

The Giants Gazette

Fourth of July 2011

San Francisco, California



AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants with a right-field wall built for Barry Bonds.

The house Barry built

The park where we spent the Fourth of July has the most wonderful and notorious right field wall in baseball.

It is form-follows-function architecture in service of human achievement and business greed that honors the oldest traditions of the game.

The 1923 Yankee Stadium – the House

that Ruth Built – had nothing on today's modern AT&T Park in San Francisco.

Why?

As Deep Throat told Bob Woodward during the Watergate investigation, "Follow the money."

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The house Barry built

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When the Boston Red Sox sold Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees in 1919, it was because they owned the best player in baseball but refused Ruth's demand that they double his \$10,000 salary.

No team could afford to give up the players it would take to get Ruth in a trade, but the Yankees could afford to buy him for \$125,000 in cash, three \$25,000 loans to the Red Sox payable at 6 percent a year, and a personal loan to Sox owner Harry Frazee for \$300,000 with Boston's Fenway Park as collateral.

The Yankees, who shared the Polo Grounds with the New York Giants, immediately commenced construction of their own park across the Harlem River from the Giants' stadium designed especially for their newly acquired left-handed power hitter. The right-field fence in Yankee Stadium was only 295 feet down the line, closer than many high school fields.

Ruth hit the first home run in Yankee Stadium to beat Boston and led the Major Leagues that year with 41 homers. Before his Yankees career was over, Ruth raised



A walk in another kind of park.

the single-season home run record to 60 and retired with a career-record 714 homers.

Most important, though, was that Ruth's gate appeal restored professional baseball's financial health after the 1919 Black Sox Scandal in which Shoeless Joe Jackson and seven Chicago teammates

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The house Barry built

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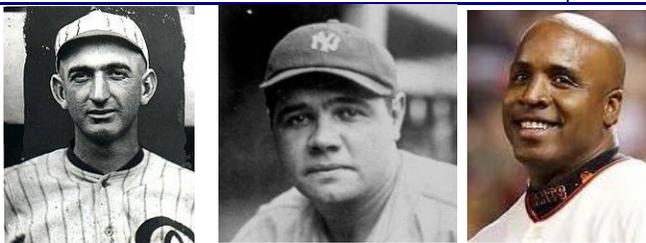
were banned from baseball for taking gamblers' money to throw the World Series.

Baseball had returned to the financial doldrums by the early 1990s when Barry Bonds was leading the Pittsburgh Pirates to consecutive National League-East titles. The Pirates couldn't afford to keep baseball's best player, however, and Bonds signed a six-year free agent deal with the now-San Francisco Giants for \$43.75 million in 1993.

But the Giants were not financially strong either, playing in cold, windy and gray Candlestick Park where fans had to be bribed with award pins known as the "Croix de Candlestick" to stay through the end of extra-inning night games. San Jose and St. Petersburg, Fla., tried to lure the team and San Francisco voters rejected a ballot measure to build the Giants a new park.

So the Giants did what their former arch-rival Yankees did. They undertook the first ballpark project in nearly 40 years in which the team, rather than taxpayers, paid the

<i>Splash hits in AT&T Park</i>	
Splash hits are home runs (by Giants only) over the right field wall and into San Francisco Bay	
Hitter	Number
Barry Bonds	35
Pablo Sandoval	5
Felipe Crespo	2
Michael Tucker	2
Ryan Klesko	2
Andres Torres	2
Aubrey Huff	2
J.T. Snow	1
Jose Cruz Jr.	1
A.J. Pierzynski	1
Randy Winn	1
Fred Lewis	1
John Bowker	1



(L-R) Shoeless Joe Jackson, Babe Ruth and Barry Bonds

\$357 million construction bill. And they twisted the layout of the field 15 degrees clockwise from the one voters had rejected so that San Francisco Bay would chop off the right field line just 305 feet from home plate, a tempting target for their left-hand power hitter.

Bonds did his part to pay the mortgage on Pacific Bell Park (which became SBC Park and then AT&T Park as the phone company went through mergers) by hitting home runs into the water and packing the park with double the fans who went to Candlestick. He and other home run hitters like Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs and Mark McGwire of the St. Louis Cardinals brought fans back to baseball after the strike-shortened 1994 season, each of them beating Ruth's single-season homer record with Bonds finally fixing it at the current 73 as well as raising the career mark to 762.

The illegal steroids these players took to increase their strength were suspected but ignored by fans and press and tolerated, if not secretly encouraged, by team

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The house Barry built

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owners. Then came a 2003 federal investigation into the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative. BALCO had developed steroid compounds that were undetectable by the drug tests then in use and supplied them to baseball players and Olympic athletes.

The investigation revealed a truth everyone had wanted to ignore.

The Giants refused to renew Bonds' contract after the 2007 season and no

other team would sign him. The team refused to retire his number 25 even though it refuses to reissue it.

In 2010 the Giants won their first World Series since leaving New York in 1958. And in Greenville, S.C., Shoeless Joe Jackson, who lived out his 64 years in shame because he took \$5,000 from a gambler, rolls in his grave.

His crime didn't damage baseball's integrity. It allowed people outside baseball to also profit from the game.

Padres drub local nine 5-3

On a heat-wave July Fourth in San Francisco when the high hit 70 and fans watched in shirtsleeves, Aaron Rowand grounded out to end the Giants' ninth-inning rally with runners on second and third.

Thus the Mission San Diego de Alcalá Padres – a team named in 1969 for the Catholic priests (padre = father), who between 1771 and 1823 founded a chain of 21 missions along *El Camino Real* (the royal road) that were the first European settlements in Alta California – defeated the Giants of Mission San Francisco de Asis, a team that began its existence in 1883 in New York and have won more games than any Major League team.

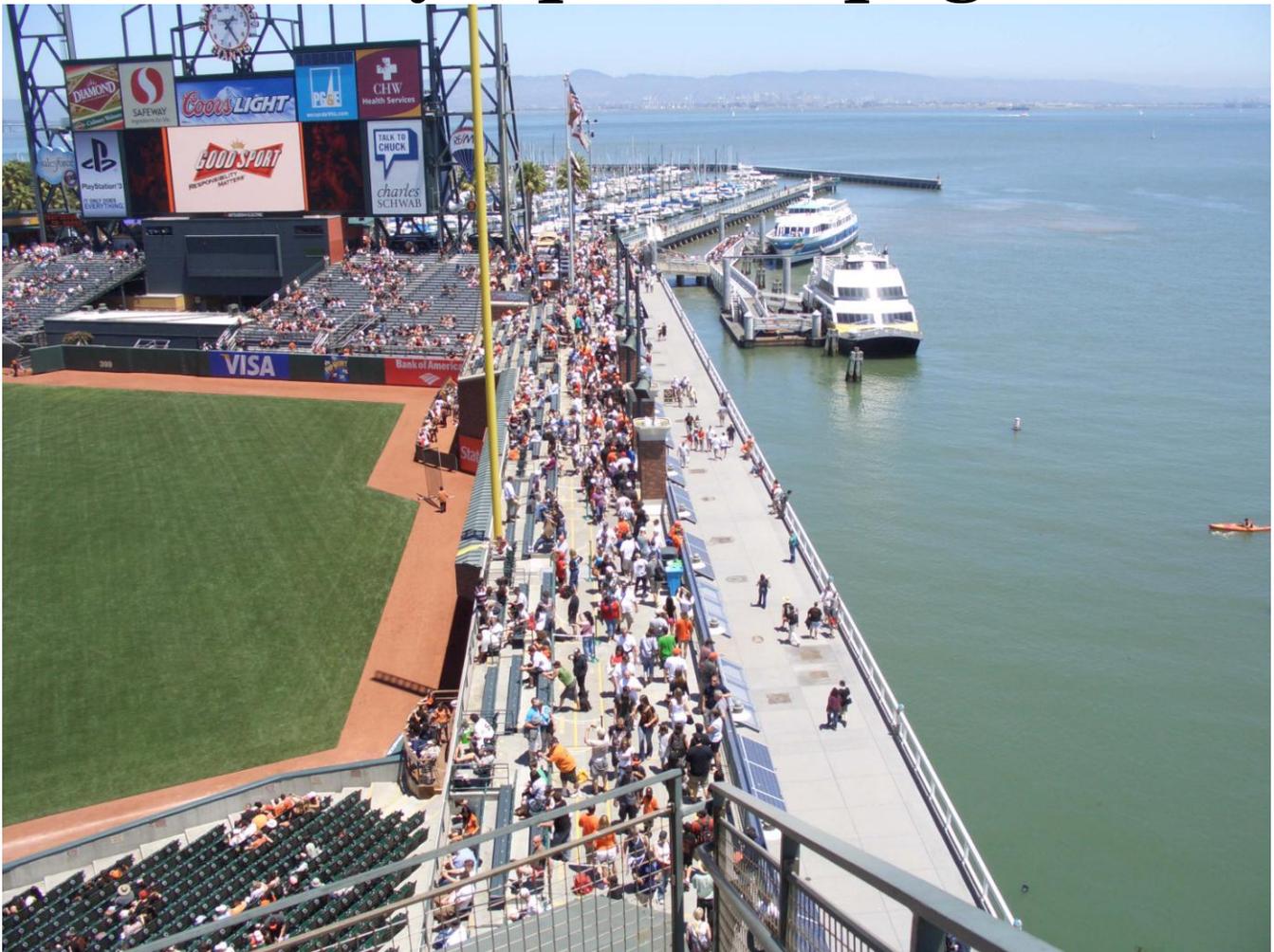
In 1958, the Giants brought Major League Baseball to the Pacific Coast in tandem with the Brooklyn / Mission San Fernando Rey de España (now Los Angeles) Dodgers in the last-known instance of cooperation between the two teams.

In good news, the Rev. Dr. Ken Henry and his daughter Madeline accompanied Emily, Gordon and me to the game. We had a blast.



Two years ago, Madeline Henry and her father Ken climbed the South Sister, a 10,358-foot volcano in their home state of Oregon. She's following in Gordon's path as a drama student at Lincoln High in San Jose.

Today's picture pages



The right-field wall at AT&T Park separates the outfield from an arm of San Francisco Bay now called McCovey Cove in honor of former Giants star Willie McCovey. We were fortunate to see the 56th splash hit in the park's history Monday when switch-hitter Pablo Sandoval, batting left handed, hit a two-run homer into the water to close the Giants' deficit to 3-2. The two boats are passenger ferries that will depart after the game to take fans back across the Golden Gate to the towns of Sausalito and Vallejo.



No park in Major League Baseball offers the views that you get from AT&T Park. The Bay Bridge beyond left field runs 2 miles from San Francisco to Yerba Buena Island in the middle of the bay as a suspension bridge, tunnels through the island, and then runs 2 miles as a truss bridge to Oakland in the East Bay. The truss bridge is being replaced by another suspension bridge built in China in prefabricated sections, carried across the Pacific Ocean by ship, and assembled on-site. It was the section damaged in the 1989 World Series earthquake.



<<< Boaters gather in McCovey Cove to await home run balls. The two Navy ships docked in the distance are the *USNS Cape Hudson* and a sister vehicle cargo ship used to transport and pre-position U.S. Army vehicles.