Abstract

The history of baseball in the United States during the twentieth century in many ways mirrors the history of our nation in general. When the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants left New York for California in 1957, it had very interesting repercussions for New York. The vacancy left by these two storied baseball franchises only spurred on the reason why they left. Urban decay and an exodus of middle class baseball fans from the city, along with the increasing popularity of television, were the underlying causes of the Giants' and Dodgers' departure. In the end, especially in the case of Brooklyn, which was very attached to its team, these processes of urban decay and exodus were only sped up when professional baseball was no longer a uniting force in a very diverse area. New York's urban demographic could no longer support three baseball teams, and California was an excellent option for the Dodger and Giant owners. It offered large cities that were hungry for major league baseball, so hungry that they would meet the requirements that Giants' and Dodgers' owners Horace Stoneham and Walter O'Malley had asked for in New York. These included condemnation of land for new stadium sites and some city government subsidization for the Giants in actually building the stadium. Overall, this research shows the very real impact that sports has on its city and the impact a city has on its sports.
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Throughout the history of major league baseball in America, there has been only one city, which has housed more than two teams. That city, of course, is New York, which was home to the New York Yankees, Brooklyn Dodgers, and New York Giants for more than a half century. That all changed in 1957 when club owners Walter O’Malley and Horace Stoneham yanked the Dodgers and the Giants out of New York to move to west coast. History has vilified these two men, but that vilification simplifies the situation far too much. In reality, Stoneham, and especially O’Malley, saw a trend in New York, which included the movement of people from urban areas into the suburbs, the influence of television on baseball, and the decay of New York’s stadiums. Recognizing that this was happening, they decided that conditions in New York had to change or they would find a new location that fit their organizations’ needs more closely. This baseball exodus from New York had many effects, but mostly it expedited the process of urban decay. That is to say, the very reason that the owners drew their teams out of New York was then only sped up as a result of those teams’ absence. This was especially true for Brooklyn, which was far more attached to the Dodgers than Manhattan was to the Giants.

Even today, the reasons why the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants left for California, and the legitimacy behind those reasons, are hotly debated. In the end, it would seem that both teams improved fiscally after they moved west, but the question of whether those moves were still justified is an interesting one. Both teams were definitely motivated by money, as any profit earning business should be. Prior to and during the
1957 season, the Giants and Dodgers both cited financial problems as the main motivation for leaving New York.¹

For some, this claim is hard to swallow, especially from the side of the Brooklyn Dodgers. A study done by Major League Baseball actually showed that from 1952 to 1956, the Dodgers led all teams in profit.² The Giants were not doing as well as the Dodgers. Despite this, they still managed to do all right, reaping a profit in 1954, 1955, and 1956 in the span of the study.³ The Giants did end 1953 and 1954 with losses, but overall in the five-year study they had a profit of $242,602.⁴ New York Times writer Emanuel Perlmutter does an excellent job explaining that despite the problems that baseball as a whole was going through, New York baseball, and especially Brooklyn, had seemed to hold its own. “Although both the Dodgers and the Giants are leaving because they assertedly feel the financial pickings are better in California,” he noted, “Brooklyn has been a profitable place for the Dodger owners.”⁵ One would wonder why Dodger management would want to leave such a profitable situation. Walter O’Malley felt that, while the Dodgers were making money, their profits were marginal at best. These marginal profits had come during a tenure when Brooklyn had won multiple pennants, and O’Malley was very concerned about what would happen if and when Brooklyn was not so successful.⁶ Simply put, he knew that everyone loves a winner, and that even the heartiest fans can be rather fickle if that success fades, especially if a team just across town is playing well.

³ Drury, “Frick Calls,” 1.
⁴ Drury, “Frick Calls!” 1.
In many ways, O’Malley and Stoneham understood, as competent businessmen, that although they could survive and maybe do reasonably well in New York, there was an opportunity in California to thrive on a fan base of millions of people who were tired of watching the second class baseball of the Pacific Coast League. Understandably, many fans do not like being reminded that the sports that they love so much and rely on as an escape from the business of every day life are indeed a part of the business world and are subject to its demands for fiscal success. As a businessman, O’Malley saw that although he was not saving a dying franchise, he had an opportunity to turn a healthy franchise into a wealthy franchise by making the move.7 O’Malley and Stoneham understood that due to factors beyond their control, including television and a middle class urban exodus, financial matters would only get worse in New York.

Since the Dodger and Giant brass cited financial problems as the reason for their move, it is important to see why their financial situation appeared less profitable than the situation out west. One very apparent reason was sagging attendance. Both ball clubs were suffering from serious attendance problems. In 1956, the Giants played before merely 629,159 spectators at their home games in the Polo Grounds.8 This figure is less than half of what they played to in 1947.9 The meager increase in 1957 to 653,903 was probably only due to a small number of fans whose sentiment for their departing team drove them off of their couches to witness the last few games of the New York Giants.10 Even the Giants’ “swan song,” their final game ever at the historic Polo Grounds, only

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drew a solemn 11,606 fans on September 29, 1957.\textsuperscript{11} Although Dodger attendance suffered as well, it was not down to the point that the Giants’ attendance was.\textsuperscript{12} Still, the Dodgers’ attendance slide was definitely noticeable. At the beginning of the 1957 season, only 182,000 saw fifteen home games for the Brooks, while the Yankees, as a point of comparison, drew 81,000 in bad weather during a three game home stand.\textsuperscript{13} There are many reasons why this decline occurred. One interesting reason could actually be linked to their success. The Dodgers had always been the loveable chokers of Brooklyn, who would make multiple appearances at the World Series and always come up short. With their World Series victory in 1955, they met success with some unfamiliarity as The New York Times columnist Arthur Daley explains: “Maybe satiety has set in. Lots of folks are ennobled by adversity but unable to cope with success. Attendance at Ebbets Field has been a mite on the disgraceful side this season.”\textsuperscript{14} With the World Series victory, the Dodgers had become winners, and the fans in Brooklyn at least in some respect, lost interest. Although success was not the sole factor in the attendance problems, in the Dodgers’ case it definitely had an impact.

There were, of course, larger trends than Brooklyn’s success that led to both franchises slide in fan presence at home games. A mass population shift that was occurring in the 1950’s from urban areas to the suburbs had a definite affect on baseball’s attendance figures.\textsuperscript{15} Fans were no longer simply a walk away from catching a game at Ebbets Field or the Polo Grounds. It took more planning, work, and money to go to a

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\textsuperscript{12} “Drop in Home-Game,” 25.
\textsuperscript{13} Daley, “Sports of,” 18.
\textsuperscript{14} Daley, “Sports of,” 18.
\end{flushleft}
ball game from the suburbs, in many ways removing the spontaneity of the process. Horace Stoneham himself claimed that New York could not support three professional baseball teams with the rate at which its baseball watching population was moving outside of the city.16 This decrease in urban baseball watching population was hurting attendance in many baseball venues, and the Dodger and Giants owners were beginning to understand that New York could probably not support three teams.

Of course, another reason for the crumbling attendance of many baseball organizations was the advent of the television. Watching a team from the comfort of home on television definitely led to fewer people going to the park.17 Aside from the simple comfort, it also was economically cheaper than loading up a car to drive into the city to get to the games and then parking and buying a ticket. Audiences in the suburbs would prefer to watch a game on the television, rather than spending effort and money to go to a game. In the end, some small amount of support caused attendance to rise for both clubs in 1957, but by that time it was too late.18 On Monday August 19th the Giants announced that they were leaving for San Francisco, and only a short time later, on Tuesday, October 8th of 1957, the Dodgers accepted a bid to move to Los Angeles.19 One of the factors that scared the Giants and Dodgers out of New York was that while there were three teams in one city, that city’s baseball game attending population was decreasing rapidly due to an exodus from urban life to the suburbs. This factor, coupled with the advent of television, made the idea of moving for the Giants and Dodgers more and more attractive.

Despite these trends, both clubs might have stayed in New York if they had been given city government subsidies for new stadiums. Although the history of both stadiums is as interesting as their actual design, there is no doubt that by 1957 both teams were in need of new homes. Ebbets Field could not accommodate the Dodgers of the future because of its lack of parking and tightly packed location in a rather dreary neighborhood.\(^{20}\) In fact, for more than ten years prior to making the move west, O’Malley had believed that Ebbets Field badly needed to be replaced.\(^{21}\) To highlight this need for a stadium, in 1955 the Dodgers struck a bargain with Jersey City, leasing out their Roosevelt Stadium for seven to eight games in the 1956 and 1957 seasons.\(^{22}\) Playing the games in Jersey City did help attendance, drawing around 48,000 fans in seven games, around double what it would have drawn in Brooklyn.\(^{23}\) Improving attendance, however, was not the only concern addressed by playing games in Jersey City: “This step [playing games in Roosevelt Stadium] had the dual purpose of stimulating Dodger attendance and in prodding civic officials to more definitive action in Mr. O’Malley’s campaign for a desirable building site in Brooklyn.”\(^{24}\)

On the Giants’ side, the Polo Grounds was quite simply falling apart. In addition to worrying about its poor condition, Stoneham was also completely fed up with its lack of suitable parking.\(^{25}\) Both owners needed some sort of city government subsidy for the project of building a new stadium in New York. While O’Malley had capital to build a stadium and simply needed the city to condemn and buy land for the stadium to be built

on, Stoneham had no capital with which to build a new stadium, no site for the stadium, and no plan on how to achieve this in New York. Both the boroughs, Brooklyn and Manhattan, had studies performed in order to find more adequate sites for stadiums that could provide parking and other necessities.

In a meeting on June 4, 1957, between Walter O’Malley and Mayor Wagner of New York, O’Malley informed Wagner that he would not stay in Brooklyn without a new stadium, which he could not obtain without land being condemned by the city. The city was less than responsive to both teams’ situation. Mayor Wagner opposed subsidizing baseball teams, believing that as a business they should be able to afford whatever actions they wished to take on their own. At first, however, he considered condemning land, but only under the strict guideline that any new stadium created there would be “self-sustaining.” When a study showed that condemnation of a Brooklyn slum and transference of it to a stadium site would cost an estimated $30 million, the city was even more reluctant to help the Dodgers. The city government in general felt that O’Malley was blackmauling it and did not like his course of action. Democratic congressman from Brooklyn, John T. Rooney explained:

Let the Dodgers move to Los Angeles if the alternative is to succumb to an arrogant demand to spend the taxpayers’ money to build a stadium for them in Brooklyn. I am opposed to uprooting decent citizens living in my Congressional district in order to put more money in the pockets of my

dear friend Walter O’Malley and the private profitmaking Brooklyn Baseball Club Stockholders.\textsuperscript{32}

In a way, the politicians’ firm stance against subsidizing stadiums reflects, at least partly, the stance of the public. If there were a loud enough voter outcry against the possibility of a shift because of lack of sufficient facilities for either of the teams, the city most likely would have responded.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite the city’s somewhat unbending stance, the impasse cannot all be attributed to the city. A stadium location was actually proposed for the Giants. Giants’ president Horace Stoneham turned down a site at Flushing Meadows in Queens, claiming it was unsuitable for what he needed.\textsuperscript{34} Brooklyn’s stance was just as picky, having demanded a very specific site for their stadium as historian Neil J. Sullivan explains in his book \textit{The Dodgers Move West}:

The only chance Brooklyn had to keep the Dodgers was to construct a variation of Bel Geddes’s proposed stadium at the junction of Atlantic and Flatbush avenues, the terminus of Long Island Rail Road and also the meeting point for two subway lines.\textsuperscript{35}

This spot was an ideal location for a Brooklyn baseball team because of the meeting of transportation lines in the area and the room for installation of parking, which

\textsuperscript{35} Sullivan, \textit{The Dodgers Move}, 44. Norman Bell Geddes was an industrial engineer who, at the request of O’Malley, came up with a stadium proposal.
was key for attracting Brooklyn fans who had left the city for the suburbs. In the end, the city would not budge on their stance of not condemning the land for O’Malley.

With the Giants’ lease running out at the Polo Grounds, the reason for their stubbornness was more justified. In long-range terms, if a new stadium were not built, the only option for the Giants would be sharing Yankee Stadium with their American League counterparts.\(^{36}\) Obviously, although this never came to pass, even the idea did not cause a lot of positive excitement in the Yankees camp.\(^ {37}\) We can see why Stoneham and the Giants were feeling more and more that their only option was to move to California. By July 17, 1957 Stoneham openly admitted that he felt that New York and the Giants were not a good fit due to inadequate transportation, limited parking, and competition from television and the harness races in Yonkers.\(^ {38}\) Among the most important of these was parking. Without space necessary to draw in those who had left the urban areas for the suburbs, the franchises probably would end up not achieving the attendance numbers they needed to survive.

Television contracts were another reason that these two franchises felt that they might make more money on the west coast. People were just starting to understand what major moneymakers professional sports teams could be when coupled with television. In 1957, the Dodgers brought in $750,000 a year with their network television contract.\(^ {39}\) The Giants’ contract was less lucrative, bringing in $600,000 per year in revenues according to the contract they had agreed to.\(^ {40}\) The fact that these contracts were for network television, that is, telecast free to the television owning public, made them much

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\(^{38}\) Mooney, “Stoneham Favors,” 51.
\(^{39}\) Phillips, “2 Ball Clubs get 5,000,000 TV Bid,” The New York Times, 6 June 1957, 23.
\(^{40}\) Phillips, “2 Ball Clubs get,” 23.
less financially rewarding than they could have been. California suggested using cable television, an up and coming form of television that viewers had to pay for, in order to watch the Dodgers and Giants. Using this idea, San Francisco and Los Angeles were both able to offer television contracts valued at $2 million a year. There were offers for cable television contracts in New York for millions of dollars as well, but these offers were made at a point when the owners had set their hearts and minds on getting their new stadiums. Combined with the hope of new stadiums, these lucrative television contracts proved to be one of the large attractions for the move made by the Giants and Dodgers.

One other, minor reason that the two clubs wanted to leave for greener pastures was their unhappiness with the standing five percent admissions tax for all amusements in New York. The tax applied to all sorts of industries in the city, including sports, theatre, and amusement parks such as Coney Island. When the owners inquired about it, the city put its foot down refusing to do away with the tax. It netted the city almost $9 million a year. The refusal of the city to lighten up on this tax only increased the financial difficulties that the owners perceived they had, and by doing so, added to their reasons to leave.

Perhaps some of the most overlooked reasons for the Dodgers and Giants skipping across the country to the west coast were the salesmanship and effort by the cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco to attract them. By May 1957, Los Angeles had already approved a budget of $3.5 million to spend on the Dodgers. This money was specifically allotted for stadium construction. In addition to the construction funds, Los

41 Benjamin, “Closed TV,” 15.
43 Benjamin, “Closed TV,” 15.
44 Benjamin, “Closed TV,” 15.
Angeles also had a budget of $2 million set up just to spend on wooing the Dodgers to the City of Angels.\(^\text{45}\) These western cities wanted good baseball badly. We can understand why O'Malley was so willing to work with a city that was happy to spend money to put the changes in that he felt were necessary to attract fans from a changing urban demographic and the suburbs.

Although the Giants’ and Dodgers’ transition to the west coast was groundbreaking, they were not the first franchise to leave the east coast for a more western home. The team situated western most was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.\(^\text{46}\) The only reason Milwaukee had a team was because the Braves had left Boston. Before that had happened, St. Louis was considered the west coast of baseball. Millions of people across the west were missing out on professional baseball. This meant that there were millions of people who could become loyal Dodger and Giant fans. With these urban areas actually growing, one can see why Stoneham and O’Malley felt tempted to leave an urban area that was actually losing viewers and already had three teams. Because there was literally no competition for the Giants and Dodgers in the west, fans from Arizona, Nevada, and Washington would also follow the teams. Television helped make this possible. In New York City, there were three teams within one metropolitan area, compared to two teams in a whole section of the continental United States. The Dodgers were becoming more and more acclimated to the idea of moving.

By February of 1957 Walter O’Malley had purchased Wrigley Stadium, home to a Pacific Coast League team, in Los Angeles.\(^\text{47}\) In 1957, Los Angeles was a city of 5 million people that did not have a professional baseball team. Certainly, baseball needed

badly to catch up with the American population’s westward migration and expansion. California became as prosperous a gold mine for baseball as it had been for miners in the nineteenth century.

By June 1957, the city of Los Angeles was already working hard to do what New York City refused to do, condemn land for a stadium. Stoneham had no way of funding a stadium on his own in New York, while San Francisco was so hungry for baseball, that they were happy to help. In Brooklyn, the Dodgers could not get any sort of stadium site condemned for them, but Los Angeles, without even a firm commitment from the Dodgers, was already working to get that done. San Francisco was also very active on behalf of the Giants. Under the leadership of Mayor George Christopher, the city performed a study to find sites suitable for building a major league baseball stadium. It seems quite clear that California’s hunger for baseball led officials to make very attractive offers to two of the most storied organizations in baseball history. These offers compared very positively to what New York offered, with no effort to build new stadiums and an urban population that was losing middle class baseball fans.

When we consider the actual agreements that the Giants and Dodgers accepted when moving to Los Angeles and San Francisco, it becomes even more obvious why they came. First of all, Horace Stoneham, after consulting with San Francisco officials and going over various studies, guaranteed to his board members that the organization would make a profit between $200,000 and $300,000 a year. This figured compared to their

48 "Los Angeles Moves," 15.
five-year total profit of just over $240,000, and made the move seem very attractive.\textsuperscript{51} Next, the city of San Francisco passed a $5 million bond issue in order to help pay for expenses.\textsuperscript{52} The deal also included a new stadium which seated somewhere between 40,000 to 45,000 fans and would be leased for the next thirty-five years.\textsuperscript{53} Even more important than the seating capacity of the stadium was the fact that it would be surrounded by a parking area which would hold between 10,000 and 12,000 cars.\textsuperscript{54} This was crucial, considering the face that the number of people living in urban areas was dwindling. People could not just walk a couple of blocks to catch a ball game when they lived in the suburbs. They drove their cars to games and needed somewhere to park them. San Francisco provided that and then some. The city also promised to equip the stadium with everything it needed for operation.\textsuperscript{55}

With that said, there were definitely some negatives to moving to the coast. For one, the Giants were forced to pay damages to two organizations. They would have to pay the Pacific Coast League one million dollars in damages.\textsuperscript{56} The Giants would also have to compensate the San Francisco Seals, a member of the Pacific Coast League, with damages of around $125,000.\textsuperscript{57} These damages were necessary because the introduction of major league baseball in California would injur the Pacific Coast League by destroying the Seals’ market. Another negative in the Giants move to California was their initial home. Stadiums take time to build, and until the Giants’ new home was ready they

\textsuperscript{51} Drury, “Frick Calls,” 1.
\textsuperscript{54} Becker, “Giants Will Shift,” 27.
\textsuperscript{55} Becker, “Giants Will Shift,” 27.
\textsuperscript{57} “Giants Will Have To Dig,” 27.
would have to play in the Seals' stadium, which seated only 22,000 people.\textsuperscript{58} Despite these problems, the deal was still a very attractive one for the Giants, especially when the only other option was sharing a stadium with the Yankees in New York City once their lease ran out at the decrepit Polo Grounds.

Similarly, the Dodgers were also wooed to Los Angeles with very attractive offers. The Dodger organization was promised a $10 million stadium at the plush Chavez Ravine section of Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{59} The stadium would seat 50,000 people and also have ample parking.\textsuperscript{60} In this case as well, there were negatives. The stadium would not be ready until, as it turned out, 1962.\textsuperscript{61} Thus the Dodgers had to find a place to play until their new stadium at Chavez Ravine was ready. One possibility was Los Angeles Coliseum, which was a large football and track facility, very poorly suited for baseball.\textsuperscript{62} The other option was playing at Wrigley Stadium, which belonged to the minor league Los Angeles team. Of course, O'Malley had already bought the stadium and the Pacific Coast League franchise before they even moved.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, although forced to pay damages to the Pacific Coast league, he was not required to pay damages to the franchise he owned. Obviously, neither situation was ideal, but once again the initial negatives of the move were more than counterbalanced by the overwhelming positives. With the offers made by the cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco, the organizations would be better equipped to handle a society that was both moving westward and out of urban centers. Just the fact that they were out of New York City, which was overcrowded with baseball

\textsuperscript{58} Becker, "Giants Will Shift," 27.
\textsuperscript{59} Perlmutter, "Dodgers Accept Los Angeles Bid," 37.
\textsuperscript{60} Perlmutter, "Dodgers Accept Los Angeles Bid," 37.
\textsuperscript{62} Perlmutter, "Dodgers Accept Los Angeles Bid," 37.
\textsuperscript{63} Phillips, "Baseball Parley," 25.
teams while its baseball watching population was leaving made the offers from California that much more attractive.

With two baseball teams leaving that had been rooted in New York City for over sixty years each, there is little doubt that their sudden move would have an effect on the city. The Dodgers had been in Brooklyn since 1890. The Giants had been in Manhattan even longer, arriving in the city in 1883. One overt effect that each move had was animosity from the fans toward the owners of each ball club. By the end of the 1957 season, most New York Giant fans were very unhappy with the leadership of Horace Stoneham. Many Dodger fans reacted similarly. In fact, Walter O’Malley was hated even more than Stoneham. Carl E. Prince explains how the fans reacted to O’Malley:

Within months of the announced departure, Walter O’Malley was denounced as a ‘Gaelic Machiavelli,’ a ‘cold schemer who would cast aside any loyalties in order to make a dollar.’ He was ‘lured by the glint of gold in California, and oblivious of the loyal, broken-hearted fans they (the Dodgers) left behind them.’

Of course, this characterization is not fair. In the end, what Walter O’Malley was guilty of, more than any other baseball owner before him, was showing the public that

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64 Perlmutter, “Dodgers Accept Los Angeles Bid,” 1.
baseball really was a business. Not all of the fans reacted so negatively when the teams announced the move. Many journalists of the times noticed that Giants fans actually relaxed some when the move was announced. In reality, most of the fans went through an entire array of emotions, including sadness and anger obviously. Of course these reactions were to be expected, but in many ways they were less intense than people would have expected. After the National League approved the possibility of the franchises moving, there was not a strong response. City Hall did not receive a great outcry from fans and city residents to keep their teams in New York. In fact, many Dodger fans were ready to say good riddance by the time the move was actually announced. The New York Times quoted one Dodger fan, a shoe repairman, as saying, "I got no use for them bums. If they wanna move I say let 'em go. I used to be a great fan, sold soda pop so I could sit out in left field and watch Zach Wheat. There was a ballplayer." Another Dodger fan reacted with less anger and more sadness. Carmen Gonzales, a drycleaner, said, "I'm all shook up . . . I think more of the Dodgers than anything in the world." Giant fans also reacted with strong emotions. One Giant fan was quoted as saying, "You can't call them the Giants when they move to San Francisco. They can't be the Giants of John McGraw and Christy Mathewson." Obviously fans felt betrayed by their favorite baseball teams. While everyone knew that the possibility of a move was imminent O'Malley remained close-mouthed, refusing to allow the public

68 Sullivan, The Dodgers Move, 137.
71 Knowles, "Wagner Striving To Keep," 17.
73 Feinberg, "Mourning After Grips Local Fans," 27.
74 Feinberg, "Mourning After Grips Local Fans," 27.
75 Feinberg, "Mourning After Grips Local Fans," 27.
to see his hand. In fact, as late as the end of August 1957, O'Malley still would not give any hint as to what his team's destination was.\textsuperscript{76} Much of this was probably due to his hope to keep attendance at a respectable level.\textsuperscript{77} In the end, it is evident that one result of the Dodgers and Giants move to the west coast was the demonization of both owners, but especially O'Malley. Prince further explains why many fans viewed the two owners differently:

Few seemed to blame Giants' owner Horace Stoneham, who at the same time took his team west to San Francisco as companion to O'Malley. 'Poor Horace,' wrote one sportswriter, catching the general drift, 'he's become a patsy for O'Malley.' The only evolution of recollection since the 1950s has been a deepening of the downward spiral of Walter O'Malley's memory in New York.\textsuperscript{78}

Obviously the fans' emotional reaction is to be expected. O'Malley's memory in New York is definitely not a positive one, and it has kept him out of the Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, despite what some feel is a very worthy career.

Many employees were also affected by the move. Numerous Giant employees were deeply attached to their home at the Polo Grounds and had worked there for many years. They were emotionally saddened to see the team leave its home, which it had been in for quite a long time.\textsuperscript{79} One man, Eddie Brannick, had been a member of the Giant

\textsuperscript{76} Talese, "O'Malley Silent," 19.
\textsuperscript{77} Talese, "O'Malley Silent," 19.
\textsuperscript{78} Prince, \textit{Brooklyn's Dodgers}, 144-5.
organization since 1910, and was the club’s secretary at the time of the move.\textsuperscript{80} He was quoted as saying:

I wanted to see this game [the Giants’ last home game at the Polo Grounds] all the way, down to the last out. I guess it was a case of clinging to something you love. I still can’t realize this thing has happened to us.\textsuperscript{81}

Other connections went even deeper at the Polo Grounds. Eddie Logan was the head custodian of the Giants’ clubhouse. He was the third generation of Logans to work for the organization. He explained how deep his love for the organization was and his feelings when they decided to move:

It gives me a wrench. Dad started with the Giants, chalking the runs on the scoreboard, he always had fine handwriting back when they played at the old Polo Grounds at 110\textsuperscript{th} Street and Fifth Avenue. I came here as his helper in 1931, after I finished school and now my son, Eddie is on board here too, as a batboy. We’ll stay with the Giants I hope, but it never will be the same.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{80} Sheehan, “Adieus Prove Difficult,” 36.
\textsuperscript{81} Sheehan, “Adieus Prove Difficult,” 36.
\textsuperscript{82} Sheehan, “Adieus Prove Difficult,” 36. \textit{The New York Times} fails to mention the impact of the move on Dodger employees.
These people were losing more than just their job. They obviously felt something very special for their New York Giants, and when they left a part of them was leaving with them.

Another effect of the Giants and Dodgers move was not local to New York. During the 1957 season, there were numerous inquiries at a federal level on professional baseball’s exemption from anti-trust legislation. Throughout the history of baseball and modern professional sports, this has been a hotly debated topic. The impact of the westward baseball expansion does not seem to connect at first. At a closer look, however, the idea that a team could leave a city whenever its owner wanted, because of financial problems sounds very businesslike.83 Brooklyn Congressman Emanuel Celler, one of the main players in the congressional hearings on the subject, explained more aptly how moving Giants and Dodgers was in conflict with baseball’s anti-trust status:

The attitude of Walter O’Malley, president of the Dodgers, and Horace Stoneham, president of the Giants, has been inconsistent in this matter. In one breath they say that baseball is a sport, not subject to antitrust regulations. In another breath they say they have the right to move franchises in the interest of dollars, selling to the highest bidder. If that isn’t business, I’d like to know what is.84

In this situation, the move was actually working against the two teams. Before 1970, baseball would see the anti-trust legislation, at least moderately, applied to its

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business and the reserve clause end. The reserve clause kept players’ salaries low, because it prohibited competition between teams when attempting to sign players. Many baseball purists also felt that it kept competition between teams livelier, since all the great players were not lured to and signed by the richest teams. In the end, the Giants’ and Dodgers’ decision to move west had a tangible role in discrediting baseball’s exemption from anti-trust legislation since almost all the arguments for the moves had to do with business considerations.

Certainly, one area that the Giants and Dodgers affected when they left New York was the transportation industry. In fact, the Transit Authority expected to lose upwards of $300,000 a year in revenues.\(^\text{85}\) People obviously had to get to games in some way, especially those living in urban areas far from the stadium. With little or no parking, the transportation system was given a large boost by the baseball teams’ presence. Now that boost would be gone--just another example of one way that the Dodgers’ and Giants’ decision to leave New York City sped up the urban deterioration that was already occurring.

Yet another result of the cross continent leap of the Dodgers and Giants is the effect it had on the city’s rivalries. All of a sudden two of the top National League teams were gone from New York City. This sudden disappearance took one of the best things about the Giants’ and the Dodgers’ stay there, their close rivalry.\(^\text{86}\) There would be no more jibes between coworkers about whom they rooted for. Also, the debates would end. Suddenly, the Dodger fans could not get into huge arguments with a guy from work that swore that Willie Mays was better than Duke Snider. These little rivalries gave a small

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\(^{86}\) Feinberg, “Mourning After Grips Local Fans,” 27.
bit of almost indefinable something to New York City, which was lost forever. In fact, the one reason that the Giants’ attendance was even at the slightly respectable level that it was was because of the rivalry games against the Dodgers, which drew very large crowds to the end.\textsuperscript{87} The Dodgers, although not relying on it as heavily, also took a large boost in attendance from the games that pitted them against the Giants. Even when the Mets returned National League baseball to New York City, they were in the opposite league from the Yankees. Thus, this sense of close rivalry has been lost to the city of New York ever since.

In the end, when really looking at the effects that these two teams had on their areas after they left, it is much more relevant and interesting to examine Brooklyn. Brooklyn has always been much more of a separate community from New York City. While Manhattan, where the Giants were located, and Brooklyn, obviously the Dodgers’ home, were both boroughs of New York, but Brooklyn started out as its own city not actually becoming at any way part of New York City until the bridges and subways connected it to the rest of the city.\textsuperscript{88} Thus, Brooklyn developed differently and in many ways very separately from the rest of New York City. Brooklynites even developed their own variety of the New York accent, known as “Brooklynese.”\textsuperscript{89} Central to this somewhat isolated development was Brooklyn’s beloved Dodgers. They felt like outsiders from the rest of New York, but they also took pride in being outsiders. Without a doubt, the central rallying point for that pride was their Dodgers, or “dem Bums” as they referred to them.\textsuperscript{90} This sort of devotion and pride in and identification with their

\textsuperscript{87} Sullivan, \textit{The Dodgers Move}, 115.
\textsuperscript{88} Prince, \textit{Brooklyn’s Dodgers}, 102.
\textsuperscript{89} Prince, \textit{Brooklyn’s Dodgers}, 103.
\textsuperscript{90} Prince, \textit{Brooklyn’s Dodgers}, 103.
team only led to a deeper depression when the Dodgers skipped town. Journalist Joseph M. Sheehan further explains the effect on the borough, “In deserting Brooklyn for Los Angeles, the Dodgers will leave an aching void in the Borough of Churches. Few baseball clubs have had greater identity with, and greater impact on, their communities than the Dodgers have had on Brooklyn.” This close bond between team and borough definitely made the Dodgers decision to leave, even more devastating than the effect that the Giants had when they left Manhattan.

So what was so important about the connection between Brooklyn and their Dodgers? For one, the city’s ethnic and racial make up was quite diverse. Brooklyn included extensive enclaves of people with Irish, Italian, and Jewish heritage and also a growing presence of African-Americans in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area. Obviously with such an ethnic mix, there could be problems. During the 1950’s, Brooklyn’s composition was growing even more diverse. Despite this, things remained rather calm, as the Dodgers presence helped to keep people somewhat united. Historian Carl E. Prince further explains how the Dodgers accomplished this:

This was a remarkable diverse and equally tense cultural mix in a geographically contained area, and the Dodger ball club provided the major unifying focus amid this Joseph’s Coat of a population. The degree to which this was true may be measured by the Dodgers’ central place in the distinct language of Brooklyn. Overt class-consciousness seemed to run higher in Brooklyn than elsewhere in the city, and the Dodgers’ presence helped maintain an uneasy truce among ethnic groups...The

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92 Sheehan, “Fans Added Zest,” 37.
93 Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 103.
realities of immigrant differences dominated everyday life, as the
Brooklyn experience yet again demonstrated. The Dodgers, in this tense
setting, formed a social force for acculturation...  

The unity brought on by common identity as Dodger fans trumps the hostility between
conflicting ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups.

When the Dodgers left the city, this force of unification was gone. This had a
huge impact on the city. Many middle class families began moving out of Brooklyn, and
the city began to erode. Of course, this had been going on prior to the Dodgers’ leaving
and actually was probably more of a cause than an effect of their departure. The
uprooting of the Dodgers, however, doubtless sped up the process. Prince paraphrases,
"The erosion of community in Brooklyn in the years following 1957 cannot fully be laid
at the door of the Dodgers, for that erosion was part of a larger urban malaise present in
most American cities. But the Dodgers’ departure contributed." 

Yet another example of the Dodgers departure expediting the process of urban
decay in Brooklyn can be seen by the way in which their team influenced the politics of
the town. The team’s politics can be most aptly defined as anti-communist,
integrationist, and patriotic. Besides their integrationist platform, the politics of the
Dodgers were basically conservative. Even the racial integration that occurred, in the
eyes of the man responsible for it, Branch Rickey, was done in the name of “that very
patriotism that drove the engine of his cold war rhetoric.” 

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94 Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 103.
95 Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 118.
96 Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 25.
97 Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 25.
politically conservative, despite the fact that he was part of one of the most radical changes in baseball history.⁹⁸ In the end, when this somewhat calming, conservative, middle class political frame of mind left with the Dodgers, it once again sped up the rate at which like-minded citizens who lived Brooklyn left for the suburbs. The Dodger organizations somewhat conservative political attitude had an affect on those who lived their; when it left it took with it some stability thus speeding up urban exodus and decay.

The factors that led the Dodgers and Giants to leave for the west coast, in at least some respect, were only exacerbated by these teams’ leaving. Issues such as a middle class exodus and urban deterioration were driven to higher levels by the Dodgers’ and Giants’ absence. Without any way to stop these problems, O’Malley and Stoneham realized that with cities facing the problems that they were, New York City could not support three teams for long. Thus, they seized an opportunity, which could keep them relatively prosperous in the long run. The move effected their boroughs and fans in various ways. The effect on Brooklyn was definitely stronger, due to the city’s strong affiliation with its team. In both cases, however, the problems that drove the teams’ move were only sped up by the teams’ departure.

⁹⁸ Prince, Brooklyn’s Dodgers, 10.
Works Consulted


