

# BASEBALL STUDIES

## Long Term Ramifications of the Major League Baseball Shift

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While the three other papers in the proposed session “The Dodgers Move West” will focus upon the shift of the Dodger baseball franchise from Brooklyn to Los Angeles and the impact of this move upon the Los Angeles community and Pacific Coast League, the final presentation will seek to examine the broader political, economic, social, and cultural implications of Major League Baseball’s growth in the West. Franchises to be considered in this presentation include: The Los Angeles Dodgers and Angels, San Francisco Giants, San Diego Padres, Seattle Pilots and Mariners, Oakland A’s, Houston Colt .45’s and Astros, Texas Rangers, and Colorado Rockies (while some mention will be made of the Atlanta Braves and Florida Marlins as reflective of a Sunbelt shift in baseball and American society). Sources for this overview will include essential baseball monographs such as Neil Sullivan’s The Dodgers Move West, works of a more sociological nature such as Kirkpatrick Sale’s Power Shift: The Rise of the Southern Rim and Its Challenge to the Eastern Establishment (which actually makes no mention of baseball), and periodicals such as the Sporting News, Sports Illustrated, Sport. Life, Saturday Evening Post, and selected western newspapers (for example, Los Angeles Times and Houston Chronicle).

Needless to say, this topic would be enough for an entire monograph. Accordingly, the paper will focus upon presenting some suggestions about how the growth of baseball in the West has reflected some of the key economic (factory relocations), ethnic (role of Latino and Asian communities), and political changes (Electoral College and Congressional representation) within the country. However, these ideas will need to be fleshed out in more concentrated study, and the hope is that this paper will help provide this impetus for historians of western sport.

In conclusion, the presentation will seek to comment upon what seems to be a cultural lag that does not necessarily correspond with economic and political changes. For examples, in his marvellous documentary Baseball, documentary film maker Ken Burns attempts to tell the story of baseball in a rather long eighteen hours; however, a closer examination of the project suggests that the focus of the program was the history

of baseball in New York and Boston. One shudders to think how long the program might have taken if other sections of the country had been included. But the geographical blind spot blind spot of Burns is all too common. Lyndon Johnson of Southwest State Teachers' College always had some difficulty with the Harvard background of the Kennedy family, and during their first year of existence a much better Houston Colt .45's team was ignored by the media hoopla surrounding Casey Stengel and the New York Mets. Thus, some examination of the long term ramifications of Major League Baseball in the West may shift some needed academic and cultural focus upon a region which deserves more scrutiny in sport history in order to ascertain how sports fits into the portrait of the West emerging in the new Western History.