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The History of Duncan Park

By George Morgan

It was a magnificent gift. A gift for which Spartanburg City, County, and baseball fans will forever be grateful. The gift, a tract of land along the Union Street Extension, was donated by the four children of David Robinson Duncan and turned out to be one of the showcases of the Spartanburg Community. The land was transformed into beautiful Duncan Park, the home of the Spartanburg Phillies.

David Duncan was a Confederate Civil War Major who served with valor and was captured at the Battle of Petersburg. At the end of the war he became a successful lawyer, and public servant. He also was a trustee of both Wofford and Converse College and later became a board member of Spartan Mills, plus he was President of the Spartanburg-Asheville Railroad. He died in 1902.

On February 28, 1923, the four children of David Duncan "sold" a tract of land west of the railroad to the city fathers of Spartanburg for ONE DOLLAR. Their one stipulation was that the park be named after their father. In late 1923, the City Council ordered a survey to be done for a roadway in Duncan Park and in 1924 the road was constructed. In early 1925 the Council's attention turned to what was to become Duncan Park Baseball Stadium. Originally calling for a simple athletic field, the Council provided for the excavation of the field and parking area and in January 1926 they awarded a contract of \$31,000 for grandstand seats.

The Spartanburg baseball team won the pennant of the Sally League in 1925. The team hoped to start the next season in the new Duncan Park. It was not until July 8th that the park was ready for the American pastime. Opening day was such a big event in the city that all the stores closed by afternoon. There were 2,500 fans in attendance in what was described as the last word in comfort, the best in the South. Even the mayor of Macon was present and he watched as the Spartanburg Spartans defeated the Macon Peaches, 5-1.

In the ensuing years there were New York State minor league clubs in spring training and in 1937 the New York Yankees played an exhibition game before moving onto New York. Spartanburg saw the "Yankee Clipper," Joe DiMaggio, Lefty Gomez and the "Iron Horse," Lou Gehrig. In 1936 and 1938, Duncan Park hosted the "World Series" of American Legion baseball with an incredible 12,000 fans in attendance for one of the games.

By 1937, a large pasture, located beyond center field, was replaced by a man-made lake and cutting the roads around it was the work of the depression-era WPA project. A year later, the WPA landscaped, beautified, and graded the park area.

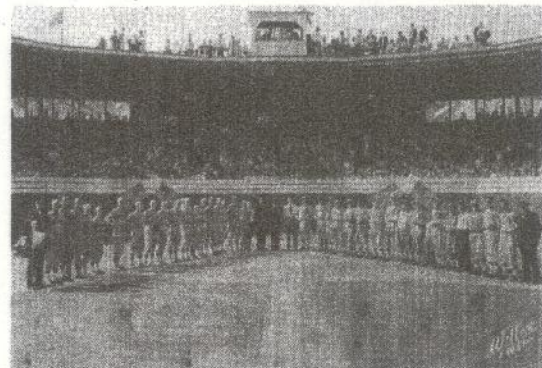
Since 1963 the Spartanburg Phillies, the Class A Sally League entry of the parent Philadelphia Phillies, have called Duncan Park home. This association with Philadelphia is one of the longest running major or minor league affiliations in the United States. Duncan Park has seen many players reach the major leagues. Duncan Park has seen some of the best of times and the worst of times. The franchise uncertainty of the early 80's had to be one of the worst of times; however, the monstrous home runs of Rocky Colavito in the early 50's, or the legendary home run by Ron Allen in 1966 that cleared the trees in right field and landed in the little league field, or the championship year of 1988 had to be the best of times.

On July 8, 1992, Duncan Park will turn 66 years old and has seen many changes and additions in those years. Lights were added in 1936 and updated in 1985. In the early 70's

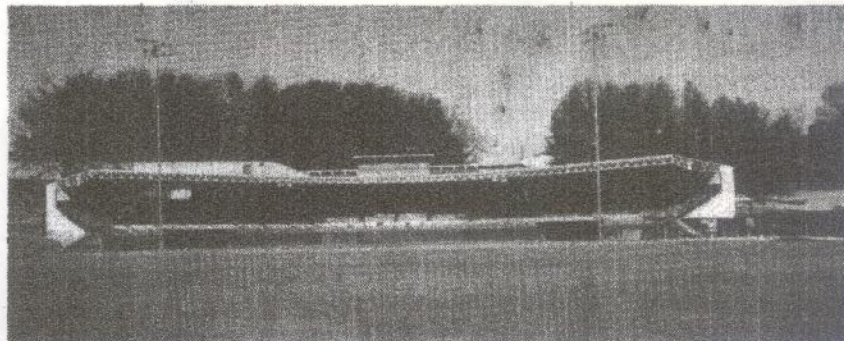
when the Phillies moved out of Connie Mack Stadium, seats from the shut down park were added to Duncan Park.

There are no better ways to spend a summer day or night than in a ball park. After a person stops collecting baseball hats, cards and balls, he then finds himself collecting baseball stadiums. There are thousands of ball fields across this nation. Some just base paths cut out of corn fields. Others are big, mammoth, artificial and plastic, the playground for the present-day stars. But there is another star, the real star, Duncan Park Stadium. The oldest minor league park with the newest major league stars. It has real grass, real dirt and good family fun. - The tradition continues.

(Lewis P. Jones contributed to this story)



1936



1992

1992 - Phillies Program

