

*“Should you go first and I remain  
For battles to be fought,  
Each thing you’ve touched along the way  
Will be a hallowed spot.”*

— Excerpt from the poem “Should You Go First” by A.K. “Rosy” Rowswell,  
beloved Pirate radio broadcaster

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An undated game at Exposition Park.





# The First World Series & Its Pittsburgh Connections

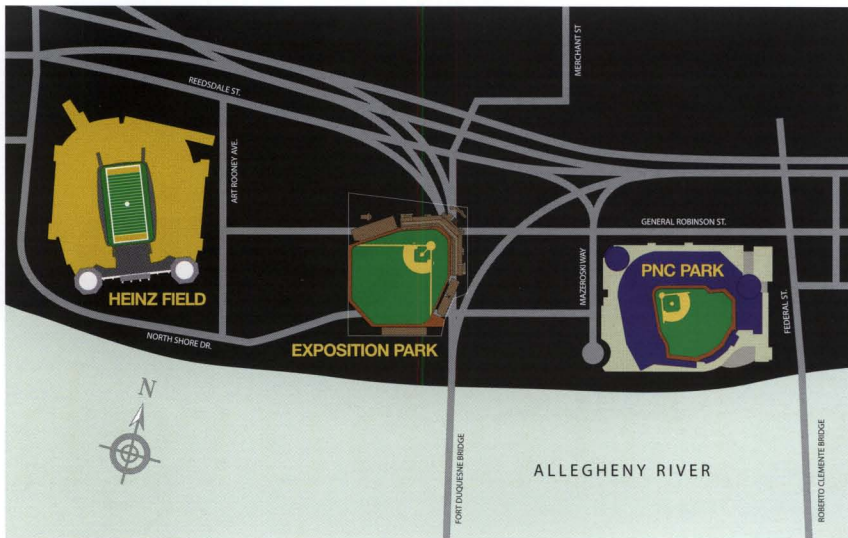
By Dan Bonk and Len Martin

**T**his year marks the 100th anniversary of the first World Series, an event that annually pits the champion of the American League against the champion of the National League to determine which team can claim the “World Champions” title. Major League Baseball marked the event in early June with games between the Pittsburgh Pirates and Boston Red Sox, bringing together the original two participants in a regular-season game for the first time since October 1903.

The history of the World Series has been chronicled innumerable times in books, videos, newspapers, and magazine monographs. Three new books devoted to the first World Series alone were published in 2003. Essays could be found in newspapers and periodicals from coast-to-coast. But perhaps because Boston beat Pittsburgh in the series, and perhaps because Boston is a significantly larger market than Pittsburgh, the information seems a little short on the Pittsburgh aspect of the story.

Pittsburgh lost the first World Series – a best of nine-game format – five games to three. Games 4, 5, 6, and 7 were played at Exposition Park in Allegheny City, now Pittsburgh’s North Side, on October 6, 7, 8, and 10. The Pirates had a superb team in 1903 led by powerful shortstop Honus Wagner. Unfortunately for Pittsburgh, Wagner had a sub-par series. His performance, coupled with a pitching staff depleted by late-season injuries and maladies, contributed to the team’s failure.

Boston was led by baseball’s all-time greatest pitcher, Cy Young, and a pitching mate by the name of Bill Dinneen. Young was 36 years old at the time, but little more than halfway



Graphic by Len Martin

Exposition Park was located between Pittsburgh's current sports stadiums.

Exposition Park, built in 1890 across from Pittsburgh's Point, was the scene of baseball's first World Series in 1903.



Len Martin

through his legendary career. In fact, Young won a league-leading 28 games in 1903, one of those his 300th career victory. By the time he finished pitching in 1911, he accumulated another 211 wins for a total of 511, leaving his name on one of those rare records that is likely never to be broken. Boston also had rabid fans, a special group of them known as "The Royal Rooters," who provided strong support in Boston as well as on the road in Pittsburgh. The combination of superior team play and vocal fans were big factors in Boston's success.

## POST-SEASON MATCHES

The first World Series was not a particularly unique event in 1903. Professional baseball in America has always been a "for-profit" endeavor where the business model is based on covering expenses and achieving a reasonable rate of return on investment during regular season play, then padding profits by playing post-season tournaments. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, various teams would match up after the regular season and play a variety of so-called championship exhibitions. These challenge matches would run into mid-October, which was about as late as fair weather could be expected to hold up in the northeast. Match-ups were scheduled in a number of ways: between teams within one's league or from different leagues, first place teams would be pitted against other first- or second-place teams, or teams from nearby cities would play each other regardless of season records. The rule-of-thumb was that games would be

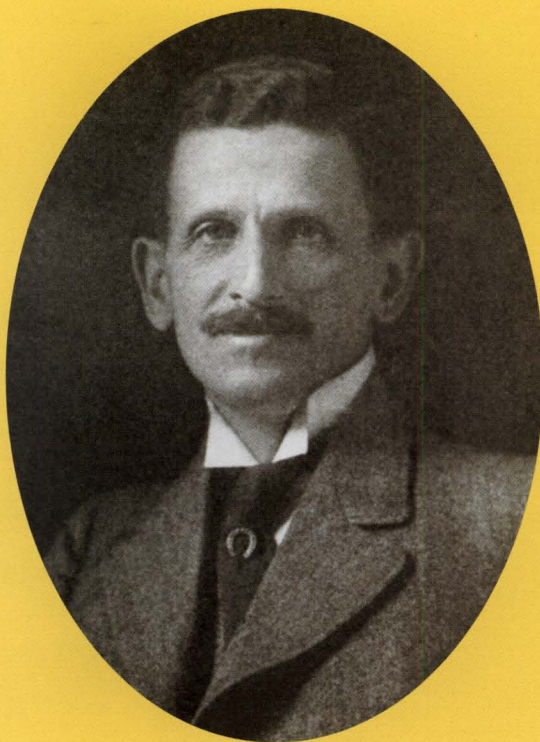




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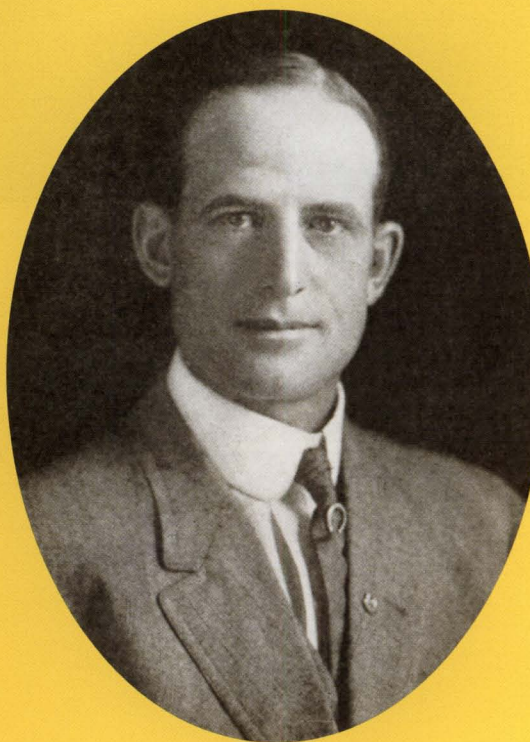
**A flooded outfield was a regular obstacle for ball players at Exposition Park. The Pirates moved to Forbes Field in 1909, but Exposition continued to serve other teams. Here, it's been inundated by flood waters on March 29, 1913.**





HSWP Library & Archives, MSS 242, box 1

Pirates president Barney Dreyfuss (top) and team manager Frederick C. Clarke (bottom), from *Line Drives at the Pittsburg Pirates*, 1910.



HSWP Library & Archives, MSS 242, box 1

played if an audience could be enticed to attend. Most often these were multi-game series that allowed for several games to be played in each competing city. These post-season tournaments went by names such as Regional Championship, World Championship, Challenge Cup Series, and even World Series. As such, the term World Series was by no means a new one when used to describe the games between Pittsburgh and Boston in October 1903.

The World Series of 1903, although a financial success, is more significant for what it spawned than what it actually was. As an event, it was closely followed, supported, and enjoyed by sports fans and media in Pittsburgh and Boston, but to the rest of the country it was not much more than just another post-season series between a couple of top-flight teams. Sports fans in America were used to such series and had no particular reason to feel this one was any different than others that had been taking place for many years. No one in the media was predicting that the series was the beginning of something bigger. In fact, the series wasn't even played the following year. In 1904, the National League champion New York Giants refused to play American League champion Boston in a dispute mostly over territorial marketing rights. The American League had established a franchise in 1903 in New York – to the chagrin of New York Giants owner John Brush – that evolved into today's New York Yankees. In spite of the wishes of many National League owners that it fail, the



American League quickly found its niche and proved stable within its first few years.

Once combined, the American and National leagues dominated the major sports markets in America. In effect, they relegated all other leagues throughout the country to minor status. Under pressure from fans and media, the World Series returned in 1905 under the now-familiar best-of-seven format. With the best players and best teams firmly in the fold – and with a little help later from the courts and Congress – Major League Baseball as defined by the American and National Leagues has been able to play an annual championship and generate revenues beyond the wildest dreams of its founders.

### ENTER BARNEY DREYFUSS

Barney Dreyfuss immigrated to this country in 1882 at age 17 to escape conscription in the Prussian military. Of German-Jewish ancestry, he became a naturalized American. He worked as a bookkeeper in a whiskey distillery owned by his cousins in Pudacah, Ky. Hard working and entrepreneurial, Dreyfuss also married well and used his resources to enter the baseball business. He became president of the Louisville Colonels franchise of the National League, but, after the 1899 season, the National League chose to terminate several poor-performing franchises, one of them the Colonels. Dreyfuss worked out a deal with the Pittsburgh Baseball Club that

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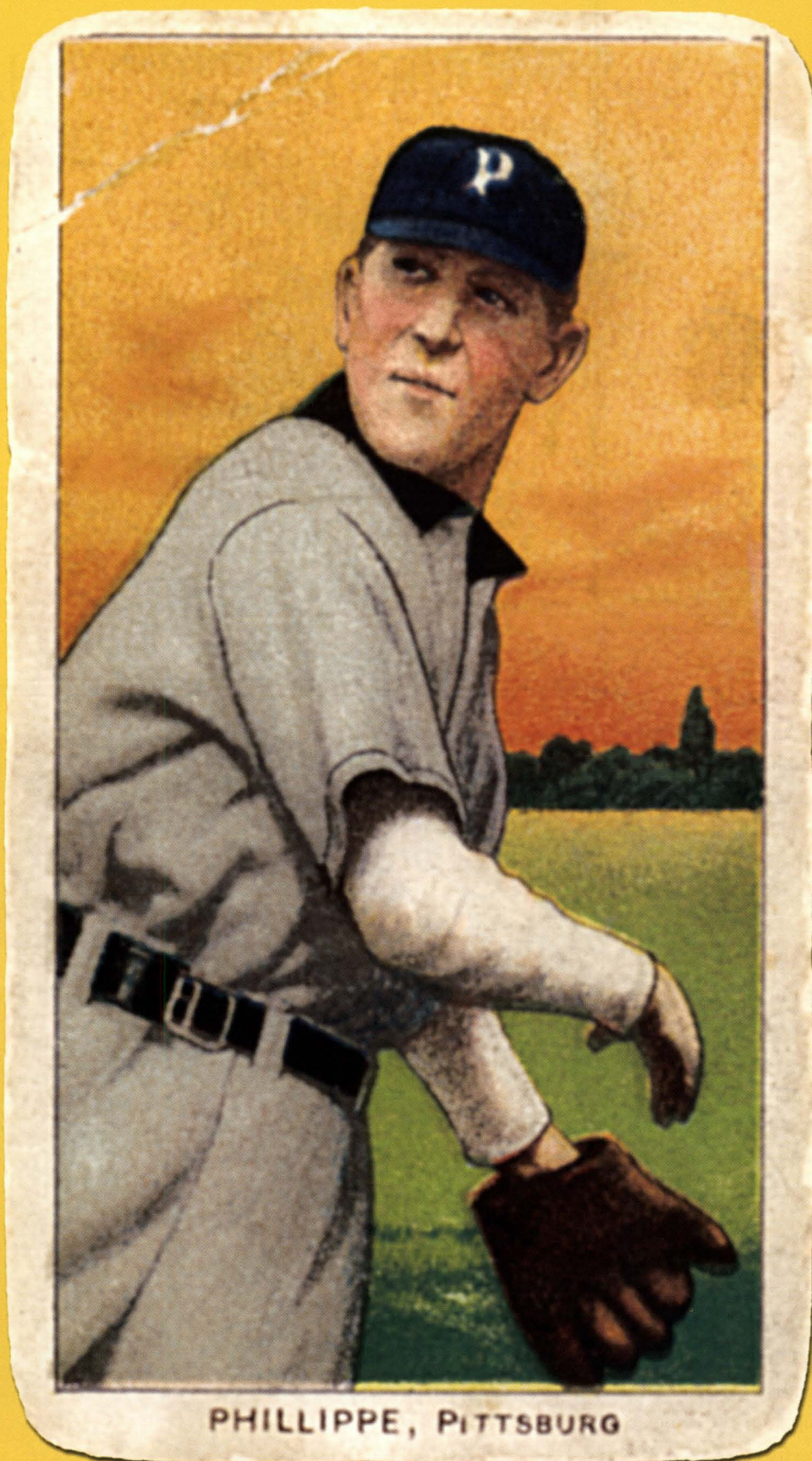
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The Pirates had high hopes for Deacon Phillippe in the 1903 series.



allowed him to purchase a half interest in the team for cash and the promise that he could deliver the contracts of the best Louisville players.

The Pittsburgh Baseball Club (PBC) had never finished in first place; in fact, since 1882, when the Kansas City franchise of the National League folded and was transferred to Pittsburgh, the team typically ended close to the bottom of the standings. That changed with the arrival of Dreyfuss; the losers became perennial winners. With standout Louisville transfers like future Hall of Famers Honus Wagner and Fred Clarke, up-and-comers like third baseman Tommy Leach, and right-hand pitching ace Deacon Phillippe, the Pittsburgh franchise was poised for an era of unprecedented success.

In 1900, Dreyfuss's first season in Pittsburgh, the team finished second to Brooklyn. That success provided an opportunity for the long-suffering partners of the franchise to sell out their remaining interest to Dreyfuss, and by the start of the 1901 season, he was the majority stockholder. With Dreyfuss calling the shots, the team won league championships for the next three years: 1901, 1902, and 1903.

It's worth noting that even by 1903, the Pittsburgh franchise had yet to officially accept the name "Pirates." The team had unofficially been the Pirates since the 1891 season, when journeyman second baseman Louis Bierbauer was signed off the roster of a team from another league. The story is somewhat complicated, but suffice to say the other team's owner wasn't happy with the signing and called it "an act of piracy." Interestingly, in 1890, the team called itself the Innocents, though locals referred to them as the Alleghenies because they played in Allegheny City, or the Nationals because they played in the National League. As a business, the team was formally known as the Pittsburgh Baseball Club; their uniforms were typically emblazoned with "PBC" and their hats with a "P." In time, more and more people as well as the media were referring to the team as the Pirates or sometimes as the Corsairs, which is a term for real pirates of the Barbary Coast. It wasn't until 1910 that the team wore the name Pirates on their jerseys.

## **CEMENTING PEACE WITH THE AMERICAN LEAGUE**

Ironically and not coincidentally, Barney Dreyfuss's success in Pittsburgh corresponded with the formation of the American League in 1901. The American League was established to challenge the National League with a brand of baseball designed to be less rowdy and more civilized. The thinking was that a league so conceived would be attractive to a more upscale and well-heeled clientele. It would be a league where women would be comfortable attending games in the company of their husbands, fathers, and boyfriends – all for the betterment of team profits. The American League was the brainchild of its president,



Ban Johnson, whose views and philosophies were not unlike some that Barney Dreyfuss embraced and had been preaching to other National League owners. The rival league quickly established franchises in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, St. Louis, and others, and began luring National League players with better-paying contracts. The American League put out feelers to local investors in Pittsburgh who might be interested in establishing a franchise in the Smokey City. Rumors abounded in the local papers as to if and when the American League would come to town. One story had William W. "Captain" Kerr, one of the PBC partners who had sold out to Dreyfuss, being courted by Ban Johnson to start a new American League franchise in Pittsburgh. In a 1949 news story, Kerr's son recalled that Christopher Lyman Magee Jr. had even offered to "build a beautiful ball park on the Magee estate" to help Kerr swing the deal. (Magee, waning political "boss" of Pittsburgh who would die in March 1901, may have been friends with Kerr's father, William W. Kerr, Sr., mayor of Pittsburgh 1846-47.) But the deal never solidified and a decade later, the Magee home became the Elizabeth Steele Magee Hospital for Women. With Dreyfuss sympathetic to how the American League wanted to run things, Ban Johnson decided to at least temporarily bypass Pittsburgh and established a franchise in Detroit in 1901.

His territory secure for the time being, Barney Dreyfuss paid his players well (relative to other National League teams) to keep them from being enticed to jump to American League teams. The strategy generally worked as Dreyfuss's Pittsburgh teams dominated the National League for several years. Still, Dreyfuss was nervous that the American League would eventually come to Pittsburgh and split his customer base. His success tenuous, Dreyfuss became a major supporter of a peace deal brokered between the American and National leagues in the winter of 1902-03.

Called the "Cincinnati Agreement" for the city where negotiations took place, the deal put a halt to the practice of signing players out from under each league and stopped the establishment of new franchises in cities already occupied by a team from either league. Still, there was much animosity between the principals, and Dreyfuss felt the peace was fragile. Pittsburgh, which according to the 1900 U.S. Census was the 10th largest city in America and certainly capable of supporting two major league teams, was left with only one, and Dreyfuss wanted desperately to keep it that way. With his team poised to repeat as National League champions for the third year in a row in 1903, he boldly proposed to his Boston counterpart, attorney Henry Killilea, to play a postseason "World Series" to determine the champion of Major League Baseball.





The 1902-03 Champions from *Forbes Field 60th Birthday Pittsburgh Pirates Picture Album, 1969*. Front row: Burke, Conroy, Leach, Ritchey, McLaughlin; middle row: Chesbro, Bransfield, Clarke, Dreyfuss, Wagner, Beaumont, Smith; back row: Zimmer, Sebring, Phillippe, Merritt, Leever, Phelps.

Laurie Schulte



*Some writers have referred to him as the “Father of the Modern World Series,” but his lasting impact on Pittsburgh can be traced to his relentless desire to field winners. If there is such a thing as a Pittsburgh fire of intolerance for losing, that fire was first fanned by Barney Dreyfuss.*

Some of his fellow National League owners were appalled by Dreyfuss's offer to Boston's Killilea, especially those who competed with American League franchises in their own towns. Content with the cost savings brought about by the Cincinnati Agreement, few wanted to also give the rival league a stage to compete with their more established circuit. Worse was the fear that a championship series between the two leagues' best teams would provide the American League an opportunity to gain a parity and credibility that, until then, had been reasonably doubted by the media and general sporting public. But as far as Barney Dreyfuss was concerned, anything that solidified the peace established by the Cincinnati Agreement was good for his Pittsburgh franchise. Dreyfuss was extremely competitive, the kind of guy who hated to lose, but in this case he figured that, win or lose, the interests of his franchise would be well-served.

### THE SURVIVING CONNECTIONS

One has to dig a little to locate remnants of the first World Series of 1903. Attendance records were set both in Boston and Pittsburgh and, as such, game tickets and programs have survived the century and can often be found at collectibles shows. The games were covered by newspapers in Boston and Pittsburgh, and those accounts are available in local public libraries. Anything more substantial than these minor items requires some imagination.

Barney Dreyfuss is arguably the most under-appreciated figure in Pittsburgh sports history. Some writers have referred to him as the “Father of the Modern World Series,” but his lasting impact on Pittsburgh can be traced to his relentless desire to field winners. If there is such a thing as a Pittsburgh fire of intolerance for losing, that fire was first fanned by Barney Dreyfuss. Having experienced the success of the first World Series, he became one of its most strident advocates. His teams would play in three more World Series, winning in 1909 and 1925, but not in 1927. His four World Series visits and six National League pennants make him by far the most successful owner in Pirate history.

In 1908, Dreyfuss initiated efforts to build Forbes Field, the largest and most luxurious ballpark of its era. The site, at the entrance to Schenley Park in the cultural and educational heart of Pittsburgh, was recognized as being rivaled perhaps only by the site of Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, a ballpark completed some 50 years later. Forbes Field was such a success that it arguably hindered its successor, Three Rivers Stadium, from ever being accepted by the baseball fans of Pittsburgh.



Barney Dreyfuss died of pneumonia at age 67 in February 1932. For years, he had lived in an apartment attached to the Schenley Hotel in Oakland to be close to his beloved Forbes Field. The apartment building is now part of the Schenley quadrangle, which serves as dormitories for students attending the University of Pittsburgh. Upon his death, he was eulogized by local and national media as “The Last of the Baseball Squires” and the “Dean of the Major Leagues.” Some believe that Barney lost his zest for life a year before his death when his 36-year old son Sam passed away suddenly. Barney had groomed Sam to take over the family business and his death left him feeling empty. The grief-stricken Barney had a tombstone-like monument fitted with a round bronze marker to commemorate his son which he placed in deep right center field at Forbes Field. That monument now resides on the first level main concourse at PNC Park at the top of the escalators in the Home Plate Rotunda. It is the only remnant from inside Forbes Field (other than some of the finest ballpark ushers in baseball) that transferred over to PNC Park. Barney Dreyfuss was posthumously inducted into the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame at its second annual induction ceremony held in Los Angeles in 1980. He is buried in West View, north of Pittsburgh.

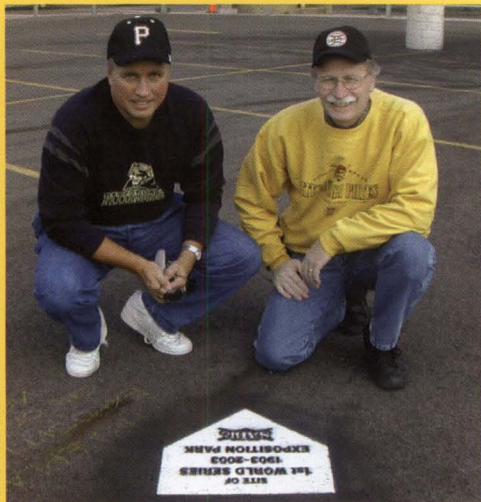
Honus Wagner made up for his sub-par performance in the 1903 World Series with a dominating performance against the Detroit Tigers and Ty Cobb in 1909. Wagner, a native of Mansfield, Pa. (now Carnegie), was ubiquitous in the local sports scene. He started a sporting goods business in downtown Pittsburgh that carries his name to this day. In spring 1955, Wagner was present at the dedication of his statue in Oakland near Forbes Field. His Hall of Fame and 1903 World Series teammate Fred Clarke was on hand for the ceremony as was his Hall of Fame 1903 World Series opponent Cy Young. Wagner died later that year on December 6, 1955 and was laid to rest at Jefferson Memorial Cemetery, south of Pittsburgh. (Cy Young preceded him in death by 32 days.) His statue now stands in front of the main entrance to PNC Park.

The last surviving players from the 1903 World Series were Pittsburgh starting third baseman Tommy Leach and Boston starting shortstop Freddy Parent. Leach died at age 91 in 1969. Parent lived to 97, passing away in 1972. Late in their lives, the two ballplayers appeared on the popular 1960s TV game show *I’ve Got A Secret*. Their secret – they played in the first World Series.

## THE PARKS

In Boston, games 1, 2, 3, and 8 were played in an old wooden ballpark called Huntington Avenue Grounds. Its team was called the Americans or sometimes the Pilgrims. Henry





Both by the authors

On October 13, 2002, local baseball history enthusiasts located the site of Exposition Park's home plate in the Gold Lot between PNC Park and Heinz Field. Top, from left: Len Martin, Mike Smith, Dennis DeValeria, Ed Luteran, Denis Repp, and Dan Bonk. Below, authors Bonk and Martin.

Killilea, an absentee owner who lived in Milwaukee rather than Boston, sold the team at the end of the highly profitable 1903 season to John I. Taylor. Taylor changed the team name to the now familiar Red Sox in 1907. In 1911, he broke ground on a new ballpark to raise the team's value prior to selling out his interests, and before Fenway Park was complete, Taylor sold the team. When Fenway opened in 1912, Huntington Avenue Grounds was demolished. In the 1950s, the land was acquired by Northeastern University; in the heart of that campus, where the pitcher's mound once was located, stands a statue of Cy Young, baseball in hand, peering in for a sign from his catcher.

Pittsburgh's Exposition Park never hosted another World Series. Built in 1890 to serve as home for the Brotherhood League – a one-year unsuccessful attempt by major league ballplayers to compete against the National League – Exposition Park remained active into the 1920s. When the Pirates entered the 1909 World Series, they had just abandoned the old wooden ballpark for the concrete and steel jewel of Schenley Park: Forbes Field.

From 1912 through 1915, Exposition served as home for the United States League and the Federal League, the last two serious rivals of the American and National leagues. Local high school teams continued to play baseball and football there, as did many local semi-pro and sandlot baseball teams. The Pitt Panther varsity and freshman football teams played there rather than at Forbes Field when their schedules conflicted with the Pirates. In 1925,



the University of Pittsburgh opened Pitt Stadium and old Exposition Park faded into memory. The site reverted back to its prior use: a railroad yard. It remained that way until redeveloped as the site of Three Rivers Stadium.

On Sunday, October 13, 2002 – coincidentally the 42nd anniversary of Bill Mazeroski's 1960 World Series-ending home run – a handful of local baseball enthusiasts set out to locate the position of the infield at Exposition Park. Comparing old and new maps, the group conducted an engineer's survey and determined the location of the old ballpark to be roughly half way between PNC Park and Heinz Field in what is now an asphalt-covered parking lot. They used white paint to mark the location of home plate, the bases, and the pitcher's mound so that others might enjoy a moment in thought about a hallowed spot touched by yesterday's heroes. ☼

**Dan Bonk is a historian of the evolution, design, finance, and construction of America's major sports venues. A professional engineer, he is an authority on Forbes Field and the other local ballparks and stadiums used by college and professional teams.**

**Len Martin is the author of *Forbes Field: Build-It Yourself* and *Fenway Park: Build-It-Yourself*. He is owner of Point Four, Ltd., a graphics design firm and advertising agency, and Point Four Sports, a publishing and novelty development company with a focus on baseball and ballparks. [www.pointfourltd.com](http://www.pointfourltd.com)**

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The newspapers of the day in both cities followed the series. The authors also have interviewed or communicated with hundreds of people regarding Exposition Park. Some sources helpful to future researchers include:

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