To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Brian D. DiBartolo entitled "Minor League Baseball in the Sunbelt: The Historical Geography of the Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Geography.

Leonard W. Brinkman, Jr.,
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Charles S. Aiken, Committee Member

Thomas L. Bell, Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL IN THE SUNBELT: THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CLUBS

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Brian D. DiBartolo
December 1999

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and grandparents

Mrs. and Mr. Cathy and Cosimo DiBartolo

Mrs. and Mr. Angela and Fortunato "Freddie" DiBartolo

Mrs. Kitty Engel

and

the late Charlie Engel

who have made this world a better place to live.

ABSTRACT

The Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs has been in existence since 1964. Although a history of the league has been recently completed, there has yet to be a study about the changes in the league's geographical structure. Over the last thirty years, twenty-one different cities have been home to Southern League ballclubs. This thesis proposes to examine the historical geography of the league from its promotion to Double-A status in 1964 through the 1999 season while examining the relationship between the location of the ballparks, both past and present.

The study will focus on the historical trends of franchise shifts to larger cities within the South and will focus on shifting of the ballpark locationss to suburban sites or sites with excellent freeway access. Since its inception in 1964, this latest incarnation of the Southern League has migrated from small Southern cities to some of the largest metropoli the South has to offer. In addition, the sites of Southern League ballparks have gradually shifted from locations near their downtowns to suburban sites with easier automobile access. This move to the suburbs is not a strike against the great history of baseball, but a response to the changing geography of the Southern city, both in population distribution and economic dominance. The move to the suburbs mirrors the movement of retail, corporate and other entertainment establishments that have been part of the suburban landscape for decades.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to all the many people who have assisted me throughout my graduate career at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. First, I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Leonard W. Brinkman, Jr. and my Thesis Committee, Tom L. Bell and Charles S. Aiken for their patience and assistance throughout the thesis writing process and for those times when there was no process of which to speak. Dr. Brinkman's scholarly insights and opinions were valuable for me and helped me become a better academic writer. His numerous rewrites were very important to my learning process and helped me delve deeper into the geographic impact that new stadia had caused. Tom Bell led me to numerous references and different angles for looking at changes in, not just the stadia shifts, but more of the urban and socio-economic changes that were taking place as well. Charles Aiken rekindled my interest in the American South and urban-suburban conflicts with his insightful research and teaching abilities.

Second, I would like to thank the faculty and staff in the Department of Geography for their kindness, teachings, assistance and steadfast support over these last few years. Without their friendship, cheerfulness and good graces, I most likely would not have made it to this point in my career. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Carol Harden for her understanding, guidance and assistance while serving as Department Head. Certainly, a heartfelt thank you must be bestowed upon Becky Fontanez and Pam Sharpe for all the little things they did that added up to so much.

I will ever be indebted to Dan Rajkowski and Brian Cox of the Knoxville Smokies for hiring me to work at Bill Meyer Stadium. They assisted in my travel plans, offered materials, and suggested good contacts that I never could have received if not for them opening doors. I want to also thank them for letting me experience the thrill and pain of pulling the tarp across a thunderstorm soaked outfield during the numerous rain delays experienced at Bill Meyer Stadium.

Tim Brunswick, Director/Baseball Operations of Minor League Baseball, formerly the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, deserves a hearty thank you for all the e-mail questions, requests for material and statistics to which he so quickly responded. Much the same can be said for President Arnold Fielkow and Brian Benvie of the Southern League; Joe Browning of UNC-Wilmington; Tom Farrey of *ESPN.com* and Tom Nichols of the Mobile BayBears for their rapid and thorough responses to numerous questions.

Much thanks should go to the scores of individuals who assisted me with my research both directly and indirectly as I traveled from city to city, all over the Southeast during the past few summers. Of the dozens of baseball club employees in the Southern League and other leagues who went out of their way to assist me, I would like to mention the following people, in no particular order: Lisa Chico of the Charlotte Knights; Delmar "D" Smith and Owner Larry Schmittou of the Nashville Sounds; Don Michner, President of the Huntsville Stars; Steve Bryant, Owner of the Carolina Mudcats; Chris Pika of the Birmingham Barons; and Mack Powell, of the Orlando Rays. Of the non-baseball people, I would like recognize GIS Analyst Paul Hammer, Jr. and Engineer J. Kelly Ross of the City of Greenville, SC for their assistance in producing highly effective maps of the land use changes of the area surrounding Greenville Municipal Stadium. Jerry Desmond of the Chattanooga Regional History Museum; Jim Fisher, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Hoover, AL; Scott Mondore of the National Baseball Library and Archive in Cooperstown, NY; Tony Pettis, Sports Writer for the *Nashville Banner*; Thomas Harding of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; and Mary Beth Newbill, of the Birmingham Public Library were of great help in providing old photos, records, newspaper clippings, quotes, and various other material needed to do research for my thesis. Of course, I would like to acknowledge all the interviewees that I had the pleasure of meeting and conversing with. It was great to hear the oral history of the older ballparks that have become part of the history books.

My thanks also go to Geosystems, MapQuest and Yahoo! for the use of the stadia locator maps that are used in throughout my thesis (http://maps.yahoo.com/py/maps.py). Although, Cartography Laboratory Director, Will Fontanez was a little upset, their permission saved me dozens of hours of work that would have been needed to produce the numerous maps needed for this publication.

Much of the inspiration for completing this work goes to my two friends and role models from James Madison University, Beth Robinson, M.D. and my advisor Dr. Stephen E. Wright. Both are compassionate people who exhibit the hard work, dedication, desire and intensity necessary to succeed in life.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues at UT and the Department of Geography for all the encouragement, support, friendship, and great times that I have experienced over the years. At the top of the list are my dear friends Becky and Will Fontanez, whom always helped me through the tough times and celebrated with me during the good times. Your two lovely children are a testament to the great parents and fun people that you truly are. Thanks to Patrick Solomon, John Benhart and Doug Cain for passing on the Bad Latitude's tradition (well, some of it anyway) to your fellow geographers and I hope the next group (Evan Hart, Del Scruggs, et. al.) can keep it going. I have encountered other great people while in graduate school, and I am very appreciative for all they have done to enriched my life in some way, and I hope that I have done the same for them. These people include Tracy Engel, Travis Trent, Jeannette Squires [I wanted you three to be here], Shelley and Ola Johannson, Patrick Solomon, Mike Cornebise, Wendra Chambers, Roger Brown, Matt Souder, and Jennifer Rogalsky.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for all the support, assistance, much needed care packages and love that I receive from them. Helga, Lodovico, Justin and Manuel Terranova have been a second family to me and I want to thank them for taking care of me when visiting. I wish to thank my great friend Mai Nguyen for an experience of a lifetime in Vietnam

and hearty congratulations for graduating this term as well. I would like to thank my brothers Kevin and Sean for being great friends as well as good people. Last, but definitely not least are my parents Cathy and Cosimo DiBartolo and grandparents, Kitty and the late Charlie Engel, and Angela and Fortunato "Freddie" DiBartolo. I would be nothing without your support, love, and guidance. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

As game time approaches, automobiles are turning off the highway and are making their way into the sprawling parking lots that surrounded this ballpark. Minor league baseball conjures images of folks strolling from the surrounding neighborhoods, arriving at old ballparks on foot, and greeting their neighbors. Movies such as *The Natural* and *Bull Durham* portrayed minor league baseball as a community event in which people wandered to ballparks after visiting their neighborhood restaurants and pubs.

When one sits in the stands at Five County Stadium in tiny Zebulon, North Carolina, one realizes that this ballpark was not built with any of these ideals in mind. It was built outside a small town on the Carolina Piedmont, next to a multi-lane highway, almost as far away from a neighborhood as one could imagine. The highway is the lifeblood for the Carolina Mudcats, bringing crowds in from the surrounding counties. Five County Stadium exists in isolation, not one other manmade structure can be seen. This is an alarmingly extreme example of a growing trend. A majority of the new minor league stadia that have been constructed in the past decade have gone away from nostalgia and history and have instead opted for profits, embracing the automobile.

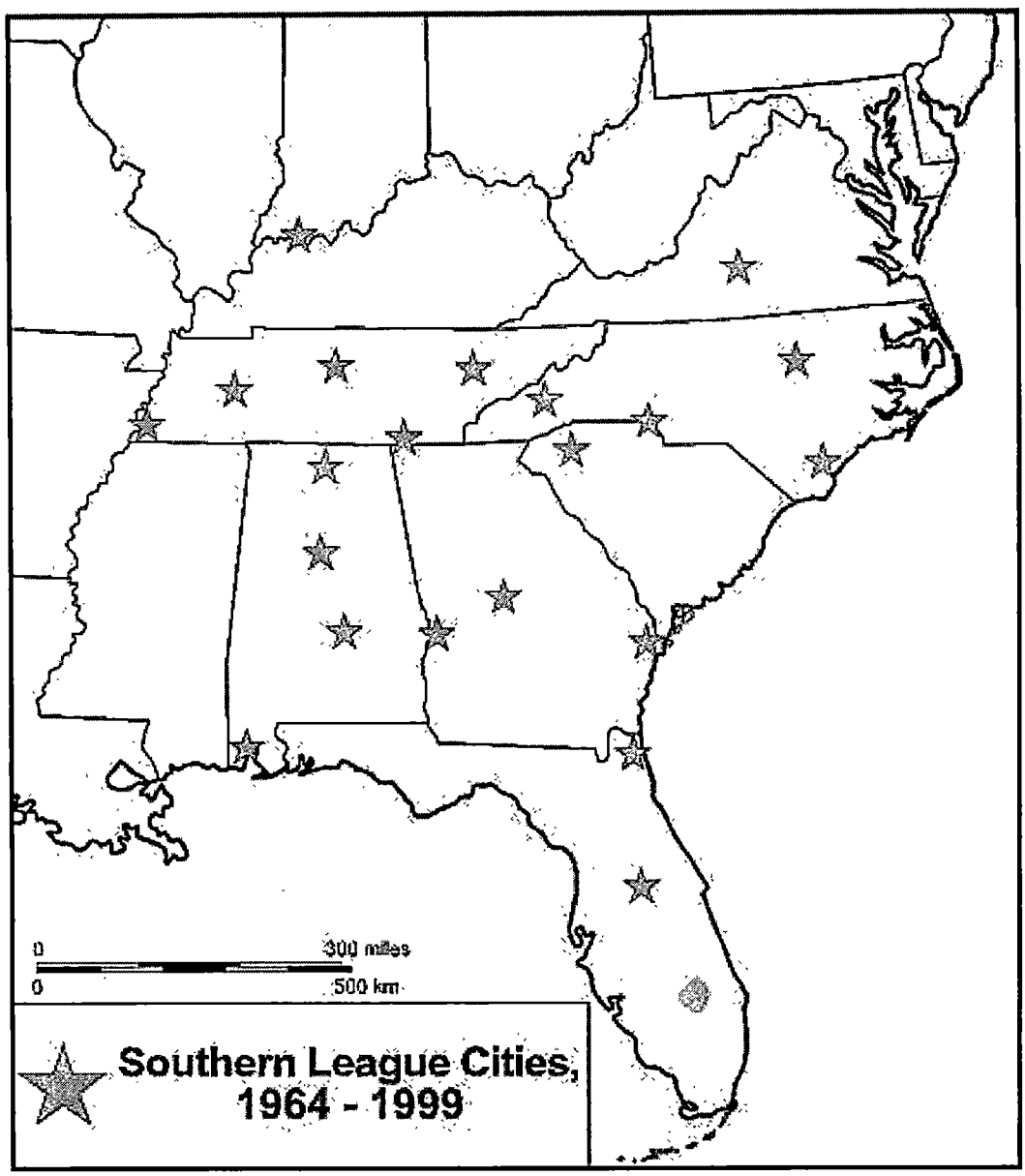
The purpose of this study is to present a historical geography of the Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs. This will be done by focusing on the historical trends of franchise shifts to larger cities within the South and by focusing on the relocation of the ballparks to suburban sites or sites with excellent freeway access. Since its inception in 1964, this latest incarnation of the Southern League has migrated from small Southern cities to some of the largest metropoli the South has to offer. In addition, the sites of Southern League ballparks have gradually shifted from locations near their downtowns to suburban sites with easier automobile access. This move to the suburbs is not a strike against the great history of baseball, but a

response to the changing geography of the Southern city, both in population distribution and economic dominance. The move to the suburbs mirrors the movement of retail, corporate and other entertainment establishments that have been part of the suburban landscape for decades.

Defining the South has always been a difficult and controversial task. This study will consider the "South" as defined by the US Bureau of the Census,[1] but will focus on the states associated with Southern League clubs (Map I-1). Emphasizing the activities in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia will provide, along with the border-South major league cities of St. Louis and Cincinnati, a general geographical region for baseball in the South over the past forty years.

The study of baseball in the South has, heretofore, been limited mainly to historical accounts of various leagues or players from the South. Although a superb history of the league has been completed recently by Bill O'Neal (1995), there has yet to be a study about the geography of the league. A geographical study of the league is necessary to understand travel costs, natural rivalries, and site selection for future expansion or ballpark construction. This thesis looks at the recent history of the Southern League in the context of recent urban, economic and population changes in the South. It examines the historical geography of the league from its promotion to Double-A status in 1964 through the 1995 season by examining the past, present and future locations of the ballparks. Both the intra- and inter-city movements of clubs are discussed, and their movements are linked to the social and economic changes that have transformed the South over the past forty years. The study will also focus on the recent stadia construction boom which started in 1984 and will be completed at the turn of the century with new ballparks in downtown Chattanooga, in Orlando's Disney Complex and in Sevierville, Tennessee – nineteen miles from downtown Knoxville.

[1] The "Census South" as defined by the US Bureau of the Census includes the following states and the District of Columbia: TX, OK, AR, LA, KY, TN, MS, AL, GA, FL, WV, VA, NC, SC, MD and DE.



Map I-1: Map of all 21 Southern League Cities.

This thesis is divided into five major sections. The first introduces the historical framework of professional baseball, both the major and minor league. It discusses the formation of professional baseball leagues and the evolution of those leagues into the general framework, which exists today. This section also discusses the relationship between the major leagues and the minor leagues, touching on affiliations, player development, and a general classification and hierarchy of the minor league baseball system, all with an emphasis on the baseball leagues in the American South.

Part two presents the historical development of the Southern League. It deals with the emergence of the league in the midst of minor league baseball's grand collapse, the first few seasons of instability, the league's eventual stability and growth, and finally, the stadia building boom which started with the revitalization of minor league baseball in the mid-1980s and has also assisted in making the League extremely popular.

Section three discusses the geographic trends that have shaped the changes in the Southern League since its inception in 1964. These trends include the urban growth of the South and the Sunbelt, suburbanization, and the impact of the automobile. The growth of urban areas has ushered in many new sports leagues and franchises, which in turn have affected AA-Minor League Baseball.

The fourth section examines the geographical locales of the ballparks and stadia that host Southern League contests. Two major categories emerge in this section. The first comprises the older, urban ballparks that have been steadily retired. The second reveals the recent national trend of building new sports stadia along highly traveled freeways or in suburban locations.

Section five presents the situations involving the last seven Southern League clubs that have moved. It describes both the inter-city and intra-city (intra-MSA) shifts of clubs, and also examines the transfer of the Knoxville club to Sevierville as part of a preview for the 2000 season.

Finally, the concluding chapter assesses the significance of these findings for the future of minor league baseball, both for the Southern League and nationally while discussing the city-suburban politics and the future of minor leagues sports.

CHAPTER I
THE MINOR LEAGUES

A Short History of Major and Minor League Baseball

The Pre-Modern Era

Base Ball in the 1800s

The minor league system of 1999 has continuously evolved from the time organized baseball was formed. The first organized baseball league, The National Association of Base-Ball Players, was formed in 1858. This league, which developed the set of rules and regulations for league participation, consisted of only amateur players. By the spring of 1861 there were 62 member clubs (including teams of free blacks). After the Civil War, the game of Base Ball [sic] spread throughout the country from its urban northeastern beginnings. In 1876, the nine team National League of Professional Baseball Clubs became the first professional league to be fully organized. In 1882, a second 'major league' was founded, the American Association, and by 1884 there were three "major leagues" with the coming of the Union Association. These three leagues competed fiercely for survival, but the National League was the only one that managed to survive into the 1890s.[1]

When the first major league was formed, there were dozens of competitive leagues throughout the country, including some in the cities of the American South. Leagues were independent from each other and competed for the talents of many ballplayers. The National League touted itself as the "major league" because it boasted many of the best players and

[1] See Ken Burns, Baseball, First Inning, produced by Ken Burns, 120 min., Public Broadcasting System, 1994, videocassette; and Bill O'Neal, The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie, 1885-1994. (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 1.

competed in the largest Eastern cities. Other leagues were relegated to "minor league" status although the competition and caliber of play was sometimes as good or better than the National League. A few of the stronger leagues commenced play in 1877 under minor league status, and by the time the three major leagues were operating in 1884, eight minor leagues had been formed.[2]

The Major Leagues are Born

For most of the 1890s, the National League was the only operating major league. However, in 1898 Ban Johnson's Western League (based in Midwestern cities) challenged the National League and touted itself as the "other major league". Johnson renamed his young circuit the American League, raided the National's rosters, placed teams in National League cities, and soon became a very serious competitor. Finally, in 1901 the two leagues joined forces and formed "The Major Leagues". The champions of both leagues met in the fall of 1903 for the first World Series.[3]

The Modern Era

The Minors Blanket the Country

The eight minor leagues, as well as hundreds of local leagues, were now clearly inferior to the two major leagues. In 1901, several minor league executives met in Chicago to form a governing body that would control and set standard rules for the various minor leagues. On September 5 they formed the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues (NAPBL).

[2] O'Neal, 1.
[3] See Burns, 1994; and O'Neal, 2.

The "National Association" started with only nine leagues and 72 clubs. By 1909, the Association had grown to 35 leagues and 246 clubs.[4]

Most smaller leagues now operated in certain geographical areas and many larger towns across the country had their own teams. Many leagues and clubs were unstable and folded or merged with other leagues after only a few years of operation. Eventually, minor league clubs evolved to become talent feeders to the major leagues and to other minor league teams. Minor league organizations would find local players and sign them to contracts. The owners of the minor league franchises operated without support from major league clubs, so in order to make a profit they had to sell their most talented players. These players (or the rights of these players to participate in leagues) were sold to larger clubs for cash.[5]

Branch Rickey Creates the Farm System

In the early 1920s, the St. Louis Cardinals were one of the least successful major league teams. They did not draw large crowds, so they did not have the money to buy talented players from other organizations. Their young general manager, Branch Rickey, soon concocted a plan. Instead of purchasing players from the minor league teams, the Cardinals would operate their own minor league teams and promote the best players to the major league level. Rickey convinced the owner of the Cardinals to buy an interest in several minor league teams. He then organized them into a hierarchy in which the clubs would feed their best young players to clubs higher in the organization, with the best talent eventually reaching his St. Louis club.[6]

This affiliation was productive for all parties. With all the players' and coaches' salaries paid by the Cardinals, the minor league teams could concentrate on running the business side of operations, becoming financially stable in the process. The major league team could now develop

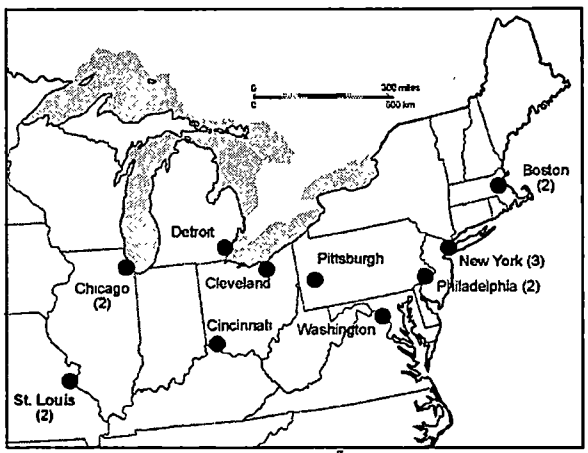
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[4]Minor League Baseball, Minor League Baseball.com - The Official Site of Minor League Baseball - History; available from http://www.napbl.com/history.html; Internet; accessed May 1996, revised to http://www.minorleaguebaseball.com/napbl/history.php3; accessed 28 October 1999.

[5] Burns, 1994.

[6] Neil J. Sullivan, The Minors: The Struggles and the Triumph of Baseball's Poor Relation from 1876 to the Present (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 93-101.

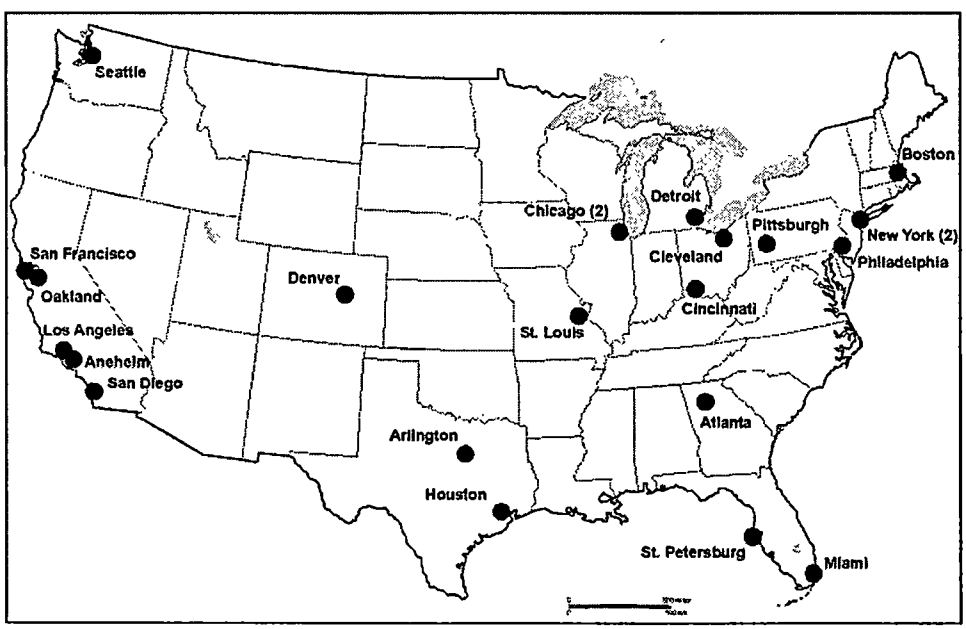
their players using certain techniques and long term goals without having to pay extremely high prices for proven minor league talent. It cost less for St. Louis to run the minor league clubs and pay their salaries than it did to bid on other teams' high priced players. Soon, the Cardinals started winning and were making money. The next decade showed how effective this new "farm system" had become. The *Gas House Gang*, led by Dizzy Dean, captured five National League pennants and won three World Series between 1926 and 1934. Other major league clubs started to emulate the Cardinals' farm system and their dominance soon faded.



Map 1-1: The Major Leagues, 1953.[7]

Expansion of the Major Leagues (1950s - 1960s)

Before 1952, the major leagues consisted of only 16 clubs, all of which were located east (or on the banks) of the Mississippi River (Map 1-1). Comparing Map 1-1 and



Map 1-2:The Major League Cities, 1972.

[7] Based on map in Joseph L. Reichler, ed. The Baseball Encyclopedia (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., and Information Concepts, Inc., 1988), 265-469.

Map 1-2, one can see that the next twelve years saw tremendous change in the geography of major league baseball, which drastically cut into the success of the minor leagues. The national pastime "truly became national in scope with the westward migration of several franchises" and the expansion to 24 clubs (Table 1-1). The Boston Braves were the first club to relocate when they moved to Milwaukee in 1953, followed the next season by the St. Louis Browns moving to Baltimore. Perennial losers, the Philadelphia Athletics, relocated to Kansas City for the 1955 season, then moved to Oakland in 1968. The moves of these three franchises were not very startling due to their lack of winning traditions or a cult-like following.[8]

Table 1-1: The Changing Face of the Major Leagues, 1953-1972.

OLD CLUB	YEAR MOVED	NEW CITY
Boston Braves (N)	1953	Milwaukee
Cleveland Browns (A)	1954	Baltimore
Philadelphia Athletics (A)	1955	Kansas City
Brooklyn Dodgers (N)	1958	Los Angeles
New York Giants (N)	1958	San Francisco
Washington Senators (A)	1961	Minneapolis
EXPANSION	1961	Houston (N)
EXPANSION	1961	L. A. Angels (A)
EXPANSION	1961	N.Y. Metropolitans (N)
EXPANSION	1961	Washington (A)
Milwaukee Braves (N)	1966	Atlanta
Kansas City Athletics (A)	1968	Oakland
EXPANSION	1969	Montreal (N)
EXPANSION	1969	Kansas City (A)
EXPANSION	1969	San Diego (N)
EXPANSION	1969	Seattle (A)
Seattle Pilots (A)	1970	Milwaukee
Washington Senators (A)	1972	Arlington (Dallas-Fort Worth)

(A) = American League (N) = National League

However, four years later the movement of two of the most popular and successful teams shocked everyone. After the 1957 season, both the Giants and Dodgers abandoned New York City for the bright lights (and untapped markets) of California. Other teams like the Washington Senators, who moved to Minneapolis in 1961 to Dallas-Fort Worth in 1972, and the Milwaukee Braves, who moved to Atlanta in 1966, soon followed suit. By 1972, Major League expansion

[8] Microsoft Bookshelf94, The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), "Baseball," Computer CD-ROM.

produced or replaced teams in both old and new markets: in 1961 the Los Angeles Angels and again the Washington Senators, in 1962 the Houston Colt 45s and the New York Metropolitans (Mets), in 1969 the Kansas City Royals, the Montreal Expos, the San Diego Padres and the Seattle Pilots, which became the Milwaukee Brewers in 1970. The whole continent, which once was the exclusive territory of hundreds of minor league teams, now fell in the shadow of major league clubs.

The decade of the 1960s was a struggle throughout the minor leagues as expansion, relocation, and national television brought live major league baseball to cities and small towns throughout the country. All these factors helped to trigger a massive drop in minor league attendance. The *Major League Game of the Week* telecast brought live baseball into the homes of millions of Americans, many of whom before had only heard games over the radio. Many minor leagues folded and merged because of poor attendance and lack of interest. In 1949, the National Association governed an all-time high of 448 clubs in 59 different leagues. That year also saw a record of 39,782,717 fans attend minor league games. By comparison, there were 20 leagues and 132 clubs in 1964, and these attracted only 10 million fans. By the end of the 1963 season, the major leagues were forced to step in and restructure the minor league system. They cut the number of leagues and clubs substantially, set strict rules governing affiliation, and formed a structured hierarchy. The committee eliminated Class B, C and D leagues and streamlined the system, implementing the familiar AAA, AA, A and Rookie classification levels.[9]

Re-Birth of the Minor Leagues

Since the early 1970s, minor league baseball has regained the popularity it once enjoyed. Attendance figures have steadily grown throughout the minor leagues for various reasons. The lure of inexpensive family entertainment, the wholesome competition, and aggressive promotion helped the resurgence. Major league baseball had many public relation nightmares including

[9] See Minor League Baseball, History; and O'Neal, 3.

widespread drug usage and gambling scandals, to go along with player image and labor problems. The image of the spoiled, self-absorbed, millionaire major-leaguer disillusioned many working-class fans. The average price of a major league ticket skyrocketed to $14.91 during the 1990s (Figure 1-1), jumping 72.6 percent since 1991. Eight work stoppages in eleven years, including long strikes in 1981 and 1994-95, and the unthinkable cancellation of the 1994 World Series, permanently scarred fans' loyalties and turned off even the most die-hard baseball fan. The minor leagues welcomed these refugees with open arms as clubs started to locate outside of major league cities.[10]



Figure 1-1: Major League Baseball's Ticket Prices (from USA Today).

By the 1980s, attendance figures for the minor leagues climbed back over the 20 million mark, reaching 25 million by 1990. Fans started coming out as clubs started promoting themselves more aggressively. Many cities throughout the nation started to construct new, more entertainment-focused baseball facilities. Compared to other diversions, minor league ballparks became an inexpensive form of family entertainment. More and more parents felt safe bring their children to the ballparks. Three hit baseball movies, *The Natural* (1984), *Bull Durham* (1987) and *Field of Dreams* (1989) had American audiences pining for wholesome baseball and brought the minor leagues back into the national spotlight. They romanticized the small town minor league atmosphere, while humanizing the young and old players' lives. The season-ending major league labor strike of 1994 also reintroduced minor league baseball to millions of disgruntled fans. Records fell throughout the country as the National Association recorded an attendance of over 33 million. That same summer the minor leagues, and especially the Southern League, in the national spotlight as Michael Jordan, perhaps basketball's greatest player, joined the Birmingham Barons, breaking attendance records in nearly every city.

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[10] "USA Snapshot: Baseball Ticket Inflation," USA Today, 15 April 1999, 01C.

A resurgence of minor league baseball has occurred in the major US markets as well. After the 1994 Major League strike, minor league parks started opening in earnest near the outskirts of the major league cities, targeting a portion of the suburban fan base. In the suburbs of New York (Little Falls, Newark and Augusta, NJ; Bridgeport, CT), Los Angeles (San Bernardino; Cucamonga), Chicago (Kane Co, IL), Philadelphia (Trenton, NJ; Wilmington, DE), Washington-Baltimore (Bowie and Frederick, MD; Woodbridge, VA), San Francisco-Oakland (San Jose), Boston (Lowell, MA), Cleveland (Akron, OH), Seattle (Everett) and Minneapolis (St. Paul) residents started looking at the minor league clubs. New Jersey, home to many suburbs of New York and Philadelphia, now has six clubs, all of which have arrived since 1994. Instead of fighting traffic to get into the city, fans drove in the other direction and saved money, time and aggravation. These low minor league and independent clubs hoped to capture the suburban market and lure major league fans to the cheaper, fan-friendlier minor leagues. Many of these leagues are stocked with either former major and minor leaguers - playing for the fun of the game or young teenagers hoping to be seen by a scout.[11]

The Major Leagues' Relationship with the Minor Leagues

Affiliations

> Quite frankly, we look at the National Association as a sort of apprentice – type arrangement. The real job is in the major leagues.
>
> - Bill Murray, director of baseball operations for MLB[12]

The minor league system is a training ground for players that the major league clubs employ, a system that serves the majors quite well. With the exception of independent leagues, the majority of the minor league ballclubs today do not own any of their players, managers or

[11] Andy May, Independent Baseball Page; available from http://www.angelfire.com/ak/indybaseball; Internet; accessed 23 June 1999.
[12] Andrew Zimbalist, Baseball and Billions (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), 105.

coaches. In fact, the club rarely involves itself with the promotion of any of the players. "The Player Development Contract (PDC) between Major League Baseball and the NAPBL, details the relationship (or 'working agreement') between the major league teams and their minor league affiliates," states Arthur T. Johnson. The job of the minor league club is, essentially, to take care of the players: help them focus on baseball, develop as players, assist them in everyday matters and make sure the field they play on is in good shape in order to prevent injury. In reality, especially in the lower minors, the club acts as a daycare center, harboring the young players while they try to reach their potential.[13]

The Player Development Contract calls for the parent club to pay the salary, food stipend, and provide all equipment for the players, managers, coaches and trainers throughout their minor league system. This usually amounts to almost two hundred ballplayers per organization, not including the salaries and expenses of the major league club. This money must come from all the revenue generated at the major league level, which includes parking, television and radio broadcast rights, merchandise sales concessions, and ticket sales.

For the minor league affiliates to turn a profit they must do well at the gate as well as at the concession and merchandise stands. Their expenses are more manageable, yet no less hard to maintain - staff salaries, league dues, advertising, electricity and field upkeep. Much of their budget comes from billboard advertisements and gate receipts. Johnson believes that one way the minor league clubs usually save money is in the stadium lease agreement:

> Arrangements for a playing facility . . . are the crux of the relationship between a local government and a minor league team and are a critical factor in determining a team's profitability. The results of a 1989 International City Management Association (ICMA) survey of communities that hosted minor league teams during the 1988 baseball season provides insight into this relationship.
>
> More that 95 percent of the respondents to the 1989 ICMA survey described their stadiums as being publicly owned. In a small number of cases, a team's owner owns the stadium or, more often, in some way has made an investment in the playing facility.[14]

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[13] Arthur T. Johnson, Minor League Baseball and Local Economic Development (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 20-25.
[14] Johnson, 25–26.

The lure of public money and the National Association's stricter stadium requirements adopted in 1990 are reasons for the widespread trend of club relocation in the minor leagues. The lure of free stadiums, financed by the general public, is a very big incentive for most minor league owners. The minor league clubs see the prosperity and opportunities that are available to the rest of the sporting world and have joined in the "party".[15]

Player Development

When players are signed as free agents or drafted out of high school or college, they go directly into the minor leagues to develop their skills and fundamentals. Only a handful of players have never played a ballgame in the minor league system. In the minor leagues, players learn how to hone the skills that are needed to succeed at the top level of their sport. Strategy, fundamentals, hints, tricks are taught to the young men by seasoned baseball coaches, many of whom are ex-ballplayers themselves. The players get accustomed to performing during the grueling baseball season, while growing emotionally and physically as a person. Major League ballclubs want their prospects to be mature enough to handle the pressures of the major league while still young enough to be productive for years to come.

Thousands of young men* share the dream of making it to "The Show." However the odds are stacked against them. With approximately 720 roster jobs in the majors, the odds are clearly against these young hopefuls. Reaching the majors is a daunting task, for "only one minor leaguer in ten ever plays in the big leagues and only one in fifty stays in the majors for six years." The young player will typically spend three to seven years in the minors before retiring or making it to the majors. Once he reaches the Double-A level, his chances of advancing to the Majors jumps dramatically.[16]

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[15] National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, Attachment D: Facility Standards and Compliance Inspection Procedures (Rule 40) (St. Petersburg, FL: NAPBL, Inc., December 1990), D1+. Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, NAPBL, Inc., July 1995.

* 5,856 players based on a roster of 24 players per team in the 244 team NAPBL, discounting disabled lists.

[16] Zimbalist, 106.

The Classifications of the Minor Leagues

The minor leagues, until 1963, had been a loose affiliation of teams in various leagues. The 1963 agreement organized the minor leagues into the present system that has a structured hierarchy. Arthur T. Johnson points out that, "with the exception of AAA leagues... minor leagues tend to be geographically compact. This reduces the travel costs of league members." At the top of the minor league hierarchy (Figure 1-2) is the Class AAA or "Triple-A" leagues, a step below the Major Leagues. This Triple-A level frequently shuttles players back and forth to the parent clubs at the major league level. Below the Triple-A is Class AA, or "Double-A." This level is the 'make-or-break' level in which talent either succeeds and keeps moving up in the system, or flounders and fails to advance. Many players also make the jump to the majors straight from this Double-A level. The 1963 agreement stated that each of the thirty big league teams were allowed only one minor league club at each of these top two minor league levels, resulting in 60 teams that make up the upper two levels of the minor leagues.

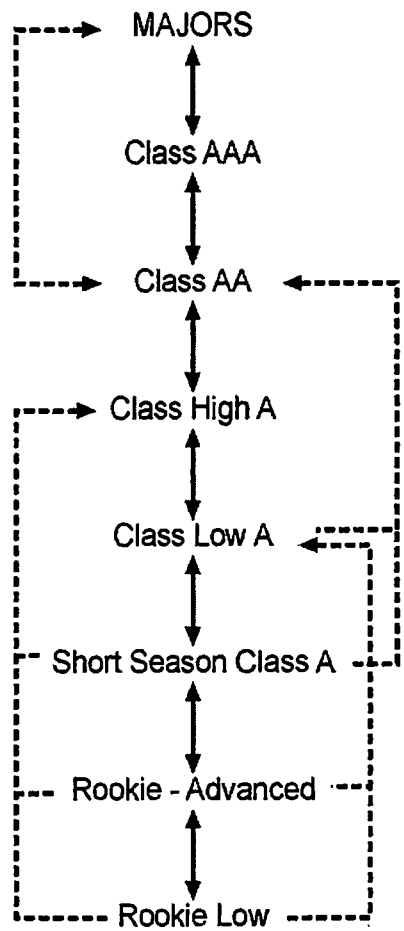


Figure 1-2: Hierarchy of the Minor League System.

Class A ball is one step below the Double-A level and is generally the highest level of what is referred to as the "lower minors." Here a parent club often has three minor league organizations called "High A-Ball" ("Class A Advanced"), "Low A-Ball" (Class A) and Short Season Class A. The lower level clubs feed players to the higher clubs, which in turn promote to the Double-A level. Rookie-Ball (Advanced and Low) is the lowest level that a major league

club usually stocks. Rookie League teams consist mainly of first year professionals straight out of high school, playing short-seasons to coincide with the summer after graduation.[17]

Hierarchy of Leagues Located in the American South

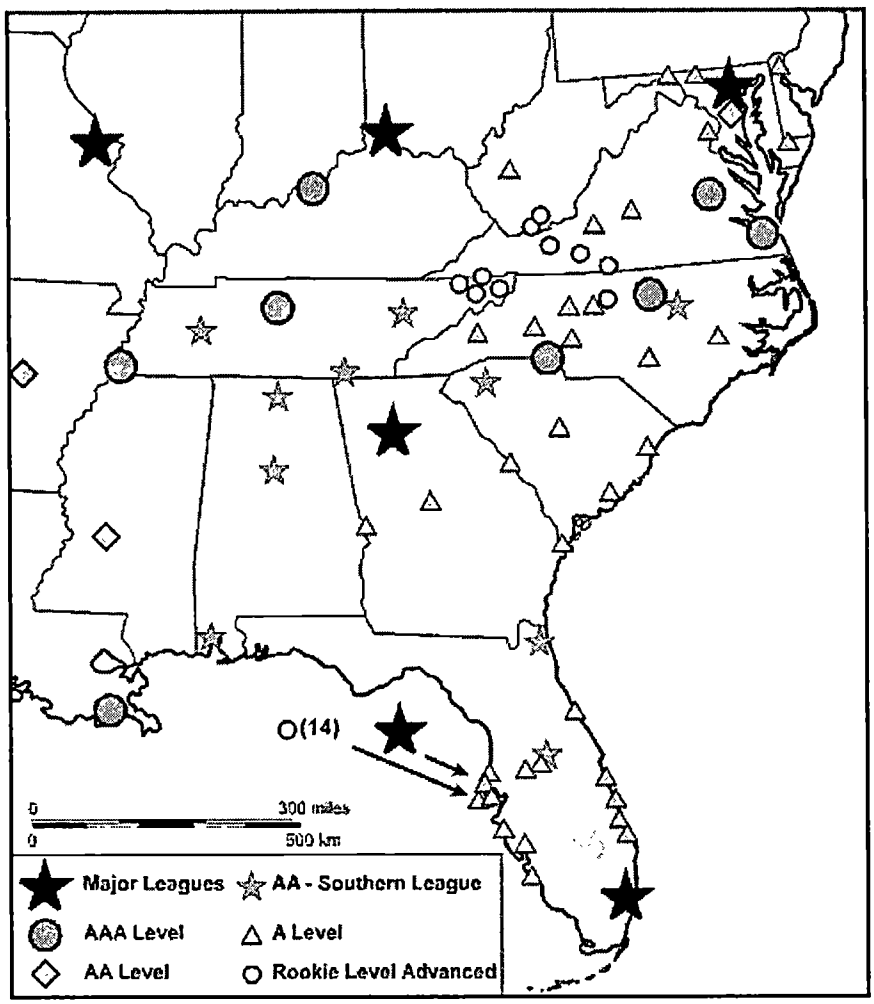
Before the Braves moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta, many baseball fans in the Deep South tended to root for one of two teams. The St. Louis Cardinals and Cincinnati Reds were the two closest teams and they broadcast their games to a significantly large portion of the region. When the Braves arrived in 1966, allegiances slowly changed. Fans started to watch Braves games at home on television, at the expense of their hometown minor league clubs. Yet, minor league baseball held on valiantly, despite a sharp drop in attendance throughout the decade.

Today, baseball flourishes across the South as there are eight major and minor leagues represented in the American South (Map 1-3). They run the gamut of professional baseball: from the major leagues to the independent Texas-Louisiana League. They include teams in the largest metropoli and in small mountain towns. The Atlanta Braves, the Florida Marlins (Miami) and the Tampa Bay Devils Rays (Tampa) represent the big-city, big-time, national television major leagues**. A notch below the southern giants are the cities of Louisville, New Orleans, Richmond, Norfolk, and three former Southern League cities – Charlotte, Memphis and Nashville. These cities all play Class AAA ball in the International League and the Pacific Coast League. The 1999 Class AA Southern League consists of the large to medium sized cities of Birmingham (Hoover), AL; Raleigh (Zebulon), NC; Chattanooga, TN; Greenville, SC; Huntsville, AL; Jacksonville, FL; Knoxville, TN; Mobile, AL; and Orlando, FL, as well as the small city of Jackson, TN.

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[17] Some information provided by Johnson, 10.

** Included on Map 1-3, although not technically in the Census South, are the cities of St. Louis and Cincinnati, which have been mentioned above.

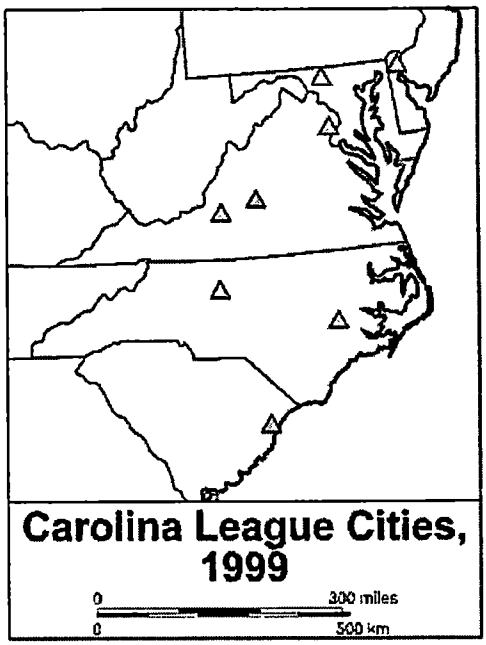


Map1-3: Location of Professional Baseball Clubs in the South, 1999.

The South is home to three of the five Single-A Leagues. The High A-Ball leagues are the Carolina League and the Florida State League, while the South Atlantic League (SALLY) plays at the Low A-Ball level. The Carolina League (Map 1-4) fields teams in small cities such as the former Southern League town of Lynchburg, VA; Salem (Roanoke), VA; Winston-Salem, NC and Wilmington, DE. Historically, this league was based solely in the states of North and South Carolina. However, present day economics and a troubled past have left only two of the eight teams located in North Carolina. This league has recently placed teams based in the outer suburbs of the larger cities of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Roanoke and Washington, D.C.[18]

[18] Judith Blahnik and Phillip S. Schulz, Mud Hens and Mavericks, (New York: The Penguin Group, 1995), 10.

The state of Florida is saturated with baseball. In addition to half the spring training sites and two major league teams (Miami and Tampa), the Sunshine State is home to the Florida State League and the Low-Rookie level Gulf Coast League. The Florida State League plays exclusively in Florida, in many cases at the parent clubs' spring training facilities.



Mapl-4: 1999 Carolina League.

The South Atlantic League (Map 1-5) boasts four former Southern League locales among its small cities. They are Asheville, NC; Columbus, GA; Macon, GA and Savannah, GA. Other SALLY cities include many of the smaller Southern cities: Albany, GA; Augusta, GA; Charleston, SC; Charleston, WV; Columbia, SC; Fayetteville, NC; Greensboro, NC; Hagerstown, MD; Hickory, NC and Kanapolis, NC. As the predecessor of today's Southern League, the South Atlantic League was founded in 1904 as a Class-C League. It was reorganized as the modern Southern League in 1964 after reaching the AA level in 1962. The modern-day SALLY stems from the Class-A Western Carolina League. It changed names to the South Atlantic League in 1980, after expansion into Macon, GA forced it to be geographically correct.[19]



Map 1-5: 1999 South Atlantic League.

[19] Blahnik and Schulz, Mud Hens and Mavericks, 243.

An Advanced Rookie League and a Low-Rookie League are also found in the South in the forms of the Appalachian and Gulf Coast Leagues. The Advanced-Rookie level Appalachian League ("Appy"), with city populations smaller than the Carolina League and SALLY cities, is based in the Southern Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains. The Appy League comprises the cities and towns of Johnson City, Kingsport, and Elizabethton, TN; Burlington, NC; Bristol, Danville, Martinsville and Pulaski, VA; and Bluefield and Princeton, WV. In contrast to these small towns and cities of the "Appy", one of the largest MSAs in the South, Tampa - St. Petersburg, is home to four of the Florida State League's clubs in addition to the entire Gulf Coast League. Many of the players in these leagues come straight from high school, most are in their late teens or early twenties, few of them ever reach the AA level, and only one or two will ever get to the majors.

Many of the cities in the country that are home to professional baseball clubs fit into a hierarchy of leagues that correspond with their population and/or accessibility to other cities. As expected, the largest, most well known cities are home to the upper divisions of professional baseball. The hierarchy extends from the low Rookie Leagues to the Major Leagues. Appendix A, which is an updated version of Arthur T. Johnson's 1992 research, presents the 1999 National Association sanctioned leagues, the number of cities which comprise each league, the smallest and largest cities in those leagues, and the geographical area in which the league competes.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CLUBS

The Original Southern League

Over the last thirty years, the Southern League of Professional Baseball has migrated from small Southern towns to some of the larger cities in the region. Major league baseball played a great part in the restructuring of the minor leagues in 1963. As part of the reorganization, the Major Leagues promoted the South Atlantic League (SALLY) from A to AA status. The SALLY traditionally included some of the small to midsize cities in the South. Georgia cities such as Augusta, Columbus, Macon and Savannah had been the mainstays of this league since 1904. Hoping to disassociate itself from the recently failed Southern Association (1901-1961), the South Atlantic League renamed itself the Southern League, drawing on the heritage of the 'ancient' Southern League (1885-1899). Cities that formed the new organization included: Asheville and Charlotte, NC; Knoxville, TN; Lynchburg, VA; Birmingham, AL; Columbus and Macon, GA and Chattanooga, TN. The later four had been members of the old Southern League of the 1880s, while Birmingham, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Macon had fielded Southern Associations teams. Only Birmingham had not been a member of the South Atlantic League.[1]

With the expansion of the major leagues and the advent of television, the minor leagues faded in popularity from the 1950s through the late 1960s. Leagues folded all over the country including the premiere league in the South, the Southern Association. The small cities in the South lost teams as attendance plummeted. Author Robert Obojski believed that the minor leagues in general, and leagues in the South in particular, faced "serious competition for fan

[1] Bill O'Neal, The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie, 1885-1994 (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 141.

interest, from televised big league games, particularly the Atlanta Braves games (which are beamed over a wide area of the South)...." The "Major League Game of the Week" telecast brought live baseball into the homes of millions of Americans, which substantially cut into minor league attendance.[2]

Author Bill O'Neal also thought that television, and not just televised baseball, helped bring about the decline of the minor leagues. More people chose to stay at home in the evening, watching television in their newly air conditioned living rooms. "An evening at the ballpark no longer was the best way for Southerners to cool off on a hot summer night," said O'Neal. Little League baseball was becoming popular for children in the 1950s, occupying a few evenings a week at a local baseball diamond. Why would people pay to see baseball when they could see their sons learning the game for free?[3]

The decade of the 1960s was a struggle throughout the minor leagues. Many leagues folded and merged because of poor attendance and lack of interest. The Southern Association was just one of these casualties.

The Modern Southern League (1964 – present)

Death of an Institution

Folding of the Southern Association (1961)

The late 1940s were the heyday of the Southern Association* (1901-1961). It reached its peak regular season attendance mark of 2.1 million spectators in the summer of 1947, and an additional 94,000 fans attended the playoffs. Postwar fans "flocked to ballparks" eager to

[2] Robert Obojski, Bush League: A History of Minor League Baseball (New York: MacMillan Publishing, Inc., 1975), 221.
[3] O'Neal, 80-81.
* Known colloquially as the "Southern League," although technically named the Southern Association.

witness the American pastime played in peacetime. The league drew over two million for the following three summers as it basked in the American post-war prosperity.[4]

Prosperity did not last however. Eight years after peaking at 2.1 million fans, the league could barely attract half that total – 1,127,112. By the late 1950s the league was drawing under one million patrons. After scrambling to field eight teams, reorganizing several clubs, a low attendance of 647,831, and the movement of two key franchises, the league disbanded following the 1961 season.[5]

In January, 1962, the top officials of the Southern Association and the South Atlantic League (SALLY) met in Charlotte with top minor league officials. At this meeting it was decided that two of the Southern's franchises, Chattanooga and Nashville, TN, would transfer to the Class A SALLY. However, major league affiliations proved a barrier to this and only Macon moved into the SALLY for the 1962 season. SALLY officials declined a proposal to merge the two leagues into a twelve team, two division league. George Trautman, president of the NABPL, tried to soften the blow by saying, "The Southern Association is taking a year's vacation." History proved him wrong however, as the Southern Association never revived.[6]

Emergence of the Modern Southern League (1962-1964)

The disbanding of the Southern Association in 1961 left the SALLY as the only professional league in the South. Dissolving the Double-A Southern Association left the minors with only twelve Double-A clubs for twenty major league teams. To make matters worse, one of the Triple-A leagues, the American Association, suspended operations for the 1963 season.

The major leagues, noting the desperate situation in the minor leagues, decided to take action. In order to stabilize the situation, the major leagues reorganized the minor leagues into a simple system that they hoped would stabilize the baseball world. The committee eliminated

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[4] O'Neal, 70.
[5] O'Neal, 89.
[6] Ed Harris, "Lookouts and Vols Join SALLY --- Southern Suspended," The Knoxville Journal. 25 January, 1962, 9.

Class B, C and D leagues and streamlined the system. For the 1963 season, the committee moved the SALLY from Single-A to Double-A status, thanks to the leadership of SALLY President Sam Smith. The promotion also came with the stipulation of keeping an eight-team league.[7]

In 1962, the eight-team league had fielded teams from the small cities of Asheville and Charlotte, NC; Greenville, SC; Augusta, Macon and Savannah, GA; Knoxville, TN and Portsmouth-Norfolk, VA. After a promotion to Double-A status, the SALLY restructured for 1963. The Savannah club relocated to Lynchburg after racial problems forced them to reschedule in Lynchburg, VA late in the 1962 season. For the 1963 campaign, Portsmouth, VA and Greenville, SC decided to stay at the Class-A level. They were replaced by two Southern Association cities which had "taken the year off," Nashville and Chattanooga, TN.[8]

Unfortunately, the distance between Nashville and most of the other clubs proved to be too much for the club to handle financially. The club withdrew from the league and was replaced by Birmingham, AL, which welcomed baseball back after two seasons without baseball due to city ordinance 597, which banned blacks and whites from playing together. Also, the parent club of the Augusta (GA) Yankees moved their facilities to the larger city of Columbus, GA.

Another change for the 1964 season was the name of the league. The South Atlantic League, hoping to lose the image of the lower minor classification of an A-Level league, revived the name of the first professional league in the South (1885-1889), the Southern League. With the promotion, the Southern League "replaced the Southern Association as the top minor league circuit south of the Mason-Dixon Line."[9]

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[7] O'Neal, 133.

[8] See O'Neal, 133; and Harris, 9.

[9] See O'Neal, 133; Timothy Whitt, Bases Loaded with History: The Story of Rickwood Field, America's Oldest Ball Park, (Birmingham, AL: The R. Boozer Press), 1995, 81; and Obojski, 223.

NOTE: Thanks to Mary Beth Newbill, Librarian from the Southern History Department, Birmingham Public Library for providing information about the segregation of Rickwood Field.

The Very Shaky Years: Unstable Clubs and Cities (1964-1969)

The modern day Southern League formed in 1964 with eight teams: Asheville and Charlotte, NC; Birmingham, AL; Chattanooga and Knoxville, TN; Columbus and Macon, GA and Lynchburg, VA. The Macon franchise only drew 60,000 people in 1964 and was moved to Montgomery, AL for the 1965 season. The league only attracted 380,000 fans that summer and changes were made for the upcoming 1966 season. Birmingham (28,001) and Chattanooga, which lost its Philadelphia Phillies affiliation due to low attendance (25,707), dropped out of baseball, and Lynchburg moved into the Class A Carolina League. Former Southern Association cities Macon, GA and Mobile, AL were added to the league along with Evansville, IN, which was north of the Ohio River and had once been part of the Three-I League but had not fielded a professional team since 1957. After securing the White Sox franchise from departing Lynchburg in 1966, the "E-Sox" only lasted three years in the league before dropping out of organized baseball for a year.[10]

Table 2-1: Southern League Attendance Figures, 1964-69.

TEAMS	YEAR	Attendance	Avg. Atten.
8	1964	484,180	60,523
8	1965	380,093	47,512
8	1966	362,180	45,273
6	1967	240,566	40,094
6	1968	324,487	54,081
6	1969	333,516	55,586

The first few years of the new Southern League were similar to the last few years of the Southern Association and the SALLY. Attendance showed a small recovery the first year because of new interest, but dipped the following three seasons (Table 2-1). The late 1960s saw an alarming and dangerous drop in attendance and interest in the league.[11]

[10] See O'Neal, 142-143; and Wirt Gammon, "Just Between Us Fans: How We Lost the Attractive White Sox Deal," Chattanooga Times, 5 February 1966, 11.

[11] See O'Neal, 141-148; and Southern League of Professional Ballclubs, "Southern League Attendance 1964-1998," 1999 Southern League Media Guide, (Marietta, GA: Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs, Inc., 1999), 35.

The formative years of the new Southern League were difficult for many clubs. The focus of the minors had shifted from fielding winning ball clubs to a feeder system and training ground for the major league parent clubs. When Harper's Magazine profiled the Knoxville (TN) Smokies ballclub during the 1967 season in their story "Down and Out in the Minor Leagues," it shed a troubling light on what the minors had become. Author J. Anthony Lukas theorized some possibilities for the drastic decline in attendance (21,390 in 1967) that faced Knoxville and the rest of the ball clubs in the South. Lukas, in echoing Obojski and O'Neal's arguments, felt that TVA's damming of the East Tennessee rivers to produce recreational lakes had drawn people away from the ballparks. Other activities that now competed for patrons' time and dollars were drive-in theaters, new bowling alleys, air conditioning and television. Knoxville's owner Joe Buzas admitted that he preferred to host professional wrestling matches on Friday night because he made more money on concessions with the wrestling crowd. Specifically in Knoxville, Lukas also saw the 1960s version of NASCAR, stock car racing (three dirt tracks were operating adjacent to the Knox County line), as competition to minor league baseball.[12]

The basic reason cited by all three authors was the televising of Atlanta Braves games and the national "Game of the Week" on the NBC network. The Braves had just moved to Atlanta from Milwaukee in 1966 and became the first professional major league team to call the South home. The Braves were a major hindrance to the Southern League teams located near Atlanta in the late 1960s. Of the eight clubs in the league in 1966, seven were within a day's drive of Atlanta. The eighth, Evansville, IN, was approximately 400 miles away. Of those seven clubs, Columbus, GA, Asheville, NC and Mobile, AL would drop out after the 1966 campaign and Knoxville, TN and Macon, GA would leave after the summer of 1967. Their failures cannot be attributed only to the Braves coming to Georgia, but the region-wide televising of Braves games certainly did not help their situation.[13]

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[12] J. Anthony Lukas, "Down and Out In the Minor Leagues," Harper's Magazine, June 1968, 73-74.
[13] See Lukas, 77; and Bob Terrell, "Braves' Arrival Puts Southern Future in Doubt," Sporting News, 23 April 1966, 11.

From the 1966 to 1968 seasons the Southern League could barely keep the minimum of six teams operational. Another year of poor attendance (362,180) in 1966 forced three cities out of the league. Mobile, AL and Columbus, GA dropped out of organized baseball while Asheville, NC followed the Lynchburg, VA club to the Carolina League. Mobile's parent club, the Athletics, moved their operations back to Birmingham after a one-year hiatus. The roster of the 1967 the Southern League consisted of Birmingham and Montgomery, AL; Charlotte, NC; Evansville, IN; Knoxville, TN and Macon, GA. With only a six-team league, attendance dropped by one-third, forcing Knoxville (21,390) and Macon (30,658) out of the league. They were replaced for the 1968 season by clubs in Savannah, GA and Asheville, NC. Attendance increased in 1968 to 324,487, up almost one-third. However, Evansville only drew 35,000 and the White Sox replaced them with former league member Columbus, GA. Charlotte became the first Southern League team to draw over 100,000 in 1969. They won the pennant and drew 146,141 as the league's attendance rose to 333,516.[14]

Movement to Traditional (and Largest) Cities

The late sixties saw the Southern League scramble to field the minimum number of teams and continual franchise shifts haunted and threatened to sink the whole league. To address the problem, according to O'Neal, the Southern League "drew upon cities and fans with the traditions and background of the old Southern Association and SALLY." In fact, comparing the league rolls of both the Southern Association and the SALLY to the 1967-1970 versions of the Southern league, one finds seven clubs that had been members of previous versions of the top league in the South. Asheville, Charlotte, Columbus, Jacksonville, Montgomery and Savannah had teams in the SALLY, while Birmingham had had clubs in the Southern Association since the inaugural 1901 season. The reliance on traditional cities helped stabilize the league and attendance steadily increased during this period.[15]

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[14] See O'Neal, 141-148; and Southern League, 35.

[15] See O'Neal, 148; and "Southern League Attendance 1964-1998," 35.

The three of the seven cities which helped the Southern League most were some of the largest urban areas in the Southeast during the late 1960s (Birmingham, AL; Charlotte, NC and Jacksonville, FL). Three others had populations near the 200,000 mark (Columbus and Savannah, GA and Montgomery, AL) while Asheville, NC's population was approximately 130,000. Geographically, the league was overextended, especially during the 1966-68 seasons when Evansville, IN was a day trip from most other league cities. In 1969, league attendance rose slightly as Columbus, GA replaced Evansville. This also compressed the league, shortening the travel distance and saving all the clubs money.[16]

Expansion and Stability (1970-1983)

Recovery from the 1960s (1970-1972)

Attendance increased again in 1969 and with the major league expansion in Kansas City, Montreal, San Diego and Seattle, the Southern League was awarded two new expansion teams for the 1970 season. Not only was expansion a reality, the league returned all its clubs from the previous season, the first time the league had been able to accomplish this feat. O'Neal saw this as the first step in stabilizing the Southern League:

> By the end of the 1960s Southern League attendance commenced a slow improvement as families and club executives began to realize the immense potential of minor league baseball as wholesome, inexpensive entertainment, and it was indicative of an optimistic future that the Southern League entered a new decade by expanding to eight teams.[17]

The problem now was where to locate the two new clubs. Mobile, AL, which had dropped out of the league in 1967, took over the White Sox affiliation from Columbus, GA and rejoined the league. Columbus joined the Astros' organization and won the 1970 title. Jacksonville, FL, which had recently been stripped of its AAA-International League club by the

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[16] US Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995 United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office), 1995.

[17] O'Neal, 149.

New York Mets, filled the other slot. Jacksonville was an obvious choice to fill the last slot: it was a charter member of the SALLY in 1904, it had been home to minor league baseball for most of the century, and it was one of the largest cities in the Southeast. The choice turned out to be correct, for as of 1999, it holds the longest continuous tenure of any club in the Southern League.[18]

In stark contrast to Jacksonville's success, the 1970 season proved to be the last chance for Mobile, AL and professional baseball. The Bears finished second to last in both the standings and attendance, and dropped out of professional baseball. The White Sox franchise, having failed in Lynchburg, VA; Columbus, GA and now Mobile, AL moved on to affiliate with Asheville, NC for a year before moving to Knoxville, TN for eight long years. It took seventeen years before Mobile would be offered another franchise, opening up in Hank Aaron Stadium for the 1997 season.[19]

The departure of Mobile left the Southern League with only seven clubs. A baseball league cannot operate with an odd number of clubs due to the fact that there will be a inactive club each time a series (3 to 4 games) is played. With only seven clubs stocked with players the league had to be creative. As luck would have it, the neighboring Double-A Texas League also was short a team. The "Dixie Association" was formed by merging the two leagues together with three divisions. The experiment only lasted one year as both leagues added teams, but it helped save two of the three AA leagues.[20]

League Re-Alignment and Stability (1973-1983)

With the addition of Knoxville, TN for the 1972 season, the Southern League settled down into two divisions with the champions playing for the title in the postseason. Attendance topped 400,000 fans for the first time.

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[18] See Cecil Darby, "Columbus' Champions," 1994 Columbus RedStixx Game Program 1994, 38; and O'Neal, 150.
[19] See O'Neal, 253; and O'Neal, 277.
[20] O'Neal, 151.

Things were not well everywhere, however. Charlotte, NC's parent club, the Minnesota Twins, decided to field both their AA-Southern League and A-Western Carolina teams at the city's Griffith Park for the 1972 season. This was a disaster for both clubs, as they drew 30,789 and 12,835 respectively. The Twins terminated both franchises, relocating the AA club to Orlando, FL's Tinker Field the following season.[21]

Table 2-2: Southern League Attendance Figures, 1970-83.

TEAMS	YEAR	Attendance	Average Attendance
8	1970	358,354	44,794
7	1971	333,906	47,701
8	1972	434,274	54,284
8	1973	443,812	55,477
8	1974	491,580	61,448
8	1975	398,802	49,850
8	1976	566,329	70,791
8	1977	540,303	67,538
10	1978	1,054,658	105,466
10	1979	1,483,141	148,314
10	1980	1,761,192	176,119
10	1981	1,911,436	191,144
10	1982	1,909,527	190,953
10	1983	1,707,506	170,751

The next three seasons (1973-75) saw no franchise shifts and clubs were financially stable. A noncompetitive pennant race in 1975 accounted for the almost twenty percent decrease in attendance (Table 2-2).

Poor showings by two of the leagues most stable franchises, Asheville, NC and Birmingham, AL, forced both out of the league after the dismal 1975 season. Wrestling promoter Jimmy Crockett bought the Asheville franchise and moved it to Charlotte, NC taking the Baltimore affiliation with him. Meanwhile, the Oakland Athletics, unable to reach acceptable rental terms for ancient Rickwood Field in Birmingham, transferred to ancient Engel Stadium in Chattanooga, TN for the 1976 year.[22]

Returning the league to two of its original cities also helped boost attendance and interest in the league. Charlotte drew 135,144 fans while Chattanooga totaled 113,559, prompting league president Billy Hitchcock to boast it was the "first time [in league history] that two teams hit the 100,000 mark in the same season." The league also added a split season to help remedy the loss in interest, awarding split champions. This situation gave teams and their fans a second chance to make the playoffs, and boosted interest during the long, muggy dog days of July and August.

[21] O'Neal, 157.
[22] "Southern Loop Welcomes Back Two Old Cities," Sporting News, 6 December 1975, 53.

The tinkering worked, as a record number of fans patronized Southern League ballparks. Attendance passed one-half million fans during the 1976 campaign, a figure that would again be topped the following year.[23]

Hitchcock and the club owners took steps throughout the decade to help improve the image and profitability of the league. Teams actively recruited families and many of the league's stadia were "refurbished and painted," helping them become them more attractive and inviting, especially to families. With the coming of the 1980s, the league, "for the first time in circuit history, enjoyed growing popularity, extraordinary attendance and financial stability."[24]

The Major League Baseball expansion into Toronto and Seattle in 1976 resulted in two new teams for the Class-AA Southern League the following year. Memphis and Nashville, TN, founding members of the old Southern League and former Southern Association members, filled the two expansion slots. Memphis, which drew 153,686 fans at Tim McCarver Stadium, had fielded teams in both the AAA-International League and the Texas League since it withdrew from the Southern Association in 1960.[25]

With the entrance of Nashville into professional baseball new ideas, celebrity tie-ins, and showmanship came back into the league. Nashville Sounds president Larry Schmittou readily identified his team to the city's main industry - Country Music. Famous musicians became stockholders, bands played after games, fans could meet, take photos and get autographs from the bands. The Sounds' first season in the Southern League, and Nashville's first in baseball since the SALLY's last year of 1963, saw them draw 380,000 fans to Herschel Greer Stadium, more than twice total of the next club. This attendance boom was not just a rookie phenomenon, as Nashville drew over one-half million fans for the next four years (1979-1982). Schmittou used the city and all the resources he could to make the Sounds, as O'Neal puts it, "the Southern League's most glamorous and successful franchise." The two additions to the league and the

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[23] See "Loop," Sporting News, 53; and "A Super '76 for Southern," Sporting News, 9 October 1976.
[24] O'Neal, 161-2.
[25] O'Neal, 159.

gates they drew helped the league nearly double its attendance, topping one million for the first time (Table 2-2).[26]

The 1980s brought prosperity to the Southern League while problems crept into the major professional sports scene. Major league salaries started to climb, distancing the gap between the players and the common fan. Major league play was halted by a player's strike in 1981, and drug scandals became front-page stories. The minor leagues started to become the last bastion of wholesome baseball.

The Southern League thrived on the attention, as attendance topped 1.7 million in 1980 and exceeded 1.9 million in 1981 and 1982 (Table 2-2). Helping this jump was the movement of the Montgomery club to Birmingham's 72 year old Rickwood Field in 1982. The Detroit Tigers decided to shift their Montgomery, AL team to the larger metropolis of Birmingham, AL after new president, Jimmy Bragen relocated the league headquarters to Trussville, a Birmingham suburb. After the season, Bragen beamed about the 1,909,527 Southern League patrons. "We outdid the AAA-American Association and the International League by 100,000 each," said Bragen. "And we also outdrew more than the AA-Texas and AA-Eastern Leagues combined!"[27]

Prosperity and the Stadium Boom (1984-2000)

As attendance continued to climb larger cities began replacing smaller cities, new owners began replacing family-run businesses and new stadia began replacing historic, tradition-laden parks. Organizations started to promote minor league baseball as fun, safe and affordable places to spend an evening.

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[26] O'Neal, 284-5.

[27] Terry Smith, "Bragen Foresees Record Attendance Year," Sporting News, 26 April 1982, 37.

Reasons for Prosperity

Record Attendance and Business Mindsets

The 1980s also brought Wall Street and big business to the minor leagues. The Southern League saw many family run clubs, which had not really cared if they maximized profits, being bought out by wealthy investors. New owners transformed the 'mom and pop' minor leagues into commercially oriented organizations, [Charlotte: George Shinn, Chattanooga: Richard Holtzman, Knoxville: Don Beaver, Birmingham: Art Clarkson, Memphis: David Hersh, Bob Costas, Ron Howard, Maury Povich, Tim McCarver.] Clubs that were sold for as little as one dollar in the early 1970s were selling for "one million dollars for the first time," by the end of the 1980s.[28]

Table 2-3: Southern League Attendance Figures, 1984-99

YEAR	Attendance	Avg. Atten.	% Change
1984	1,593,066	159,307	
1985	1,437,003	143,700	-9.8%
1986	1,604,758	160,476	11.7%
1987	1,557,052	155,705	-3.0%
1988	1,552,744	155,274	-0.3%
1989	1,685,891	168,589	8.6%
1990	1,859,367	185,937	10.3%
1991	2,127,828	212,783	14.4%
1992	2,318,080	231,808	8.9%
1993	2,408,578	240,858	3.9%
1994	2,596,340	259,634	7.8%
1995	2,260,750	226,075	-12.9%
1996	2,091,070	209,107	-7.5%
1997	2,305,073	230,507	10.2%
1998	2,394,208	239,421	3.9%
1999	2,382,712	238,271	-0.5%

This new breed of owner transformed the league into mass family entertainment. They focused their product towards family entertainment and away from the actual attraction of baseball. Families do not sit and study the game or follow strategy as they once did. Parents let their children roam the stadium, knowing that they cannot get into too much trouble. Stadia now had roving mascots, kids racing around the bases, putt-putt golf courses, speed pitch stations, and playgrounds. The adults were also pleased with the larger and cleaner concourses, cleaner restrooms, picnic areas, the safer environment (real or perceived), baby changing stations and a wide variety of ballpark concessions. Attendance in the last fifteen years (Table 2-3) has

[28] The Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs, Southern League History: 1885-1998; available from http://www.southernleague.com/history.html; Internet; accessed 23 September 1999.

eclipsed the two million mark and, with Michael Jordan playing in Birmingham, reached nearly 2.6 million in 1994. Former League presidents Hitchcock and Bragen must have been extremely pleased with the transformation of the league between the mid-1970s and 1999.

Table 2-4: Populations of New Southern League Cities, 1980-90.[30]

Old City	City Population	Last Year	New City	City Population
Montgomery, AL	273,000	1980	Birmingham, AL	884,000
Savannah, GA	< 200,000*	1983	Greenville, SC	590,000*
Columbus, GA	179,000	1990	Zebulon, NC	3,100
	261,000*		(Raleigh)	856,000*
Nashville, TN	462,000	1984	Huntsville, AL	150,000
	890,000*			< 250,000*

* - MSA Populations

Larger cities.

With the booming attendance during the 1980s, consistently led by the big cities of Nashville and Memphis, TN; Charlotte, NC and Jacksonville, FL, Southern League attendance figures hover between 1.4 and 1.9 million fans. The old Southern League cities of Savannah and Columbus, GA and Montgomery, AL became too small, while Nashville (and, in the 1990s, Charlotte and Memphis) became too large and popular for the AA league.[29]

For the eleven years spanning 1980-1990, the league saw three cities depart, replaced by larger metro areas (Table 2-4). Savannah and Columbus, GA moved down to the reborn Class-A South Atlantic League, the SALLY, while Montgomery, AL left professional baseball.

Montgomery drew 81,000 fans and the Tigers moved their club from the state capital to the state's largest city, Birmingham, drawing 220,219 fans in 1981. Two years later, the

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[29] National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports) (St. Petersburg, FL: NPBL, Inc., July 1999).

Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, July 1999.

[30] See National Association, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports); US Bureau of the Census, 1983 Population Report: "No. 22, Metropolitan Statistical Areas-Population, 1970 to 1983 and Selected Characteristics, 1980," (Washington, DC: GPO), 19-21; US Bureau of the Census, 1985 Population Report: " No. 26, Metropolitan Statistical Areas-Population, 1970 to 1983 and Selected Characteristics, 1980," (Washington, DC: GPO), 23-25; US Bureau of the Census, 1991 Population Report: "No. 40, Cities With 105,000 Inhabitants or More in 1990-Population, 1970 to 1990, and Land Area, 1990," (Washington, DC: GPO), 34-36; and US Bureau of the Census, 1993 Population Report: " No. 42, Metropolitan Areas-Population: 1980 to 1991," (Washington, DC: GPO), 37-39.

Savannah (GA) Braves drew only 66,057 in 56 year old Grayson Stadium. The Atlanta parent club decided to move its AA-team eighty miles closer to Atlanta, a move which produced a new stadium and higher attendance (217,096) in nearby Greenville, SC. The move was made primarily to assist club officials, coaches, scouts and players in travelling between the parent club and the AA affiliate.[31]

The last of the three small cities to leave the league during this period was Columbus, GA. Steve Bryant, a Raleigh, North Carolina native, purchased the club after the 1988 season with the idea of moving it to his hometown within two years. Even though they did not finish last in attendance the final two years in Columbus (95,689 and 94,265), Bryant saw greener pastures in the Carolinas, moving the team to tiny Zebulon. Zebulon was located in Raleigh's Wake County, and Bryant claimed that his market, which included Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Wilson and Rocky Mount, extended to one million people. The new Carolina Mudcats drew quite well in 1990 (218,054) and have drawn from 230,00 to 319,000 fans to their "Field of Dreams" each season since 1990.[32]

By 1984, Nashville (TN) Sounds owner Larry Schmittou had seen his club take the league to the next level by drawing an *average* of 484,658 fans over the seven years in the league. Outdrawing all other AA clubs and many AAA ones as well, his team and his city finally received their wish and moved up to the AAA level. The city of Huntsville, AL was recruited to replace the "jewel" of the Southern League. The fast growing, high technology city of Huntsville, which boasts one of the highest Ph.D. ratios in the country, affiliated with the Oakland A's in 1985 to field a team in the new Joe W. Davis Stadium.[33]

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[31] NABPL, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports).
[32] NAPBL, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports).
[33] See US Bureau of the Census. 1996 Population Report: "No. 19, Cities With 100,000 Inhabitants or More in 1984-Population, 1970 to 1984, and Land Area, 1984," (Washington, DC: GPO), 16-18; and US Bureau of the Census. 1996 Population Report: " No. 24, Metropolitan Statistical Areas-Population: 1970 to 1984, and Selected Characteristics, 1980," (Washington, DC: GPO), 21-23.

Newer facilities

As the decade of the 1980s approached, Southern League ballparks started to show their age, suffering from cramped quarters and power outages, which contributed to an erosion of their fan base. In earlier years baseball was the main draw for fans. But today, ballclubs are not just competing against movie houses, but many other forms of entertainment. They now must to compete against major league baseball on cable and satellite TV, longer football, basketball, and hockey seasons, college sports, movie rentals, laser tag games, the Internet, and other weekend recreation. To help draw more fans, many cities have built new ballparks or refurbished the older ones. These capital investments have brought new life into the Southern League cities.

Most of the stadia in use in the early 1980s were constructed in the first half of the 20th Century. The granddaddy of all the parks was Birmingham's Rickwood Field, the second oldest stadium in active use when it was retired in 1988. Table 2-5 shows the list of similar "Green Cathedrals" that were in use during the first two decades of the league. The addition of Herschel Green Stadium in Nashville in 1978 signaled the start of a new era for the league. The Southern League, along with many others, took notice of the huge crowds and financial success that Nashville had achieved with a shiny, new, clean stadium. The full impact took some time to come to fruition, but when it did, the stadia boom engulfed both the Southern League and the rest of professional sports.[34]

The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues implemented a change in standards for all minor league stadia in 1990. This decree was the catalyst that forced clubs and cities to upgrade all playing, clubhouse, and training facilities. Stadia also had to upgrade ticketing, security, parking, scoreboards, first aid and media facilities. These changes forced the retirement of many older ballparks into retirement, which could not cost-effectively meet the standards set forth by the National Association.[35]

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[34] Philip Lowry, Green Cathedrals (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley), 1992.

[35] See National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, Attachment D: Facility Standards and Compliance Inspection Procedures (Rule 40) (St. Petersburg, FL: NAPBL, Inc., December 1990), D1+. Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, July 1995; and Charlene Carr, "Mirroring

Table 2-5: Ages of Southern League Stadia.[36]

City/MSA	Stadium	Constructed	Major Renovations
Birmingham, AL	Rickwood Field	1910	1921, 1938, 1981
Orlando, FL	**Tinker Field**	**1914 (1923 new)**	**1963, 1990**
Evansville, IN	Bosse Field	1915	after Southern League tenure
Asheville, NC	McCormick Field	1924	after Southern League tenure
Columbus, GA	Golden Park	1926	1950, after Southern League tenure
Savannah, GA	Municipal / Grayson Stadium	1927	after Southern League tenure
Macon, GA	Luther Williams Field	1929	1956
Chattanooga, TN	**Joe Engel Stadium**	**1930**	**1976, 1990**
Lynchburg, VA	City Stadium	1938	after Southern League tenure
Charlotte, NC	Griffith / Crockett Park	1941	1985
Montgomery, AL	Paterson Field	1949	
Knoxville, TN	**Municipal / Bill Meyer Stadium**	**1931 (1953 new)**	**1972**
Jacksonville, FL	**Wolfson Park**	**1955**	**1970**
Mobile, AL	Hartwell Field	post 1964	
Memphis, TN	Blues / Tim McCarver Stadium	1968	
Wilmington, NC	Brooks Field	1965	after Southern League tenure
Nashville, TN	Greer Stadium	1978	
Greenville, SC	**Greenville Municipal Stadium**	**1984**	
Huntsville, AL	**Joe W. Davis Stadium**	**1985**	
Birmingham, AL	**Hoover Metropolitan Stadium**	**1988**	
Charlotte, NC	Knight's (Castle) Stadium	1990	
Zebulon, NC	**Five County Stadium**	**1991**	**1999**
Mobile, AL	**Hank Aaron Stadium**	**1997**	
Jackson, TN	**Pringles Park**	**1998**	
Chattanooga, TN	BellSouth Park	2000	
Knoxville, TN	T.B.D.	2000	
Orlando, TFL	T.B.D.	2000	

Bold = 1999 Southern League Club (new stadia constructed).
Break indicates start of new stadia era.

The National Association started documenting new ballpark construction in 1985. Since that year, ninety new stadia have been constructed in the US and Canada, some in old decaying city centers or warehouse districts, some in suburban strip-mall shopping centers, and one in a former tobacco field, miles from a major city. All eleven of the most recent members of the Southern League have new stadia or will have new facilities by the year 2000. These new facilities have been built in two separate waves since 1984. The first wave incorporated sloping grandstands and a major league feel. The second wave, constructed and patterned after the

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the Majors: Minor League Baseball in Southern California," (Master's Thesis, University of California-Fullerton, 1999), presented at the Association of American Geographers Meeting, (Honolulu, HI), 27 March 1999.

[36] See O'Neal, 195-201; and O'Neal, 205-297.

enormous success of Baltimore's Camden Yards in 1992 (Figure 2-1), have a 'retro' aura about them that makes fans think of the "grand old ballparks" of the 1920s through 1950s.[37]

> Oriole Park is state-of-the-art yet unique, traditional and intimate in design. It blends with the urban context of downtown Baltimore while taking its image from baseball parks built in the early 20th century. Steel, rather than concrete trusses, an arched brick facade, a sun roof over the gentle slope of the upper deck, an asymmetrical playing field, and natural grass turf are just some of the features that tie it to those magnificent big league ballparks built in the early 1900's. Ebbets Field (Brooklyn), Shibe Park (Philadelphia), Fenway Park (Boston), Crosley Field (Cincinnati), Forbes Fields (Pittsburgh), Wrigley Field (Chicago), and The Polo Grounds (New York) were among the ballparks that served as powerful influences in the design of Oriole Park.[38]

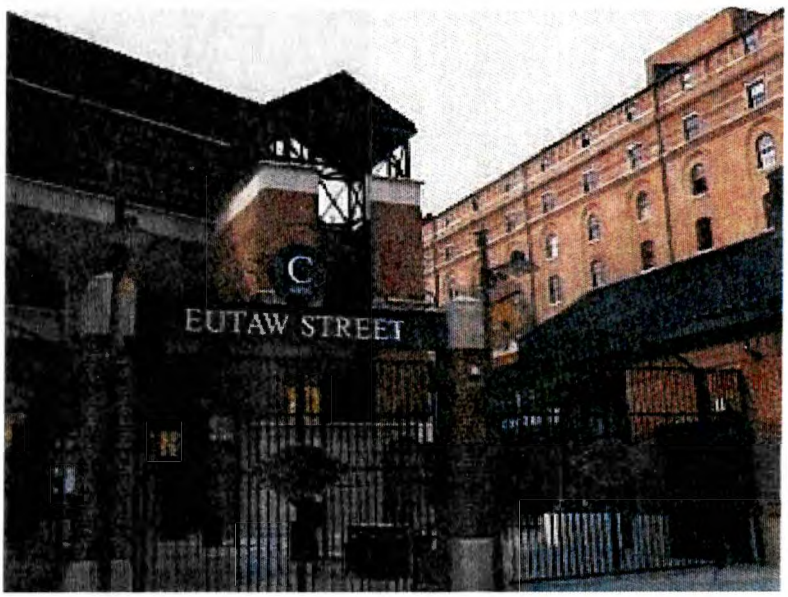


Figure 2-1: Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Baltimore.

a) *PRE-CAMDEN YARDS (1992)*

Greenville (SC) Municipal Stadium (1984) started the new stadia building movement by incorporating an unsheltered grandstand that gently sloped away from the field of play. Huntsville, AL built their multi-purpose stadium behind shopping centers just south of town. Joe W. Davis Stadium (1985) is an unsheltered concrete structure, which has a long left field, making

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[37] National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, New Ballparks Constructed Since 1985 (updated 21 May 1999) (St. Petersburg, FL: NAPBL, Inc., 21 May 1999).
Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, July 1999, (originally August 1995).

[38] Oriole Park At Camden Yards, Orioles Online - Official Site of the Baltimore Orioles; available from http://www.theorioles.com/camdenyards.htm; Internet; accessed 23 September 1999.

it useful for local high school and college football and soccer games. Two clubs, Charlotte (1990) and Birmingham (1988), built their new stadia with the idea of expansion to Triple A or even the major league level. The addition of skyboxes and luxury suites helped the club generate more gate income, a precursor of the 1990s trend. They both look and feel similar, offering sweeping stadium seating, large concourses, sky and luxury boxes, plus grassy knolls for blankets or overflow crowds (Figure 2-2). Their pressboxes are major league level: roomy, air conditioned, and fully wired with phones, cable and satellite television.



Figure 2-2: Knights Castle, Fort Mill, SC.

The last of the first wave stadia was built in tiny Zebulon, NC. Although Five County Stadium (1991) has open-air, aluminum grandstands that look suitable for a high school team, the field and scoreboard are top notch.[39]

b) POST-CAMDEN YARDS (1992-PRESENT)

The neoclassical parks offer, wrought iron fencing, brick-façades, low corridors and a quaint feel to them. The new 'ballparks' usually try to market the 'old-time' feel of watching baseball. The major league parks that have been built since Camden Yards include ballparks in Cleveland, Dallas-Arlington-Fort Worth, Atlanta, Colorado and Phoenix. These successes led to the new trend in stadium building that has been showing up in new minor league stadia throughout the country. The newest ballparks may make the fans seem closer to the action, and at some they actually are, but most general seating is placed farther away from the field and at higher prices. In order to incorporate the luxury suites and skyboxes that generate income, the field has to be set back away from the stands.

[39] The author visited Five County Stadium four years after its opening, supposedly before stages two and three were complete. The final plans, when adequate funding is found, call for a covered grandstand, permanent concession stands, offices and locker rooms.

The second wave of Southern League 'ballparks' that are emulating Camden Yards include Mobile, AL's Hank Aaron Stadium (1997), Pringles Park in Jackson, TN (1998) and future parks in Chattanooga, TN (2000), Orlando, FL (2000), and the former Knoxville club in Sevierville, TN (2000). Rumbles of new stadia activity have also been heard in Jacksonville, FL.

Fans seem to like the new stadia, but some also resent the abandoning of the historical stadia that gave the Southern League the character, flavor and tradition that it built up over a half century's time. Table 2-6 compares ballpark age to league's attendance figures over the last three seasons (1997-99). Clubs with the oldest stadia also have the lowest attendance. This is certainly not a fact missed by the league's owners and executives. Looking at the names of stadia, one also sees the older stadia with traditional names or named after people and more along the lines of "ballpark," "field," or "park." Seven of the last Southern League facilities are named "stadium" and the naming rights of corporations are starting to be seen, much like those at major league stadia.

Table 2-6: Attendance Figures vs. Stadium Age.

City	Constructed	1997 vs League Average	1998 vs League Average	1999 vs League Average	3 Year Average	vs League's 3 Year Average
Orlando	1914	65.7%	61.3%	37.2%	1,930	54.9%
Chattanooga	1930	100.3%	96.6%	90.4%	3,356	95.5%
Knoxville	1953	59.9%	51.8%	50.8%	1,899	54.0%
Jacksonville	1955	100%	106.8%	115.4%	3,771	107.3%
Memphis	1968	55.7%			1,951	55.5%
Greenville	1984	106.6%	112.9%	109.4%	3,846	109.4%
Huntsville	1985	123.5%	109.7%	115.2%	4,072	115.95
Hoover	1988	126.8%	123.1%	127.8%	4,416	125.7%
Zebulon	1991	114.7%	98.1%	102.7%	3,688	104.9%
Mobile	1997	137.6%	111.9%	121.0%	4,332	123.3%
Jackson	1998		127.7%	126.6%	4,464	127.0%
LEAGUE AVERAGE					**3,515**	

The most recent stadium building involves the three oldest ballparks in the league. Knoxville's Bill Meyer Stadium, Chattanooga's Joe Engel Stadium and Orlando's Tinker Field were retired from professional baseball when the 1999 season concluded. Knoxville lost their club to neighboring Sevierville, while Chattanooga is working with the club to build a new

downtown stadium. Orlando's Tinker Field has seen its last season, as they will move to a new facility inside the Disney World Complex.[40]

Attendance Boom

Comparing Attendance: Old versus New Ballparks

When a new Southern League stadium is constructed, there has been a sharp increase of attendance, not just for the first few years, but an overall and substantive gain. Of the ballparks constructed since 1984 only two clubs have moved within their original MSA. Birmingham, AL and Charlotte, NC increased their attendance by 75 percent and 141 percent respectively. Both clubs moved out of older neighborhoods into suburban stadia along interstate highways. Charlotte's new stadium moved further south of the other "Charlotte" tourist attractions of Heritage USA and Carrowinds. These facilities were so far out of the city limits, they were actually in the next state, (Fort Mill, SC).

Transferring of clubs into new cities proves to be much more of an attendance boost. For the first four or five years, attendance is very high, then levels off. There are many factors that cause this spike in patronage. First, the previous city, more than likely, was using an aging, dilapidated facility, while the new city had just constructed a state of the art stadium for their new tenants. Second, the new city sees a new activity on which to spend their disposable income. Third, taxpayers, after shelling out millions of dollars, want to see and use what they have just funded. Finally, the old city, knowing the team will leave town, usually rejects the club the last year in the ballpark, citing feelings of abandonment and disloyalty.

The Southern League has seen attendance jump drastically in all the cities which have 'stolen' clubs from other cities, save Huntsville (Table 2-7). Due to years of monster attendance,

[40] See NAPBL, New Ballparks Constructed Since 1985; Brian Benvie, ed. and Mark Jones, contributing writer, Southern Bases: "The official online newsletter of the Southern League", Vol. V, No. 2, 3 May 1999; available from http://www.southernleague.com/newsletter/files/990503.html; Internet; accessed 23 September 1999; and NABPL, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports).

Nashville was granted a AAA franchise and Huntsville had a hard act to follow. Still, they outdrew the rest of the league in their first three years. Greenville drew 125 percent more fans than did the previous home of the team, Savannah. Tiny Zebulon, even temporarily using a fifty-year old stadium twenty-three miles away for half the season, outdrew Columbus by 169 percent. The three years before the "Gypsy Franchise" settled down in Mobile, the club drew an average of 104,581 compared to 298,929 in Mobile (186 percent increase). Finally, Jackson, a much smaller city than its West Tennessee counterpart of Memphis (1996: 98,489 to 1,078,151), outdrew the "Capital of the Delta" 313,775 to 177,190, a 74 percent increase.[41]

The numbers prove that new stadia increase attendance figures. Knoxville Smokies General Manager Dan Rajkowski used these statistics and similar ones from throughout the country in trying to convince Knoxville and Knox County to assist in funding a new ballpark from 1996 through 1998. He kept reiterating that attendance (therefore the taxes paid to the

Table 2-7: Southern League New Stadium Attendance Increases, 1981-99.

Old City	Attendance @ Old Park	New City	Attendance @ New Park	Percent Increase
Savannah	94,073	Greenville	211,706	125%
*Nashville	456,870	Huntsville	273,366	-40%
Birmingham	152,137	**Hoover	265,617	75%
*Charlotte	127,904	**Fort Mill	307,713	141%
Columbus	100,192	Zebulon	269,800	169%
***Wilmington	104,581	Mobile	298,929	186%
*Memphis	177,190	Jackson	****307,989	74%

* Promoted to AAA Level *** Wilmington includes one year in Nashville
** Same MSA **** Only two seasons average
NOTE: Attendance Figures based on last three year average at old park and first three year average at new park. SOURCE: NAPBL, see footnote 41.

[41] See Marty Coward, "Carolina lands Wilson home away from home," Zebulon Record, 11 April 1991, 1; and US Bureau of the Census, Series MA-96-5, Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan Areas: Annual Time Series, July 1, 1991 to July 1, 1996 , Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, (Washington, DC: GPO), 1996; available from http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/ma96-05.txt; Internet; accessed 1999.

Much of this section from National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues. Attendance: New Ballparks/Same City (1/22/99) and Attendance: New Ballpark/Relocation (1/22/99) (St. Petersburg, FL, July 1999). Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, NPBL, Inc., St. Petersburg, FL, July 1999 (originally August 1995). NOTE: Figures were compiled using the average attendance of last three years in the old park and the average of the first three in the new park. Jackson uses the 1998 and 1999 attendance figures while the previous city's three-year figures were averaged.

government from the ticket and concession sales) "usually doubles" when new ballparks are constructed. Unfortunately for Rajkowski, neither the city nor the county wanted to invest the stadium money needed to improve the city and/or county and its image. Although each circumstance is different in detail, this trend shows little sign of waning, and will continue with the three new parks opening up for the 2000 season: Chattanooga, Orlando and Sevierville.[42]

[42] Nick Gates, "City, Smokies Pitch New Stadium," Knoxville News-Sentinel, 7 February 1996, C1.

CHAPTER III
GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOUTHERN LEAGUE CHANGES

Urban areas in the South have seen rapid growth since the 1940s. In fact, since 1940, the region has been the most rapidly urbanizing section of the country. To be more exact, the percent of urban population in the South has grown from 36.6 percent in 1940 to 68.6 percent in 1990, approaching the national average of 75.2 percent. Southern League cities are part of this remarkable growth which has transformed the face of the South's economic and population profiles.[1]

Sunbelt Cities' Boom Period Starting Mid-1960s

Sunbelt Growth and the Emergence of Regional Centers

The term *Sunbelt* has been used for the last thirty yeas in vaguely describing the southern portion of the United States. The term conveys feelings of clean, warm, progressive cities in sharp contrast to the stereotypical cold, dirty, run-down polluted northern *Frostbelt* cities of the 1970s. Linking this supposed advantage to cheaper labor, tax and land incentives, the South has utilized this advantage to lure business away from other parts of the country.

The rise of the American Sunbelt, after World War II, and the introduction of air conditioning are perplexing concepts. The Sunbelt consists of the "booming cities" and "booming economies" of many Southern states. Never really defined, the term is used as an all-encompassing area that stretches from California to North Carolina. Brunn sees the Sunbelt as a "perceptual region" rather than an economic or political one. However, he believes that the Sunbelt is "a belt with spots" - not prevalent in many areas, but prominent in just a few states

[1] David C. Roller and Robert W. Twyman, eds. Encyclopedia of Southern History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), "Urbanization" by James M. Russell, 1264.

(Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and California). National media and political figures have used the term to mean the area of the South that is "associated with economic growth." This somewhat misleading label leads to the belief that there are many more states, regions, and cities across the South which are doing quite well, while ignoring those areas which are not. The reality is clear, however, in saying that not all areas of the South are experiencing this Sunbelt/suburban-sprawl growth.[2]

In the post industrial South, service jobs are propelling the economy in addition to the traditional industrial and agricultural sectors. Cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas–Ft. Worth, Orlando and Nashville are taking the lead in service sector employment as well as emerging as Southern regional centers. These cities have landed such Fortune 500 giants as BankAmerica, First Union, Turner Entertainment, Bell South, BMI, Federal Express, Delta, USAirways, Harrah's and Walt Disney. Banking, communication, transportation, and tourist industries have brought these larger cities into the national consciousness. Small- to medium-sized Southern cities have also grown during the past half-century, attracting businesses, including professional sports franchises, from other sections of the country.[3]

Major League sports franchises have expanded into the Sunbelt, more than any other region in the last decade. The NHL has moved from eleven US markets in 1990 to twenty-one by the end of the millenium. Many of the new markets are located in the sunbelt: Anaheim, Phoenix, Dallas, Nashville, Atlanta, Tampa Bay, Miami and Raleigh. Since 1988-1990, the NBA has new teams in Charlotte, Orlando and Miami. Also in this decade the NFL re-located or expanded clubs into the Sunbelt cities of Nashville, Charlotte and Jacksonville, while major league baseball expanded to Phoenix, St. Petersburg and Miami.[4]

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[2] Stanley D. Brunn, "Sunbelt USA," Focus 36 (Spring 1996): 34-35.
[3] See James O. Wheeler, "The Changing South: Changing Corporate Control Points in the US South, 1960-1990," Southeastern Geographer 32, no. 1(May 1992): 68-73, 113-25; and "The Fortune 500 List," Fortune Magazine, available from http://www.pathfinder.com/fortune/fortune500/; Internet; accessed 26 April 1999. A similar discussion exists in Truman Hartshorn, "The Changed South, 1947-1997," Southeastern Geographer 37, no. 2 (November 1997): 122-139.
[4] Greg Garber, ESPN.com: Bettman's NHL growing nicely, available from http://espn.go.com/gen/columns/garber/01332782.html; Internet; accessed 1 July 1999.

These new clubs have entered markets that have continually expanded. Major league baseball expansion has come at a time when the United States is facing an over-saturation of sports. Sporting events are now available during almost every weekend throughout the year. Hockey's Stanley Cup Playoffs finish in late June, the baseball playoffs finish just before November, and pro football training camps start in the heat of July. In past decades, baseball and college football were the two big spectator sports. Sport seasons have gotten longer, overlapping into other seasons. Today professional and college football games are played from summer until January. During autumn, winter and spring there are hockey, college and pro basketball matches. Baseball starts spring training in February and now shares the spring, summer and early autumn months with major league soccer and the Women's National Basketball Association. Add the immensely popular NASCAR racing and other sports such as golf, horse racing, tennis and professional wrestling and you have a glut of sporting events/entertainment options that are taking up television airways, time and disposable income.

Today, minor league baseball competes against many things during the summer. Besides other sports on local, cable and satellite television, there are many other things to do during summer evenings. One can go to the movies, malls, or stay home and rent a movie. The pace of change at the turn of the millenium is considerably faster than that of just thirty-five years ago.

Population Changes

The American South has witnessed a population explosion since World War Two. In terms of total growth, the South added more metropolitan residents than any other region (6.3 million) between 1990 and 1996, representing 46.5 percent of the country's metropolitan growth. Small cities throughout the South also have seen a rapid expansion in both their economy and their population, which of course, are intertwined. Charlie F. Bryan, director of the Virginia Historical Society has said, "since 1950, the South has urbanized more than any other section of

the United States. In 1950, 36 percent of the South lived in urban areas. That number is now 79 percent."[5]

Migration

Kavita Pandit, of the University of Georgia, discusses factors that changed migration patterns, which became part of the Southern population influx after 1970. Pandit offered three new flows of people to the South to go along with a sharp decline in out-migration from the region, starting in 1970. These flows include: labor migration, reverse migration of blacks, and retirement migration.[6]

Many workers come South due to the job market and low cost of living. Along with the jobs, people have found the South to be more progressive with cleaner air and more room in which to live. Pannell and Parkins cite the milder climate of the South as a major pull factor in attracting businesses and people from the north.[7]

New people from other regions of the country also bring different ideas. Teegardin links the 1994 Republican Congressional victory, in part, to this influx. The "Solid South" had been pro-Democratic for almost a century, until the mid-1970s, when jobs, prosperity and people started coming to Georgia. Suburbanization of this new population has led to great metropolitan growth, which Teegardin points out led to more Republican votes. Teegardin cites Census data showing that "metropolitan populations rose by 30% in both the 1970s and the 1980s in Georgia, and rose almost as quickly in the South, twice the national rate." (Table 3-1)[8]

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[5] See Larry Evans, "Air Conditioning Marched Into South And Killed Rich Traditions," The Fredericksburg (VA) Free Lance–Star, 3 July 1998, available from http://starweb.infi.net/columns/evans/le070398.htm; Internet; accessed on 25 May 1999; and Rodger V. Johnson, US Bureau of the Census, "Current Population Reports, Special Studies Series P23-194, Section 5: Metropolitan and Non-metropolitan Area Population Trends," Population Profile of the United States, 1997, (Washington, DC: GPO), 14, available from http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/popula.htm#popspec; Internet; accessed 21 September 1999.

[6] Kavita Pandit, "The Southern Migration Turnaround and Current Patterns," Southeastern Geographer 37, no. 2 (November 1997): 238-250.

[7] See Clifton Pannell, "Recent Metropolitan Growth in the Southern United States," Southeastern Geographer 14 (1974), 11; and E. A. Parkins, The South: Its Economic-Geographic Development (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1938), 41-44.

[8] Carrie Teegardin, "GOP sweep of South tied to region's suburban boom," Atlanta Journal/Constitution 13 (November 1994): A8.

The out-migration of blacks from the South started with the collapse of plantation agriculture after 1910 and continued until the 1970s. Many Blacks were also forced off tobacco and cotton farms starting in the 1930s and 1940s with the introduction of tractors and mechanized farming, while many left to find work in Northern factories during World War Two. With the improved economic and social conditions that started with the Civil Rights Movement, the in-migration to the South reversed a decades-long trend of leaving the South to find work in the major industrial cities of the US manufacturing belt.[10]

Table 3-1: Population Growth Rates in the South, 1970-92.[9]

	1970-80		1980-92	
	Metro	Non-Metro	Metro	Non-Metro
The South*	29 %	2 %	22 %	5 %
USA	15 %	0 %	15 %	5 %

Finally, retirement migration is one of the factors that Calvin Beale cited for the growth of rural areas in America. The retirement of Northerners and Midwesterners to communities in the South has helped small towns and cities in the South grow and lure manufacturing and recreational industries. Many of these, including some in the Southern League, are close or even adjacent to metropolitan areas. Beale believes the small cities of Branson, Missouri and Sevierville-Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, are benefactors of this retirement and recreational expansion. In fact, Sevierville is the future home of the former Knoxville Smokies Southern League club.[11]

Many of Beale's small cities are also college or university towns that have benefited from the growth of their schools. Cities such as Lynchburg and Charlottesville, Virginia and Johnson City, Tennessee, are college communities with a core of educated people that helps attract businesses and manufacturing. Retirees are recruited, just as the freshman, to move to college

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[9] Teegardin, A8.

* The "Census South" as defined by the US Bureau of the Census includes the following states and the District of Columbia: TX, OK, AR, LA, KY, TN, MS, AL, GA, FL, WV, VA, NC, SC, MD and DE.

[10] See David R. Goldfield, The Promised Land: The South Since 1945 (Arlington Heights, IL: H. Davidson, Inc., 1987), 23-24; and Charles S. Aiken, The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 133-134.

[11] Calvin L. Beale, The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 1975), 11-12.

towns across the South such as Oxford and Starkville, Mississippi, and Auburn, Alabama. These communities cater to the retiree in the form of university classes, lectures and activities as well as the safe, small town atmosphere.[12]

Pockets of Growth

Some parts of the South have ridden the information wave into the twenty-first century while others are content to stay embedded in the nineteenth. The Interstate-85 "Boombelt" (Richmond, VA to Atlanta, GA) and the Nashville basin are booming because of technology and cheap labor. Florida's Gulf and Gold Coasts, as well as the I-4 Corridor, are booming because of retirement communities and corporate office relocations. Corporate offices have relocated to Florida, in part, because their executives love the proximity to the beach, great golf courses and can handle the heat and humidity thanks to air conditioning. Other urban areas such as Mobile, Birmingham, Memphis, Shreveport, and Knoxville and many rural areas, are not doing well because of recession, older infrastructure and a lack of good leadership.[13]

Air-Conditioning

The introduction of air conditioning opened up the humid South to development and business. The invention, by Willis Carrier in 1902, took almost forty years to proliferate into the South. In the North air conditioning had made its way into factories and a few hotels and movie theaters by the 1920s. Two decades later, air conditioning was common in most movie theaters and the better hotels, even reaching into the South. By 1951, houses and apartments could purchase inexpensive, portable air conditioning units that revolutionized the South and forever changed the Southern way of living. Four years later, air conditioners could be found in automobiles. By the mid-1970s, over ninety percent of the South's major buildings, eighty percent of the cars, almost two-thirds of the houses and apartments, half of the classrooms and

[12] Beale, 11-12.
[13] Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds. Encyclopedia of Southern Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), "Migration Patterns" by Curtis C. Roseman, 552.

even one-third of the tractors in the South had air conditioning. With the coming of air-conditioning, humid Southern Florida prospered and saw unparalleled growth, both in population and economy.[14]

Suburbanization

A "New" Type of City

Although the largest Southern cities have grown substantially (Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Houston, Miami and Washington), the bulk of the Southern urban growth is found in the small and medium sized cities, such as Austin, TX; Wilmington, NC; and Orlando, FL. The growth of many of these smaller cities is directly linked to the amenities of life in the late twentieth century: air conditioning, telecommunications, a reliance on the adoption of technology, college campuses, retirement villages, cheaper standards of living, high-speed freeways and a reliance on suburban growth.[15]

Because the Southern City boomed after the Second World War, it has been influenced by different factors than its Northern counterpart. Interstates tend to elongate the city and form pockets of development along transportation corridors. These transportation spurs lead to development away from the center city and result in the formation of a non-compact city. This, in turn, leads to piecemeal, strip development skipping over land parcels, forming haphazard and non-planned growth.

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[14] Raymond Arsenault, "The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture," Journal of Southern History 50, no. 4 (November 1984): 613.

[15] See US Bureau of the Census, Series MA-96-9, Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan Areas (ranked by 1990-1996 percent population change): July 1, 1996, Population Estimates Program, Population Division, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1996), available from http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/ma96-09.txt; Internet; accessed 6 July 1999; and Beale, 11-12; and Stan Little "The Diverging South: Metropolitan Growth Versus Stagnation Down in Dixie" (Knoxville, TN: Seminar in Geography of the American South, Department of Geography, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, December 1994). Knoxville's poor leadership and planning for the future has cost it jobs and progress. Examples during the 1990s include: Clayton Homes relocation to Blount County, losing the Knoxville Cherokees to tiny Florence, SC, the closing of two Levi Strauss factories and losing the Knoxville Smokies to neighboring Sevierville, TN.

One major Southern metropolitan phenomenon that has sprouted due to this effect of the automobile and the superhighway is that of the non-nucleated city or the dispersed city. This type of "city" would include a string or group of cities that have been grouped together either by the media or by chambers of commerce for the explicit reason of pooling resources or placing themselves on a bigger stage.

Some of the fastest growing dispersed Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), according to the US Census Bureau, are the North Carolina conglomerates of "The Triangle" (#15), "The Triad" (#93), "Northwest Arkansas" (#3) and those MSA's in the "The Valley" of the Rio Grande in Texas. "The Triangle" is comprised of the research area of the cities of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill while "The Triad" contains Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem. The area of "Northwest Arkansas" comprises of the three fast growing communities of Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers. "The Valley", along the Mexican/Texas border, consists of three separate MSAs which include Laredo (#2) and the grouped cities of McAllen-Edinburg-Mission (#3) and Brownsville-Harlingen-San Benito (#10).[16]

Edge Cities and New Downtowns

The physical layout of today's Southern "city" is closely tied to existing freeways and interstates. These are the spinal chords that link most of these conglomerates together. Considering that these Southern cities blossomed in the late Twentieth Century, it only seems natural that their layouts were affected by the major curent transport mode. Joel Garreau states in *Edge City*, "Cities are always created around whatever the state-of-the-art transportation device is at the time." Garreau continues, "The combination of the present is the automobile, the jet plane, and the computer. The result is Edge City." [17]

These later cities, which boomed in the post-1950s grew around the most dominant transportation available to the masses: the high-speed freeway. Across the country, these

[16] US Bureau of the Census, Series MA-96-9.
[17] Joel Garreau, Edge City: Life on the New Frontier (Doubleday, 1991).

suburban foci were becoming the new downtowns: places where citizens shopped, ate and spent their leisure time. Corporate headquarters and office buildings, taking advantage of cheaper land, government incentives and the lower taxes, moved out to these areas to make the commute easier for their employees.[18]

Since the 1920s, the United States has been transformed from a rural country into an urban one, and finally into a suburban country. The transformation to a suburban country started with the advent of the automobile and streetcars in the 1900s and 1910s. People could now live outside of the city center while still being able to commute for work or other activities. The building of suburban developments on Long Island after the World War Two opened a new era in American settlement. Levittown became the standard community of suburban development. The G.I. Bill assisted war veterans in borrowing for house payments. Communities copied the Levittown model and soon suburbs were growing around every major city in the country.

By 1990, the United States was the only country in the world in which the majority of the population lived in suburban dwellings. The emergence of affordable housing in the suburbs and the network of roads and highways have transformed the country into one that is increasingly reliant on the automobile. No longer do most people walk to the local market/supermarket, work or to the store. Most suburbs are not pedestrian friendly places. A pedestrian in the suburbs is essentially a fish out of water.

In the 1990s, many children who live in the suburbs, live in subdivisions and tract housing. Sidewalks are foreign objects to them, much like vinyl records and rotary telephones. Children today are often shuttled to and from overcrowded schools in minivans and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) instead of walking with groups of friends. The parade of suburban SUVs usually arrive at the school twenty minutes before school is dismissed, often tying up traffic flow. Gone are the innocent days of groups of children strolling home along the sidewalks and through

[18] Thomas J. Baerwald, "The Emergence of a New 'Downtown'," Geographical Review 68 (July 1978): 315-316.

the woods. The reliance of the automobile, along with fewer sidewalks in the suburbs and a more violent society have, rightfully, scared parents.

Housing / Population

Over that last two decades the suburban growth in the United States has been staggering, the South in particular. No longer are the downtown areas of southern cities the main economic focus. Instead, business is taking place miles outside the CBD in suburban office parks. Major entertainment complexes and retail stores are located in strip malls, mega-malls and shopping centers along the transportation corridors that fan out from the central city. "In the region's rapid, mostly upscale growth over the past 20 years, suburban territory has expanded at twice the rate as the rest of the nation," writes *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporter Carrie Teegardin. In fact, the census has found that the suburbs have benefited from cities' losses in population, "Central cities lost while the suburbs gained. The suburbs were the most popular destinations among movers both within and between metropolitan areas."[19]

Suburban developments usually pop-up at major transportation intersections. These suburban business centers, as described by Hartshorn and Muller in *Suburban Business Centers*, set up shop and move the focus of local development and retail out of the center cities and into these suburban business parks, accessible only by automobile. Once established, these centers act as magnets, drawing further development and people away from old and decaying city centers. Soon the suburbs become a place where people work, live, shop, and participate in recreation activities, without even thinking about "the city."[20]

Instead of cities growing in the traditional sense – upward with denser populations - such as those in Europe, Asia and the northern Rustbelt, Sunbelt cities have expanded outward,

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[19] See Teegardin, 17; and D'Vera Cohn, "Study Shows Longtime Residents Leaving D.C.," The Washington Post, 26 February 1998, C1, available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/longterm/library/growth/part4/feb26stu.htm; Internet; accessed 2 June 1999.

[20] Truman Hartshorn and Peter O. Muller, Suburban Business Centers: Employment Implications, Final Report, Project No. RED-808-6-84-5, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, (Washington, DC: GPO), November 1986.

devouring small rural communities and crossroad hamlets in their paths. The urban population of the South has grown at the expense of thousands of small towns. Some of this development is driven by the housing and real estate developer, while other developments might revolve around the planned building of a minor league ballpark or an all-purpose recreation facility.

Much of this growth stems from new development along the urban fringe. This urban fringe development ('Bow Wave' or 'New Metropolis') is eating up the countryside in a piecemeal manner. Typically, urban development stretches out along highway corridors emanating from the central city. As developers and land speculators snatch up the land along these corridors, pockets of urban areas are passed upon. Soon these pockets are surrounded by development and lose all sense of "rurality." Wehrweins noted that the rural territory was pierced by finger-like projections, of urbanized landuses.[21]

Small towns, once considered rural crossroads, are turning into bedroom communities, sending a substantial percentage of residents into some of the larger metro regions of the South. Although many of these towns lie far from these metro centers, the highway has expanded the commuting zone beyond what was possible even a decade ago. While it is true not all the residents of these towns make the drive to the city center, many commute to jobs in the fringe and suburbs of city's metro area. "The interstate highway system has played a significant role in producing the American dream of the single family house in the suburbs," say Cox and Love. "As the interstate highway system reduced travel time, people had broader options in residential location."[22]

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[21] See John Fraser Hart, "The Perimetropolitan Bow Wave," The Geographical Review 81 (January 1991): 35-51; Julian Wolpert and Michael N. Danielson, "The Rural Fringe in the New Metropolis," in National Rural Studies Committee, 4, ed. by Emery Castle and Barbara Baldwin, (Corvallis, OR: Western Rural Development Center at Oregon State University, 1991), 33; and David Thomas, "The Urban Fringe: Approaches and Attitudes," in Suburban Growth: Geographical Processes at the Edge of the Western City, ed. James H. Johnson, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1974), 17.

[22] Wendell Cox and Jean Love, "Quality of Life," The US Interstate Highway System: 40 Year Report, in Wendell Cox Consultancy, The Best Investment A Nation Ever Made: A Tribute to The Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate & Defense Highways for the American Highway Users Alliance, (Belleville, IL: June 1996), available from http://home.il.net/~policy//tp-is40.htm#qual; Internet; accessed 30 May 1999.

Automobile commuting has increased more than sixty percent since 1970, although the average automobile driver spends ten percent less time traveling, he or she travels twenty percent further to work. Part of this is due to the impact of the interstates. The highway commuting system, with interstates acting as its backbone, provides quicker commutes than previous times had afforded. Even in cities with urban rail systems, highway-commuting speeds are thirty percent greater than rail commuting speeds. After a long day of commuting, the last thing parent might want to do is take the kids, turn around and head back downtown to watch a minor league baseball contest. Therefore, placing ballparks in the suburbs, where people reside, makes good business sense.[23]

Some of the small rural towns of the South are feeling the affect of this urban and suburban growth. Many towns are boarding up Main Street and becoming bedroom communities of the larger metropoli. Residents of these towns are being forced to commute up to ninety minutes or more to centers such as Nashville, Atlanta and Charlotte for decent salaries. These monster cities are "doing fantastically because they're drawing people from wide destinations," says Chris Zeilinger of the Community Transportation Association in Washington, DC. Since the small towns are losing jobs, the residents must either commute the long distance or move to where there are jobs available.[24]

Retail

While people traveled fairly easily to work using the interstate and freeway system, they also could use the same infrastructure to do their shopping. Retail businesses were the first to realize the advantage of the suburbs. The lure of cheap land, low taxes, plenty of parking and a

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NOTE: US Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995 United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1995).

[23] Cox and Love, Interstate Highway System.

NOTE: Calculated from data in Federal Highway Administration, Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey: Urban Travel Patterns United States Department of Transportation, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994).

[24] Jim Yardley, "Loving the country, working the city," Atlanta Journal/Atlanta Constitution, 14 November 1993, A1.

growing suburban population led to the development of strip malls, regional shopping centers, movie theaters and today – minor league ballparks, on the edges of large cities. The newly constructed interstate highway system shuttled population out of the central city and into the ceaseless endless suburbs. Thomas Baerwald has captured this movement with *The Emergence of a New "Downtown."* The interstates were the pull factor that lured development out of the inner city and placed it out in the suburbs. Along these interstates, housing, retail shopping centers and corporate offices were constructed targeting the local population.[25]

By broadening the geographical range and options of shoppers, the interstate highway system has also increased retail competition, resulting in larger selections and lower consumer prices. Each of these cost reducing impacts have made both labor and capital more efficient and this has encouraged business expansion, new investment, and job creation.[26]

After the preliminary phase of suburban sprawl had started, the development of suburban malls was the defining factor in the growth of the suburbs. Starting in the early 1960s, large retail shopping malls started relocating to the outer suburbs. Cherry Hill Mall in South New Jersey was built way outside of downtown Philadelphia, located in a sleepy small town. After a couple of years of stellar business, developers started planning hundreds more malls around the country. The title of "the Country's Largest Mall" never could be kept for very long, as malls were being built larger and larger, seemingly every month.

Just as malls are built along highways and extremely high traffic secondary roads, the site locations of other stores, shopping centers and stadia have become very important in order to be profitable. New businesses, no matter the focus – retail or entertainment, try to build at highly visible places with easy automobile access. The national chain of Walgreens Drugstores has a

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[25] See Thomas Baerwald, "The Emergence of a New "Downtown," Geographical Review 86 (July 1978): 308-318; and Wilson and Ferris, eds. Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, "Cultural Landscapes," by Richard Pillsbury, 540.

[26] Cox and Love, Interstate Highway System.

NOTE: See, for example, Federal Highway Administration, Benefits of Interstate Highways United States Department of Transportation, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1970) and Federal Highway Administration, Benefits of Interstate Highways United States Department of Transportation, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1983).

corporate policy of locating new stores at "signaled intersection of two main streets with significant traffic counts." New ballparks, similarly, are being built at interstate exits that afford excellent visibility to thousands of potential customers per day. Of the ten Southern League ballparks that will open the 2000 season, fans will be able to see the freeway from eight of their entrances.[27]

Corporations and Manufacturing

Major corporations have been migrating south since the advent and widespread use of air conditioning. Major companies such as Delta Airlines, Coca-Cola, Tennessee Eastman-Kodak, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company and Alcoa have long called the South home. Most older companies such as these were located in the South because of one of two factors: either they just happened to have founders live in the South or the labor costs and manufacturing facilities were inexpensive and built for the cheap power supply.[28]

However, since the revolution of air conditioning, corporate relocation in the South has exploded. New companies can be seen relocating offices to many parts of the South. General Motors - Saturn opened up offices and factories in Spring Hill, Tennessee. Kimberly-Clark has a research facility in Roswell, Georgia in addition to production facilities and operations headquarters in Knoxville. Spartanburg, South Carolina landed Bavarian Motor Works (BMW) Manufacturing Corporation, the North American manufacturing headquarters for Bavarian Motor

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[27] Walgreens Drugstores, Walgreens Drugstore Real Estate Criteria, (Deerfield, IL), available from http://www.walgreens.com/comp/realest/realcritinfo.html; Internet; accessed 20 October 1999.

[28] From company histories found on the following Internet pages, all accessed 23 June 1999.
Delta Airlines, (1924, Tallulah/Monroe, LA), available from http://www.delta-air.com/cgi bin/dlt_news.cgi?category=1999_STATS_AND_FACTS&display=file&name=history.txt;
Coca-Cola, (1886, Atlanta, GA), available from http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/tccc/1886.html;
Eastman-Kodak, (1920, Kingsport, TN), available from http://www.kodak.com/aboutKodak/kodakHistory/milestones78to32.shtml;
RJR Tobacco, (1875, Winston-Salem, NC), available from http://www.rjrt.com/pages/COwhoweare_corpfactbook.asp?Nav=CO; and
Alcoa, (1910, Alcoa, TN), available from http://www.alcoa.com/frameset.asp?page=%2Fknow%2Fhistory%2Ftrademark%2Easp.
NOTE: The headquarters for Eastman-Kodak and Alcoa are in Rochester, NY and Pittsburgh, PA, respectfully.

Works. Heathrow, Florida, located in the swampy central inland portion of the state, is now the home of the American Automobile Association's (AAA) headquarters.[29]

Many of these facilities would not have even thought of moving to the South without air conditioning. "Can you imagine an Atlanta or a Richmond without air conditioning? I think we can say clearly that air conditioning has urbanized the South," said Virginia Historical Society director Charles F. Bryan. The Atlantic Coast of South Florida has exploded with growth. Having a large retirement community leads to the building of golf courses and with the building of golf course, companies opened offices long the coast to take advantage of the amenities of the warmth, the beach and recreation. Also, it does not hurt that these new facilities are located in a heavily populated area where many potential customers and new employees are available.[30]

Although agriculture is still a major player in the Southern economy, it is no longer king. Many other industries have grown and some have become quite large. Along with the population boom, the South has embraced the information and technology age, moving with the rest of the country into the future. Cable television, telecommunications, research facilities, high tech companies have taken root all over the South and have became major industries. International and interstate commerce can be done practically anywhere there is a phone. Transportation industries have helped open up once-isolated parts of the South. No longer must corporations locate in large northern metropoli. The telephone, faxes, e-mail and the internet can connect small towns with villages and cities all over the globe. Telecommuting has redistributed high technology jobs throughout the country. This has helped small business locate virtually anywhere in the world, including the small cities of the American South.

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[29] See The Economic Development Commission of Mid-Florida, Inc., Metro Orlando Business: Industry and Commerce, available from http://www.business-orlando.org/domestic/bb_ind06.htm; Internet; accessed 23 June 1999; and Kimberly-Clark, The Company, (Neenah, WI), available from http://www.kc-careers.com/company.htm; Internet; accessed 23 June 1999.

NOTE: BMW announced its move to Spartanburg County June 22, 1992. Construction began on April 6, 1993. The plant opened July 11, 1994. The plant sits on a 1,039-acre site on SC 101 and Interstate 85, midway between Greenville and Spartanburg. Found in BMW, BMW Tradition – Manufacturing, available from http://www.bmwusa.com/contact/manufacturing/manufacturing.html; accessed 23 June 1999.

[30] Evans, "Air Conditioning...Killed Rich Traditions," 3 July 1998.

Entertainment and Tourism

With this growth in population and an expanded economic base, the booming tourist and entertainment industry has provided a place to spend all this new income. When Disney World opened its doors outside of Orlando during the autumn of 1971, it ushered in the tourism trade that has been so profitable throughout the South. Locales such as Pigeon Forge-Gatlinburg, TN; Branson, MO; Myrtle Beach, SC; Williamsburg, VA; Chattanooga, TN; New Orleans, LA and the entire Orlando, FL area have capitalized and made tourism their main industry.

One of the biggest industries in the country in the 1990s has been tourism. All over the country tourist hotspots are driving the local economy of scores of states. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, "Travel and tourism is the nation's largest services export industry, third largest retail sales industry and one of America's largest employers. It is in fact, the first, second or third-largest employer in 32 states."[31]

The South houses a gamut of tourist and recreational activities and destinations. Amusement parks, historical sites, Civil War Battlefields, beach resorts, mountain retreats and outlet malls make up many of the targets for American and foreign tourists. The most prominent of these places is the most popular of all domestic tourist destinations - Orlando, FL. Central Florida is home to not only seven Walt Disney World Complexes (including the new ballpark site for the Orlando Rays,) but many spin-off attractions as well. They boast Sea World, Bush Gardens, Universal Studios, Gatorland, Cypress Gardens along with dozens of malls, outlets stores and roadside attractions. This area is easily the largest tourist attraction in the United States.[32]

The Orlando and Orange County tourism and development have moved into surrounding counties. Jobs and prosperity followed into the area. Other industries capitalized on the visibility and easy transportation connections that Orlando offered. Seminole County, to the northeast of

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[31] Travel Industry Association of America, Fast Facts: Economic Impact, (Washington, DC, 1999), available from http://www.tia.org/press/fastfacts1.stm; Internet; accessed 24 June 1999.
[32] Orlando.com, available from http://www.orlando.com/, Internet; accessed 24 June 1999.

Orlando has experienced fantastic growth in many economic fields. This is a county that has no major city, yet in 1998, over 350,000 people call it home - a twenty-two percent increase from 287,521 in eight years and up from 83,692 in twenty eight years.[33] Since the 1950s, the county has grown from a rural, swampy county to a major destination and residence. The Seminole County Convention and Visitor's Bureau publishes a short development history since the 1950s, mentioning the influx of companies moving to Seminole County. They talk about the prosperity that has spilled over from adjacent Orange County:

> The arrival in Orange County of Martin Marietta Corporation's aerospace factory in the fifties and Disney World in the seventies caused rapid growth in industry and tourism, which spilled over into Seminole County. The construction of the Altamonte Mall in the seventies made southern Seminole County a focal point of retail sales in Central Florida. Some of today's major employers in Seminole county include Siemens Stromberg-Carlson, United Telephone of Florida, American Automobile Association -AAA-, K-Mart and Wal-Mart, ESCO, ABB Power Distribution, Sprague Electric, NCR and Southern Bell.[34]

Except for Disney being a neighbor, this example could be many counties in the South during the last half century.

Sporting Facilities

As with other entertainment, professional sports have moved from city centers to the suburbs. The move of the Dodgers and Giants from New York City to California in 1958, and the completion of Dodger Stadium north of downtown Los Angeles four years later, ushered in a new era of professional sports. Although not truly a suburban site, Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine made teams start to look outside cramped city neighborhoods for new sites to build luxurious stadia like Dodger Stadium.

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[33] US Bureau of the Census, Series CO-98-4, County Population Estimates for July 1, 1998 and Demographic Components of Population Change for April 1, 1990 to July 1, 1998 (includes revised April 1, 1990 Census Population Counts), Population Estimates Program, Population Division, (Washington, DC: GPO), available from http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/county/co-98-4/98C4_12.txt; Internet; accessed 12 March 1999.

[34] Seminole County Convention and Visitor's Bureau: Tourist Information Office, Seminole County Florida Tourism - Historic Overview, available from http://www.visitseminole.com/historic.html; Internet; accessed 12 March 1999, revised 28 October 1999.

NOTE: The site also lists 12 private and semi-private and championship golf courses, available from http://www.visitseminole.com/golf.html; Internet; accessed 12 March 1999, revised 28 October 1999.

Baseball was the first league to see this phenomenon strike as Shea Stadium in Queens (1964), the Astrodome on Houston's fringe Medical Center Area (1965) and Jack Murphy Stadium on the outskirts of San Diego (1967) were the firsts ones to not consider downtown sites. The NFL witnessed their building of new suburban stadia in the early and middle 1970s: Texas Stadium (1971) in Arlington, Foxboro Stadium outside of Boston (1971), the Pontiac Silverdome outside of Detroit (1975) and Giants Stadium in the Meadowlands of New Jersey (1976). The NBA and the NHL had their share of suburban arenas including the Richfield Coliseum (1974), a place Cleveland fans called "The Little House on the Prairie." The structure, which was built twenty-four miles south of downtown, was home to the Cleveland Cavaliers and soccer's Cleveland Force until the middle 1990s. All these facilities were built outside of city centers and, most importantly, along major freeway and other transportation corridors.[35]

Sports owners saw the future and believed the next generation of fans would be reliant on the automobile for transportation to both work and entertainment. The minor leagues, and especially the Southern League, have bought into the suburban sprawl theory. With the aging of many professional ballparks, clubs had the excuse of leaving the city center. The clubs lobbied for newer facilities, better access and smaller lease payments. Rural municipalities, eager to bring entertainment and expand their tax base, raised money for new facilities. Existing cities recruited clubs and found suburbs were the least expensive area in which to construct parks. No existing buildings or expensive downtown property had to be condemned or purchased in order to build new facilities. A natural progression of newer ballparks out of the city has followed. In fact Southern League cities have built eight of the last nine new stadia in suburban sites with easy access to the interstates or freeways. The ninth, of course, is Chattanooga, which was mainly

[35] See Tom Farrey, ESPN.com: Comparing Baseball Stadiums and Comparing NFL Stadiums, available from http://archive.espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/nfl.html and http://archive.espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/mlb.html respectively; Internet; accessed 16 September 1998; and Patrick Solomon and Derek Solomon, interview by author, 20 June 1999, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

funded by private interests and has the freeway running right through downtown, west of the future ballpark site.

Locating new parks on sites along freeways has a large part to do with the Southern League's success over the past fifteen years. As the cities have changed to become more spread out and dispersed, the clubs have adjusted to that fact and placed themselves in the best possible locations they could in order to make a profit. The clubs have followed the blueprint laid out by the developers, retailers and real estate moguls of earlier days. To built a shopping mall, entertainment park or, in this instance, a baseball stadium, the ideal location would be where the bulk of your customers are and with an easy way to travel to your business. That would make the site a suburban site along a highly traveled highway, precisely the locales of the new Southern League ballparks.

CHAPTER IV
SOUTHERN LEAGUE BALLPARKS

Major League Ballparks

The decade of the 1990s has revolutionized professional sports in the United States. The 'Big Four' sports leagues (Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League) have expanded to cities all over the continent, individual player salaries have reached $10 million a year and strikes and lockouts have become all too common occurrences. Millionaire players are fighting with billionaire owners while ticket prices keep escalating. Older stadia and arenas do not generate the kind of revenue needed to be competitive. Club owners need higher gate receipts or lucrative cable television contracts to finance these astronomical player salaries. As costs increase, so do ticket prices, to the point where the common fan cannot afford them.

> 'It is almost worse for a city's image to lose a major league team than to have never had one at all.' . . . The idea is that status as a 'major league' city will help a municipality attract businesses and citizens.[1]

Owners press city governments for ballpark improvements, begging for public financing. "The teams hold all the advantages in negotiations with cities," says Charles C. Euchner, "chief among them being a highly desirable product in artificially short supply." Politicians, not wanting to lose a city's prestigious professional sports franchises and face losing the next election, give in and fund stadia constructions. It has become an issue that is now costing taxpayers hundreds of million of dollars a year.[2]

Older, tradition-laden arenas and stadia such as the Boston Garden, Maple Leaf Gardens (Toronto), the Montreal Forum, Tiger Stadium (Detroit), Memorial Stadium (Baltimore), County

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[1] Robert A. Baade, "Is there an Economic Rationale for Subsidizing Sports Stadiums?" in Heartland Policy Study no. 13, (Lake Forest, IL: Heartland Institute, February 1987), 7; quoted in Charles C Euchner, Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 55.
[2] Euchner, 50.

Stadium (Milwaukee), RFK Stadium (Washington, DC) and possibly even fabled Yankee Stadium (New York) and Fenway Park (Boston) are falling to the wrecking-ball.

Replacing these monuments are newer, "classic" facilities with dozens of skyboxes and luxury suites. Although touted as more fan-friendly, these facilities usually place fans further from the playing surface and at much higher prices. It is easy to see which groups win and which groups do not. The owners and players laud the new facilities and speak of now being able to compete with the rest of the league. Fans love them, because they have more choices at the concession counter and other amenities to entertain them (batting cages, speed pitch stations, etc.) However, they are forced to pay for personal seat licenses, more expensive tickets, concessions and parking fees.[3]

Most of newest facilities, since 1989, are being located in downtown sections of cities. Many of these buildings are cornerstones to inner-city rejuvenation. Following the grand success of Baltimore's Camden Yards in 1992, baseball has seen a dozen "retro-ballparks" constructed in downtown areas, all of which were financed with public funds. Leagues now realize that there is taxpayer money available from municipalities all over the country to help finance new stadia. In fact Greg Garber, ESPN.com columnist, has found...

> In the last three years, the NFL has thrown itself into no fewer than 17 stadium debates with enormous gusto. The remarkable results: eight new stadiums in play or on the way, three ambitious renovation projects and six pending proposals.[4]

Tom Farrey, Senior Writer at ESPN.com, has researched this trend across all four major sports and has found, "33 stadiums and arenas have been built this decade and another 24 are on

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[3] John Siegfried and Timothy Peterson, Vanderbilt University Department of Economics and Business Administration. "Who Is Sitting in the Stands? The Income Levels of Sports Fans," in Economics of Sports: Winners and Losers, ed. William Kern, (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, estimated publishing date Spring 2000), in Tom Farrey, ESPN.com: New stadiums, new fans, 8 September 1998; available from http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/monday.html; Internet; accessed 12 April 1999.

Siegfried and Peterson cite data showing the income levels of people who purchased season tickets to sporting events in 1994 was 90 percent higher than that of the typical American. That's a significant jump from 1972, when season-ticket holders were found to make 58 percent more than that the median, and single-game tickets buyers were 10 percent higher.

[4] Greg Garber, ESPN.com: New stadiums are works of Art; available from http://espn.go.com/nfl/columns/garber/01221688.html; Internet; accessed 22 April 1999.

the way, most of them with the stated desire of improving conditions for fans." However, Farrey continues, "But what goes unsaid during the campaigns to get public money approved is the facilities are largely for new fans – wealthier individuals and corporations that can afford the seats in these often, ironically, smaller stadiums and arenas." Once funding is approved, the team or owner issues the newest marketing tool used to generate funds for stadium building: the Private Seat License (PSL). This one time fee, usually from $500 to $1,500, reserves a certain seat in the new stadium, to be purchased at a later time. The price does not include any tickets to games, only the right to buy tickets. These PSLs are a detriment to the average fan, whom today can barely afford the price of tickets, and are being purchased by wealthy individuals and corporations.[5]

Table 4-1 shows a list of new or future ballparks for the two most popular sports in the United States, Major League Baseball and the National Football League since the stadium boom started in 1989. Each ballpark location is categorized as a city, a downtown, a freeway facility, or a combination of the three. The first, a city park, is located within the central city, but not in the Central Business District (CBD) which is categorized as a downtown stadium. The last, a freeway stadium, has easy access to a major freeway.

Most of the new stadia for the big leagues are being located in downtown sections of large cities. As the centerpieces for downtown redevelopment, government and city planners hope to keep fans in the downtown area, well after five P.M. However, many of these new ballparks have very easy access to the interstates and major highways that dissect their cities, inviting in suburbanites. Easy entrance also means easy exit, thereby leaving the city without any spent dollars from fans.

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[5] Tom Farrey, ESPN.com: New stadiums, new fans. available from http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/monday.html; accessed 16 September 1998.

NOTE: For a list of stadia in the big four sports please see the following ESPN web pages, all accessed 16 September 1998:
http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/nfl.html;
http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/mlb.html;
http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/nba.html;
http://espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/nhl.html.

Table 4-1: New or Future Ballparks in Major League Baseball and the National Football League, 1999.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL		NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
NEW BALLPARKS	**FUTURE BALLPARKS**	**NEW STADIUM PROPOSALS ACCEPTED**
1. **Toronto (1989)** City/Freeway	1. **Detroit (2000)** DT/Freeway	1. **Baltimore** DT/Freeway
2. **St. Petersburg (1990)** City/Freeway	2. **San Francisco (2000)** City	2. **Tampa** Airport/Freeway
3. **Chicago (White Sox) (1991)** City/Freeway	3. **Milwaukee (2000)** Freeway	3. **Cleveland** DT/Freeway
4. **Baltimore (1992)** Downtown/Freeway	4. **Houston (2000)** Freeway/DT	4. **Nashville** DT/Freeway
5. **Cleveland (1994)** DT/Freeway	5. **Pittsburgh** Freeway/DT	5. **Cincinnati** DT/Freeway
6. **Arlington, TX (1994)** Freeway	6. **Cincinnati** Freeway/DT	6. **Seattle** DT/Freeway
7. **Denver (1995)** City/Freeway	7. **San Diego** Downtown	7. **Pittsburgh** DT/Freeway
8. **Atlanta (1996)** DT/Freeway		
9. **Phoenix (1998)** Downtown	DT = Downtown	
10. **Seattle (1999)** DT/Freeway	Freeway = easy freeway access	

Minor League Ballparks

Looking beyond the top echelon of the American sports scene, a different building trend emerges. Many smaller cities and towns throughout this country have been building facilities for minor league ballclubs that are not located in downtown sections of their cities. Instead, they are taking one half of the big league's idea and are building new parks along highways corridors.

New Stadia and New Economic Development

Rather than placing these new ballparks downtown or in older neighborhoods, such as the major leagues have done, they are building them along highways, near the outskirts of town, or in the far suburbs of their cities. Most small cities do not have the financial resources or the corporate benefactors that help defray the costs of downtown ballparks in major league cities.

Instead, a finance package of $8 to $40 million is all that the smaller city can afford. Most of that money is usually used for construction costs and not for relocation or condemnation of pre-existing buildings.

Why are so many suburbs taking on the enormous debt service required to build and finance the sporting cathedrals of today? The answer is development. These outlying towns and suburbs need a catalyst for development and a ballpark or sports arena is a highly visible (physically and psychologically) way to start the infrastructure. Over and over, in newspaper articles and personal interviews across the South, the author has encountered this reasoning for constructing new ballparks. The tiny, rural towns of Zebulon, NC and Fort Mill, SC have the same plan as tourist magnets Sevierville, TN and Orlando, FL and the larger urban areas of Greenville, SC; Mobile, Huntsville and Hoover, AL.

Once the infrastructure of roads, telephone, water and sewer lines are laid, it becomes much easier to attract new business. Several city and county planers have reiterated that because of the construction of ballparks in these once remote, undeveloped areas, other development has followed. Zebulon has attracted a P.Y.A. (Sara Lee) distribution center across from Five County Stadium. Greenville gained a Hitachi plant and a few industrial areas after Municipal Stadium was constructed. Fort Mill added Baldor Electrical Company, which manufactures electrical parts, just past Knights Castle. Mobile's Hank Aaron Stadium was the precursor to the development of a movie theater and several restaurants. Some investments are risks, but these communities thought the odds were in their favor and that the long-term goals outpaced the short-term thinking. Distribution and manufacturing plants benefit from new development along a major transportation corridor. Along with the cheap rent and new infrastructure, their trucks and employees can be on the interstate in a matter of minutes.[6]

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[6] See John Koffa, City of Zebulon Planning Department, interview by author, 10 August 1995; Mark Ferris, York County (SC) Economic Development Office, phone interview by author, 14 August 1995; Joe Bogan, O'Neal Engineering Inc., phone interview by author, 20 August 1995; and Tom Nichols, Mobile BayBears Director of Broadcasting / Media Relations, E-mail letter to author, 26 September 1999.

Many Southern League ballparks had a special nostalgic feel about them. The older, historical ones have seen Hall of Fame players and coaches pass through, barnstorming all-star teams, wacky publicity stunts, and even a female player excelling against the stars. In the days of train travel, major league teams used to make their way North after spring training broke camp. They would sharpen their skills for the upcoming season by playing exhibition games in many of the cities along the way.

Exhibition games were routinely played in Southern Association, SALLY and Southern League ballparks. Most took on festival atmospheres and many were the target of publicity stunts. In fact, Joe Engel, owner of the Chattanooga Lookouts, once signed a woman player to pitch in one of the exhibitions against the World Champion New York Yankees. As the story goes, on April 2, 1931, Jackie Mitchell pitched to the heart of the Yankee order - Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig - striking out both Hall-of-Famers.

Before Jackie Robinson broke into the majors in 1946, Southern League cities were some of the few places to see Negro League ballplayers display their vast skills and talents against the all-white Major League clubs. The older ballparks, like those in Asheville, NC; Birmingham, AL; Chattanooga, TN; Columbus, GA; Knoxville, TN; Macon, GA; Memphis, TN and Montgomery, AL saw these exciting exhibition games in which the Negro League clubs triumphed more often than not. It was these lucky Southern fans whom got to see the best Negro Leaguers getting a chance to prove that, indeed, they did belong in the majors.

The fans were also treated to year after year of good, hard-nosed baseball. In those hot summers, millions of fans visited Southern Association, SALLY and Southern League parks to watch these youngsters try and climb the ladder to the majors. Many did not reach the top rung, but the fans rooted for them all, win or lose, as long as they showed effort and desire.

With the passing of the decades, the sites of the ballparks have been gradually transformed. Many of the old ballparks were built in the more upscale sections of cities, usually along trolley lines or major boulevards. Birmingham's Rickwood Field (1910) and Knoxville's

Caswell Park (1921) were two examples of parks which were built near prominent neighborhoods along major thoroughfares that emanated from the center cities. Asheville built its park within walking distance of its downtown, along the road to Biltmore Mansion. Orlando built Tinker Field near neighborhoods on the outskirts of their town more than eighty-five years ago. Charlotte's Crockett Park was built in the heart of a newly created residential area called Dilworth, just east of South Boulevard (US 431), a major thoroughfare into the city.

Since the time of construction, these neighborhoods have changed significantly. Urban renewal, white flight and the abandonment of many inner city neighborhoods have combined forces to shift the makeup of these mostly upscale locales into middle class, minority or blue-collar sections. Ballclubs, along with other entertainment and retail businesses, saw this change and reacted by following their market to the suburbs (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2: Southern League Ballparks, 1999.

Downtown Ballparks		Freeway/Suburban Ballparks	
Orlando	1914, 1923	Jacksonville	1955
Chattanooga	1930	Greenville	1984
Knoxville	1931, 1953	Huntsville	1985
		Birmingham	1988
		Zebulon	1991
		Mobile	1997
		Jackson	1998

Since the formation of the modern Southern League in 1964, many of these older ballparks have been retired while some others have become hosts for other leagues. Only four of the older ballparks are left (soon to be just Wolfson Park in Jacksonville, FL), and the three which are closing are located in downtown areas, older industrial districts, or in older neighborhoods of their respective cities. The newer facilities have been generally located in suburban areas or adjacent to high traffic freeways. The newer ballparks are located off the freeway to attract the highly mobile and monied suburban fans.

Inner-City/Neighborhood Ballparks[7]

Former Stadia (1975 – 1997)

Historically speaking, the Southern League has had its share of beautiful, downtown facilities. Over the course of its thirty-six year existence, however, these facilities have left the league or been replaced by new, more modern ballparks. This section will focus on the locations of some of the older stadia that the Southern League has used during the last quarter century.

Asheville (1964-66, 1968-75)

McCormick Field was built in 1924 for the SALLY's Asheville Skylanders (Class B). It housed Southern League teams during the 1964-1966 and 1968-75 seasons. Its first game saw Hall of Famer Ty Cobb visit with the Detroit Tigers in an exhibition game. Other greats, such as Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, and Jackie Robinson also came through McCormick Field during the barnstorming years. Located just three-quarters of a mile south of downtown, this beautiful stadium was built into a side of a hill adjacent to Valley Street. The entrance faces the Biltmore Avenue thoroughfare, which connects downtown to the interstate and the Biltmore Mansion. The area is a light commercial zone that includes shopping centers, storefronts gas stations and some fast food businesses.

After a dozen years in the Class-B Tri-State League, Asheville rejoined the SALLY in 1959. The Tourists, along with the rest of the league, moved to Double-A status in 1963 and became one of the original eight Southern League teams in 1964. Except for a one-season hiatus in the Class A Carolina League during 1967, the Tourists lasted until Baltimore moved their Double-A club downstate to Charlotte in 1976. McCormick Field then hosted a Class-A Western

[7] Unless noted, attendance figures throughout this chapter are from the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, NAPBL Club Attendance (1978-1998 reports) (St. Petersburg, FL: NPBL, Inc., July 1999).

Provided by Tim Brunswick, Director of Baseball Operations, July 1999.

Carolina club until 1980 when a reorganized SALLY recruited the Tourists. Many of the minor league baseball scenes from the 1987 movie *Bull Durham* were filmed in McCormick Field.[8]

By 1992, the stadium was the oldest minor league ballpark in operation and the fourth oldest in all of baseball. The city decided to raze the old structure and rebuild a beautiful brick grandstand in its place. Parking is still a major problem, but the fans feel safe parking on the adjacent streets and walking to the ballpark. The reconstruction of the ballpark, coupled with a major public and private reinvestment in Asheville's downtown, has helped raise attendance over the 100,000 mark since 1992. The future looks good for both McCormick Field and Asheville due to local interest and investment as well as the city's revitalization of downtown.[9]

Montgomery (1965-80)

Paterson Field was built in 1949 and fielded Southern League teams from 1965 to 1980. Clubs here averaged 73,758 during their last seasons in the league between 1978 and 1980.

Paterson Field is the definition of an old city ballpark. Although retired from pro ball with the departure of the Rebels to instate rival Birmingham, it is still used for NCAA tournaments and local amateur clubs. Located within walking distance of the State Capitol, Paterson Field epitomizes the livable city and the pedestrian age. In the final three years of Paterson Field's tenure in the Southern League, Montgomery drew an average of 73,758 fans.

Savannah (1968-83)

Municipal/Grayson Stadium was built in 1927 and was renovated in 1940. During its last six years in the Southern League (1978-83) the average attendance was 87,279.

Home today to the SALLY's Sand Gnats, Grayson Stadium kept Southern League fans entertained for fifteen summers. In losing the AA-franchise to Greenville, SC, Savannah found a

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[8] See Bill O'Neal, The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie, 1885-1994 (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 207-211; and Judith Blahnik and Phillip S. Schulz, Mud Hens and Mavericks, (New York: The Penguin Group, 1995), 246.

[9] Blahnik, 246.

league more its size in the smaller SALLY. Grayson has consistently drawn in the 110,000 to 130,000 range over the past decade, while being located about three and one-half miles southeast of downtown Savannah. Grayson Stadium is at the edge of Daffin Park, found off the main east-west boulevard in Savannah, US 80-Victory Drive.

Birmingham (1964-65, 1967-75, 1981-87)

Rickwood Field (Figure 4-1) was built in 1910. During its last six years in the Southern League (1981-87) the average attendance was 189,305.

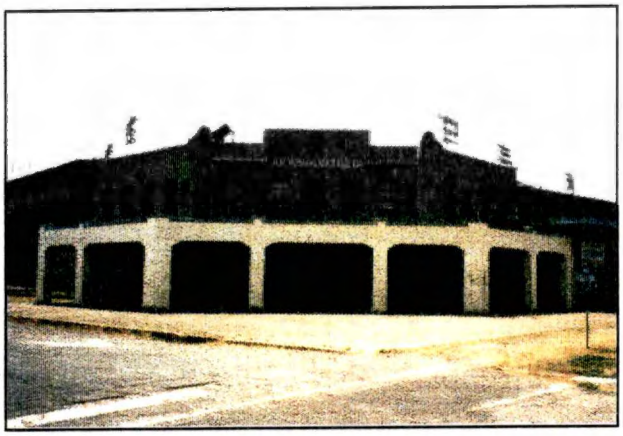


Figure 4-1: The Entrance to Rickwood Field.

Perhaps the most historic of the great minor league ballparks, Rickwood Field is located three miles west of downtown Birmingham. Owner Rick Woodward erected his concrete-and-steel ballpark at the intersection West Second Avenue and 18th Street in 1910, along the end of the Rickwood Trolley Loop which led from downtown to the ballpark. Seating almost 14,000 fans, it was modeled after Pittsburgh's state-of-the-art Forbes Field, which opened a year earlier. The single tiered park curves around the right field corner and puts the fans closer to the field of play (Figure 4-2). Dozens of antiquated features emphasize tradition: the faded, cracking paint of the multi-colored wooden seats, the concrete-and-steel supports that hold up the wooden roof, the light banks which hang precipitously over the playing field, and the tiny stairway which leads to the roof and



Figure 4-2: View of Rickwood from Right Field Roof.

diminutive pressbox. The nostalgic atmosphere of the ballpark can transport fans back to the second decade of this century: Ty Cobb being pelted with trash by the right field fans and Burleigh Grimes striking out opposing batters. One can also picture a young Willie Mays patrolling the vast confines of the outfield, the famed Satchel Paige bringing the crowd to their feet, and Reggie Jackson belting monstrous home runs into the passing freight trains beyond the right field bleachers.[10]

The Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro Leagues also called Rickwood home for many decades, capturing many titles. Civil Rights battles were fought on this field. Timothy Whitt cited a city ordinance as the reason Birmingham lost professional baseball for two seasons. The ordinance stated,

> It shall be unlawful for a Negro and a white person to play together or in company of each other in any game of cards, dice, dominoes, checkers, baseball, softball, football or basket ball [sic] or similar game.

After two years of no baseball in Rickwood Field, "a chastened Birmingham wanted baseball back and was willing to integrate its team to regain the sport." The 1964 inaugural Southern League season brought the first integrated team to Rickwood.[11]

Abandoned by the Southern League's Birmingham Barons in 1987 in favor of a spacious stadium in suburban Hoover, Rickwood Field today is utilized by Birmingham's inner city youth baseball programs and local high school teams. At the time of its retirement from professional baseball, it was the second oldest park and oldest minor league facility in the country (Chicago's Old Comisky Park opened one week earlier than Rickwood). Today it is the oldest park in the country (Comisky was razed in 1991) and The Friends of Rickwood have placed it on the National Register of Historic Places.

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[10] O'Neal, 26.

[11] See Timothy Whitt, Bases Loaded with History: The Story of Rickwood Field, America's Oldest Ball Park (Birmingham, AL: The R. Boozer Press, 1995), 81; and Whitt, 89.

I wish to thank Mary Beth Newbill, Librarian from the Southern History Department, Birmingham Public Library for providing information about the segregation of Rickwood Field.

The area around Rickwood has completely changed since its completion almost ninety years ago. Access to the Interstate or other freeways could be much better. Gone are the upscale neighborhoods served by trolley lines to downtown, replaced by mostly poor residents with hardly any political power and who cannot afford many ballgames. Like many other urban neighborhoods, the Rickwood area is fighting a perception of crime and gang activity. However, the reality is not as bad as the perception, for, on a recent visit, the author encountered residents walking their children, kids riding around on bikes, and shopkeepers sweeping their sidewalks. The mostly black, inner-city residents felt slighted by the city government for letting the Barons move to Hoover. The suburb of Hoover built the $14 million Hoover Metropolitan Stadium for the Barons in 1988, locating it directly off the I-259 Birmingham bypass.

> 'Rickwood had real character,' he [Barons' CEO Art Clarkson] said 'but the neighborhood there got old, the park got run down, the housing projects got tough. They chased me away. I don't know how many times my office was broken into. My market was moving away from me. Baseball is like the fast-food business; you've got to go with your market and that market today is in the suburbs.'[12]

Charlotte (1964-72, 1976-88)

Clark Griffith Park was built in 1941, and throughout its tenure in the league, which included stints from 1964-72 and 1976-88, the stadium was called Crockett, Griffith and Knights Park. During its last eleven years in the Southern League (1978-88) the average attendance was 128,299.

During The Depression, Washington Senators' owner Clark W. Griffith acquired the Charlotte franchise and, to start the 1941 season, he moved his Charlotte Hornets into a new ballpark. Griffith built the 6,500-seat ballpark on a site he had purchased at 400 Magnolia Avenue. The $40,000 wooden structure, named Clark Griffith Park, would be the home to pro baseball in Charlotte until a devastating fire in 1985.[13]

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[12] David Lamb, A Stolen Season, A Journey Through America and Baseball's Minor Leagues (New York: Random House, 1991), 120.

[13] Scott White and Danny Trapp, "If you build it . . . ," 1990 Charlotte Knights Baseball Program 1990, 54.



Map 4-1: Charlotte's Crockett Park

Magnolia Avenue lies in the heart of the Dilworth residential area off South Boulevard (Map 4-1). A mostly white, working class neighborhood, many of its residents worked in "uptown" (downtown) Charlotte, two and one half miles north, or in factories and mills along South Boulevard. At the time of construction, South Boulevard (US 431 and NC 49) was a major thoroughfare into the city. "Griffith Park was part of a neighborhood that sprang up at the time the park was developed [1942]," said Charlotte Observer columnist Dan Lohwasser, forty-four years later.[14]

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[14] Dan Lohwasser, "44-Year-Old Park Held Many Baseball Memories," The Charlotte Observer, 17 March 1985, 15A.

Lohwasser continued about the unusual history of the Dillworth area: "The neighborhood itself was developed in the 1930s on 165 acres owned by the Southside Land Company. Company president Charles Cathey directed construction of Magnolia Avenue and Iverson Way, between Park Road [to the east] and South Boulevard [to the west]. He planned to develop the entire area and build himself a large home were the stadium stood. But the Depression brought everything to a halt."

The Hornets played Southern League baseball at Griffith Park until 1973. The city lost pro baseball in 1972 after a bizarre move by the Hornet's parent club, the Minnesota Twins. The Twins, who had relocated from Washington, DC in 1961, decided to place their Class A Western Carolina league franchise in Charlotte, to play alongside their Southern League club. The two teams would temporarily share the facilities at Clark Griffith Park for the 1972 season. Baseball was played nearly daily on Magnolia Avenue throughout the 1972 summer. While the Hornets were at home, the Charlotte Twins would play on the road, and vice versa. Attendance plummeted, as fans became saturated with professional baseball. The 1971 season saw the AA Hornets draw over 70,000 fans. But the following season, the two teams only drew a combined attendance of under 44,000 fans, in twice as many games. The Hornets attracted just under 31,000 fans while the new Twins only drew 12,835. Minnesota realized its mistake, but punished the city of Charlotte even after they had assisted in their experiment. The big league club moved its Class-A affiliate to Geneva, NY of the NY-Penn League. The Charlotte Hornets AA-Southern League franchise was transferred to Orlando, to play at aged Tinker Field, the Twins' spring training home.[15]

For three summers, Charlotte lacked professional baseball. Clark Griffith announced he would demolish his park in 1974, after several failed bids to sell it. Jim Crockett, a "prominent Charlotte businessman and pro wrestling promoter, purchased the facility for $87,000, renaming it Crockett Park." Meanwhile, the Baltimore Orioles decided to move to their AA club in Asheville to a larger market for the 1976 season. Crockett convinced the Orioles to move downstate to his park in Charlotte, thus ending an eleven-year membership in the Southern League for the city of Asheville.[16]

The Charlotte Orioles started playing in Crockett Park (Figure 4-3) during the 1976 season. The Orioles were well supported by the city and baseball became a Charlotte mainstay

[15] O'Neal, 223-224.
[16] Lohwasser, 15A.

once again. Thirteen years later, in 1989, Charlotte ended their affiliation with Orioles when future owner George Shinn signed on with the Chicago Cubs' farm system.

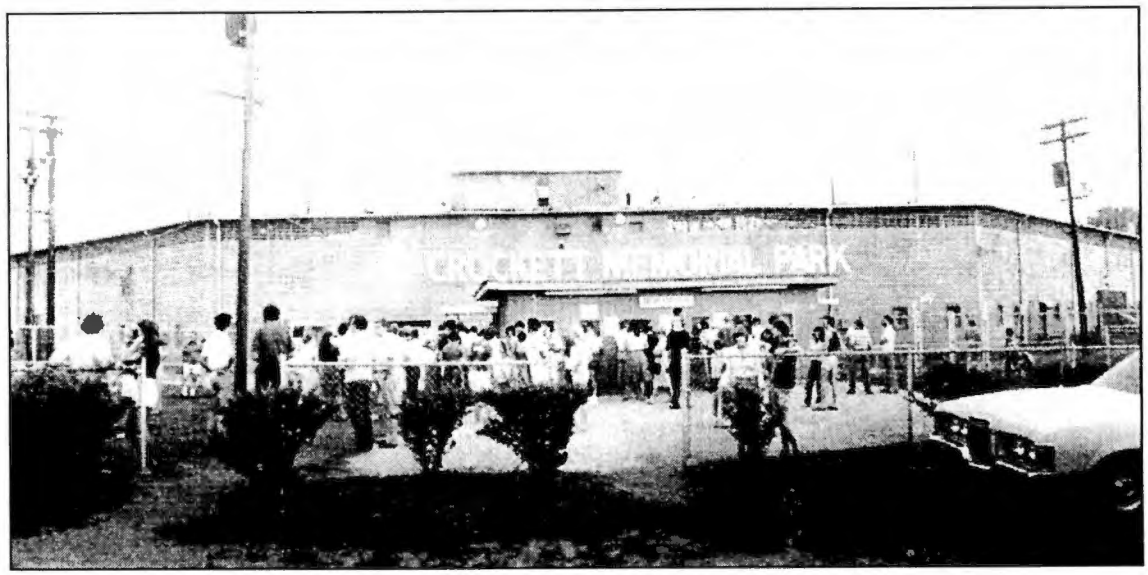


Figure 4-3: Crockett Park's Entrance in Charlotte, circa 1978.[17]

Crockett Park had accommodated Charlotte's minor league clubs since its opening in 1941. It had the reputation of a family-friendly, neighborhood ballpark. Other events, such as rodeos, rock concerts, high school ballgames, and the old World Football League practices were held at Crockett Park. The world's largest submarine sandwich and the world's largest ice cream sundae were both constructed at the site. But just before the start of the 1985 season, disaster struck the old wooden ballpark.[18]

A three-alarm fire broke out after the completion of a Charlotte's Catholic High School's St. Patty's Day Tournament game. According to The Charlotte Observer reports, Charlotte Orioles' president, Frances Crockett, had closed up the park around 7:10 PM, just ten minutes before the fire started. The wooden framed grandstand, believed to be one of the last of its kind still operational in the country, took no longer than fifteen minutes to "hit the ground." The Charlotte Observer reported the blaze created "a tower of smoke and flames that lit the sky above

[17] File Photo from Charlotte Observer, 17 March 1985, 15A.
[18] Ricki Morell and Linda Brown, "Crockett Park Destroyed By Fire, The Charlotte Observer, 16 March 1985, 1A.

Magnolia Avenue and could bee seen for blocks." The blaze would haunt the league for almost thirteen years, making a once stable franchise the gypsy of the Southern League.[19]

Today, Interstate-77 lies to the west of South Boulevard, and a major expressway loops uptown. The nature of South Boulevard has changed from the major access thoroughfare into an inner city artery. On the former site of Crockett Park lies a condominium complex and the area has become a bit more upscale than forty years previous.

Columbus (1964-66, 1969-90)

Golden Park was built in 1926 and underwent major renovations in 1950. During its last thirteen years in the Southern League (1978-90) the average attendance was 112,497.

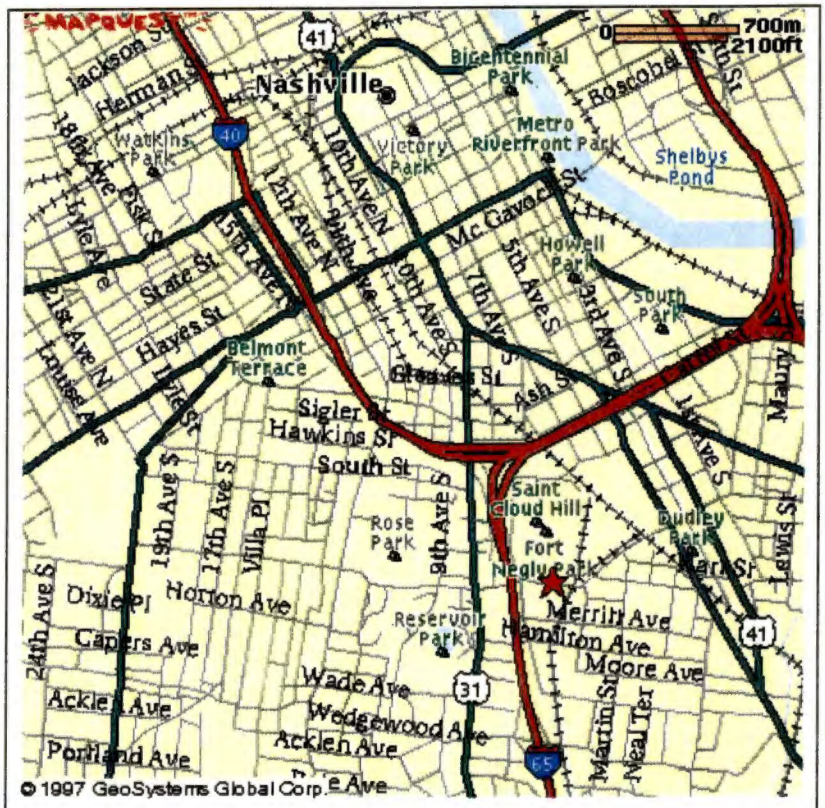
Columbus RedStixx Vice President and General Manager John Dittrich called Columbus a "sleepy Southern town." So when North Carolina native Steve Bryant bought the Columbus club in 1988, Dittrich knew what lay ahead. He probably was not too upset when the team was moved to the Carolina Piedmont, for he stayed in Columbus, directing a SALLY club instead. Dittrich and his sleepy little town experienced Olympic fever in 1996 as Women's softball invaded a reconstructed Golden Park, on the banks of the Chattahoochee River. Golden had been host to SALLY, Southern League and Southern Association teams since it opened in 1926. Golden Park is located in the heart of downtown Columbus along the Alabama-Georgia border.

Nashville (1978-84, 1993-94)

Herschel Greer Stadium was built in 1978. During its seven years in the Southern League (1978-84) the average attendance was an incredible 484,658. During the Nashville Express's two-year temporary stay (1993-94) the club averaged 156,893.

Herschel Greer Stadium is located south of downtown, just off US Highway 31, in an older section of Nashville (Map 4-2). In the mid-1970s, Nashville was offered the opportunity to place minor league baseball back in the city for the first time since the Nashville Vols folded in

[19] Morell and Brown, 1A.



Map 4-2: Herschel Greer Stadium (to the south) in Relation to Downtown Nashville.

1963. Sulphur Downs had long been torn down and local businessman Larry Schmittou was lobbying the city politicians and businesses for support in building a new stadium.

After receiving no support from the city, led by an unhelpful mayor, Schmittou took offers from the surrounding counties. While other counties fought for the new stadium, the local towns in those counties objected. Schmittou was left with no other option: he had to take an offer from the city of a free parcel of land, in a less than ideal place. The land was part of Fort Negly Park, which was city owned. The park also is the site of a former Union Civil War fort. Both the fort and park are not open to the public, which does not help add off-season visibility to the stadium. The city offered a piece of the park to the club, situated 1.7 miles south of downtown, as a place to build a new stadium. The site is adjacent to housing projects, railroad tracks, and Interstate-65, although there is no exit that offers easy access. With no other choice the club built

the stadium for one million dollars (1977), with only private funds, on the free land given to them by the city.[20]

Memphis (1978-97)

Tim McCarver Stadium was built in 1968 and renovated in 1985. During its twenty years in the Southern League (1978-97) the average attendance was 220,682. During the pre-Southern League term, McCarver Stadium was also known as Blues' Stadium, after the name of the club.

Russwood Park, the original location for professional baseball in Memphis, was built just outside the eastern border of the city in 1899, a few blocks from the now famous Beale Street. Southern Association ballclubs called Russwood home for sixty years, until a "five-alarm fire (the largest ever in Memphis)" engulfed the park and threatened the neighboring hospitals. Hodges Field (Figure 4-4), a prep-school football field on the eastern fringe of Memphis, was used as a temporary site for the rest of 1960.[21]



Figure 4-4: Hodges Field, Memphis, 1960.

With the return of professional ball to Memphis in 1968, the city made major renovations to the American Legion field (Fairgrounds Field #3). The renamed Blues' Stadium became one of the anchors of a new recreational complex, which included the county fairgrounds, a large track and field complex, and eventually the Liberty Bowl Memorial (football) Stadium - all dating back to the mid-1960s (Figure 4-5). The complex is somewhat isolated from major highway access and can only be reached by driving on city streets. The ballfield lies in the

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[20] See Larry Schmittou, Nashville Sounds Owner/General Manager, interview by author, 20 August 1995; and Pete Bird, "Nashville Sounds: Team's Amazing First Year Seen Ringing Bell At $300,000 Profit," Nashville Banner, 9 August 1978, sec. 15, p. 1.

[21] John J. Guinozzo III, "Fifth Inning: Russwood Park and home, the Farm, original Chicks," chap. In Memphis Baseball Encyclopedia (Memphis: Guinozzo Centre for Baseball Research, 1995).

middle of this vast complex of facilities. The stadium was renamed in 1977 after the Memphis native and former pro-catcher/TV announcer Tim McCarver. McCarver grew up attending Chicks games as a member of the Chickasaw Buddies Club, a youth fan club sponsored by the team, based after Engel's Knothole Gang in Chattanooga. He then played for the Chicks on his way to the Big Leagues.[22]



Figure 4-5: The Memphis Fairgrounds, home to Tim McCarver Stadium (and the Liberty Bowl in the background).

Present Stadia

At present, the Southern League teams that have either inner city or old neighborhood ballparks include Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Orlando. All three are located in old sections of their respective cities, in older sports complexes or both. However, beginning in April 2000, none of these fields will be hosting professional baseball. All three will have been abandoned for new, modern facilities.

Orlando (1973-present)

Tinker Field (Figure 4-6) was built in 1914 and rebuilt with a concrete grandstand in 1923. Orlando has fielded a southern League team since 1973. During the last twenty-two years in the Southern League (1978-99) the average attendance was 106,612.

Many major league clubs call Florida home during the first few months of the year - spring training. Until recently, the National

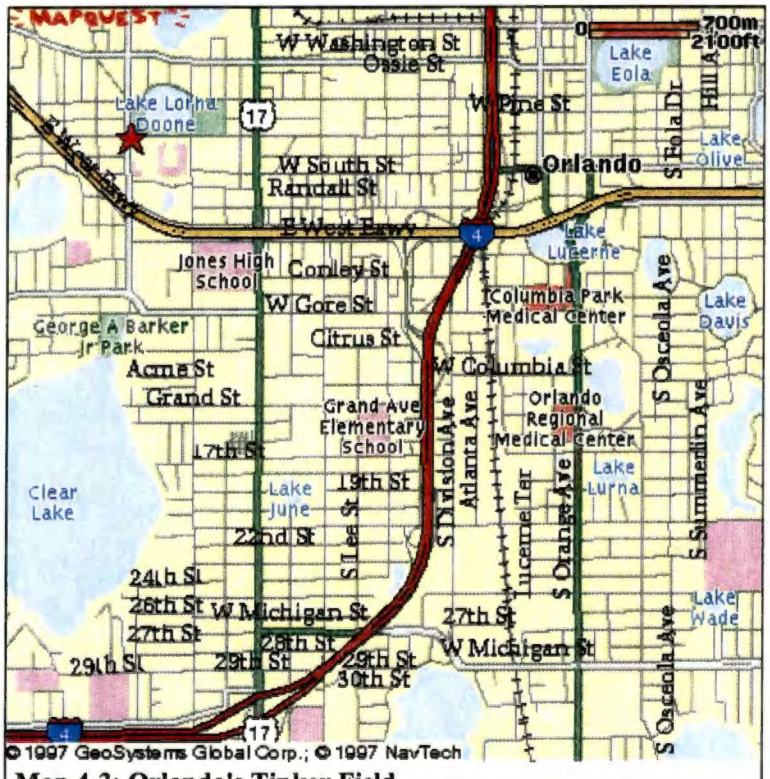


Figure 4-6: Tinker Field and adjoining neighborhood.

[22] See Guinozzo, "Fifth Inning;" and John J. Guinozzo III, Memphis Chicks Historian and Official Scorer, interview by author, 16 June 1995, Memphis, notes, Tim McCarver Stadium, Memphis.

League's Chicago Cubs trained in Orlando, home of their former Southern League affiliate, the Orlando Rays. Tinker Field is named after Joe Tinker, the famous Chicago shortstop (of "Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance" fame) who played for the Cubs during the first two decades of the century. The longtime player/manager finished his baseball career playing and managing the minor league club in Orlando. The stadium, originally built in 1914, was rebuilt and expanded in 1923.[23]

A low-lying, older neighborhood, which include many single-family houses, borders Tinker Field to the west. To the north lies a man-made lake and a hotel complex (Map 4-3). South of the field are several baseball diamonds used for spring training and a few picnic areas. The East-West Expressway, a toll-road that connects downtown Orlando (two miles to the east) with the Florida Turnpike (about nine miles to the west), runs about a quarter-mile south of the facility. Older business thoroughfares and a predominately minority neighborhood lie to the south of the expressway. Although this complex lies within a stone's throw of the East-West Expressway, the stadium was constructed well before the highway, hence the author does not



Map 4-3: Orlando's Tinker Field.

[23] Bill O'Neal, 288.

consider Orlando's Tinker Field a Freeway Ballpark. Tinker Field is also part of a recreation complex, although a much smaller one than Memphis or Jacksonville's. The Citrus Bowl football stadium, capacity 75,000, was built during The Great Depression (although with a much smaller capacity) adjacent to the baseball field. The Citrus Bowl rises dramatically from Tinker Field's right-field fence, dwarfing the minor league field.

Chattanooga (1964-65, 1976-present)

Chattanooga's "Historic Joe Engel Stadium" was built in 1930 with major renovations completed in 1976 and 1990. The stadium hosted Southern League teams from 1964-65 and from 1976-99. During the last twenty-two years, the average attendance was 175,407.



Map 4-4: Chattanooga's Historic Joe Engel Stadium.

Historic Joe Engel Stadium is located on the corner of Third and O'Neal Streets, just one mile east of downtown Chattanooga (Map 4-4). Built in a working class, predominately white neighborhood in 1930, the stadium is named after longtime owner and general manager Joe Engel. Engel Stadium has seen some of the wackiest promotions ever, thanks to the best showman this side of B.T. Barnum in Joe Engel. Engel once gave away a house in the midst of the Great Depression before a Southern League record 24,839 fans, some standing 25 deep along the outfield wall. He also became famous for being the owner that traded his starting shortstop to Charlotte in exchange for a turkey.

Today, the stadium is bordered by an older, predominately black neighborhood, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, O'Neal Street and a rail line which lies just east of the

grounds. The stadium has been refurbished over the years, most recently in 1990. The image of the area has gone downhill since its construction almost seventy years ago. "Unfortunately," states new Lookouts owner Frank Burke, "Engel Stadium is not on the way to anywhere. If you are on the way somewhere in that neighborhood, you're probably going to the hospital."[24]

The 1999 season was the final one for Historic Engel Stadium. Like Birmingham, Jacksonville, Orlando and Knoxville, Chattanooga hosted players like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jackie Robinson, Duke Snider, Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson and a host of other immortals.[25]

According to the Lookouts, the new ballpark will open on Hawk Hill, in downtown Chattanooga during April of 2000. "The financing of the stadium was carefully designed," states the Lookouts, in order "to insure that there would be no negative effect on the local taxpayer. In fact, a new ballpark should generate more sales tax than the Lookouts currently generate at Engel Stadium."[26]

Knoxville (1964–67, 1972-present)

Bill Meyer Stadium was built in 1953 on the site of the ashes of twenty-year-old wooden Smithson Stadium, which had burned down in 1951. Bill Meyer Stadium is named after the most famous native Knoxvillian to play and manage in the major leagues. It was also know as Caswell Park during its pre-Depressions days and the site of professional baseball since Appy League play in 1921. The site hosted Southern League teams from 1964-67 and from 1972-99. During the last twenty-two years, Bill Meyer Stadium has averaged 104,573 in attendance.

Bill Meyer Stadium is shoehorned between a warehouse, a factory, the city public transit system, and other public ball fields. The stadium has seen many new coats of paint, but has

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[24] See Dave Anderson, Director of Public Relations, Chattanooga Lookouts Baseball Club, Information Packet, 27 February 1995; and Larry W. Fleming, "Stadium years in the making," Chattanooga Times, 5 November 1998; available from http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/today/Thursday/November51998/CTStorya1sta110.html; Internet; accessed 22 September 1999.

[25] Chattanooga Lookouts, The New Stadium; available from http://www.lookouts.com/new_stadium.htm; Internet; accessed 22 September 1999.

[26] Chattanooga Lookouts, The New Stadium.

undergone only one major refurbishing project. Today the decaying stadium suffers from plumbing problems, electrical outages, cramped players and management quarters, poor parking and access to the interstate and the bulk of Knoxville's population, which lies west of the city.

Caswell Park (now the general location of the stadium, Map 4-5, Figure 5-7) is located two miles northeast of downtown Knoxville. Two major Knoxville neighborhoods surround the thoroughfare of Magnolia Avenue (US highway 11 and 70). Both the Park Ridge neighborhood and the Fourth & Gill neighborhood consider the Caswell Park area part of their community, although neither is adjacent to the stadium. When the original Smithson Stadium was built in the 1930s,, the Magnolia Avenue neighborhoods were upper class with large Victorian houses. A streetcar route was constructed which helped lure upscale residents to the area from downtown.[27]

In the sixty years since the construction of Smithson, the neighborhoods and Magnolia Avenue have changed radically. The large Victorian houses now are boarded up and replaced by mixed retail and service businesses. Both neighborhoods have been gentrified, seen rough times and recently have been experiencing a rebirth and re-investment.[28]

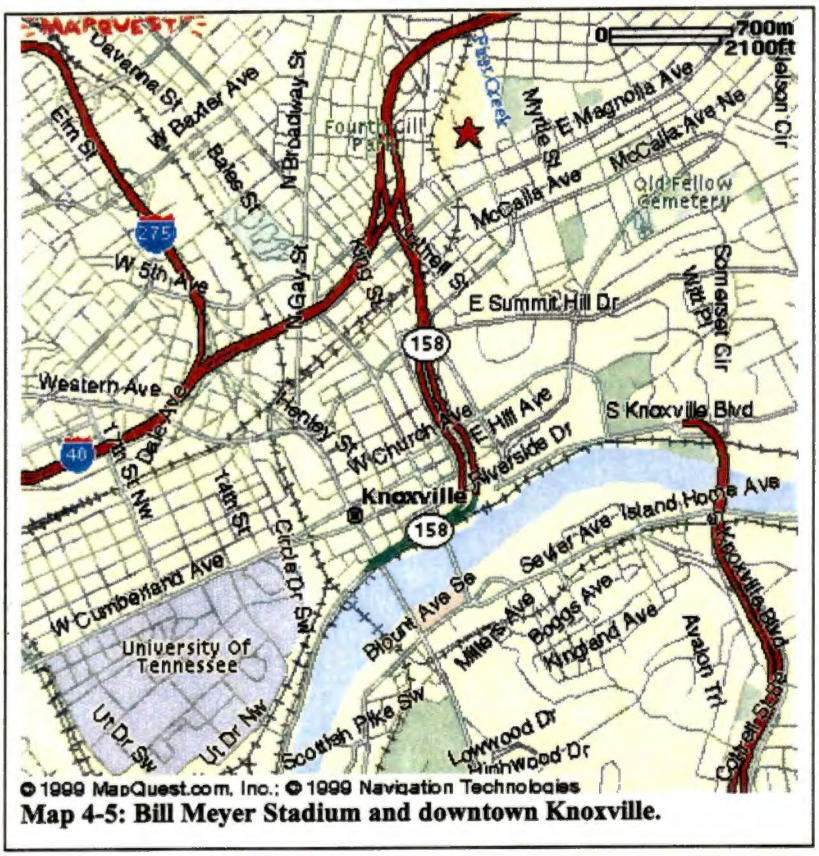
Sevier County agreed to help fund a new ballpark, at a location eighteen miles east of downtown Knoxville, for the new "Tennessee Smokies" starting during the 2000 season. The regional marketing of the Smokies will extended to the towns of Morristown and Dandridge. They will also try to capture the tourist dollar from the 10,201,750 cars exiting at the Interstate-40, "Dollywood" exit (#407) each year, the majority of which are heading towards Sevierville, Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg and the Smoky Mountains.[29]

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[27] See Ben Byrd, "Smokies History: The Return of the Smokies," 1994 Knoxville Smokies Program 1994, 27; O'Neal, 91; and Brian DiBartolo, "Decline of an American Boulevard: Knoxville, Tennessee's Magnolia Avenue" (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Department of Geography, December 1994), 2-4, presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Charlotte, North Carolina, March 1996.

[28] DiBartolo, "Decline of an American Boulevard," 2+.

[29] See Brian Cox, Assistant General Manager, Knoxville Smokies, phone interview by author, 1 November 1999, Knoxville, TN; and Tennessee Department of Transportation, Region 15, Daily Average Traffic Map of Sevier County, Tennessee, (Knoxville, TN: Tennessee Department of Transportation), 1998.



Map 4-5: Bill Meyer Stadium and downtown Knoxville.



Figure 4-7: The Caswell Park Area, Knoxville.

Suburban/Freeway Ballparks

Many of the newer ballparks constructed have been located with the automobile in mind. In the 1950s and 1960s, sports complexes were the hot topic in city planning and revitalization. By the 1970s, inner cities around the country started to show signs of major decay. 'White flight' and 'suburban growth' became catch phrases. The 1980s changed the mindset in government planning, at least in the smaller cities making up the Southern League. Many of the cities were trying to promote growth and recruit industry. With vast acres of land nearby, the southern cities held a great advantage over their older, northern counterparts. The Southern city could expand and annex surrounding land to add new industry and retail establishments, while their older, northern counterparts could not, due to the existence of older, established suburbs. The cities listed in this section, with the exception of Jacksonville, had land to "give away" to club owners. The owners on the other hand, promised their new ballparks would draw other industry and broaden the tax base.

Former Stadia (1975 – 1997)

Charlotte (Fort Mill, SC) (1989-92)

Knight's Stadium (affectionately called Knight's Castle due to the flags along the top of the facility) was built in 1989 in Fort Mill, South Carolina. During the four seasons in the Southern League (1989-92) the Knights season average attendance was 270,215 fans.

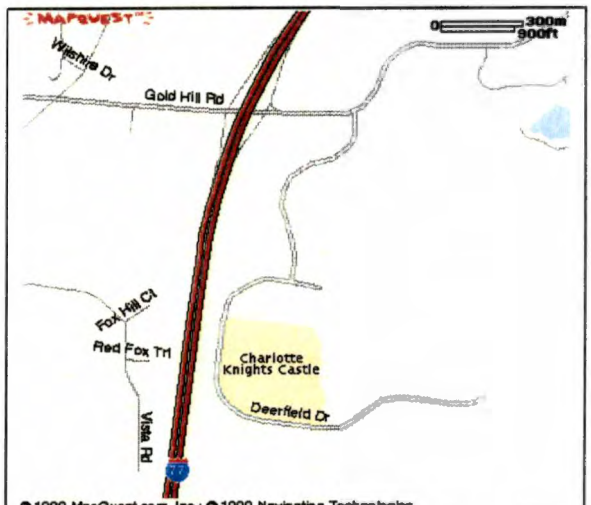
The new stadium located in Fort Mill, South Carolina is a model facility that is among the best in all minor league baseball. It is modeled after two of the newest and state of the art minor league parks: the Hoover (AL) Metropolitan Stadium and Buffalo's Pilot Field. Knight's Castle architects "concentrated on distinguishing the look of the stadium from the outside and not skimping on inside features." The stadium had all sorts of perks that normally wouldn't be found at minor league parks. A large, glass-enclosed press box; a $250,000 sound system; and a

$550,000 scoreboard with "capacity for animation" were all incorporated into the stadium to coincide with future plans for major league expansion. Knight's Castle (Figure 2-2 (p. 39) and Figure 4-8) seated 10,002 fans, had 22 luxury skyboxes, a club restaurant sitting high atop the field, six permanent concession stands, an extremely wide, open-aired concourse, extremely large clubhouses, underground batting and pitching areas and even a sauna for the players.[30]



Figure 4-8: Knight's Castle, Fort Mill, SC.

Gone is the humble, wooden stadium that many fans strolled to on muggy, summer evenings (Figure 3). Gone is the quaint, personal level that people enjoyed at Griffith/Crockett Park. It has been replaced by a state-of-the-art, 10,000-seat baseball *stadium* that basks in a rainbow of colors. The long, sloping lower level dwarfs the diamond, removing the smugness and comfort level of an older ballpark (Figure 4-8). The only way to enter the new complex is by automobile; down a grand, five-lane entrance connected almost directly to the Interstate (Map 4-6). There is but one residence in sight, that belonging to the family of the late Doyle Jennings.



Map 4-6: Knights Castle and I-77 in Fort Mill.

The Knights followed their market to the suburbs, just as the shopping centers, movie theaters and grocery stores did in the preceding decades. Shinn realized that in order to profit

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[30] See Joe Posnanski, "Let The Games Begin!," Charlotte Observer,14 April 1990, 1A+; and Lisa Chico, Director of Promotions. interview by author," Monday, 14 August 1995.

NOTE: The author would like to thank Lisa Chico, the Charlotte Knights' Director of Promotions/Game Operations for her assistance and a wonderful guided tour of Knights Castle. She went out of her way to answer any question I could present her.

from his franchise, he had to draw large crowds, make it easy for them to enter and egress his facility, and entertain his customers so they would return. In building Knight's Castle, Shinn accomplished those goals. He made coming to a Knights' game safe, easy, enjoyable, hassle free and relatively cheap. The cost of the facility he constructed would be offset, he hoped, by the future profits from the real estate deal that he struck with York County.

The record crowds and brilliant success he brought to the Charlotte franchise paid off in a Triple-A promotion. The future looks bright for this stadium and Charlotte Baseball as a whole. With expansion success in the Charlotte area by both the NBA and the NFL, Major League Baseball should take a good look at Charlotte as one of its next expansion cities. With the state of the art Knights Castle as his centerpiece, George Shinn should have an easy time convincing the expansion committee.

Present Stadia

Jacksonville (1970-present)

Saw W. Wolfson Baseball Park was built in 1955. Jacksonville has fielded a Southern League team since 1970, the longest running tenure in league history. During the last twenty-two years in the Southern League (1978-99) the average attendance was 185,370.

Jacksonville's Wolfson Park was built in 1955 just one mile east of downtown (Map 4-7), a similar distance to downtown as that of Chattanooga's Engel Stadium. Unlike Joe Engel Stadium, Wolfson Park is part of the city's sports and entertainment complex, which includes the neighboring Gator Bowl, a city park, the local Public Broadcasting Station and the city's riverside amphitheater. The complex is adjacent to three inner-city expressways, which have either direct or indirect exits for the sports complex. Due to the expressways, acres of parking and other facilities, Wolfson Park cannot be accurately portrayed as a downtown ballpark. The major access is via a freeway not a city street and large parking areas separate the surrounding neighborhoods from the ballparks.



Map 4-7: Jacksonville's Wolfson Park.

Greenville (1984-present)

Greenville Municipal Stadium was built in 1984, becoming the first of the new freeway stadia. During the last sixteen years in the Southern League (1984-99) the average attendance was 227,629.

Greenville had three sites in mind when planning to built a stadium in the early 1980s. The first was west of downtown, along US 123 towards the town of Easly. The second location was downtown Greenville, in an older drug-infested area. The third and eventual site (Map 4-8) was southeast of downtown on Mauldin Road, just off the Interstate 85 corridor at Exit 46, roughly in the center of the Anderson-Greenville-Spartanburg MSA. The Mauldin Road site was selected mainly to open up land for further development. The southeast section of Greenville was growing rapidly, due to the I-85 corridor growth. City leaders thought the ballpark could start the infrastructure development along parts of the Mauldin Road corridor. New development did follow the ballpark onto this thoroughfare.[31]

[31] Paul Ellis, City of Greenville Director of Parks and Grounds, interview by author, 20 August 1995, notes Greenville, SC.



Map 4-8: Greenville's Municipal Stadium on Mauldin Road, southeast of downtown.

Huntsville (1985-present)

Joe W. Davis Stadium was built in 1985 as a multipurpose facility. During the last fifteen years in the Southern League (1985-99) the average attendance was 254,971.

Huntsville's multi-purpose stadium was built along the main highway that runs north south through the city (US Highway 231). The stadium lies only one and one-half miles south of downtown and is located in a heavily commercialized area. Beyond the left field wall are a Wal-Mart shopping center and a Kroger supermarket. Joe W. Davis Stadium is very visible to passing cars on US 231. Motorists should be aware that balls sometimes clear the centerfield fence and bounce onto the highway. Former Huntsville Star and 1988 American League MVP Jose Canseco once launched a home run over the wall and beyond the subsequent lawn, bouncing onto the freeway during rush hour. The backdrop of Round Top and Chapman Mountains beyond the city, provide a wonderful setting for a game.

Birmingham (1988-present)

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium (Figure 4-9) was built in 1988. During the last twelve years in the Southern League (1988-99) the average attendance was 302,663.[32]

The four lane boulevard that leads to Hoover Metropolitan Stadium can be found at the intersection of I-459, Exit 10, and AL Highway 150. On opening night, management had to turn away thousands of fans while recording an attendance of 13,279 in the 10,000 seat Hoover Met. The Hoover Met was planned to draw people into the Birmingham suburb of Hoover, which lies fourteen miles south of downtown, over Bluff Ridge. During the crazy 1994 season, when Michael Jordan decided to try his luck at baseball as a Baron, Hoover drew an incredible 467,867 fans! By averaging 6,684 fans, the Barons helped push the league to a record attendance of just under 2.6 million (2,596,339).



Figure 4-9: Aerial view of the Hoover Met.

Zebulon [Raleigh], NC (1991-present)

Five County Stadium was built in 1991 and has added phase two of the stadium in 1999. The club has averaged 273,204 fans per year over their nine-year existence in the Southern League (1991-99).

The bucolic and pastoral setting of Zebulon's field (Figure 10), recalls the fabled (and fictitious) origins of baseball - the quiet countryside of upstate New York. Wake County's Five County Stadium is the perfect fit for today's suburban, mobile society. It is located in a town of 6,300, but draws a majority of its fans from a thirty-five mile radius. The site is just 2.4 miles east of downtown Zebulon, a town 16 miles from Raleigh's beltway.

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[32] Aerial Photo from Birmingham Barons, A History Of Barons Baseball: available from http://www.barons.com/history.shtml; Internet; accessed 9 November 1999.

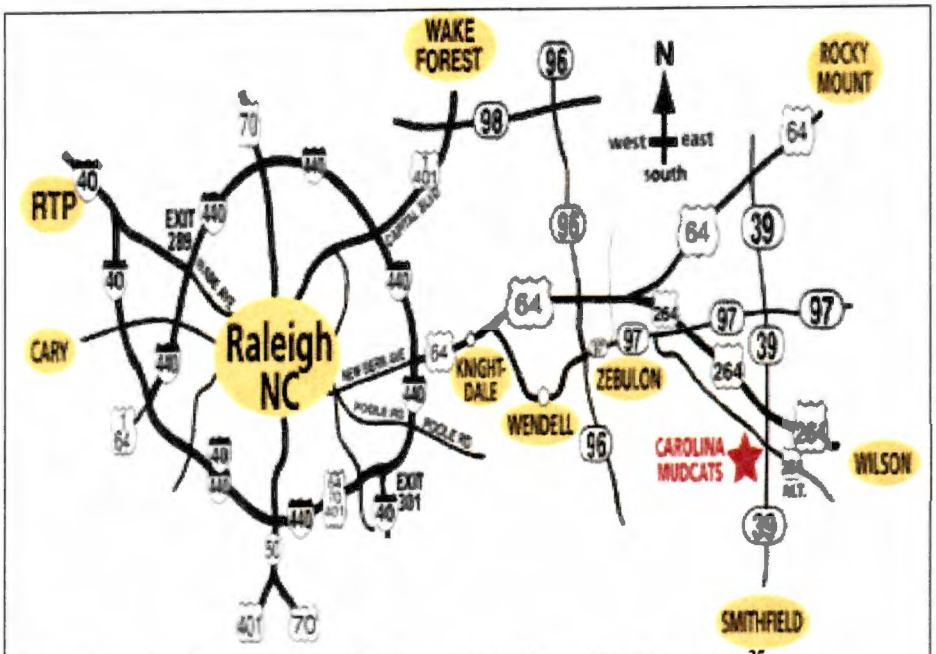


Figure 4-10: Five County Stadium stands in tobacco fields outside of Zebulon.

While searching for a new site for his club, Bryant went to the edge of the county and saw a tobacco field at the junctions of highways US 264, old US 264 (264A) and State Road 39. Consulting his map, he realized this would be an ideal place (Map 4-9). Access to the park was excellent. Two four-lane, controlled access highways, US 64 and US 264, intersect two miles to the west. Highway 64 links the Raleigh beltway with Rocky Mount - 35 miles from Zebulon, and Highway 264 joins US 64 with Wilson - 24 miles east of the site. North Carolina Route 39 connects neighboring county seats Louisburg and Smithfield, both about 20 miles from the site. These highways led directly to the hearts of the five surrounding counties: Franklin, Johnston, Nash, Wake, and Wilson. "Within a thirty minute drive," Bryant stated, "were one million people." Bryant, realizing he was 37 miles from rival Durham Bulls' Durham Athletic Park's home plate, knew he had found 'the spot.'[33]

Additional attractions of the site were two fishing ponds that were on the property. Bryant pictured kids and adults fishing in these ponds before games and frolicking. Knowing the

[33] See Steve Bryant, Carolina Mudcats Owner/President, interview by author, 11 August 1995, notes, Raleigh, NC; and US Census Bureau, Time Series of Resident Population of Places: April 1, 1990 to July 1, 1994, (Washington, DC: GPO); available from http://www.census.gov/ population/estimates/metro-city/scts94/sc94tsNC.txt; Internet; accessed 25 September 1999.



Map 4-9: The Location of Five County Stadium. (Not to scale).[35]

name of his new team would be nicknamed the Mudcats, he knew this would be the perfect place for his new ballpark.[34]

Five County Stadium is not located in a city, or even a town. It is located in a completely rural setting. Bryant said, "this is the future." Unfortunately it might just be. Instead of walking through your neighborhood and patronizing family-run businesses, one must now drive everywhere one goes. Many ballparks are located along suburban freeways and thoroughfares, but Five County Stadium has taken the concept to the extreme. The suburban/automobile lifestyle of today's America has topped itself, yet, once again.[36]

The Southern League's Gypsy Franchise (1992–97)

This unique franchise went through four name changes and locations in four cities within a span of five years before finding a permanent home at beautiful Hark Aaron Stadium in Mobile in 1997 as home of the Mobile Bay Bears.

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[34] Bryant, interview.

[35] Carolina Mudcats, Carolina Mudcats – Map and Directions; available from http://www.gomudcats.com/Stadium/MapsAndDirections.html; Internet; accessed 22 September 1999.
NOTE: Not to Scale.

[36] Bryant, interview.

Charlotte (1989-92) and Nashville (1993-94)

The tale of the club presently called the Mobile Bay Bears has become Homer's Odyssey of the Southern League. Originally the club was the Charlotte Knights, playing at Knight's Castle in Fort Mill, South Carolina for four seasons. After Charlotte accepted promotion into the Triple-A International League, the franchise became a wandering club looking for a permanent home. Larry Schmittou, the Owner/President of the AAA Nashville Sounds, offered his club's stadium, Herschel Greer, as a temporary home to the AA club (renamed the Nashville Xpress). For two years, the team played in Nashville, drawing an average of 156,893 over the two year span. After attendance plummeted in Nashville due to the over-saturation averaging 156,893 fans, the club had to move on.

Wilmington, North Carolina (1995-96)

The Charlotte Carolina Mudcats Owner/President Steve Bryant, offered to help operate the club and temporarily moved it to Wilmington, North Carolina until a permanent home could be found. Wilmington historically had been a good home to minor league baseball. This small port city on the Atlantic Ocean had become a major resort town during the 1980s. Wilmington, however, did not have a professional baseball club or a place to play, so owner Dennis Bastein agreed to rent Brooks Field from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Constructed in 1965, Brooks Field was constructed for small college competition, not the spectacle of minor league baseball. Bastien and the university added additional seating before the Port City Roosters began play in 1995, averaging 89,348 fans during its two years at this location.[37]

Being located on a college campus has proved difficult for the franchise. Located in the middle of campus, the stadium is not very visible to the general public. Since the University of North Carolina system includes alcohol-free campuses, beer sales were forbidden. The temporary nature of the team also hurt ticket sales, since no one wanted to get attached to a team which they

[37] See UNCW Athletics: Facilities; available from http://www.uncwil.edu/athletics/facilities.html; Internet; accessed 29 September 1999; and Joe Browning, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Sports Information Director. E-mail letter to author, 30 September 1999.

knew would be leaving soon. The two-year experiment of the Port City Roosters ran its course and the franchise once again moved.[38]

Mobile (1997-present)

Hank Aaron Stadium was built in 1997 and has housed the club for three seaons (1997-99). During that tenure, the club has averaged 298,929 fans.

As home to the minor leagues' 1998 All-Star Game, Hank Aaron Stadium showcased itself to the rest of baseball as a fine park and a beautiful place to watch a game. "Officially opened on April 17, 1997," states the clubs web site, "this state-of-the-art facility is one of the finest Double-A stadiums in the country. Its most unique feature is its field level luxury suites." Dr. Eric Margenau "led the return of professional baseball to Mobile" with the combined "efforts of Mobile Mayor Michael Dow and the Mobile City Council."[39]

The club had the new stadium, named after the career major league home run record holder from Mobile, built in a previously non-developed, wooded area at the corner of Satchel Paige Avenue and McVay Drive. Automobile access is good due to Interstate 65, which runs just to the west and intersects with US Highway 90 at exit 1, just a quarter-mile from the park entrance (Map 4-10). This route provides excellent access to much of Mobile's population. Those patrons traveling the five and one-half miles from downtown Mobile would travel along the Government Boulevard (US 90) corridor. Tom Nichols, Mobile BayBears' Director of Broadcasting / Media Relations described US 90 as "a moderately developed four lane roadway. There are occasional stop lights and commercial development along the highway," he continued, "but it is not jam-packed either."[40]

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[38] See Blahnik and Schulz, Mud Hens and Mavericks, 120-1; and Arnold D. Fielkow, "Honoring the Past - Charting the Future," 1995 Southern League Media Guide, (Marietta, GA, Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs, Inc., 1995), 7.

[39] See Mobile BayBears - Club History; available from http://www.mobilebaybears.com/history.htm; Internet; accessed 26 September 1999; and Mobile BayBears - Hank Aaron Stadium; available from http://www.mobilebaybears.com/stadium.htm; Internet; accessed 26 September 1999.

[40] Nichols, E-mail letter to author.

Nichols classified the environs of the ballpark as "mostly residential, although there are scattered businesses in the area as well." The Hank Aaron Stadium, much like Knight's Castle, Five County Stadium and the Hoover Met, was built isolated from other commercial or residential development. "The stadium was built deep within a wooded area that had not been developed in any way. An entry-way of about a half mile [in length]," again, similar to Knight's Castle and Hoover, "was built leading though this wooded area to the park. Therefore, the park is surrounded on three sides by trees for several hundred yards, and the other side by I-65."[41]

Similar to other the other Southern League "freeway ballparks" in Fort Mill, Zebulon, Hoover and Greenville, development to the area has come after the construction of the ballpark. "Along the new roadway leading back to the park," says Nichols, "they [local real estate developers] have constructed a large movie theatre and a couple of restaurants." Nichols is



Map 4-10: Location of Hank Aaron Stadium in Relation to Downtown Mobile.

[41] Nichols, E-mail letter.

convinced that the construction of the stadium opened the area for other commercial development. "Clearly, neither the theatre, the restaurant, or any future development along the new roadway (Satchel Paige Boulevard) would not have taken place if the stadium had not been built."[42]

Jackson, Tennessee (1998-present)

Pringles Park was built in 1998 and has averaged 307,909 fans in the two years (1998-99) in the Southern League.

The ballpark, located directly off I-40 just 5.2 miles from downtown Jackson, drew over 300,000 fans its inaugural season. For a small city of just under 100,000, Jackson draws quite well from the surrounding area, and after two seasons has surpassed Memphis by 74 percent. It remains to be seen if this city can continue to support a Double-A club with such fervor. If they continue to market themselves as a regional team, as the Carolina (Zebulon) Mudcats have been doing, then they could be successful for a long time.

Future Stadia

Chattanooga (2000)

The new BellSouth Park will open on Kirkman Hill, in downtown Chattanooga during April of 2000, just 1.7 miles west of Engel Stadium. Locals call the hill "Hawk Hill" because it's the site of the old Kirkman Hawks High School. The site is immediately adjacent to the anchors of Chattanooga's downtown tourism industry: the Tennessee Aquarium, the Imax Theater and the Creative Discovery Museum complex, all near the Tennessee River (Figure 4-11).

"The financing of the stadium was carefully designed," states the Lookouts, in order "to insure that there would be no negative effect on the local taxpayer." The Burke Family, who own the club, "will pour $8 million into the undertaking; most of the remaining money coming from

[42] Nichols, E-mail letter.

the state's Sports Authority Act." Figures show that over 90 percent of the funding will come from the private sector, including naming rights to BellSouth. Even with only 10 percent of the funding coming from public coffers, "the new ballpark should generate more sales tax than the Lookouts currently generate at Engel Stadium."[43]



Figure 4-11: Hawk Hill, Chattanooga, future site of BellSouth Park.

Orlando (2000)

The Orlando Rays rewarded Tinker Field with the last Southern League Championship of the millenium. Starting in the year 2000, the Rays will call the Disney Sports Complex home. Disney World is located 15 miles south of Downtown Orlando right off Interstate 4. The neighborhood will still have the Citrus Bowl to anchor the sports facility and the area is still suitable for spring training facilities.

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[43] Chattanooga Lookouts, The New Stadium; available from http://www.lookouts.com/new_stadium.htm; Internet; accessed 26 September 1999; and Larry W. Fleming, "Stadium years in the making," Chattanooga Times, 5 November, 1998; available from http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/today/Thursday/November51998/CTStorya1sta110.html; Internet; accessed 26 September 1999.

Sevierville, Tennessee (2000)

Sevier County, home of Sevierville, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Dollywood, and the destination of millions of vacationers a year, is the new home of the Knoxville Smokies. Although the new site lies only seventeen miles from the Caswell Park site in Knoxville, the new $19.4 million ballpark might seem further to many Knoxvillians because the most of them reside on the opposite side of the city. As with other freeway parks, the Gateway Center will have a substantial amount of acreage devoted to commercial development. Included in the proposed ballpark development are the area's Visitor Information Center and a restaurant.[44]

Comparing Attendance Figures to Location

Comparing attendance figures is sometimes like comparing apples and oranges. There are many reasons why some clubs draw better than other clubs. The reason could have something to do with the winning percentage, or maybe connectivity to or the size of the community. Many times it has to do with the weather or even the weather forecasts. But, generally, these factors tend to average out over the long run, especially in the minor leagues where the focus is placed on grooming talent. The major reason determining why sites draw better than others is location. Where is the product located in relation to your market? Is it easy to get to for the fans? Are the tickets and concessions affordable? How much should you charge for admission? Are there interesting promotions? Do your customers think the ballpark is safe or located in a safe area? These factors tend to bump up or cutback on the walk up crowds, or in modern terms, the "drive-up" crowds. These crowds, which decide to attend a ballgame on the day of the event, are the ones that make or break many minor league clubs.

[44] Nick Gates, "Play ball! says Sevier: Smokies' new stadium to be near I-40 Exit 407," Knoxville News-Sentinel, 5 February 1999, A1+.

Analyzing Southern League attendance figures from 1978 to 1998 shows a marked difference between the inner-city ballparks and the freeway stadia locations. Examining Table 4-3, one sees that the average attendance at newer facilities far outpaced the older facilities. The stadia built before 1968 have averaged under 225,000 fans, while the freeway and easy-access stadia have all topped the 225,000 level. Even during the peak year for the non-freeway sites, only Memphis topped 300,000 and only Chattanooga and Jacksonville have come anywhere close to that mark. In fact, the presence of Michael Jordan in 1994 set the records for both the downtown ballparks of Knoxville and Chattanooga.

Table 4-3: Southern League City Average Attendance Figures, 1978-99.

CITY	STADIUM	TOTAL	AVERAGE	MEDIAN	HIGH	LOW
Nashville	1978	3,392,603	484,658	507,907	575,676	372,701
Jackson	1998	615,978	307,989	307,989	313,775	302,203
Birmingham (Hoover)	1988	3,631,954	302,663	297,093	467,867	256,227
Mobile	1997	896,788	298,929	293,147	332,639	271,002
Carolina	1991	2,458,833	273,204	265,219	328,207	218,054
Charlotte (Fort Mill)	1989	1,080,860	2700,215	292,547	338,047	157,720
Huntsville	1985	3,824,568	254,971	255,139	300,810	185,811
Greenville	1984	3,642,070	227,629	222,632	269,525	203,549
Memphis	1968	4,413,635	220,682	212,816	322,037	113,183
Birmingham	1910	1,325,135	189,305	175,958	241,253	139,808
Jacksonville	1955	4,078,140	185,370	203,163	283,630	82,907
Chattanooga	1930	3,858,945	175,407	149,745	292,920	53,917
Nashville (Xpress)	1956	313,785	156,893	156,893	178,737	135,048
Charlotte	1941	1,411,291	128,299	122,336	204,546	64,163
Columbus	1926	1,462,459	112,497	109,603	159,266	75,438
Orlando	1914	2,345,453	106,612	78,380	217,716	41,021
Knoxville	1953	2,300,616	104,573	108,128	145,092	56,927
Wilmington	1965	178,696	89,348	89,348	110,233	68,463
Savannah	1927	523,674	87,279	86,664	111,910	66,057
Montgomery	1949	221,273	73,758	81,168	98,487	41,618
TOTALS: 1978-1999		***41,976,756***	***1,998,893***	***1,881,538***		

When families moving out to the suburbs, they look for entertainment that is easy to get to and is affordable. They want to know their children will be safe and they feel safer in areas they know - the suburbs. Having a stadium with easy access to freeways make sense to businesspeople who want to make a profit. As in the case of the mall and shopping centers of the 1960 and 1970s, minor league baseball parks are looking for that easy access by their consumers.

When the Knoxville club was looking for new sites in Knox County, they concentrated on the western suburbs of the city. These areas were close to the main population center of Knoxville and Knox County, and also had easy freeway access to population centers in adjoining Blount and Anderson counties.

Figures 4-12 and 4-13 (see also Appendix D), shows the inner city ballparks have had attendances that fall below the league average. Conversely, the freeway ballparks have higher than average gate figures, going back to the 1984 season. The outliers of Nashville and Memphis (Figure 12) show a spike in the attendance figures in the later 1970s and early 1980s due to the new clubs in these more populous cities. Chattanooga's five years above the average followed the remodeling and parking improvements of Joe Engel Stadium following the 1990 season. Today, the inner city parks of the Southern League simply cannot compete with the automobile friendly facilities constructed in the past 15 years.

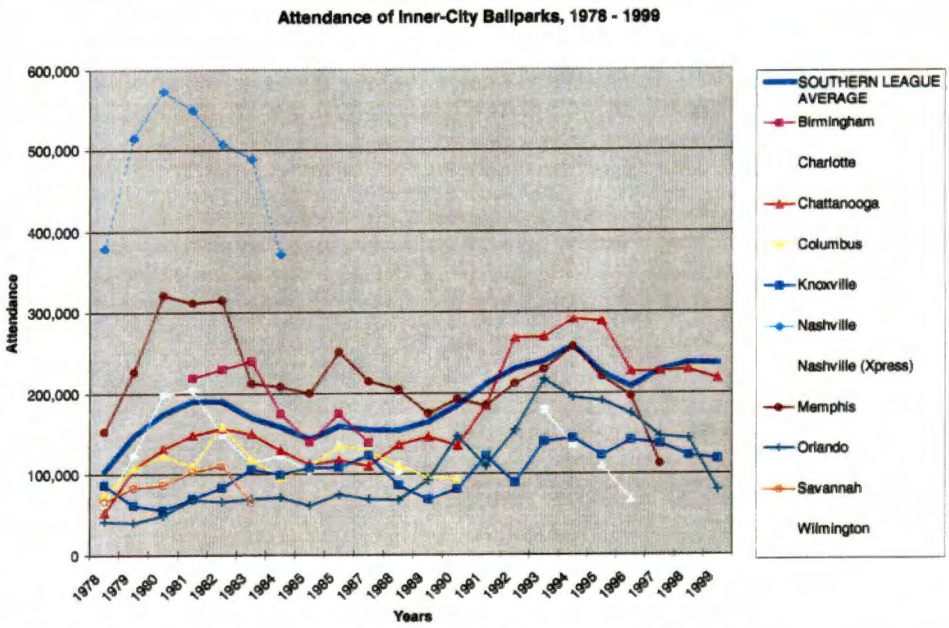


Figure 4-12: Average Attendance of Inner-City Ballparks, 1978-99.

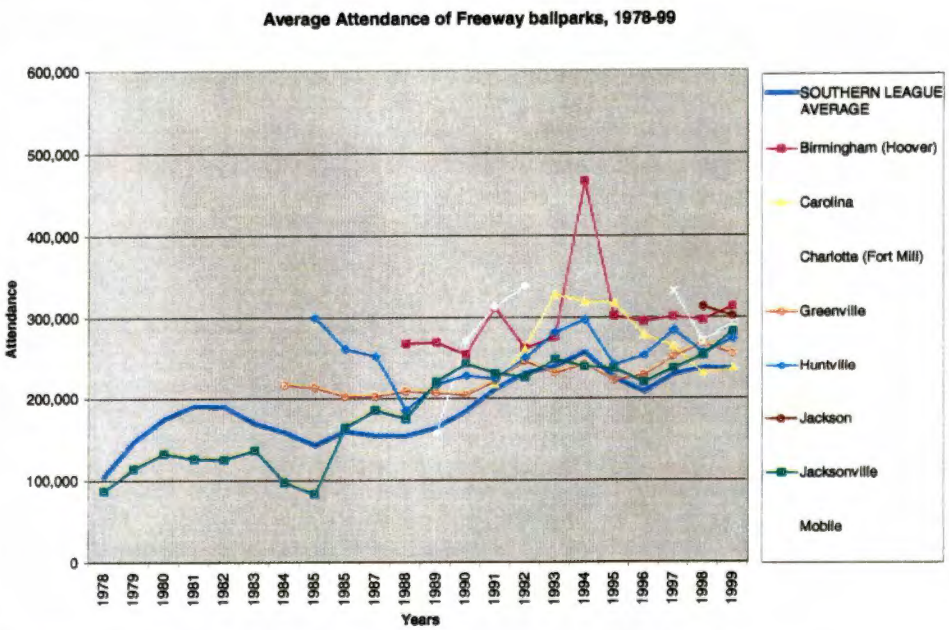


Figure 4-13: Average Attendance of Freeway Parks, 1978-99.

CHAPTER V

CHANGES IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE STADIA LOCATIONS

General Changes in Stadia Locations

The suburbs of the South have grown extremely fast in the last fifty years and, starting in the late 1960s, many became interested in professional sports franchises as a means of sparking development. The game of stadium building was difficult enough when cities across the country were fighting over the same team, but in the 1960s and 1970s, the enemy now could be found in many cities' own backyards. Major league baseball placed teams in new stadia in the suburbs, away from downtowns in the cities of Houston (the Astrodome), New York (Shea Stadium) and San Diego (Jack Murphy Stadium). Football was played in the suburban stadia in Arlington (Texas Stadium), Pontiac (the Silverdome) and East Rutherford (Giants Stadium). All these facilities were built outside of city centers and along major freeway and other transportation corridors. This trend also became prevalent with basketball/hockey arenas up until the mid-1990s.[1]

This suburbanization trend in the largest of sports cities has been reversed since the completion of Camden Yards in Baltimore. Today, in the highest professional leagues, city and county governments are building new stadia in downtown locations, supposedly sparking downtown commerce. Smaller cities, however, have still been following the suburbanization theme. This might seem somewhat contradictory; if the larger cities are reinvesting in downtown with sports facilities, why aren't the smaller cities? The answer lies in the cost. The largest cities such as Baltimore, Cleveland, Seattle, Phoenix and Denver can afford to spend or borrow the 50

[1] Tom Farrey, ESPN.com: Comparing Baseball Stadiums and Comparing NFL Stadiums; available from http://archive.espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/nfl.html and http://archive.espn.go.com/gen/features/stadiamania/mlb.html respectively; Internet; accessed 16 September 1998.

to 800 million dollars to finance such huge public improvements. Corporate and private sector contributions can also assist in the cost.

Smaller governments like Knoxville, Orlando, Jackson and Greenville cannot afford the 12 to 40 million dollars it would take to buy existing buildings, improve the infrastructure, and construct partial-use facilities in the middle of their downtowns. The tax base in these small cities is not as large and opposition from the community is stronger and more personable. These and many other factors rule out new downtown ballparks in smaller cities.

In the Southern League, stadia have been moving out to the suburbs or locating along highways since Greenville relocated along Interstate 85 in 1984. Including that year, eight of the new nine stadia have, or soon will have, moved out of inner city or neighborhood settings into suburban or freeway accessible locations. The exception will be Chattanooga's new BellSouth Park, which financed ninety-percent of the needed eight million dollars with private sector money. The fact that the city owns the land, a former high school, is another factor that makes the new stadium site cost effective. The new stadium also compliments the already strong downtown tourist industry, which includes an IMAX Theater and the Tennessee State Aquarium, all of which lie just east of the US 27 Freeway running through downtown Chattanooga.

The suburbs have transformed a league that once boasted character-laden, asymmetrical ballparks into a league that has parks that are very similar. They now are large and sanitized stadia that one must use a car to reach. Almost all of the new parks are Camden Yard clones, complains ESPN Columnist Leigh Montville. He describes these "quirky" and "traditional" parks as having "the same dignified shade of green paint, the little outfield irregularities, the same charm mixed with modern function. They are a Walt Disney version of the past, sanitized and improved."[2]

Sitting in the stands at Knights Castle in Fort Mill, South Carolina, and scanning the horizon, one sees open fields, stands of pine trees and nothing much of anything else. The view

[2] Leigh Montville, The Curse of Camden Yards, 18 April 1998; available from http://www.cnnsi.com/baseball/mlb/news/1998/04/18/montville/; Internet; accessed on 23 September 1999.

is *almost exactly the same* in Greenville and Birmingham. Zebulon, Jackson, Mobile and Sevierville have the same view, adding a superhighway as a backdrop.

There was once a time where minor league ballparks meant views of warehouses and train tracks. Asymmetrical parks were crammed into city blocks, built to represent the dimensions of the surrounding neighborhood. Today, the automobile has transformed the American society. Many Americans cannot fathom living without their car. The suburbs were built in response to the automobile and it grew in popularity due to the rise of the suburbs. It is here where the Southern League Stadia of today may be found . . . just hop in your car, drive to the next interchange and exit.

Inter-City (Relocating to a new MSA)

Since 1984, the Southern League has seen five franchise shifts which resulted in a relocation to a different city. In each instance, the new club has eventually moved into a new facility.

Savannah to Greenville (1984)

The Savannah Braves drew poorly, compared to other Southern League clubs, from 1980 to 1983, averaging a little over 94,000 per year. The parent Atlanta Braves, who owned the club, noting the attendance drop and the deterioration of Grayson Stadium, decided to look for another city, preferably a little closer than Savannah. Local businessman Sam Phillips, owner of Phillips Staffing, was instrumental in bringing the team to the Greenville area. As 1984 chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Phillips drummed up support around the community.[3]

Greenville had lost its minor league team, the Spinners, in 1972 and was looking to get back into professional sports. The city had long been a hotbed of minor league and amateur

[3] See Joe Bogan, O'Neal Engineering, Inc., phone interview by author, 20 August 1995, notes, Fort Mill, SC; and Paul Ellis, City of Greenville Director of Parks and Grounds, interview by author, 20 August 1995, notes, Greenville, SC.

baseball for over a century. Many of the mill towns on the South Carolina Piedmont sported clubs during the 1800s and early 1900s. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, one of the Major Leagues' all-time greatest players, grew up and played on some of those teams. The neighboring communities of Spartanburg and Anderson both had SALLY teams in 1984 and Greenville wanted to compete with them. Phillips convinced the Braves to choose his city specifically because of its larger population and business community than rivals Anderson or Spartanburg, and generally because of its close location to Atlanta (about a two hour drive south on I-85).

The Carolina Piedmont had been showing great growth through the 1970s and Greenville was one of the cities supplying much of the increase. The Greenville-Spartanburg metropolitan area added 96,000 new residents in the 1970s, which translated into a twenty percent growth rate for the decade. This metro region was just a portion of the "Interstate 85 Boombelt" that ran from Atlanta to Richmond. In the years following the movement of the Braves to Greenville, other development, such as construction of a Hitachi manufacturing plant, an apartment complex and an industrial park have been build along Mauldin Road in the vicinity of Greenville Municipal Stadium.[4]

Nashville to Huntsville (1985)

Larry Schmittou, the flamboyant owner of the Nashville Sounds, was granted his wish, a Triple-A franchise for Nashville for the 1985 season. After he bought the Evansville Aces and converted his stadium to AAA standards, he looked around for a city to house his AA franchise. Schmittou debated between two locations for his AA club: either Evansville to the north, thereby effectively swapping franchises, or Huntsville to the south. Based on demographics and distance to Nashville, Huntsville was the locale that triumphed. Mayor Joe W. Davis championed the stadium cause before city council and the new stadium was named after him. The stadium was

[4] See Bogan, phone interview; Ellis, interview; Paul E. Hammer, Jr., GIS Analyst, City of Greenville, interview by author, 20 August 1995, notes, Greenville, SC; and US Bureau of the Census, Series PC80-S1-5, 1980 Population Report: "No. 23, Large Metropolitan Areas-Population, 1960 to 1980 and Households, 1980," (Washington, DC: GPO), 18-21.

built on the old airport grounds, in a "wasteland of tall grass," just one and one-half miles south of downtown, just off US Highway 231. General Manager Don Michner commented that since the stadium was built "some shopping facilities have been put up" nearby since 1984.[5]

Unfortunately for baseball fans, the stadium was built under the condition that it be a multipurpose facility with football in mind. The stadium is not very baseball friendly and does not have a baseball-type feel to it (Figure 5-1). Chattanooga was contemplating razing Engel Stadium the winter after Huntsville had built Joe W. Davis. Chattanooga Times writer Bill Casteel chastised the new stadium by writing, "...they ain't making baseball stadiums like Engel anymore. If you don't believe it, drive down to Huntsville sometime and take a gander at the bright and shiny but character-free stadium."[6]

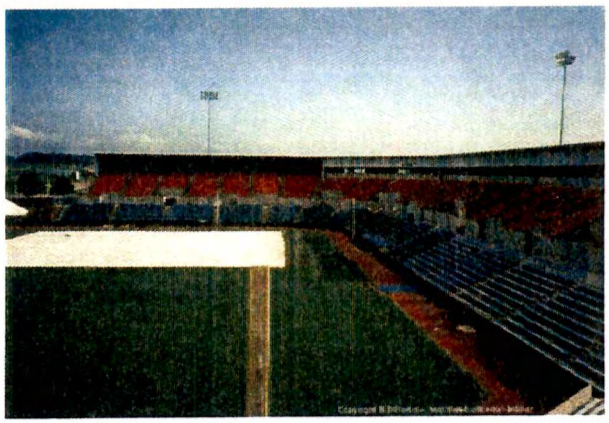


Figure 5-1: Huntsville's Multipurpose Joe W. Davis Stadium.

Columbus to Raleigh (Zebulon) (1991)

In September of 1988, Steve Bryant, president of the Raleigh-based Pro Sports Franchises Inc. and native of nearby Smithfield, North Carolina, purchased the Columbus Astros, a ballclub that had not turned a profit in ten years. His long-term plan was to move the Columbus team to the fast growing Raleigh-Durham area. After three years of negotiations, politicking, challenges from the nearby Durham Bulls, and construction delays Mr. Bryant finally saw the fruition of his dream to bring baseball to Wake County.[7]

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[5] Don Michner, Vice President and General Manager of the Huntsville Stars, interview by author, 23 July 1985, notes, Huntsville, AL; and Carmine Budge, Department of Engineering City of Huntsville, interview by author, 24 July 1985, notes, Huntsville, AL.

[6] Bill Casteel, "Stadium plans go too far if wrecking Engel is involved," Chattanooga Times, 13 December 1985, B1.

[7] See Bill Woodward, "'Dreams' Farmer Helps Christen Field," Raleigh News and Observer, 4 July 1991, C2; and Steve Bryant, Carolina Mudcats Owner and President, interview by author, 11 August 1995, notes, Raleigh, NC.

Zebulon is centered in a triangle of cities that include Raleigh, Wilson and Rocky Mount, all lying east of North Carolina's "Research Triangle." Tiny Zebulon still only has a few stoplights, but attendance still is strong after nine seasons as the club moves into the second stage of their stadium building plan. The second and third phases include upgrading the stadium seating with larger box seats, a larger clubhouse, covering the grandstand, adding indoor batting cages, and building permanent concessions stands and bathrooms.[8]

The Southern League's Gypsy Franchise (1992–1997)

The complicated and long story of the Mobile Bay Bears opening Hank Aaron Field in 1997 started with a fire in Charlotte, NC, twelve years before. Crockett Park was engulfed in flames after a high school tournament game in March of 1985. The fire put things into motion, resulting in a 10,000 seat stadium constructed over the state line near Fort Mill (York County), South Carolina. Knights Castle attracted record crowds, prompting a 1993 promotion of Charlotte minor league baseball from the Class AA Southern League to the Class AAA International League. This promotion left the Southern League with a homeless franchise.

Nashville businessman Larry Schmittou 'volunteered' to house the club (renamed the Nashville Xpress) for a maximum of two years, playing side by side with his AAA Nashville Sounds. City after city was mentioned as a potential home for the AA franchise, including Springfield, MO; Lexington, KY, Mobile, AL and even Bayamon (San Juan), Puerto Rico. Stadium financing killed the Lexington and Mobile, proposals while distance to other clubs killed Springfield and Bayamon bids. While all this was transpiring, attendance for both the Xpress and Sounds decreased to last and next to last in their respective leagues. The little seaside city of Wilmington, NC, was selected to house the team on another two-year temporary basis. The University of North Carolina at Wilmington's Brooks Field would be a two-year home of the Port

[8] See Steve Vinson, Five County Stadium Page; available from http://www.ipass.net/~kd4wiw/5cstad1.html; Internet; accessed 30 November 1999; and Wade Rawlins, "Mudcats' stadium project wins backing," Raleigh News Observer, 22 October 1996; available from http://www.nando.net/newsroom/nao/tri/102296/tri12_27334.html; Internet; accessed 6 March 1997.

City Roosters. A stadium deal finally was approved in Mobile, Alabama and five seasons after leaving Charlotte, a permanent home for the club, Hank Aaron Stadium was built.

Memphis to Jackson, TN (1998)

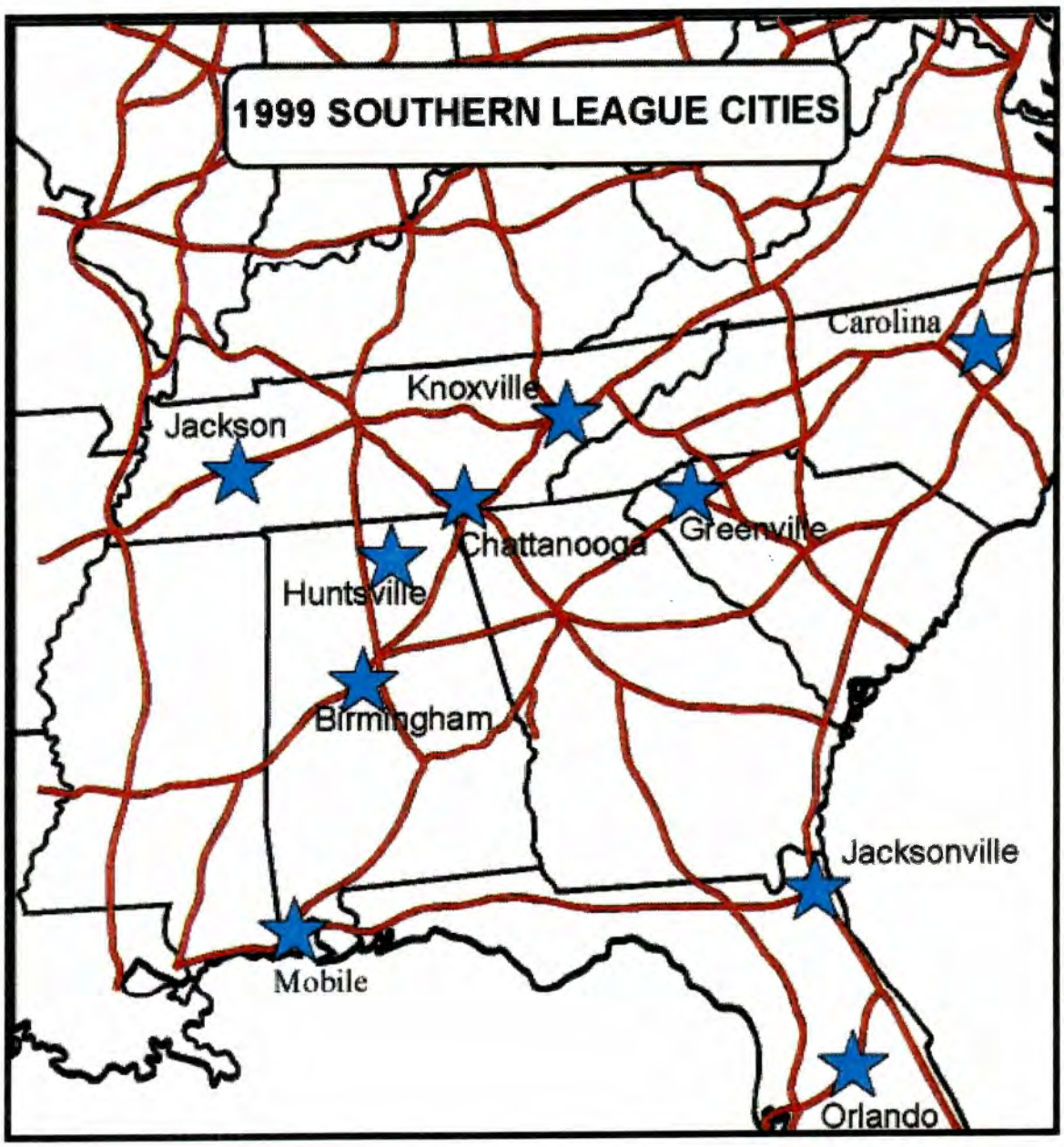
Major League expansion in the late 1990s resulted in the NABPL granting Memphis a Triple-A minor league affiliation. Memphis, being very close to St. Louis, landed the Cardinal's top farm club, replacing longtime AAA affiliate, Louisville. Instead of repeating past failures (Charlotte in 1972 and Nashville in 1993-94) and putting two franchises in one MSA, the league and the National Association decided to grant Jackson, Tennessee, just eighty miles east of Memphis, the AA franchise formerly housed in Memphis. This transfer was the last move of the twentieth century as the circuit played the final season of this millenium with the ten cities shown on Map 5-1. Included are the teams from Jackon, Chattanooga, and Knoxville, TN; Huntsville, Birmingham, and Mobile, AL; Orlando and Jacksonville, FL; Greenville, SC; and Zebulon, NC. [9]

After years of playing in a stadium inside Memphis's hard-to-reach fair grounds, the new club opened the 1998 season just off the F.E. Wright Drive Exit from Interstate 40. The fast growing city of Jackson built a state-of-the-art, eight million-dollar facility at "no cost to the taxpayer." The multi-use facility also hosts non-baseball events, and is touted by the Diamond Jaxx as the entertainment center of a 16-county area in West Tennessee. The city of Jackson sold the naming rights to the Proctor & Gamble Company "in recognition of the nation's only Pringles plant, located in Jackson."[10]

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[9] US Bureau of the Census, Series MA-96-5, Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan Areas: Annual Time Series, July 1, 1991 to July 1, 1996, Population Estimates Program, Population Division, (Washington, DC: GPO), 1996; available from http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/ma96-05.txt; Internet; accessed June 1999.

[10] See Minor League Baseball, The Official Site of Minor League Baseball – West Tennessee Diamond Jaxx Page; available from http://www.minorleaguebaseball.com/teams/sou-wte.php3; Internet; accessed 29 September 1999; and West Tennessee Diamond Jaxx, Diamond Jaxx Stadium Information; available from http://www.diamondjaxx.com/stadium.html; Internet; accessed 29 September 1999.



Map 5-1: 1999 Southern League Cities.

Intra-City (Within the Same MSA)

While some clubs were playing one city against another in their relocation attempts, other clubs used their own cities' suburbs as a way to get better financial deals. Since 1988, the Southern League has seen three franchise shifts from the city center to a suburb within the same metropolitan area. In all three cases, city governments rejected funding a stadium for use by a private enterprise, and the franchises sought a home in the adjacent suburbs or outlying area, where suburban/rural locales were willing to risk investing in their own development.

Birmingham (Hoover, AL) (1988)

"Rickwood smells like a baseball park," said longtime ticket manager Joe Drake. "You can still smell the old leather, the popcorn, the concession stand, the hot dogs. I do anyway."[11]

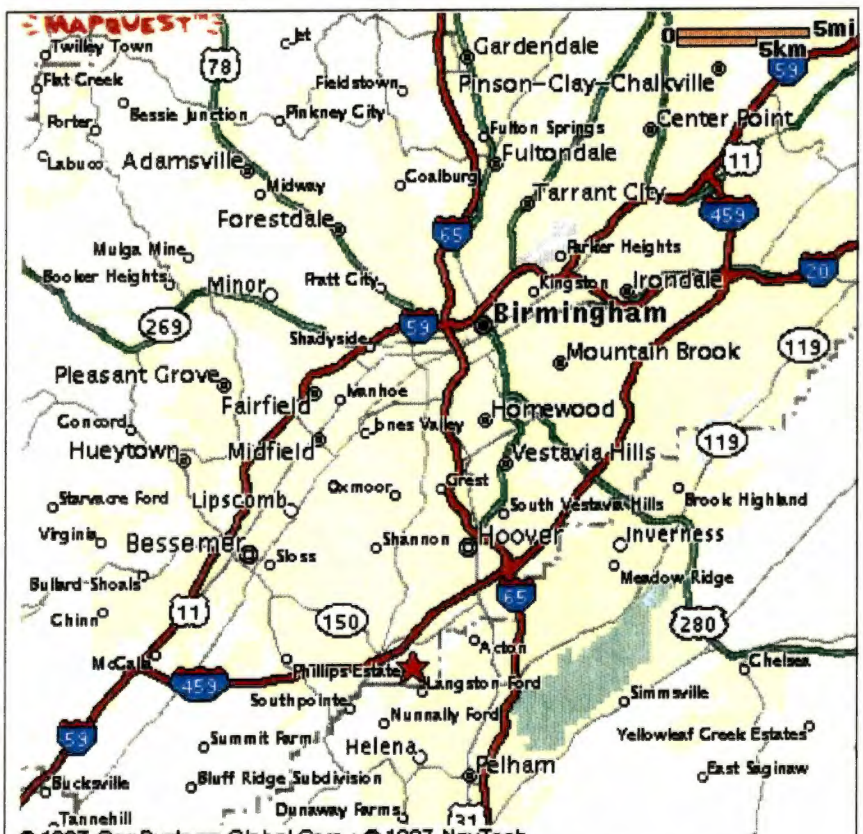
Rickwood Field represented the nostalgia of the minor leagues: close quarters, old wooden grandstands, a train behind the outfield wall, a neighborhood ballpark and a park that exuded history and tradition. It seemed like any player who amounted to anything in baseball played at Rickwood at one time or another – Cobb, Grimes, Ruth, Gehrig, Dean, Williams, Gibson, Paige, Mays, Aaron and Jackson...the list goes on and on. Although watching a ball game at Rickwood could take one back seventy some odd years, working there day after day was like working in the dark ages: very cramped working conditions, power outages almost bi-weekly, flooding monthly and poor fan parking.[12]

By the mid-1980s, owner Art Clarkson, who had brought baseball back to Birmingham in 1981 after a five-year absence, decided to move his club to a more accessible suburban site. Over the years the park had deteriorated, the area had become a predominantly minority neighborhood,

[11] Bob Carlton, "Play (old) ball!: Return to those thrilling days of the '40s at Rickwood," The Birmingham News, 11 June 1996, 1A+.
[12] See Steve Merrill, Rickwood - America's Oldest Baseball Park; available from http://www.olcg.com/al/rickwood/; Internet; accessed 6 July 1999; and Carlton, 1A+.

and the team's core market had moved to the suburbs. After the 1985 season, Clarkson asked the city to help finance a new stadium. After the city balked, "several Birmingham-area cities jumped at the chance to offer a site," and become home to professional baseball.[13]

The suburb of Hoover eventually landed a sweetheart deal with the Barons and cleverly named their 10,000 seat stadium "Hoover Metropolitan Stadium." Pre-stadium Hoover was a sleepy residential suburb 'over the mountain' (Bluff Ridge) from downtown Birmingham that relied heavily on the Riverchase shopping mall for much of its sale tax income (Map 5-2). The stadium, says Hoover Mayor Frank Skinner, "is the bait being used to attract more business to locate at Trace Crossing, an industrial park adjoining the stadium site (Figure 5-2)." He continued, "We need to broaden our [tax] base and not be so dependent on sales tax for our



Map 5-2: Hoover (to the South) and Metropolitan Birmingham.

[13] "Barons' new season begins in new home: a stadium that's tops," Birmingham News, 10 April 1988, promotional section, 2.

survival." Skinner preaches the gospel for suburban communities interested in luring minor league sports. Many suburban towns just like Hoover, use new stadia as means of attracting other business and broadening their tax base.[14]



Figure 5-2: Other Development outside of the Hoover Met.

Charlotte (York County, SC) (1990)

After the St. Patrick's Day Fire in 1985, the city of Charlotte told its minor league club that they were not willing to fund a new ballpark. After two years of tough negotiations and near deals, the Crockett family was forced to sell the club or move the franchise out of Charlotte. Being forty-year residents of Charlotte, they decided to keep the club in town and sell it to George Shinn, a Charlotte businessman and part owner of the NBA Charlotte Hornets.

The city council was as tough on Shinn as they had been on the Crocketts. A deal was almost struck, but fell apart due to minor (in baseball and development terms) money disagreement. Shinn became fed up and announced his intention to look over the entire Charlotte metro area for a site suitable for a 15,000 seat ballpark. He found his 410-acre plot of land over

[14] Bill Lumpkin, "Life in the suburbs: City makes long-term investment in Barons," Birmingham Post-Herald, 23 June 1988, 1B.

the state border in sleepy Fort Mill, South Carolina. There he built a 10,000 seat facility known as Knights Castle (the stadium has flags that remind people of a medieval castle).[15]

The relocation of the Charlotte franchise has become known as a real estate deal. The York County Chamber agreed to build all needed infrastructure for George Shinn if he purchased a large tract of land and promised to develop it. Shinn would benefit by having a water, transportation, and sewage network built upon which he could build office complexes, housing tracts, and retail establishments. In exchange, York County would benefit from the businesses, industries, housing, and retail development (and all the taxes they would add to the county coffers.) The stadium gave the area "visibility, glamour, and traffic they would not otherwise have," says Arthur T. Johnson. The county commissioners viewed the deal as "a means of managing future growth and protecting the public's investment.[16]

Knoxville to Sevierville (2000)

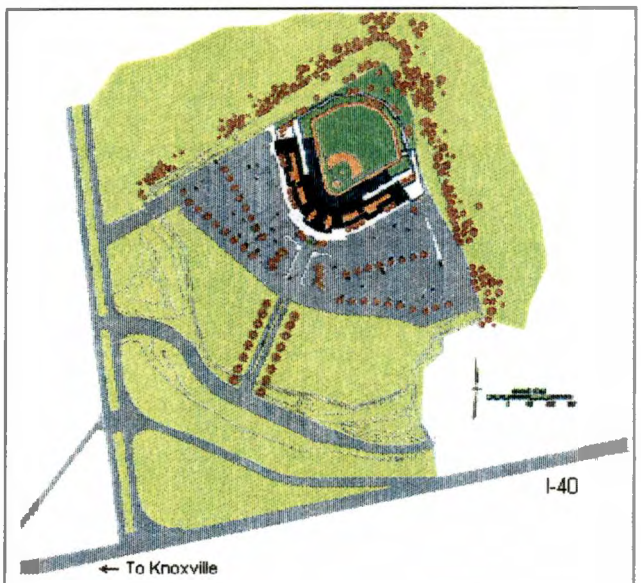
Bill Meyer Stadium is a charming old ballpark located just northeast of Knoxville's downtown sector. The ballpark is shoehorned between a sock warehouse, the Knoxville Area Transit headquarters, a rail line (almost a requirement for old ballparks) and First Creek. Bill Meyer is an ideal setting to watch young men compete in hopes of making it to the big-time. The sheltered grandstand and backdrop of shattered factory windows telling tales of long-ago home runs, ivy covered walls, and a neighborhood beyond the right-center field wall reminds fans of yesterdays past. The stadium, previously know as Caswell Park and Smithson Stadium, was rebuilt two years after the ashes of a 1951 fire had cooled. The thirty-six year old ballpark has seen its fair share of paint jobs and minor refurbishing. Unfortunately for the ownership group of today, parking is terrible, the city is apathetic about professional sports, and the population is

[15] Ed Martin, "Shinn's Bank To Recommend Stadium Site," Charlotte Observer, 26 February 1988, 1A+.
[16] Arthur T. Johnson, Minor League Baseball and Local Economic Development (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 214.

centered on the other side of the city. "All anyone has to do is walk behind the stands and see what we have to deal with," said Smokies General Manager Dan Rajkowski.[17]

The future did not look very bright for the dilapidated structure in February 1996, when the city brought up the possibility of stadium construction funding in a budget committee meeting. The idea seemed simple enough: both parties knew a new stadium was needed to move into the next century, they both knew the approximate $12 million cost, and they both wanted the team to stay in Knoxville - the club's home for the previous twenty-four years. Three years, two government bodies and ten serious sites later, the Smokies began to look to surrounding East Tennessee counties to help them foot the bill for a new stadium.[18]

Neighboring Sevier County, home of Sevierville, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Dollywood and the destination of millions of vacationers a year, welcomed the Smokies to their community. Although the new ballpark site lies only seventeen miles east of Caswell Park, it might seem further to many Knoxvillians because the most of them reside on the opposite (west) side of the city and would have to fight rush hour traffic. As with other freeway parks, the grounds will have a substantial amount of acreage devoted to commercial development. Included in the proposed $19.4 million ballpark are the area's Visitor Information Center (the Gateway Center) and a restaurant.[19]



Map 5-3: Tennessee Smokies' New Stadium in Sevierville.

The location (Map 5-3) is just to the north of Interstate 40's exit 407, one of the busiest in the state. State Route 66, a four-

[17] Nick Gates, "City, Smokies pitch a new stadium," Knoxville News-Sentinel, 7 February 1996, D1.
[18] Gates, "City, Smokies pitch a new stadium," D1+.
[19] Nick Gates, "Play ball! says Sevier: Smokies' new stadium to be near I-40 Exit 407," Knoxville News-Sentinel, 5 February 1999, A1+.

lane, divided highway, connects the interstate with downtown Sevierville and is the main artery for Smoky Mountain visitor traffic. "It provides the team," Rajkowski stated, "...accessibility off the interstate. Its visibility is a key component. You'll be able to see the facility and the field lights from the interstate.'[20]

Executive Director of the Sevier County Economic Development Council, Allen Newton, also noted that, "It is a spectacular site, visible from the interstate and within easy reach of most of middle East Tennessee." This kind of hype and marketing talk means that the Smokies will plan to market a substantially larger area than during their tenure in Knoxville. It will extended to the towns of Morristown and Dandridge and will try and capture the tourist dollar heading towards Sevierville, Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg and the Smoky Mountains.[21]

Taken together, these two characteristics of new ballparks summarize up the latest trend and mindset of ballpark construction in the 1980s and 1990s: think regionally and build so people can see you and provide them an easy way to get to you.

[20] Gates, "Play ball! says Sevier," A1+.
[21] Gates. "Play ball! says Sevier," A1+.

CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Declining Professional Sports Environment

As the popularity of professional sports has steadily increased, fans in the lower socioeconomic levels of society are starting to become more and more removed from the games. With ticket prices and cable television rates climbing, the lower and middle income fan is increasingly losing touch with professional sports. At one time, most contests could be seen over the free television airwaves. Now pay-television broadcast packages and national licensing agreements are a main source of revenue for most major league clubs. In order to pay for these broadcasts, the cable companies must raise rates. In doing so, many customers who are struggling to make ends meet can no longer afford the luxury of cable television.

Cost of Attending a Game

At the start of the 1999 major league baseball season, ticket prices averaged $14.91. However, this price was far below the cost of the other "Big 3" Leagues. According to Team Marketing Report, a sports-business newsletter, the National Hockey League charged an average of $45.70 per ticket, the National Football League $45.63, and the National Basketball Association $48.37 (up 14% from last season and 108% since 1991-92), with the New York Knicks charging an average of $79.34! Clearly major league baseball is the best value among its peers.[1]

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[1] Mike Lopresti, "Ticket prices keep average fans home," USA Today, 18 November 1999; available from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/comment/collopo2.htm; Internet; accessed 26 November 1999.

When one considers the price of taking the whole family to a game, the cost seems like a car payment. These leagues are pricing many families and fans out of the market. In 1999, Team Market Report also priced the average cost of a family of four to attend a major league ballgame at $121.36. This would cover the cost of "four tickets, two small beers, four small soft drinks, four hot dogs, parking for one vehicle, two souvenir programs and two souvenir baseball caps." For hockey, football, and basketball, that figure is much higher than baseball. At the top of the spectrum are the New York Ranger's hockey club ($30 parking), at $368.27, the NFL's Washington Redskins $391.11 (including a $6 beer), and the NBA's New York Knicks, at an incredible $455.26 for a family of four![2]

For years in the South, many fans had the choice of attending games only one major league city - Atlanta. In 1997 Atlanta opened their new Turner Field and the Fan Cost Index climbed to the highest in the league, $121.76 (1999: fourth highest, $144.34). Meanwhile, another major league alternative, the Cincinnati Reds, was the league's lowest, $81.31 (1999: fourth lowest, $96.32). These costs are astronomical and ruin any reasonable monthly budget for most lower and middle income families.[3]

Similar findings are found in Bill Koenig, "Ticket prices soar with fans expected back," USA Today- Baseball Weekly, 15 April 1997; available from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/sbbw0202.htm; Internet; accessed 23 October 1999; Dennis Berman, "The NBA's Modest Ticket-Price Hikes: Will Fans Care?," Business Week Online, 20 November 1998; available from http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/nov1998/nf81120d.htm; Internet; accessed 23 November 1999; and Rick Reilly, "National Bunco Association," Sports Illustrated, 22 November 1999; available from http://www.cnnsi.com/inside_game/magazine/life_of_reilly/news/1999/11/16/life_of_reilly/; Internet; accessed 19 November 1999.

[2] See Lopresti, 18 November 1999; Koenig, 15 April 1997; and Thomas Heath, "Pollin: Player Salaries Cause Increases in Ticket Prices," Washington Post, 27 November 1997, B7; available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/sports/longterm/general/mciarticles/pollin.htm; Internet; accessed 23 October 1999.

[3] See Lopresti, 18 November 1999; and Koenig, 15 April 1997.

The Washington Post interviewed two blue-collar workers in Washington, D.C. shortly after the MCI Center was constructed to house the city's NBA and NHL teams. Taxi driver Howard Daniel believed that the ticket prices have become too expensive. "If I came home," he commented, "and said I was going to spend $100 or more on a basketball game, my wife would say I'm out of my mind."[4]

Carpenter Percell Spinner, who worked on the MCI Center in Washington, echoes Daniel's thoughts about ticket prices, "At those prices, only the rich people can afford that."[5]

Compare these prices to any minor league club. Usually, the prices are about half that of Cincinnati's Fan Index. The average ticket price for Southern League contests is only seven dollars and concessions run $1.50 to $5.00. You will not find a $6 beer at many minor league parks.[6]

Inaccessibility and Coldness of the Major Leagues

At minor league ballparks, fans are seated much closer to the field than at major league stadia. "In the new Comiskey Park in Chicago," states author Camille Colatosti, "...the front row of the upper deck is farther from the field than the last row of the upper deck in the old park." Many fans can see the expressions on players' faces while hearing the groans and yells of players and coaches during minor league contests. They know that they will not see the highest quality of baseball, but they know they will witness kids hustling and trying to win. There are few prima donnas in the minor leagues, since every player knows that he must get better in order to make it to the major leagues. The same players that just competed on the diamond sometimes walk right

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[4] Stephen C. Fehr, "Pricey New Sports Venues Help Make Washington No. 1 for High-Cost Tickets," Washington Post, 31 October 1997, C01; available from http://www.jobs.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/sports/longterm/general/mciarticles/launch/pricey.htm; Internet; accessed 23 October 1999.
[5] Fehr, "High-Cost Tickets," C01.
[6] Brian Benvie, Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs, E-mail letter to author, 27 October 1999.

through the crowds to get to their dugouts, stopping to sign autographs. Autograph sessions are planned for kids and adults to get a souvenir from their visit.[7]

The players are accessible to the fans, the way it used to be in the major leagues. Fans used to ride the buses and trolleys, shop with, go to church and live next to professional ballplayers. Today at major league stadia, ushers and guards patrol the players' entrances, keeping fans away from the million dollar athletes, many of whom live in exclusive, gated communities.

At a minor league park, families have a place where kids can roam free and feel safe. Kids can be found running around the ballpark, chasing foul balls, throwing pitches at radar guns and asking the mascot for an autograph. At minor league parks, the ushers are not too strict about where people sit, while in big league stadia ushers constantly monitor seat sections, for the prices are too steep to ignore seat-jumpers. Children also can get easily lost amongst 55,000 people.

Fans have been returning to the minors in record numbers for these reasons. The fact that the majors have been through highly publicized drug and betting scandals, suffered eight work stoppages in eleven years, and cancelled the 1994 World Series makes the minors a place where the world is much simpler.

The Wandering Franchises and Greedy Owners

Along with the individual athletes' problems and inaccessibility of millionaire players, fans have dealt with the prospect of losing their beloved teams. Over the past two decades almost every major city has experienced some sort of "stadium crisis." Some cities have suffered more than others have. Professional football clubs have abandoned the cities of St. Louis, Oakland, Baltimore, Los Angeles (twice), Houston and Cleveland. Hockey teams in Hartford, Minneapolis and Quebec have "disappear[ed] into the history books in exchange for lucrative deals in new

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[7] Camille Colatosti, "Bad Sports," The Neighborhood Works 21, no. 2 (March/April 1998); available from http://www.cnt.org/tnw/21/212sport.htm; Internet; accessed 27 October 1999.

cities." Fans have gotten quite upset with professional sports franchises, particularly football, in the last fifteen years. The National Football League has particularly scarred the cities of Baltimore and Cleveland. They have seen their teams abandon them during a snowstorm under the cover of darkness of early morning (Baltimore, 1983). Football teams have left cities with death threats to the principal owner. Die-hard fans in Cleveland threatened owner Art Modell (1995) because he took a historical franchise out of Cleveland, despite an exceptional following of fans, for a lucrative stadium deal in, of all places, Baltimore (Figure 6-1).[8]

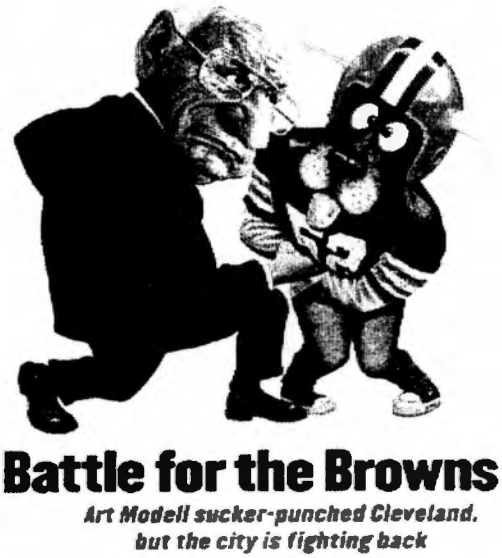


Figure 6-1: Cleveland Hates Art Modell.

Fans and residents have become sick of the constant rumblings and threats by owners, badgering local politicians for public funds to build enormous stadia with dozens of profit-making corporate skyboxes and luxury suites. Huge sums of money are necessary to fund these monstrosities and the owners are the ones who reap the profits and rewards.

Roger G. Noll, a Stanford University economics professor who studies sports facilities, said in a Washington Post interview, "A new stadium can add as much as $30 million a year to a team's revenue." With new stadia, Fehr asserts, owners can now charge "higher prices for luxury suites, club seats, gourmet concessions, fancy merchandise, advertising, restaurants and theme activities."[9]

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[8] See Joanna Cagan And Neil DeMause, Field Of Schemes: How The Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money Into Private Profit, (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press), 1998; available from http: www.fieldofschemes.com ; Internet; accessed 25 October 1999; and Terry Carroll, Model Delendus Est, picture from Sports Illustrated 5 December 1995, cover; available from http: www.aimnet.com ~carroll modell.html; Internet; accessed 26 October 1999.

[9] Fehr, "High-Cost Tickets," C01.

Author Neil deMause argues new stadia are "better only in terms of making money for owners; by and large, these things are built for luxury boxes, concession areas." Both of these revenue streams go directly into the pockets of the owners and do not have to be shared with the rest of the respective league.[10]

Troubled Players and a Loss of Fan Loyalty

Police blotters are filled almost weekly with athletes in trouble with the law. Whether it is shoplifting, drug possession, tax evasion, domestic violence, not paying child support payments or physical assaults, professional and college players do not have the best reputation among American citizens. College athletics have transformed themselves into minor leagues for professional sports. In general, it seems that the student-athlete is an oxymoron. College football players are not becoming college deans or professors any longer as they once did.[11]

The advent of free agency in 1976, a process in which the player can shop his services and skills around the league to the highest bidder, has greatly affected continuity in the highest level of professional sports. Fans and even players and coaches seem to need name tags as players move from franchise to franchise over the course of a career. At one time, a fan had a favorite team because he or she knew its players and knew each player's strengths and weaknesses. Free Agency has broken that valuable bond. As each new season starts, a fan has to relearn all the players on his or her favorite club. Fans, young ones in particular, lose confidence and respect for players and teams who break the bonds of team loyalty and run to the city willing to pay him the highest salary.

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[10] Colatosti, "Bad Sports."
[11] Jack Neely, "Free the Vols: A daydream about a less-hypocritical football league," Metro Pulse, (October 1999), 6; available from http://metropulse.com/dir_zine/dir_1999/939/t_secret.html; Internet; accessed 26 October 1999.

City vs. Suburban Politics

While the big business of big-time sports is abandoning the casual fan, cities are fighting a losing battle against franchise owners. Owners have been threatening to move their franchise to other locations in order to make the city improve older facilities or build a new facility, complete with all the aforementioned profit generating amenities. Cities used to see other metropolitan areas as their enemy in this competition. In the last 30 years, competition has not only come from across the country, but also from just over the horizon in the form of their suburbs.

Pontiac, Michigan lured the Lions thirty miles north of downtown Detroit in 1975 when they built The Silverdome. The same happened to Boston in 1971 with the building of Foxboro Stadium in Foxboro, about an hour south of the city. New York City lost **both** its football teams (Giants in 1976 and Jets in 1984) to the Meadowlands Sports Complex across the Hudson River in New Jersey.

In the 1990s, American cities are grasping at ways to revitalize their downtowns. The large cities of Cleveland, Baltimore, Denver, Indianapolis and Phoenix have been quite successful with the development of sports facilities to help spur other economic development, although at costs of up to $500 million. Seattle will spend $770 million to construct two downtown stadia. The small cities of Durham, Lansing and Akron are trying to emulate the larger cities in the hope of revitalizing their downtowns, at substantially lower costs.[12]

In dealing with the suburban sites in the minor leagues, the amount of capital does not compare with the amount for the major sports leagues. Suburban and rural communities can convert unused or agricultural land into sites for ballparks with only little site preparation. They are going out of their way to lure new minor league franchises away from older cities. The costs of constructing a six to ten thousand seat structure is much less than in the city centers. The sites are looking to attract other business to the area surrounding the ballpark. In many cases in the

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[12] Colatosti, "Bad Sports."

Southern League, a ballpark is a precursor to other development. In Fort Mill and Greenville, SC; Hoover and Mobile, AL and Zebulon, NC, new parks improved or added needed infrastructure into the area. These new roads, sewer and power lines paved the way for other industrial and commercial development.

Other Instances Around the Country

The Southern League has been transformed from a league with historical and quaint ballparks, to a league that by the turn of the century will boast only one stadium built before 1984. The oldest stadium will be Jacksonville's Wolfson Park, built in a sports complex directly off the downtown freeway. The Southern League takes this national trend of building stadia in suburban-freeway locations to the extreme. Other leagues around the country also boast similar situations to that of the Southern.

California League

The Class-A California League has ballparks in both the small towns (Adelanto, Lancaster, Lake Elsinore) and large cities (Bakersfield, Modesto, Stockton, San Bernadino) dotting the San Joaquin Valley, the Mojave Desert and other areas east of Los Angeles. This league has also seen a stadium building boom in the last fifteen years. Five of the league's ten clubs have new ballparks and all of them with very easy access to the freeways – the lifeblood of Californian commerce. Coincidentally, all the new stadia are in the southern division of the league.[13]

Eastern and Midwest Leagues

The Class-AA and the Class-A Midwest Leagues, in direct contrast to the Southern League, have built new ballparks in downtown sections of their cities. Appleton, WI; Akron,

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[13] California League, California League: History; available from http://www.californialeague.com/history.html; Internet; accessed on 28 October 1999.

OH; Battle Creek and Lansing, MI; Erie, PA; Portland, ME and Trenton, NJ have all built stadia in downtown locations, although many have easy highway access. The Eastern League, much like its AA Southern counterpart, has seen a large wave of stadia construction, having twelve of their fourteen stadia being built since 1987. Of these twelve, seven have excellent freeway access although some might be considered downtown stadia. A main difference between the cities of the Midwest and Eastern Leagues and those of the Southern League is the contrast of history, and hence, the different emphasis placed on downtown development. Many of the Eastern and Midwest League cities have centralized downtowns that have survived and functioned as the center of commerce for a century or more. Southern cities have grown and become major economic forces late in the twentieth century. Their physical layouts look different than those of the north because the southern cities relied more on automobile transport. In stark contrast to Southern League cities, their northern counterparts are trying to revive serious abandonment of their downtowns, and in essence, their identities as cities. The recession of the early 1990s struck these cities hard. Many plant closings and big factory layoffs left many communities with high unemployment and a lack of high self-esteem. A revitalization of downtown was planned to help stabilize these communities.

Conclusions

The last fifteen years of the 20th century saw great changes in the American South, which in turn changed the landscape of the Southern League. Starting with interstate construction and suburban development, the shape of the Southern city evolved quite differently than that of its Northern counterpart. Suburbanization, suburban growth and urban growth were substantial factors that helped shape the ballpark locations for the Southern League of the 1980s and 1990s. The growth of the suburbs ushered in the acceptance of the automobile and the anti-pedestrian urban landscape. Suburban housing brought manufacturing and corporate jobs, retail outlets,

entertainment establishments and finally sporting facilities to the suburbs to keep the suburban citizen occupied and happy.

With the advent of the newer ballparks the league moves into the next century looking at record popularity. The character and history of the charm of the league also has changed with the coming of the new ballparks. When the new season starts in 2000, the small, cramped, neighborhood ballparks that have seen the Hall of Fame legends of Cobb, Ruth, Gibson, Mays and Aaron will have all been retired. They will have been replaced with new, automobile-friendly parks that cater to suburbanites.

The makeup of the cities that hosted Southern League clubs has also changed over the years. The smaller cities of Asheville, NC; Evansville, IN; Macon, GA; Montgomery, AL and Savannah, GA have left the league; replaced the southern metropoli of Nashville and Memphis, TN; Charlotte, NC; Birmingham, AL and Jacksonville, FL. Of course, some of these cities have, in turn, become too large for the AA-League and have moved up to the higher classification.

Since nine of the ten clubs will have relatively new stadia by the start of the century, one would think that development and the posturing for new stadia would end. But, if the trend of sports stadia holds true to form, owners will soon be asking for stadia improvements or even new ballparks. With owners asking for progressively more and larger public handouts, more profit is to be made from newer ballparks. Stadia in Greenville, Huntsville and Hoover might be asking for improvements to "keep up" with the rest of the league. Zebulon will be looking to add phase three to their stadium as part of their plan to upgrade Five County Stadium. Club officials might ask for new suites and luxury boxes, along with other concessions. Already, in the major leagues, clubs (San Antonio) are complaining about facilities that are just six years old!

Clearly, league clubs have opted to move to sites that cater to mostly white, middle and upper class suburbanites rather than to minority residents and others that reside within the inner cities. Following the general trend of the rest of Southern economic development, the ballpark

locations have shifted to places with high visibility, plenty of vehicular traffic and plenty of parking spaces.

These new Southern League stadia have many stories and many unique situations behind them. However, most, save Chattanooga, have this in common: they (owners and politicians) decided to build them in the suburbs with excellent highway access. We must not look at this ballpark movement as an isolated phenomenon related to sports franchises and capitalistic owners, but as part of the larger picture of American suburbanization. It was put into motion after the Second World War and they building of suburban housing developments. It continued with Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System of the 1950s and the opening of shopping centers and malls in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The proliferation of business parks and office buildings maintained the trend until the sports industry followed suit in the 1980s. Today, sports facilities along with Wal-Mart Superstores, Home Depots, trucking distribution centers, mega-malls, multiplex theaters and Super Malls are sprouting up along major thoroughfares all over the country. New ballparks have become a part of the American fabric of consumerism and entertainment.

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Southern League Ballclubs

Southern League, 1 Depot Street, Suite 300, Marietta, GA, 30060. Phone # (770) 428-4749.
E-Mail Address: soleague@bellsouth.net
Website: http://www.southernleague.com

Birmingham Barons, 100 Ben Chapman Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244.
Phone # (205) 988-3200.
Hoover Metropolitan Stadium.
E-Mail Address: barons@barons.com
Website: http://www.barons.com

Carolina Mudcats, 1501 N.C. Highway 39, Zebulon, NC 27597.
Phone # (919) 269-2287.
Five County Stadium.
E-Mail Address: muddy@gomudcats.com
Website: http://www.gomudcats.com

Chattanooga Lookouts, 1130 East Third Street, Chattanooga, TN 37401
Phone # (423) 267-2208.
Historic Joe Engel Stadium.

Greenville Braves, One Braves Ave., Greenville, SC 29607
Phone # (864) 299-3456.
Greenville Municipal Stadium.
E-Mail Address: info@gbraves.com
Website: http://www.gbraves.com

Huntsville Stars, 3125 Leeman Ferry Road, Huntsville, AL 35801
Phone # (205) 882-2562.
Joe W. Davis Stadium.
E-Mail Address: stars@traveller.com
Website: http://www.huntsvillestars.com

Jacksonville Suns, 1201 East Duval Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone # (904) 358-2846.
Wolfson Park.
E-Mail Address: jaxsuns@bellsouth.net
Website: http://www.jaxsuns.com

Knoxville Smokies, 633 Jessamine St., Knoxville, TN 37917
Phone # (423) 637-9494.
Bill Meyer Stadium.
E-Mail Address: info@smokiesbaseball.com
Website: http://www.smokiesbaseball.com

Mobile BayBears, 755 Bolling Bros. Blvd., Mobile, AL 36606
Phone # (334) 479-2327.
Hank Aaron Stadium.
E-Mail Address: baybears@mobilebaybears.com
Website: http://www.mobilebaybears.com

Orlando Rays, 287 Tampa Ave. South, Orlando, FL 32805
Phone # (407) 649-7297.
Tinker Field.
E-Mail Address: orays@aol.com
Website: http://www.orlandorays.com

West Tennessee DiamondJaxx, 4 Fun Place, Jackson, TN 38305
Phone # (901) 664-2020.
Pringles Park.
E-Mail Address: baseball@diamondjaxx.com
Website: http://www.diamondjaxx.com

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Profiles of Professional Baseball Cities, 1999.[1]

League Name (Teams)	Largest	Smallest	Geography of League
MAJOR LEAGUES			
American League (14)	New York	Tampa Bay	USA & Canada
CITY	7,420,166	236,029	
MSA	19,549,649	1,690,343	
National League (16)	New York	Cincinnati and Milwaukee	USA & Canada
CITY	7,420,166	336,400	
MSA	19,549,649	1,642,658	
Class AAA			
International League (14)	Indianapolis	Pawtucket	
CITY	741,304	72,644	IN, NY, KY, NC, OH, ON, PA, RI, SC, VA
MSA	1,540,252	1,321,068	
Pacific Coast League (16)	Calgary and Vancouver	Salt Lake City and Des Moines	AB, AZ, BC, CA, CO, IA, LA, NE, NM, NV, OK, TN, UT, WA
CITY	768,082	174,348	
MSA	1,831,665	427,436	
Class AA			
Eastern League (12)	Akron and Bowie	Nowich and Altoona	CT, MD, ME, NJ, NY, OH, PA
CITY	215,712	34,931	
MSA	7,164,519	131,450	
Southern League (10)	Jacksonville and Orlando	Zebulon and Jackson	AL, FL, NC, SC, TN
CITY	693,630	3,730	
MSA	1,417,291	98,489	
Texas League (8)	San Antonio	Midland	AR, KS, LA, MS, OK, TX
CITY	1,114,130	99,621	
MSA	1,490,111	239,414	
Class A - Advanced			
California League (10)	San Jose	Adelanto	CA
CITY	861,284	15,291	
Carolina League (8)	Winston-Salem	Kinston	DE, MD, NC, SC, VA
CITY	164,316	24,470	
Florida State League (14)	Tampa	Vero Beach	FL
CITY	289,156	16,387	
Class A			
Midwest League (14)	Fort Wayne	Geneva	IA, IL, IN, MI, WI
CITY	185,716	18,382	
South Atlantic League (14)	Greensboro	Salisbury	GA, MD, NC, SC, WV
CITY	197,910	20,884	
Short-Season Class A			
New York-Penn League (14)	Staten Island	Augusta	NJ, NY,VT, MA, OH, ON, PA
CITY	398,748	2,265	
Northwest League (8)	Portland	Medford	ID, OR, WA
CITY	503,891	57,156	
Rookie Advanced			
Appalachian League (10)	Johnson City	Princeton	NC, TN, VA, WV
CITY	57,079	6,741	
Pioneer League (8)	Billings	Helena	AB, ID, MT, UT
CITY	91,750	28,306	

[1] An updated version based on Arthur T. Johnson, Minor League Baseball and Local Economic Development. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993, 12-13.
Sources: US Census Bureau, MSA Populations (1996): "MA-96-5 Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan Areas: Annual Time Series, July 1, 1991 to July 1, 1996," available from http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/ma96-05.txt; Internet;

APPENDIX B

Southern League of Professional Baseball Clubs, 1964-1999.
(Teams currently in the league in bold type)[2]

CLUB	YEARS	YEARS IN LEAGUE
Asheville, NC	11	1964-66, 1968-75
Birmingham, AL	**30**	1964-65, 1967-75, **1981-1999**
Carolina (Zebulon, NC)	**9**	**1991-1999**
Charlotte, NC	26	1964-72, 1976-92
Chattanooga, TN	**26**	**1964-65, 1976-1999**
Columbus, GA	25	1964-66, 1969-90
Evansville, IN	3	1966-68
Greenville, SC	**16**	**1984-1999**
Huntsville, AL	**15**	**1985-1999**
Jackson, TN	**2**	**1998-1999**
Jacksonville, FL	**30**	**1970-1999**
Knoxville, TN	**32**	1964-67, **1972-1999**
Lynchburg, VA	2	1964-65
Macon, GA	3	1964, 1966-67
Memphis, TN	20	1978-1997
Mobile, AL	**5**	1966, 1970, **1997-1999**
Montgomery, AL	16	1965-80
Nashville, TN	9	1978-84, 1993-94
Orlando, FL	**27**	**1973-1999**
Savannah, GA	16	1968-83
Wilmington, NC	2	1995-1996

US Census Bureau, City/Place Populations (1998): "Annual Time Series of Population Estimates, 1991 to 1998, and 1990 Census Population For Places," available from http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/cityplace.html; Internet; and Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population, "Statistical Profile of Canadian Communities," available from http://ww2.statcan.ca/english/profil/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm; Internet; accessed 14 May 1996.

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APPENDIX C-1

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Major Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium	
MAJOR LEAGUES				
American League (14)				
Anaheim (Los Angeles)	295,153	15,495,155		
Baltimore	645,593	2,468,007	1992	
Boston	555,447	3,263,060	1914	
Chicago White Sox	2,802,079	8,599,774	1991	
Cleveland	495,817	2,913,430	1995	
Detroit	970,196	2,277,401	1914	
Kansas City	441,574	1,690,343		
Minnesota (Minneapolis)	351,731	2,765,116		
New York Yankees	7,420,166	19,549,649	1923	
Oakland	365,874	2,209,629 / 6,605,428		
Seattle	536,978	3,320,829	1999	
Tampa Bay (St. Petersburg (Tampa-St. Pete))	236,029	2,199,231	1990	
Texas (Arlington (Dallas- Ft. Worth))	306,497	4,574,561	1995	
Toronto	653,734	4,263,757	1988	
LARGEST: New York	**7,420,166**	**19,549,649**	**1999**	0
SMALLEST: Tampa Bay	**236,029**	**1,690,343**	**1914**	10
Geography: USA & Canada	***1,148,348***	***5,644,639***	***AVG***	
	516,398	***3,263,060***	***MEDIAN***	
National League (16)				
Arizona (Phoenix)	1,198,064	2,746,703	1998	
Atlanta	403,819	3,541,230	1997	
Chicago Cubs	2,802,079	8,599,774	1912	
Cincinnati	336,400	1,920,931	1968?	
Colorado (Denver)	499,055	2,277,401	1995	
Houston	1,786,691	4,253,428	1968	
Los Angeles	3,597,556	15,495,155	1962	
Florida (Miami)	368,624	3,514,403	1990	
Milwaukee	578,364	1,642,658	1954	
Montreal	1,016,376	3,326,510	1976	
New York Mets	7,420,166	19,549,649	1963	
Philadelphia	1,436,287	4,952,929		
Pittsburgh	340,520	2,394,811		
San Diego	1,220,666	2,655,463		
San Francisco	745,774	1,655,454 / 6,605,428	1958	
St. Louis	339,316	2,548,238		
LARGEST: New York	**7,420,166**	**19,549,649**	**1995**	0
SMALLEST: Cincinnati / Milwaukee	**336,400**	**1,642,658**	**1912**	10
Geography: USA & Canada	***1,505,610***	***5,294,619***	***AVG***	
	881,075	***3,326,510***	***MEDIAN***	

APPENDIX C-2

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Class AAA Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium	
Class AAA				
International League (14)				
Buffalo Bisons	300,717	1,175,240	1988	fw
Charlotte Knights	504,637	1,321,068	1990	fw
Columbus Clippers	670,234	1,447,646	1977	fw
Durham Bulls	153,513	1,025,253	1995	fw
Indianapolis Indians	741,304	1,492,297	1996	
Louisville RiverBats (2000-	255,045	991,765	1956	fw
Norfolk Tides	233,430	1,540,252	1993	fw
Ottawa Lynx	323,340	1,010,498	1993	fw
Pawtucket (Providence, RI) Red Sox	72,644	1,124,044	1942	
Richmond Braves	194,173	935,174	1985	fw
Rochester Red Wings	216,887	1,088,037	1997	fw
Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons	74,683	628,073	1989	fw
Syracuse SkyChiefs	152,215	745,691	1997	fw
Toledo Mud Hens	312,174	611,417	1965	fw
LARGEST: Indianapolis	**741,304**	**1,540,252**	**1997**	12
SMALLEST: Pawtucket	**72,644**	**611,417**	**1942**	14
Geography:	***300,357***	***1,081,175***	***AVG***	
IN, NY, KY, NC, OH, ON, PA, RI, SC, VA	***244,238***	***1,056,645***	***MEDIAN***	
Pacific Coast League (16)				
Albuquerque	419,311	670,092	1969	fw
Calgary	768,082	821,628	1966	
Colorado Springs	344,987	472,924	1988	
Edmonton	616,306	862,597	1995	
Fresno	398,133	861,753	1987	
Iowa (Des Moines)	191,293	427,436	1992	
Las Vegas	404,288	1,201,073	1983	
Memphis (new 2000 - dt)	603,507	1,078,151	1963	
Nashville	510,274	1,117,178	1978	
New Orleans	465,538	1,312,890	1997	fw
Oklahoma (City)	472,221	1,026,657	1998	
Omaha	371,291	681,698	1948	fw
Salt Lake City	174,348	1,217,842	1994	fw
Tacoma	179,814	657,272 / 2,234,707	1960	fw
Tucson	460,466	767,873	1998	fw
Vancouver	514,008	1,831,665	1952	
LARGEST: Calgary / Vancouver	**768,082**	**1,831,665**	**1998**	6
SMALLEST: Salt Lake City / Des Moines	**174,348**	**427,436**	**1948**	16
Geography:	***430,867***	***956,764***	***AVG***	
AB, AZ, BC, CA, CO, IA, LA, NE, NM, NV, OK, TN, UT, WA	***439,889***	***862,597***	***MEDIAN***	

APPENDIX C-3

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Class AA Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium	
Class AA				
Eastern League (12)				
Akron Aeros	215,712	680,142	1997	
Altoona Curve	49,226	131,450	1999	fw
Binghamton Mets	46,760	254,053	1992	fw
Bowie Baysox	40,704	7,164,519	1994	fw
Erie SeaWolves	102,640	280,570	1995	
Harrisburg Senators	49,502	614,755	1987	
New Britain Rock Cats	70,492	1,144,574	1996	fw
New Haven Ravens	130,474	523,724	1927	
Norwich Navigators	34,931	286,719	1995	fw
Portland Sea Dogs	62,786	221,095	1994	fw
Reading Phillies	74,762	352,353	1950	
Trenton Thunder	84,494	330,226	1994	fw
LARGEST: Akron / Bowie	**215,712**	**7,164,519**	**1999**	7
SMALLEST: Nowich / Altoona	**34,931**	**131,450**	**1927**	12
Geography: CT, MD, ME, NJ, NY, OH, PA	***80,207***	***998,682***	***AVG***	
	66,639	***341,290***	***MEDIAN***	
Southern League (10)				
Birmingham (Hoover)	59,551	894,702	1987	fw
Chattanooga	147,790	446,096	1930	
Greenville	56,436	896,679	1984	fw
Huntsville	175,979	330,153	1985	fw
West Tennessee (Jackson, TN)	51,115	98,489	1998	fw
Jacksonville	693,630	1,008,633	1955	fw
Knoxville (Sevierville - 10,662)	165,540	649,277	1953	
Mobile	202,181	518,975	1997	fw
Orlando	181,175	1,417,291	1914	
Carolina (Zebulon (Raleigh))	3,730	1,025,253	1991	fw
LARGEST: Jacksonville / Orlando	**693,630**	**1,417,291**	**1998**	7
SMALLEST: Zebulon / Jackson	**3,730**	**98,489**	**1914**	10
Geography: AL, FL, NC, SC, TN	***173,713***	***728,555***	***AVG***	
	156,665	***771,990***	***MEDIAN***	
Texas League (8)				
El Paso	615,032	684,446	1990	fw
Jackson, MS	188,419	421,068	1975	fw
Arkansas (Little Rock)	175,303	548,352	1932	
Midland	99,621	239,414	1972	
San Antonio	1,114,130	1,490,111	1994	fw
Shreveport	188,319	379,596	1986	fw
Tulsa	381,393	756,493	1981	
Wichita	329,211	512,965	1934	
LARGEST: San Antonio	**1,114,130**	**1,490,111**	**1994**	4
SMALLEST: Midland	**99,621**	**239,414**	**1932**	8
Geography: AR, KS, LA, MS, OK, TX	***386,429***	***629,056***	***AVG***	
	258,815	***530,659***	***MEDIAN***	

APPENDIX C-4

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Class A Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium	
Class A				
Midwest League (14)				
Wisconsin (Appleton)	65,514		1995	fw
Michigan (Battle Creek)	53,496		1990	
Beloit, WI	35,157		1982	
Burlington, IA	26,855		1973	
Cedar Rapids, IA	114,563		1949	
West Michigan (Grand Rapids-Comstock Park)	185,437		1994	fw
Clinton, IA	27,626		1937	
Quad City (Davenport), IA	96,842		1931	
Fort Wayne, IN	185,716		1993	
Kane County (Geneva), IL	18,382		1990	
Lansing, MI	127,825		1996	
Peoria, IL	111,148		1984	fw
Rockford, IL	143,656		1988	
South Bend, IN	99,417		1987	
LARGEST: Fort Wayne	**185,716**		**1996**	3
SMALLEST: Geneva	**18,382**		**1931**	14
Geography: IA, IL, IN, MI, WI	***92,260***		***AVG***	
	98,130		***MEDIAN***	
South Atlantic League (14)				
Asheville, NC	63,031		1924, 1992	
Augusta, GA	187,689		1995	
Charleston, SC	87,044		1997	fw
Charleston, WV	55,056		1949	
Capital City (Columbia, SC)	110,840		1991	
Columbus, GA	182,219		1951	
Cape Fear (Fayetteville, NC)	77,295		1987	
Greensboro, NC	197,910		1926	
Hagerstown, MD	34,105		1931	
Hickory, NC	31,523		1993	
Piedmont (Kannapolis, NC)	36,975		1995	fw
Macon, GA	114,336		1926	
Delmarva (Salisbury, MD)	20,884		1996	fw
Savannah, GA	131,674		1941	
LARGEST: Greensboro	**197,910**		**1997**	3
SMALLEST: Salisbury	**20,884**		**1926**	14
Geography: GA, MD, NC, SC, WV	***95,042***		***AVG***	
	82,170		***MEDIAN***	

APPENDIX C-5

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Short-Season Class A Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium
Short-Season Class A			
New York-Penn League (14)			
Auburn, NY	29,145		
New Jersey (Augusta, Lafayette Twp.)	2,265		
Batavia, NY	15,784		
(Winooski) Vermont (Burlington)	6,619		
Jamestown, NY	32,166		
Lowell, MA	101,075		
Mahoning Valley (Niles, Ohio)	20,593		
Oneonta, NY	12,965		
Pittsfield, MA	45,513		
St. Catharines, Ont.	130,926		
Staten Island, NY	398,748		
Utica, NY	59,334		
Hudson Valley (Wappingers Falls, NY)	4,507		
Williamsport, PA	29,891		
LARGEST: Staten Island	**398,748**		
SMALLEST: Augusta	**2,265**		
Geography: NJ, NY,VT, MA, OH, ON, PA	***63,538***	***AVG***	
	29,518	***MEDIAN***	
Northwest League (8)			
Boise, ID	157,452		
Eugene, OR	128,240		
Everett, WA	88,625		
Southern Oregon (Medford)	57,156		
Portland, OR	503,891		
Salem-Keizer, OR	126,702		
Spokane, WA	184,058		
Yakima, WA	64,967		
LARGEST: Portland	**503,891**		
SMALLEST: Medford	**57,156**		
Geography: ID, OR, WA	***163,886***	***AVG***	
	127,471	***MEDIAN***	

APPENDIX C-6

City/MSA Population sorted by League:
The Rookie Advanced League Leagues.

CITY POPULATION BY LEAGUE	1998 CITY	1996 MSA	Year of Stadium
Rookie Advanced			
Appalachian League (10)			
Bluefield, WV	12,047		
Bristol, VA	17,486		
Burlington, NC	40,531		
Danville, VA	50,868		
Elizabethton, TN	13,211		
Johnson City, TN	57,079		
Kingsport, TN	41,139		
Martinsville, VA	15,668		
Princeton, WV	6,741		
Pulaski, VA	9,566		
LARGEST: Johnson City	**57,079**		
SMALLEST: Princeton	**6,741**		
Geography: NC, TN, VA, WV	***26,434***	***AVG***	
	16,577	***MEDIAN***	
Pioneer League (8)			
Billings, MT	91,750		
Butte, MT	33,994		
Great Falls, MT	56,395		
Helena, MT	28,306		
Idaho Falls, ID	48,122		
Medicine Hat, ALB	46,783		
Missoula, MT	52,239		
Ogden, UT	66,507		
LARGEST: Billings	**91,750**		
SMALLEST: Helena	**28,306**		
Geography: AB, ID, MT, UT	***53,012***	***AVG***	
	50,181	***MEDIAN***	
MSA Populations (1996): MA-96-5 Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan Areas:			
Annual Time Series, July 1, 1991 to July 1, 1996, http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/ma96-05.txt.			
City/Place Populations (1998): Annual Time Series of Population Estimates, 1991 to 1998, and 1990 Census Population			
For Places, http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/cityplace.html.			
CANDAIAN SOURCE: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population, 14 May 1996,			
http://ww2.statcan.ca/english/profil/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm.			

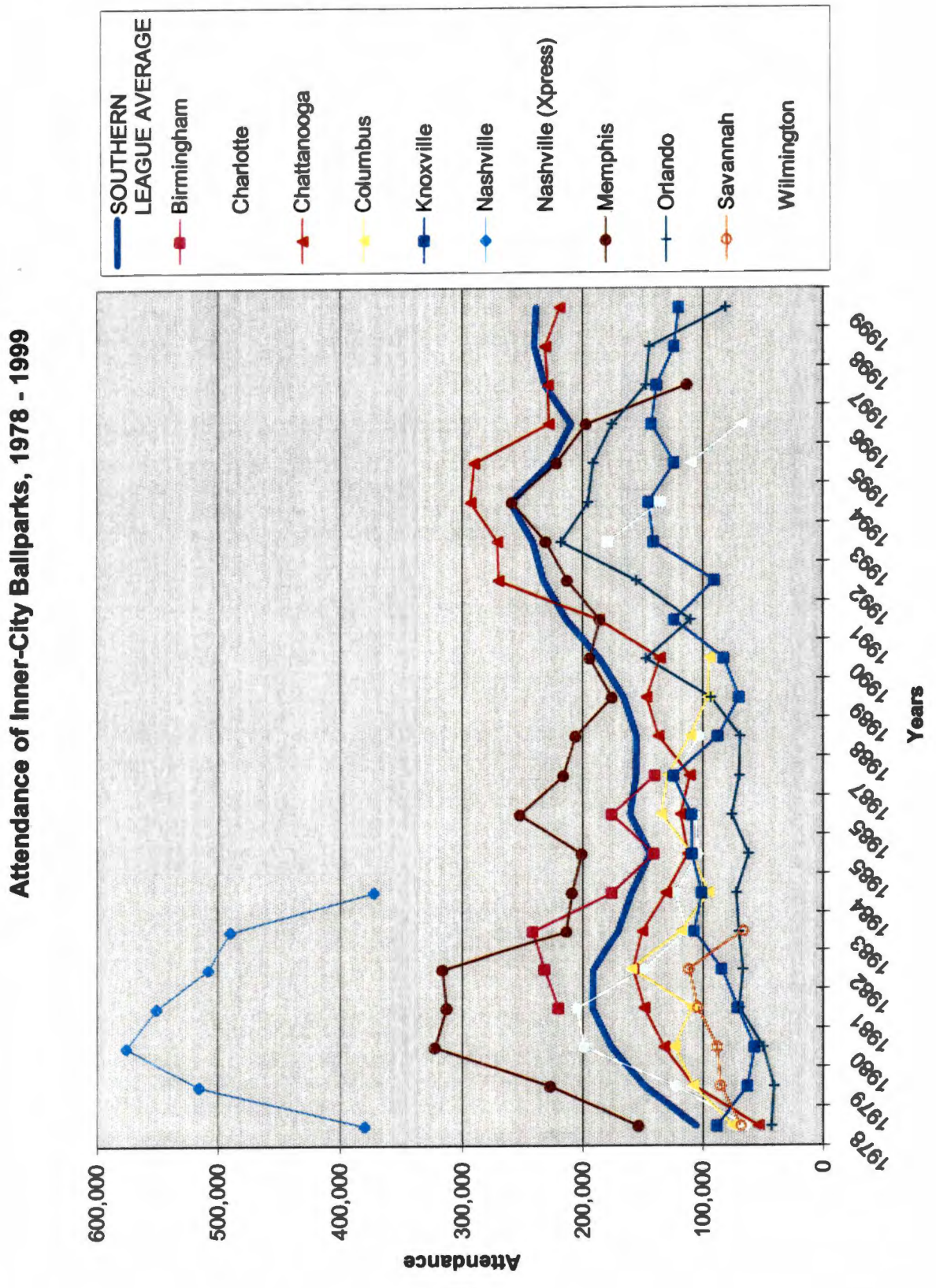
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D-1. Attendance of Inner-City Ballparks, 1978 – 1999. 157

D-2. Attendance of Freeway Ballparks, 1978 – 1999. 158

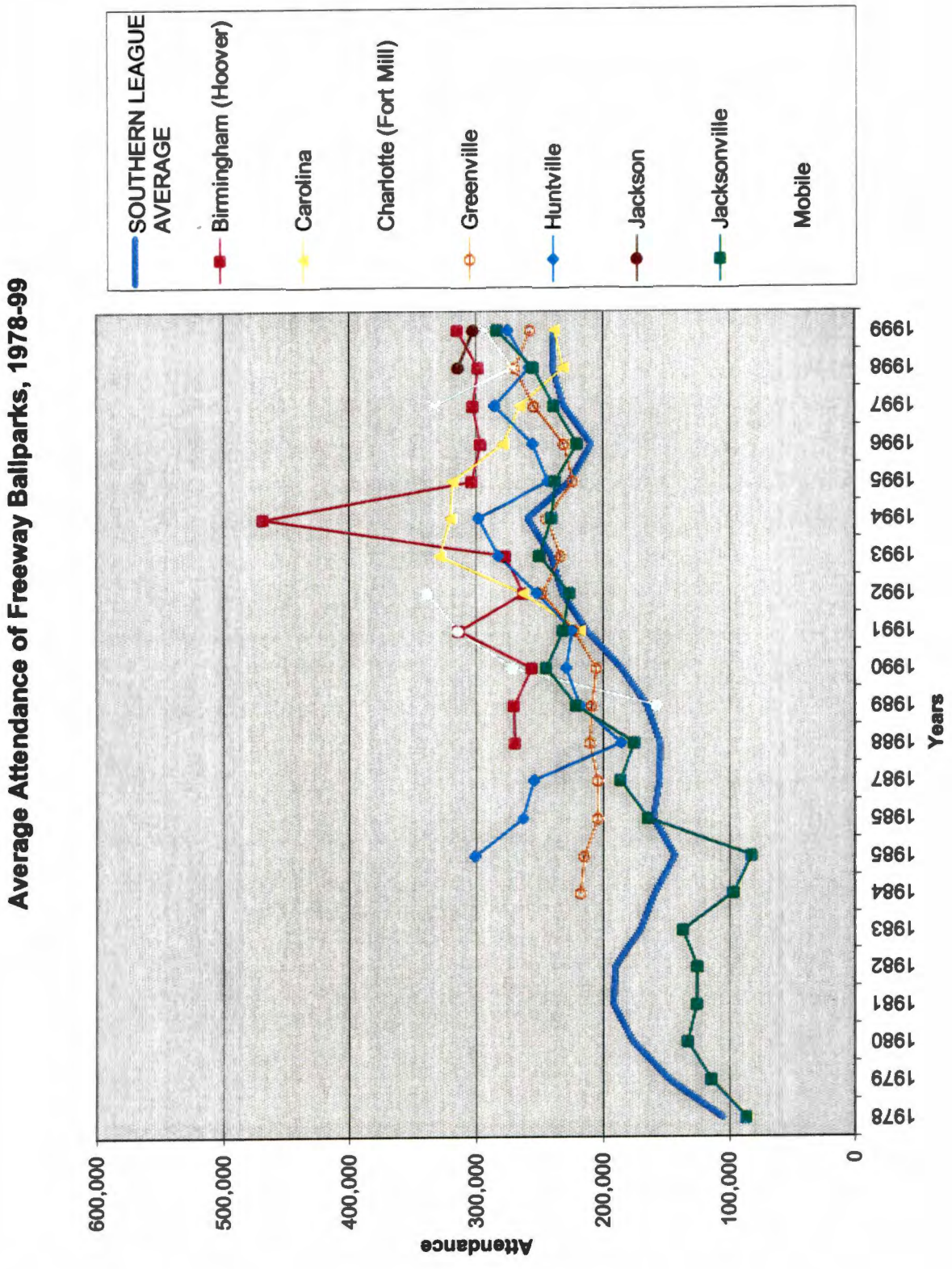
APPENDIX D-1

Attendance of Inner-City Ballparks, 1978- 1999.



APPENDIX D-2

Attendance of Freeway Ballparks, 1978 - 1999.



VITA

Brian Davis DiBartolo was born in Englewood, New Jersey on 6 July 1970. He became quite enamored with baseball after seeing Yankee Stadium for the first time in 1976 with his father. He left his hometown of Hillsdale, New Jersey, after graduating from Pascack Valley High School in June of 1989.

He attended James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia and worked as a cartographer at Earth Satellite Corporation in Rockville, Maryland during the summer of 1992. In May of 1993, he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Geography and History with specialties in Cartography and the American South, respectively. He entered the graduate program in Geography at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in August 1993 and received his Master of Science degree in December 1999.

During his time at Tennessee, he has worked as a cartographer in the University's Cartography Laboratory and as a GIS Technician for the Tennessee Valley Authority, in Norris, Tennessee. He worked for the Class-AA Knoxville Smokies Baseball Club during 1995 where he gained valuable insights into minor league baseball.

His love for baseball can only be comparable to his love for travel. He has taken a cross-country motorcycle excursion with stops in Nevada, Utah and New Mexico highlighting the trip. His travels have also landed him in Sicily, mainland Italy, Korea and Vietnam. His experience in Vietnam assisted his professional growth as it has assisted him in thinking more globally and generally broadened his perspectives of people and culture. His experience in rural and urban Vietnam has assisted the Geography Department's World Geography Courses in which he occasionally lectures.