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*Ebbets Field: Essays and Memories of Brooklyn's Historic
Ballpark, 1913–1960* ed. by John G. Zinn and Paul G. Zinn
(review)

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who scouted Robinson for Rickey, and Jake Pitler, the Jewish first base coach who did not appear on the High Holy Days. Sportscasters and owners receive equal coverage with the players. In addition to Rickey and Walter O'Malley, we encounter John L. Smith, president of the Pfizer pharmaceutical company, who loved the Dodgers and bought a one-quarter interest in the club. Pfizer's Brooklyn plant was a major supplier of penicillin, and Sir Alexander Fleming, who was the drug's Scottish discoverer as well as a Nobel Laureate, visited Smith in Brooklyn. Who knew that Fleming, through Smith, became a Dodger fan and acquired a collection of autographed memorabilia?

The essays in *The Team* focus on various aspects of the 1947 season, including spring training in Havana, Rickey's relationship with the press, the suspension of Durocher, ownership infighting, and Robinson's first game. Several essays are devoted to the memorable 1947 Dodgers-Yankees World Series, won by the Yankees in seven games. Highlighted are Al Gionfriddo's game-saving catch of Joe DiMaggio's 415-foot potential home run in Game 6, and Cookie Lavagetto's pinch-hit, walk-off double in Game 3, which knocked in two runs and spoiled Bill Beven's bid for the first World Series no-hitter.

The Team That Forever Changed Baseball and America: The 1947 Brooklyn Dodgers is a volume to be treasured, to be read in small, savory portions, but it is not a dissertation on how the 1947 Dodgers "changed baseball and America." Other books—Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* and Chris Lamb's *Blackout: The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson's First Spring Training*—provide more synoptic treatments of this topic. Rather, *The Team* excels in recreating the era and its ethos, the players and their arena, the drama and the triumph of Robinson. Something wonderful happened in the Brooklyn of 1947; *The Team* is a portal to that time and place.

John G. Zinn and Paul G. Zinn, eds. *Ebbets Field: Essays and Memories of Brooklyn's Historic Ballpark, 1913–1960*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2013. 240 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

Steven P. Gietschier

This package of essays and related materials was compiled and edited by a father-son team, neither of whom ever had the good fortune to see a ball game played at Ebbets Field. John Zinn, the father, is chairman of the board of the New Jersey Historical Society. His son, Paul, is a former sportswriter now

working for a virtual communications software company. They have teamed up before, coauthoring *The Major League Pennant Races of 1916: "The Most Maddening Baseball Melee in History"* (2009). Other contributors are Ellen M. Snyder-Grenier, former chief curator of the Brooklyn Historical Society; James Overmyer, biographer of Effa Manley; and Ronald Selter, whose essay here is adapted from his book, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era* (2008), also published by McFarland.

This collection is the second in the publisher's Historic Ballparks series, following the initial volume on Forbes Field (2007) put together by the series' general editors, David J. Cicotello and Angela J. Louisa. No doubt each volume will include some testament to its subject's exceptionalism; this one gets right to it. "All historic ballparks created important relationships," John Zinn writes in the preface, "but Ebbets Field is special in its own way" (1). No reader should be surprised by that assertion.

Perhaps the most interesting essay in the book, Snyder-Grenier's "A Ballpark and Its 'City': Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, and Changing Times," is a solid piece of cultural history. Written in two sections, it contrasts Brooklyn in 1913, when Ebbets Field opened, with Brooklyn in 1957, after which season the Dodgers left. Her thesis, not unique but certainly presented well here, is that "Ebbets Field's construction suggests why the ballpark served as one of a number of enduring symbols of a *city*—even after Brooklyn had become a borough of New York City—and how its demolition in 1960 was all the more poignant as a symbol of changing times" (34).

Similarly fine, Overmyer's essay is a neat summary of all the African American baseball that Ebbets Field hosted before the debut of Jackie Robinson in 1947, including the ballpark's stints as the home field for the Bacharach Giants; the Brooklyn Eagles, who later moved to Newark; and the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers of the short-lived United States League. Selter, an expert on ballpark dimensions, presents a thorough history of how Ebbets Field's evolving configuration affected team offenses. Simply put, Ebbets Field was an average offensive park during the Deadball Era, but as more seats were added at the expense of fair territory, the park, not surprisingly, became an offensive heaven.

The other four essays include two by Zinn *père*, one by Zinn *fils*, and one cowritten by both. John Zinn contributes a rather standard and uncritical biographical treatment of Charles Ebbets, the man who built the ballpark and was majority owner of the Dodgers until his death in 1925. As much a business history of the Dodgers as a biographical essay, this piece does not say much about Ebbets personally, nor does it engage the argument that his shortsightedness in acquiring insufficient land before construction began led inevitably to the park's being hemmed in and handicapped by future development.

John's second essay is much shorter. It presents simple narrative accounts of the first and last Dodgers games at the ballpark.

Paul Zinn's solo effort, "Ebbets Field: Sporting Venue and Community Center," covers the many uses besides baseball to which the ballpark was put. These include a remarkable amount of boxing and football, both college and professional; soccer; and a handful of opera performances in the 1920s. Fans tend to think of Ebbets Field as a pure baseball park, but it, like so many others, was also multipurpose.

The Zinns' joint effort is a rather large accumulation of the most notable games played at Ebbets Field, starting with the Dodgers' first win in 1913 and concluding with the last game of the 1956 regular season. For each, they include a pithy narrative and, for most, the box score.

Following the essays, the editors present three sets of remembrances: one by Dodgers, a second by opposing players, and a third by fans. These reminiscences are culled mostly from interviews conducted by Paul Zinn with some coming from oral histories conducted by the Brooklyn Historical Society. Much of what the players have to say is repetitive: Ebbets Field was small; it was cozy; the fans sat close to the action; the fans were loud and exuberant; one could hit well there; the Dodgers were tough to play against. More than one opposing player remembers that the playing surface was always in first-rate condition, a recollection that is a bit of a shock to those who have pored over photos of old ballparks and seen lots of bare earth where grass should have been. The fans' memories, perhaps surprisingly, prove to be well worth reading. Each tells an individual story adorned with family tradition, memories of first games attended, and nostalgia for a team that truly was part of the neighborhood. One is struck by the intensity of these experiences, like that of Mary Walsh Heagney, now seventy-five years old, who, once wanting Pee Wee Reese's autograph, simply walked a few blocks to his apartment, rang the bell, and saw Reese, who answered the door, oblige with a smile.

Donald Spivey. *"If You Were Only White": The Life of Leroy "Satchel" Paige.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012. 347 pp. Cloth, \$29.95.

Jim Overmyer

Another book on Satchel Paige? There has been so much written about the legendary African American pitcher since he was finally allowed into the