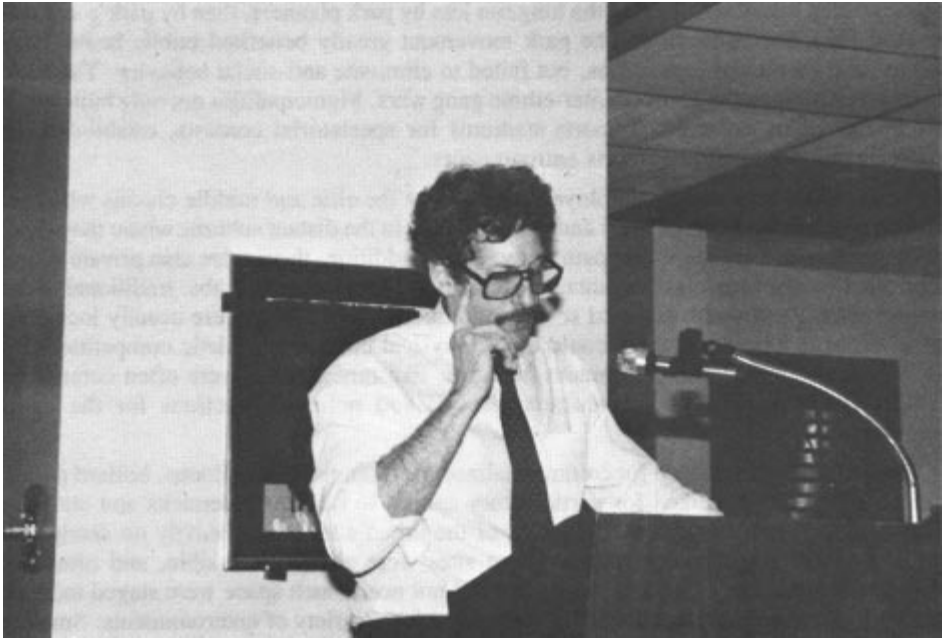


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Sport and Urban Space in the Industrialized Radial City, 1870-1950

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The process of urbanization had a crucial impact on organized and recreational sport in the industrial radial city. One of the most important elements of that process was spatial change as cities grew in size, became more densely populated, and developed specialized patterns of land use. The dynamic development of cities resulted in the loss of traditional playing sites, great competition for remaining spaces, and a quest for new facilities among rival social groups. This paper focuses on how three forms of urban land: public space, private space, and semipublic space, were secured and employed for athletics.

Municipal governments in the late nineteenth century were pushed by civic reformers, community activists, and other pressure groups to establish new public spaces for residents

to counter growing urban pathology. The (suburban) park movement at first mainly benefited the middle classes because of accessibility problems, and the result was a small park and playground movement to secure breathing space in the urban slums. Use of these public spaces was determined in the long run less by park planners, than by park goers who insisted on active recreation. The park movement greatly benefited public health, land values, and municipal reputations, but failed to eliminate anti-social behavior. The parks themselves became the focus of inter-ethnic gang wars. Municipalities not only built parks, but in the 1920s constructed sports stadiums for spectatorial contests, establishing an important model for future sports entrepreneurs.

Private space was mainly employed for sport by the elite and middle classes who built athletic clubs in the heart of town and country clubs in the distant suburbs where they could enjoy privacy and escape urban pathology. But in addition, there were also private spaces controlled by working class organizations, such as ethnic athletic clubs, traditional sports organizations, and youth oriented social and athletic clubs. They were usually located in urban villages where members could enjoy physical culture or athletic competition in a friendly atmosphere. The preeminent facilities, like turner halls, were often community centers that provided various cultural, social and political functions for the entire neighborhood.

Semipublic space utilized for commercialized sport ranged from saloons, billiard parlors and bowling alleys utilized for participatory sports, to outdoor racetracks and stadiums employed for spectator sports. Residents of the urban core relied heavily on semipublic space for their participatory sports. These sites were cheap, accessible, and often had unsavory reputations. Spectator sports that did not need much space were staged indoors, mainly in unspecialized buildings that were used for a variety of entertainments. Smaller, more specialized facilities of lower quality were located in working class neighborhoods, but the larger auditoriums and arenas like Madison Square Garden were situated in the CBD or entertainment district. Permanent outdoor sites were devoted to sports that required a lot of space (baseball, turf, football), and professional facilities were always located on the suburban fringe or outside of the city where land was cheap, near good transportation. Early ballparks were cheaply built in comparison to top racetracks, but once the national pastime was firmly established in the early 1900s, major league owners constructed expensive permanent edifices that could safely house the huge crowds that the sport hoped to attract.