renewal and the rebuilding of community identity through baseball nostalgia.

The power behind nostalgia might be a powerful force. However, some still wonder whether the stigma of the Hough Riots haunts the neighborhood and whether there might need to be more large-scale changes aside from the restoration of the ballpark, including new, updated school buildings.¹⁶⁸ When asked why the Cleveland Indians franchise was not involved with the restoration efforts, Cleveland journalist Terry Pluto noted that while the Indians are sponsoring efforts to bring the sport of baseball to inner-city youths, Hough is still a rough place and is immediately associated with the Hough Riots rather than League Park.¹⁶⁹ While the positive memory of League Park and the peaceful connotations of baseball might be stirring feelings of reassurance in Cleveland, the legacy of the Hough Riots might also be a factor in determining just how far history and baseball can be used to bring a community back to prominence. Certainly, the memories of a winning baseball team and favorite players might be an emotional wellspring. Just as the stories of Cleveland baseball in the 1920s and 1940s have been hallmarks of the team's success and helped to provide cohesion to the city, baseball does not truly collectively unite city residents, despite the stories of mythic proportions noted by fans, journalists, and even some historians. Baseball is engrained in the psyche of Americans, the sport has provided a sense of purpose to many cities across the United

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Ott, “Restoration of League Park finally set to Begin this Year,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 26, 2012, B6.

¹⁶⁸ Rosensweig, *Retro Ballparks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City*, 173-174

¹⁶⁹ Interview of Terry Pluto conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 13, 2012, Perrysburg, Ohio (via phone).

States and the ultimate long term benefits and consequences of baseball being used to rebuild Cleveland is a story that has yet to reach its denouement.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION: PERSPECTIVE ON BASEBALL AND MEMORY

Cleveland's connection to professional baseball is a story that has been interwoven between the city's history and the fans. At times the story has been controversial, considering the business driven-side to the sport, the racial and ethnic divisions within the city, or the neglect to blighted parts of town in-order to provide tax subsidies to wealthy team owners in hope of keeping the Indians in Cleveland. Fans have also been loosely united around the sport, even though it has been used as a balm to cover up larger, contextual issues. Indians fan Veronica Hughes notes that while these issues persist, the notion of a Cleveland fan ethic endures. According to Hughes, "There is always hope. Cleveland fans have a long memory and forgive a lot. Nobody gives up; it is a part of what Cleveland is."¹⁷⁰

Baseball might be considered America's national pastime, but it is best studied by exploring the sport at the local level. Fans give the sport meaning, allowing a patchwork of similar stories to be knitted across the United States concerning the common experience of baseball fans. This story has conflicted with the business of baseball and the controversial to city history, as seen from the example of Detroit and more specifically Cleveland. Baseball has been used an emotional glue to secure succeeding generations of loyal supporters, oftentimes effectively disguising the hard and unromantic business of sport and community identity. At the start of the 2013 baseball season marketing official with the Cleveland Indians released an advertising campaign using the nostalgia of Cleveland baseball to help sell tickets. In the advertisement Cleveland Indians manager, Terry Francona, who grew up in Cleveland, speaks directly to

¹⁷⁰ Interview of Veronica Hughes conducted by Matt Ferguson, December 17, 2012, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Cleveland fans. The commercial is largely an attempt to connect the passion of the fans with the city's tumultuous history. Francona states in the advertisement, "This is a town that doesn't give up. Being a Cleveland sports fan takes resilience. The passion is real. The fans are real. Cleveland is a 'Tribe' town."¹⁷¹ Calling Cleveland a "'Tribe' town" conveys the notion that Cleveland is personified by its baseball team and the city can resiliently recover from its past as a city teetering on the brink of destruction by connecting with the sport. As Hughes and Francona stated Cleveland baseball fans are "resilient," "they don't give up," similar to how the City of Cleveland has attempted to reinvent itself, not succumbing to its failures, by building Jacobs/Progressive Field and restoring League Park and using the nostalgia of baseball in an attempt to fix larger social issues.

Recommendations for Further Study/Research

To further develop this paper it would be beneficial to study the current nostalgic and history based marketing strategies being used by the Cleveland Indians. Studying this aspect would help develop the argument that while baseball is a business, fans also have strong emotional attachments to local teams, but as seen from the appeal by Francona, nostalgia can be used to sell a product. The use of baseball nostalgia has been similarly used by Cleveland city leaders like Cleveland's mayor, Frank Jackson, to help redevelop the blighted Hough Neighborhood through the restoration of League Park. Just like business and city politics have been closely associated throughout the history of the

¹⁷¹ Cleveland Indians, "Indians Press Release: Cleveland Indians unveil 'Tribe Town' branding campaign ahead of single-game ticket on-sale," Cleveland Indians, http://cleveland.indians.mlb.com/news/article.jsp?ymd=20130222&content_id=41878074&vkey=pr_cle&c_id=cle (accessed February 27, 2013).

Cleveland Indians; both sides are now separately using baseball nostalgia, but still the same business model of attempting to build profits by monopolizing on fan attachment to the team.

To better study this aspect of business and baseball, additional interviews with Cleveland city leaders like Mayor Frank Jackson and Hough-district Cleveland City Councilman T.J. Dow, would need to be conducted to gather their viewpoints regarding the benefits of restoring League Park. Interviews would also need to be conducted with Indians marketing officials as to why they think nostalgia sells. Explanations from both city and Indians officials might provide additional viewpoints to the argument that baseball, nostalgia, and business have a strong connection with each other and that beginning with the construction of League Park in 1891, these three themes have been constant to the present.

Interviews with current residents of the Hough Neighborhood would also add depth future research. One side note from the interview conducted with Cleveland journalist, Terry Pluto, was that he was somewhat skeptical as to the actual benefits of the League Park renovations. He wondered if the project would stir any real change to the Hough Neighborhood. However, one individual who was interviewed during the research process, but not included in the body of paper, was enthusiastic about the reconstruction at League Park because she noted that as an employee of a Hough branch of the Catholic Charities: Diocese of Cleveland, she saw the restoration of League Park as an excellent outlet for the neighborhood children who frequent the center. Further developing this contrast between the perceived benefits of using nostalgia/baseball to restore Hough will eventually need to be answered. Can there be actual benefits to the Hough community

because of the use of baseball and nostalgia? Or as I argue, is baseball simply a business and ultimately, does not unite or fix a community? However, because the League Park project is not complete, the benefits of renovating League Park are not fully known and can only be extrapolated by using previous evidence. This is a weakness of this paper, in that more time must pass before the actual impact of what a rejuvenated League Park will provide for Hough and Cleveland is known. Will refocusing on the Hough Neighborhood spur city leaders to fix broken public school buildings and implement other infrastructure improvements? These questions will need to be analyzed and answered by future scholars.

Strengths include that this paper expands on the scholarship already written on the darker side to baseball, including: Michael Butterworth, Tim Jurkovic, Daniel Rosensweig. Overall, this paper is unique when compared to the previously listed books and other books written on Cleveland and sports history (*Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1996*, *The Cleveland Indians Encyclopedia*) because it does not focus singularly one element like fan memory and nostalgia, but rather combines these elements to argue that baseball is a balm that covers up the hard and unromantic business of sport and community identity. This paper provides a scholarly addition to more positive written works on Cleveland sports history such as Terry Pluto's *Our Tribe*. Overall, unlike the work written by Pluto, the nostalgic elements surrounding the Cleveland Indians, League Park, Municipal Stadium, and Jacobs/Progressive Field are dissected, giving future scholars the ability to expand on this work by exploring how the business end of baseball and city politics might be continued in Cleveland, but also other cities across the United States who have seen teams uprooted and controversy over stadium construction. The

formula developed for this paper can be used to write about similar baseball-related issues in other communities, as baseball is a sport that needs to be analyzed on the local level, as evidenced by this study on Cleveland.

SOURCES AND ANNOTATIONS

Primary Sources

Autobiography:

Veeck, Bill, *Veeck—As in Wreck: The Autobiography of Bill Veeck with Ed Linn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

Bill Veeck was the owner of the Cleveland Indians from 1946 to 1949. In his autobiography, Veeck shares recollections from his life, ranging from his involvement running other sports teams like the Chicago Cubs, but also the Indians. Many of his stories focus on the events that made him known for being a pioneering baseball owner such as modernizing concession stands, courting female and African American fans, and overall, trying to better connect with baseball fans through promotional gimmicks (giveaways, concerts) hosted at baseball stadiums of the various teams he owned.

Veeck's autobiography was useful to my thesis because he was the owner of the Cleveland Indians who moved the team permanently from League Park to Municipal Stadium, ushering in a more business-drive model of baseball management. His recollections as owner of the Indians helped better contextualize the memories of fans who recall Veeck's ownership as a celebratory time, with the Indians winning the 1948 World Series. While Veeck did enjoy courting baseball fans, he ultimately needed them to turn a profit and his autobiography provides key points to this notion as Veeck refers to fans as customers and frequently comments on to the large attendance figures he helped facilitate during his ownership in Cleveland.

Personal Reflections/Diary Entries/Reprinted News Articles:

Harwell, Ernie, *Stories from My Life in Baseball* (Detroit: Detroit Free Press, 2001).

---, *Tuned To Baseball* (South Bend, IN: Diamond Communications, 1985).

Both of these books contain the reflections of former Detroit Tigers radio announcer Ernie Harwell. Harwell was known for being one of baseball's great storytellers. He even had a column in the *Detroit Free Press*, where he offered readers insight into his experiences broadcasting baseball games. Some of these columns were reprinted in these books. Harwell largely was known as baseball's ambassadors, writing (and speaking) about the simplicity and religious-like elements associated with the game.

Harwell's writings and personal stories not only helped convey one of my arguments that while baseball should be studied at the local level to better explore local phenomenon, stories from one locality can be found (albeit somewhat differently) in different communities across the United States. Just as Cleveland fans place religious-like sentiments around their team, other baseball

fans, including a prominent booster (Harwell), do as well. Harwell's use of religious themes, including reading a *Bible* verse to open each broadcast season, helped emphasize the point as to why baseball is deep-seeded in a given community, the fans are faithful—they figuratively worship at the local stadium.

Stanton, Tom, *The Final Season* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001).

Tom Stanton, a Detroit journalist, chronicled all eighty-one Detroit Tigers home games in 1999, the year Tiger Stadium closed before the Tigers moved to a modern ballpark. Stanton is also a Tigers fan, so he found himself in a unique position of trying to remain objective regarding the closing of the stadium, but also staying mindful of the nostalgic elements associated with the structure. Much of Stanton's book, while providing a narrative from each game in 1999, usually deviates from the actual game, to instead focus on the memories of growing up at the stadium, where oftentimes the game simply became a backdrop to the birthdays, anniversaries, and family get-togethers that were being celebrated at the stadium.

This book is not specific to Cleveland, but it helped me develop the argument that while baseball fans attach strong meanings to baseball stadiums, they ultimately get knocked-down and replaced by modern structures, because team owners want to make upgrades (business suites, fancy restaurants, additional amusements) to attract more fans to their businesses, because ultimately, in the end baseball is a business, where decisions are based on the bottom line, regardless of fan attachment.

Memoirs:

Kearns Goodwin, Doris, *Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

Pluto, Terry, *Our Tribe: A Baseball Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

Both memoirs by Kearns Goodwin and Pluto are similar. Pluto details growing up an Indians fan in Cleveland, while Kearns Goodwin focuses on being a Dodgers fan in Brooklyn. Each author details their favorite memories of growing up baseball fans while also being mindful that there were negatives associated with following the Indians and Dodgers. Pluto describes poor management decisions by Indians officials during the 1970s and Kearns Goodwin writes about the Dodgers moving from Brooklyn to Los Angeles in 1957.

Both authors are more nostalgic in their respective works. While Pluto is a journalist and Kearns Goodwin a historian, their books are memoirs, so naturally they are more positive regarding their hometown baseball teams. I used their books to complement the interviews I conducted with Indians fans to help develop common themes regarding fan attachment, civic devotion, and the fan disappointment when their favorite team does not meet their expectations. Their work also helped me remember that fan attachment is real, that the stories associated with teams like the Indians are emotional and raw, something I needed to be careful of when writing about the

critical, business aspect of baseball, in-that I could not entirely discount the nostalgic elements associated with baseball.

Collection of Interviews:

Ritter, Lawrence S., *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984).

In the 1960s, Lawrence Ritter traveled the country making contact with baseball players who played during the supposed golden age of baseball in the early 1900s. Ritter wanted to interview former ballplayers like Bill Wambsganss, Stan Coveleski, and Hank Greenberg before they died, as he thought their contributions to the game as star athletes were so great, but worried that they might become overshadowed by modern players. After Ritter interviewed these players, he transcribed them into book form, letting the voices of the players tell the history of the early, nostalgic days of baseball.

I used Ritter's interview with Bill Wambsganss, a member of Cleveland's 1920 World Series Championship team. Wambsganss was an eye-witness account to the proceedings of the World Series played at League Park. This interview provided details about Cleveland fan reaction to the Indians winning the series and how exuberant fans were regarding having a championship caliber team like the 1920 Indians associated with their hometown. The interview with Wambsganss was important to my work because it helped explain why fans whitewash negative stories concerning their favorite team, because nostalgic, exciting memories from the 1920 season, a topic explored in Mike Sowell's *The Pitch that Killed*, a secondary source on the more negative aspects of the 1920 baseball season in Cleveland.

Interviews:

Homer Rae, 17 July 2001

Tim Jurkovic, 5 December 2012

Terry Pluto, 13 December 2012

Veronica Hughes, 17 December 2012

Lucy DiFranco, 20 January 2013

These interviews (except for Homer Rae, which was a recording provided to me by his family) were conducted by the author after approval from the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board. The interviews with Pluto and Jurkovic were arranged because I considered them experts on the subject matter, while the interviews with Hughes and DiFranco were arranged after suggestions by colleagues in the BGSU History Department, who were familiar with my work and recommended fans they thought might be interested in being interviewed for this project. These interviews were conducted either by phone or in-person. Each

interview, whether the person was a fan, journalist, or scholar, lasted roughly thirty minutes to one hour. Questions ranged from fan memories, current scholarship on baseball, and debates surrounding the use of baseball and nostalgia.

Rae, Hughes, and DiFranco are all Indians fans. Rae attended games at League Park. Hughes and DiFranco attended games at Municipal Stadium. Their voices helped provide new information about fan experiences at these stadiums. I was able to obtain more than just a quick one-line from a newspaper interview. The interviews with Pluto and Jurkovac were more serious. Pluto is a journalist who analyzes current trends in fan attitudes toward Cleveland baseball. He provided a counterweight to the nostalgic fans I interviewed. Jurkovac's analysis on the negatives associated with stadium construction (specifically pertaining to Jacobs/Progressive Field) helped to add more heft behind the analysis from other scholars like Michael Butterworth and Daniel Rosensweig.

Magazines:

Sports Illustrated

Sports Illustrated features interviews with former sports stars, profiling them and asking them where are they now, as well as to recollect on their past days as a professional athlete. These interviews are individual stories within the larger magazine and are often only a page or two long, giving the reader a quick reconnection with a former athlete.

For my research, I used past editions of *Sports Illustrated* from 1956 and 1972. Articles from these two years dealt with a player from the 1919 Chicago White (Black) Sox Scandal and Carl Mays' association with the death of Cleveland shortstop Ray Chapman in 1920. These interviews were conducted with people associated with these events after time had elapsed when journalists first reported them. The time differential allowed for the long-term consequences of these events to be known, including the less nostalgic side of baseball to be developed. Having players reveal a darker side to baseball helped me develop the argument that while fans hold certain events in their minds fondly, they often leave out the actual or full history in their recollections.

Newspapers:

Afro-American (Baltimore, Maryland)

Cleveland Plain Dealer

Milwaukee Journal

New York Times

Painesville Telegraph (Ohio)

Providence Evening Tribune

Spokane Spokesman Review

USA Today

Newspapers are often considered to be the first-draft of history. News articles contain voices from eyewitnesses; experts involved with the events being reported, as well as the facts and figures about a certain event. Original newspaper reporting about an event can then be compared with how the events later shaped future events, allowing the long-term consequences to be identified and contrasted regarding the original expectations for how an event would have ideally shaped history when first reported.

In my research, I relied heavily on articles from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* since my paper is specific to Cleveland. I used articles from 1891 (the opening to League Park) to 2012 (League Park reconstruction). I did not simply use one article from the day of the event or even just the front-page headlines. I looked at articles from dates preceding the main event and those following the event, whether it was the 1920 World Series, opening of Municipal Stadium, or the Hough Riots. For these events, I went beyond the headlines and explored articles within the body of the newspaper and articles from editions that preceded/followed the events to make connections as to why a certain event may have occurred and how the long-term consequences would impact the overall narrative concerning nostalgia, business, and baseball. The Cleveland Public Library's Sports Research Center has a searchable text database of the entire run of the *Plain Dealer*, which allowed me to research keywords and dates. While I used mainly articles from the *Plain Dealer*, at times when I was looking for more detail about a certain event than the *Plain Dealer* provided, I used the Google News Archive to search for more information from regional papers (*Afro-American*, *Milwaukee Journal*, *Painesville Telegraph*, *Providence Evening Tribune*, *Spokane Spokesman Review*) and national ones (*USA Today* and *New York Times*) to obtain additional perspectives on how outside news media was covering events like the League Park restoration and death of Ray Chapman.

News Reports:

WPSU-TV State College, Pennsylvania, 9 July 2009

WEWS-TV Cleveland, 5 April 2010

WJW-TV Cleveland, 26 January 2012

News reports from television stations are important when describing a current news event, as they often provide analysis from city politicians about why they are promoting a certain program. Since more and more media is becoming in electronic in nature, these news reports help supplement newspaper articles.

These news reports came from Cleveland news stations and one public television station in State College, Pennsylvania. The reports from Cleveland detailed the League Park restoration and

featured interviews with Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and Hough residents. Their voices added to the interviews I conducted with fans, as it allowed me to add the voice of Cleveland residents who are actually vested in the renovation project. Also, the report from WPSU-TV detailed fan devotion to stadiums, as the emphasis of the program was on the notion of “cathedrals of the game,” again allowing me to probe the nostalgic elements of fan enthusiasm with business and community identity.

Publications:

1995 Cleveland Indians Yearbook

2008 Cleveland Indians Yearbook

These yearbooks are official publications of the Cleveland Indians Baseball Company. They are marketed to fans prior to the start of each baseball season to help generate fan enthusiasm about the players and history of the franchise. Articles are written by paid members of the Indians organization and often feature fan lore surrounding favorite players, mythical seasons, as well as information about purchasing season tickets and upcoming special promotions. These yearbooks have been produced since 1948 and the Cleveland Public Library’s Sports Research Center has a complete collection.

Two yearbooks provided important evidence to my argument concerning mythic notions surrounding baseball and the more divisive issues surrounding neighborhood identity/city history/purity of baseball. The yearbook from 1995 featured a story on the 1920 Cleveland Indians, describing the players as restoring trust in the sport following the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. The 2008 edition featured the story of Joe Gordon purposely (not factual) striking out after Larry Doby’s first game to make him feel better. However, when researching beyond a marketing publication, using interviews, other scholarship (Mike Sowell’s book), and newspaper articles, these stories are not true and only serve to make baseball a balm for community members.

Websites:

Bible Gateway (<http://www.biblegateway.com>)

Cleveland Indians (<http://www.indians.com>)

Cleveland Memory Project (<http://www.clevelandmemory.org>)

Detroit Tigers (<http://www.tigers.com>)

ESPN (<http://www.espn.go.com>)

Insurance Journal (<http://www.insurancejournal.com>)

WEWS-TV (<http://www.newsnet5.com>)

WKSU-Radio (<http://www.wksu.org>)

Yahoo! Sports (<http://www.sports.yahoo.com>)

Part of my thesis deals with current events (circa 2012), so I had to find information produced by companies and politicians to emphasize the point I wanted to argue regarding nostalgic-based marketing strategies of baseball. Many of the press releases issued by teams and other companies are posted on their websites. A second type of website I used was from institutions that have digitized their collections, to allow for better access, enabling me to search an online database instead of traveling to an archive to physically view the artifact.

Websites from the Cleveland Indians and Detroit Tigers contained press releases concerning new marketing strategies they officials were using to garner fan support by emphasizing team history, a key point in my paper, and partly argued by Rosensweig. The website from the Insurance Journal featured a press release from Progressive Insurance after they bought the naming rights to Jacobs Field. The press release was largely an attempt to placate fans about a giant corporation being associated with their hometeam, by stating that Progressive Insurance opened their first office near League Park. The Cleveland Memory Project is a collection of historic Cleveland photographs that have been digitized by Cleveland State University. These photos helped me better describe the League Park neighborhood, but also give readers a better understanding of the events described by including some of these photos in the appendices of this thesis. Other websites (Yahoo!, WKSU, WEWS) were online news articles that focused on the tearing down of Tiger Stadium and reconstruction of League Park. Using these articles helped supplement the news reports I used in this paper, allowing me to better argue how tearing down historic stadiums or rebuilding them can be a contentious issue at times.

Secondary Sources

Books:

Amato, Joseph A., *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

Boswell, Thomas, *Why Time Begins on Opening Day* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

Butterworth, Michael L., *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity During the War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2010).

Congdon, Lee, *Baseball and Memory* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2011).

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APPENDIX A



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

DATE: November 29, 2012

TO: Matt Ferguson, M.A.

FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [378327-2] Baseball as Community Identity: Cleveland, Ohio, 1891-2012

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: November 25, 2012

EXPIRATION DATE: November 5, 2013

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 13 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on November 5, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

APPENDIX B



League Park—Baseball at the Corner of East 66th and Lexington: 1935

“League Park Ticket Booth and Entrance Areas”

Cleveland Press Collection

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University



A Cleveland railway or streetcar leaves League Park: Date Unknown

“Cleveland Railway Car 371”

Special Collection—Michael Schwartz Library

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University

APPENDIX C



Cleveland Municipal Stadium opens in-front of a crowd of 80,184: July 31, 1932

“The Cleveland Indians play the Philadelphia Athletics at the first-ever baseball game at Cleveland Municipal Stadium”

Cleveland Press Collection

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University



A group of women attend a game at Municipal Stadium: 1957

“Four Women under Blanket”

Special Collection—Michael Schwartz Library

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University

APPENDIX D



National Guardsmen keep guard during the Hough Riots: July 24, 1966

“Ohio National Guard members take cover from the rain”

Cleveland Press Collection

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University



Two men loot Hough businesses during the riots: July 19, 1966

“Two men looting following the riots”

Cleveland Press Collection

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University

APPENDIX E



A promotional postcard used by the Cleveland Indians in 1994 to sell season tickets to their new ballpark, Jacobs Field: Circa 1993-1994

"Wish You Were Here"

Postcards of Cleveland Collection

Cleveland Memory Project—Cleveland State University