

Promises, Promises: Stadium Politics and the Public

THOMAS L. KARNES
Department of History
Arizona State University
Tempe. Arizona 85281

As a part of a broader study of major league stadiums in the United States and Canada, an investigation was conducted over the past year into the costs and benefits actually realized by a large number of teams and stadium authorities. In the course of this research it became clear that the promoters of these structures, faced with outlays of millions of dollars to pay for these products, could rarely afford to bear the costs of construction and increasingly were counting upon the community to bear that burden. This meant a selling campaign to convince, perhaps not the entire body politic, but enough civic leaders that the benefits to the community would be so great that one or more generations should bear the necessary tax costs to bring about the construction.

Building styles and functions vary greatly, but a fairly modest structure designed to support only one or two different sports can easily cost more than \$40,000,000 in today's market. Inflation in the building trade would add from 12 to 15% annually in recent years. To persuade the public to make such expenditures it must be convinced that the returns to the community will be nearly commensurate, and that is where the promotions begin.

Based on hundreds of letters to leagues, managements, stadium authorities, contractors, and municipal officials, this article attempts to analyze the methods of selling utilized by the promoters and the validity of their promises.



The Rafter 6 Ranch staff surely did feed us "dudes" well.