

# LEAGUES AND THEIR CODES

## *Major League Baseball and the Emergence on the New South: The 1966 Transfer of the Milwaukee Braves to Atlanta*

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The details of the Milwaukee Braves franchise shift to Atlanta following the 1965 baseball season has been well-chronicled in a number of publications such as journalist Furman Bisher's *Miracle in Atlanta: The Atlanta Braves Story* (1966).

Rather than engage in a rehashing of the civic and business interests which attracted major league baseball to the city of Atlanta, this paper examines the wider historical and sociological implications of major league baseball's introduction into the South.

This research builds upon the analytical approach used in a presentation for the 1995 NASSH conference at the California State Long Beach, "The Legacy of Conquest: Long Term Ramifications of the Major League Baseball Shift to the West," which argued that the movement of major league baseball into the American West left an ambiguous legacy. Although many transfers were motivated by greed, with the exception of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Colorado Rockies, few of the Western franchises have struck gold. The expansion of the major leagues democratized the game by bringing the major leagues into a better balance with the demographic alignment of America in the late twentieth century. But it also brought the destruction of distinguished minor league traditions, such as that of the old Pacific Coast League, as well as the extinction of baseball loyalties in Eastern cities such as Brooklyn and Washington.

This research examines similar questions in the American South. Issues considered in this paper include: the impact of expansionism upon race relations in baseball within the historical context of the civil rights movement and concerns regarding treatment of and accommodations for Afro-American athletes; the image of the New South as an area for business investment during a time period when the South's image was under close scrutiny; the impact of the Braves upon minor league baseball in the South and the traditional Southern attachment to the St. Louis Cardinals; the efforts of major league baseball to compete with the football culture of the South; and last, but by no means least, the implications of the Atlanta move for the citizens of Milwaukee (who had gained the franchise from Boston following the 1952 season). Unfortunately, expansion in baseball in the search for lucrative new markets and to avoid Congressional antitrust actions has encouraged baseball management to seek a safety valve of frontier expansion rather than deal with its problems.

This study places the story of major league baseball's shift to the South within the larger regional and national historical context of the 1960s. It is based upon such scholarly works as Dewey W. Grantham's *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (1994), and a close reading of such sources as the *Sporting News*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Milwaukee Journal*, as well as memoirs and periodical literature from the 1965-1966 period.