

The Super Bowl Bugle

San Francisco Bay Area

31 January 2016

*How Stadiums Grow Up To Be
Super Bowls*

Kezar Stadium, built in 1925 with 59,000 seats in a corner of Golden Gate Park, was downsized to 10,000 seats after the San Francisco 49ers, the city's first major professional sports team, moved to Candlestick Park (page 3) in 1971. Without the 49ers, who joined the National Football League in 1950, Sunday's Super Bowl would not be played in Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, which these newsletters will be following this week.



Kezar Stadium in its original configuration, above left. On the right, quarterback Johnny Unitas, 19, of the Baltimore Colts throws a pass in a game (probably in the 1960s) against the 49ers.

Kezar Stadium

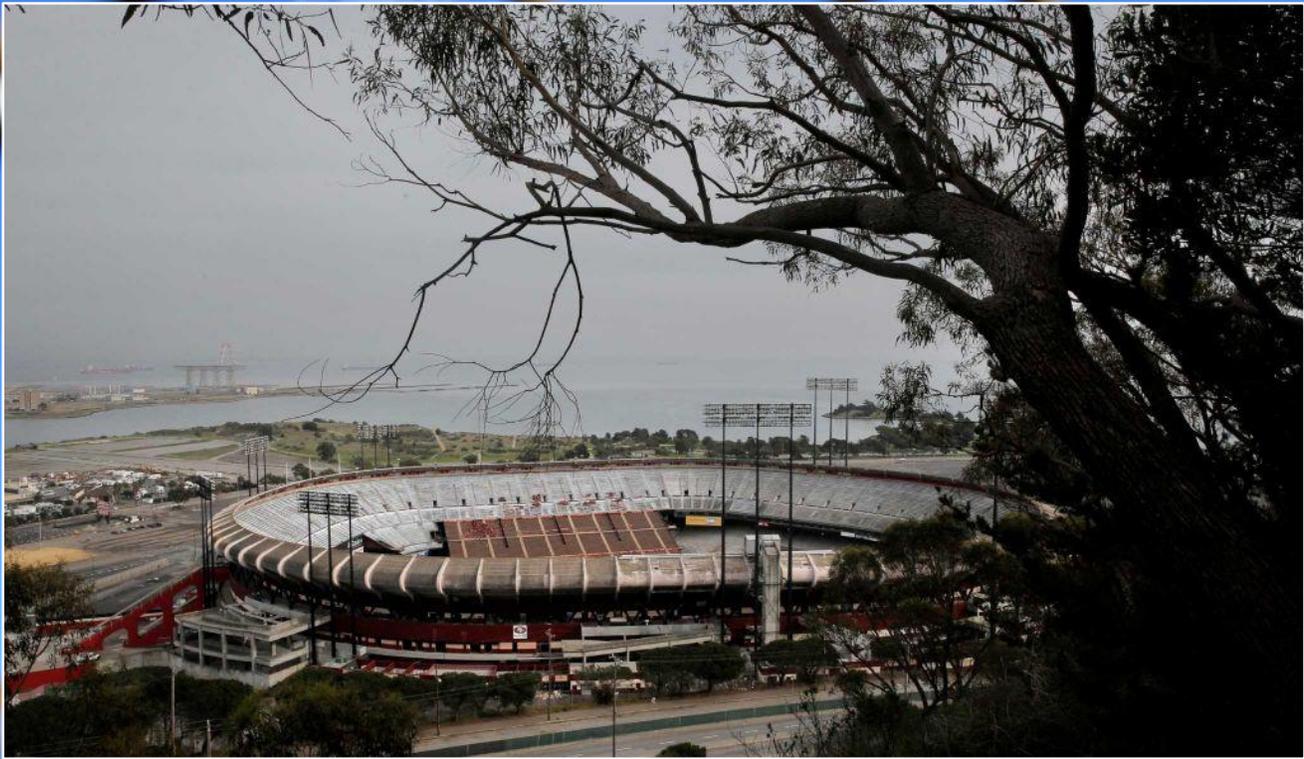
The eight team All-American Football Conference was founded in 1946 to compete against the established 10-team National Football League. It's westernmost team, the San Francisco 49ers, played here in Kezar Stadium.

The AAFC folded after four seasons, but the NFL absorbed its three most successful teams: the 49ers, Cleveland Browns and Baltimore Colts. All three played in the NFL's western conference.

Fans in the racially segregated southeast in the 1950s and '60s – like me – were forced to watch the damned Washington Redskins under the league's TV contract with CBS. Washington held out against black players until 1962 to keep its Southern audience loyal.

Occasionally, however, there would be a second CBS Sunday game from the West Coast, which could be scheduled because of the three-hour time difference. That's how I got to see my team, the Baltimore Colts, play in the Kezar Stadium you see in the inset pictures.

The 49ers last game here was Jan. 3, 1971, when they lost the NFL Championship Game 17-10 to the Dallas Cowboys. Located in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, concerts included Led Zeppelin, Jefferson Starship, Joan Baez, the Grateful Dead and Santana. Today the stadium hosts high school football, soccer, lacrosse and track. The individual chair seats just above the word "conference" in the story at left were moved from Candlestick Park after its demolition.



Candlestick Park, which takes its name from Candlestick Point in San Francisco Bay on which it's located, just after demolition began a year ago. The vantage point for the full-page view of this scene is on the street at the bottom edge of the inset view.

Candlestick Park

Candlestick Park opened in 1960 as a place for Juan Marichal to throw fastballs and Orlando Cepeda, Willie McCovey and Willie Mays to hit home runs for the San Francisco Giants. For the 49ers' arrival in 1971, it was expanded from 44,000 to 70,000 seats.

The 49ers weren't very good until the 1981 season when they won the NFC Championship over the Dallas Cowboys on a catch by Dwight Clark, who played at Garinger High School in Charlotte, home of the Carolina Panthers who will play in this year's Super Bowl. That team won the first of the 49ers' five Super Bowl victories.

No Super Bowls were played at Candlestick although the 1996 game was scheduled there and then moved to Miami when renovations were canceled. The Bay Area's only previous time to host a Super Bowl was at Stanford Stadium (next page) in 1984 when the 49ers won for a second time.

The Giants moved to their new park, now called AT&T Park, in downtown San Francisco in 2000. The 49ers stayed through their 2013 season before moving to Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara (last page).

The 49ers hosted eight NFC Championship games at the 'Stick. The Giants played two World Series there including the 1989 series against the Oakland A's that was interrupted by the Loma Prieta Earthquake. I was sitting in the overflow press box in the upper deck behind home plate when the earthquake hit. The park also hosted the Beatles' last concert in 1969 and a mass celebrated by Pope Paul II in 2013.

Stanford Stadium

Only two NFL games were played at Stanford University's stadium, both in the old 89,000 seat bowl pictured at the top of this page.

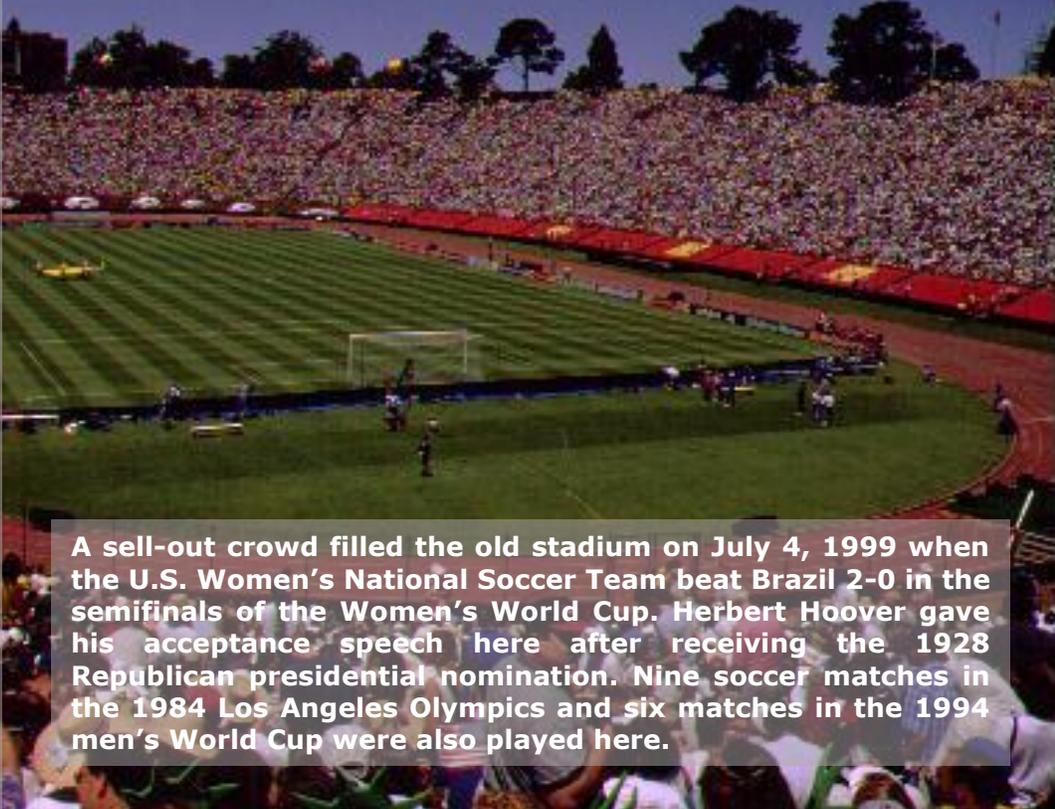
The 49ers beat the Miami Dolphins 38-16 in the 1985 Super Bowl, the only Super Bowl so far in which the host team played or won.

In 1989 the 49ers played a regular season game here against the New England Patriots while Candlestick Park was repaired following damage from the Loma Prieta Earthquake.

Originally built in 1921, Stanford played its last game in the old stadium on Nov. 26, 2005, a 38-31 loss to Notre Dame. Demolition began the next day, and then construction proceeded 24/7 on a new rectangular, double-decked 50,400-seat stadium in the same spot.

The new stadium's first game was a 37-9 Stanford loss to Navy on Sept. 16, 2006 only 40 weeks after the old stadium was closed.

Former Stanford quarterback John Elway was Denver's quarterback for both its Super Bowl victories and he is now the Broncos' executive vice president and general manager.



A sell-out crowd filled the old stadium on July 4, 1999 when the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team beat Brazil 2-0 in the semifinals of the Women's World Cup. Herbert Hoover gave his acceptance speech here after receiving the 1928 Republican presidential nomination. Nine soccer matches in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and six matches in the 1994 men's World Cup were also played here.



It's too early for the new stadium to have much of a varied history, but it's been good for Stanford football. The Cardinal has won three Pacific-12 Conference championships and gone to bowl games in seven of the nine seasons it's played here including three Rose Bowls.



The machine used to install new stadium turf.

Levi's Stadium

In contrast to Stanford's good luck in its new stadium, the 49ers have struggled in their new home in Santa Clara, going 13-19 in two seasons since leaving Candlestick Park and finishing next-to-last and last in the NFC Western Division.

But part of what they won by spending \$2 billion on new digs was the right to host a Super Bowl, which will happen Sunday.

The stadium has all 165 luxury suites stacked on one sideline, a museum, an art collection and a steak house where you can spend \$34 an ounce for a Japanese Wagyu steak.

Levi Strauss & Co., the San Francisco company that invented copper-riveted denim pants in the 1870s that became the world's most popular clothing item – jeans – paid \$220 million for the stadium's naming rights over its first 11 years.

I was in Levi's Stadium a few days ago to write about the installation of the third sod field this season, this one specifically for the Super Bowl. This is a picture of a strip of the new sod, which comes in rolls about three inches thick and is laid on a packed, leveled base of sand.