

Major League Baseball's Spring Training in Florida, 1901-2001

Jonathan I. Leib

"There are alligators out there." Babe Ruth explaining why he would not go back into the outfield to shag fly balls after walking off the field during the first day of New York Yankees' 1925 spring training in St. Petersburg (quoted in McCarthy 1996, p. 153).

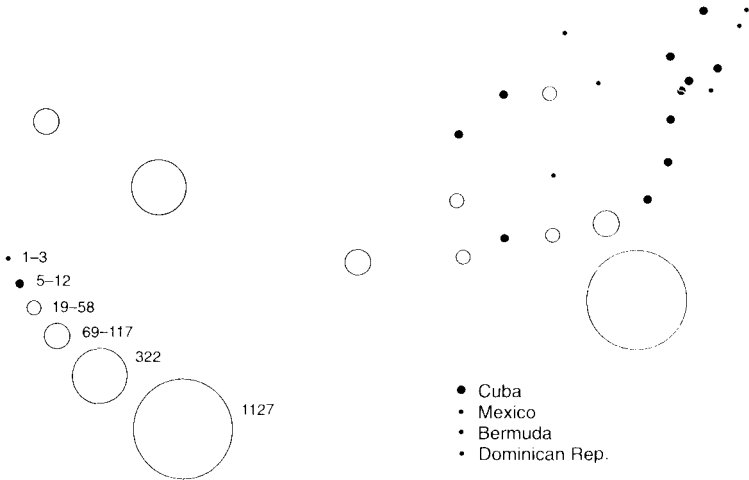
On March 22, 1888, over one thousand spectators watched at a baseball field located on the outskirts of Jacksonville as the National League's Washington Capitals and New York Giants played Florida's first spring training baseball game (McCarthy 1996). In 2001, 20 of Major League Baseball's 30 teams participated in Florida's annual baseball rite of renewal, spending six weeks in late February and March training for the upcoming baseball season at 19 spring training sites across the state.¹ Along with providing a warm weather base of operations for professional baseball players to prepare for the upcoming season, Florida spring training has long provided pictures of sunshine and palm trees to northern residents locked in the icy grip of winter's cold and snow. These pictures have also provided free advertising for Florida's mild winters to potential northern tourists and migrants. Along with pretty pictures, spring training provides tangible benefits to the communities across the state that host teams. In 2001, attendance at spring training games in Florida was over 1.5 million fans, with the Florida Sports Foundation (2001) reporting that spring training provided a positive economic impact to the state of nearly \$500 million dollars.

In the 101 seasons between 1901 and 2001, Florida has been the core area of spring training baseball. Despite being only a minor factor in spring trainings until the 1920s, 57% of the nearly 2,000 individual team spring trainings over the past 101 years (16-30 teams per year multiplied by 101 seasons) have been held in the

Dr. Leib is an associate professor of geography at Florida State University, Tallahassee.

Sunshine State. The over 1,100 Florida spring trainings are more than double that of the next two states (Arizona and California) combined (Figure 1). Since World War II, Florida has been the dominant state for spring training, with 70% being held in the state since 1946.

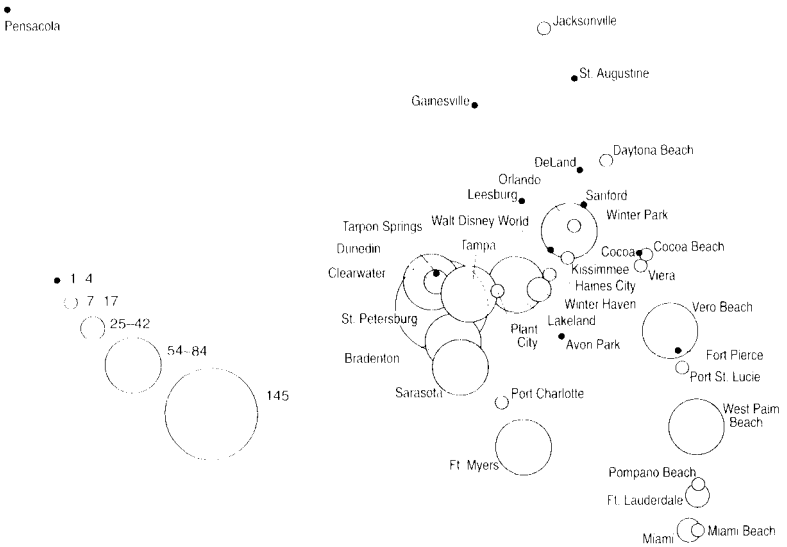
Figure 1
Number of Spring Trainings, 1901–2001



While Florida's spring trainings have been held from Pensacola to Miami Beach, the Tampa Bay area emerged in the 1920s as the state's spring training core area. St. Petersburg ranks first as a spring training site, having hosted 145 spring trainings or 13% of the state's total (St. Petersburg hosted two teams for spring training for most years between the 1920s and 1980s). Along with spring trainings held in Tampa, Clearwater, Sarasota, Bradenton, Dunedin, Plant City, and Tarpon Springs, the Tampa Bay region has hosted 44% of Florida's spring trainings over the past century. Adding to this group the spring trainings held in Fort Myers and Port Charlotte, the Florida Gulf Coast region has hosted a majority (51%) of the state's spring trainings. The state's southeast coast,

from Cocoa Beach to Miami Beach, has hosted 26%, while Central Florida has hosted 19%. North Florida, which was an important center for spring training activity in the early 20th century, has hosted approximately 3% of the state’s spring trainings (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Number of Spring Trainings in Florida, 1901–2001



This article traces the historical evolution and shifting spatial patterns of Florida as a destination for baseball’s spring training. After discussing the limitations of the data, this article looks at Florida’s emergence and dominance as a spring training center over four time periods: 1901-1912, when Florida was a minor center for spring training; 1913-1942, when Florida became the core spring training area; 1943-1960, when major league baseball and Florida’s spring training centers were faced with integration and challenges to Jim Crow segregation; and 1961-2001, when

major league baseball expanded into a nationwide sport and Florida communities faced challenges from emerging spring training centers in Arizona.

Limitations of the Data

Before tracing the historical geography of spring training in Florida, we must first address some limitations of the data on the locations of baseball's spring training sites. While baseball's first professional club, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was organized in 1869, baseball historians are uncertain as to when the first professional baseball team traveled to the southern United States during the late winter to prepare for the upcoming season. Friedman (1999) notes that while in the late 1800s many northern teams traveled south during the winter, it is difficult to differentiate to what degree these trips were taken to train for the upcoming season from "barnstorming," in which teams would travel from town to town to take on local teams to make extra money before the start of their professional seasons. Given the confusing and incomplete histories of late 19th century spring training, the *Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball* (Thorn, Palmer, Gershman, and Pietrusza 1999; Thorn, Palmer and Gershman 2001) lists spring training sites for each team starting with the beginning of the modern baseball era in 1901 (that year marked the birth of the American League, joining the National League which started in 1876).

As a result, this essay examines only 20th century major league baseball spring training sites. A second limitation is that for the first half of the 20th century, Major League Baseball was only one of two entities playing high-caliber professional baseball in the United States. From 1920 to the 1950s, a series of African American professional baseball leagues (e.g., Negro National League, Eastern Colored League, Southern Negro League, Negro American League) played in parallel to the segregated (until 1947) Major Leagues (Peterson 1970). Some "Negro League" teams conducted spring training in the South (for example, in the 1930s the Pittsburgh Crawfords trained in Hot Springs, Arkansas and New Orleans (Bankes 1991), however their sites are not listed in this study for two reasons. First, no known database exists listing all the Negro League teams spring training locations. Second, Negro League teams spring training were much shorter, if they were held at all (Tygiel 1997), than those of the Major Leagues (Chadwick 1992)

suggests that Negro teams' spring training lasted about one week). One reason was that, while many Major League baseball players used the longer spring training period to get into playing shape, many Negro League baseball players played considerably more games during "baseball season" in the US than did their white counterparts, and continued to play during the winter months in Latin American baseball hotbeds (such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Venezuela) where they were paid better, and did not face the obstacles of segregation and racism that were found in the United States (Bankes 1991, Chadwick 1992, Tygiel 1997).

Spring Training in Florida: 1901-1912

While spring training first came to Florida in 1888, the early 20th century demonstrates that it was not inevitable that Florida would become baseball's spring training core region. Most teams did travel south for spring training in the early 20th century. Of the 192 opportunities to host spring training from 1901 to 1912 (16 teams multiplied by 12 seasons), 154 (80%) were held in the eleven states of the South (in addition, 8 were held in California). However, Florida was a minor base of operation for spring training, hosting only six (3%) during this time period. Cities across Georgia hosted the most spring trainings (23%), followed by Texas and Arkansas. Late 19th and early 20th century southern resort cities were popular spring training locations during the time period, with Hot Springs, Arkansas being the main spring training center of the period. Hot Springs hosted 25 spring trainings, including five teams in 1910 alone (Boston Red Sox, Brooklyn, Chicago Cubs, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh). Jacksonville was the site of all six of Florida's spring trainings during this time period, with no more than one team training there in any one season (Figure 3).

Spring Training in Florida: 1913-1942

In the 1920s and 1930s, Florida moved from a peripheral region for spring training baseball to being the main center of activity. In the 20 seasons between 1923 and 1942, 56% of spring trainings nationwide were held in the state. In terms of spatial patterns, the major change occurred as spring training baseball shifted further south in Florida to the Tampa Bay region especially and to a lesser extent to central Florida and the state's southeastern coast.

Figure 3
Spring Training in Florida

• Jacksonville
(Cincinnati)

1905

Northern Florida retained a minor spring training presence until the early 1920s and then sporadically into the 1930s. The region hosted one to three spring training teams each year between 1913 and 1922 (in Jacksonville, Pensacola, Saint Augustine, Daytona Beach and Gainesville) and then for several seasons in the 1930s.

The major shift in Florida spring training locations began in 1913 when the Chicago Cubs transferred their spring training operations from New Orleans to Tampa. While the Cubs only stayed in Tampa for four seasons, moving to California in 1917, the Cubs started the Tampa Bay region's long-standing dominance in spring training. Ironically, the Cubs' four seasons in Tampa would

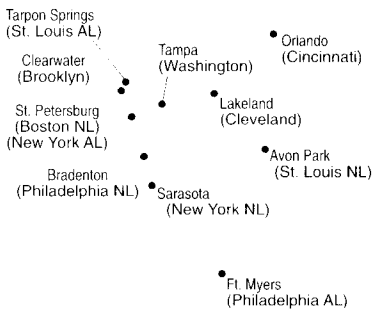
be the only seasons during the 20th century that they would train in Florida. Across Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg hosted its first spring training team in 1914 when the St. Louis Browns moved their operations from Waco, Texas. The first spring training game held in St. Petersburg that year between the Cubs and Browns drew a crowd of 4,000, some of whom came by boat and special trains, with the day declared a city holiday with businesses and schools closed (Zinsser 1989; McCarthy 1996). While the Browns returned to Texas after only one season in St. Petersburg, the Philadelphia Phillies took their place in 1915.

The rise of the Tampa Bay region as spring training's core area occurred in the mid 1920s. In 1923, four teams trained in the area: the Washington Senators in Tampa, Boston Braves in St. Petersburg, St. Louis Cardinals in Bradenton, and the Brooklyn Dodgers in Clearwater. By 1925, seven teams trained in the area (two teams trained in St. Petersburg as the Boston Braves were joined by the

New York Yankees, the Browns established a spring training base in Tarpon Springs, while the New York Giants trained in Sarasota). In addition, the Philadelphia Athletics set up operations farther south along the Gulf Coast in Fort Myers. Thus, by the mid-1920s, half of major league baseball's 16 teams were training along Florida's Gulf Coast (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Spring Training in Florida

1927



While there would be movement among some teams from one city to another, from 1923 to 1942 anywhere between four and seven teams trained each year in the Tampa Bay area, with Fort Myers also hosting a team through much of this period. During this twenty year span, the Tampa Bay region became the core area for spring training, with one-third of all of baseball's spring trainings held in the region. Adding the fourteen years spring training was held in Fort Myers during this period, the southern Florida Gulf Coast hosted 38% of all spring trainings.

To a lesser extent, other parts of the state also became spring training centers. Central Florida hosted its first spring training in 1922 when the Philadelphia Phillies shifted operations from Gainesville to Leesburg. Between 1923 and 1942, one to four cities in central Florida hosted spring training teams each season, including Leesburg, Orlando, Lakeland, Winter Haven, Avon Park, Winter Park, Deland and Sanford. During this twenty-year period, 16% of spring trainings were held in central Florida.

Southeastern Florida was a minor base of spring training operations between 1913 and 1942. For only five seasons did two teams train in this part of the state, while no teams trained there in 14 seasons. Miami hosted the first team in the region in 1916, but between 1921 and 1927, no teams trained in southeastern Florida at the same time as the Tampa Bay region blossomed as a spring training center. Between 1923 and 1942, only 5% of spring

trainings were held in the area, with Miami, Miami Beach and West Palm Beach being the only cities to host spring training.

The person who receives the most credit for turning the Tampa Bay region specifically and Florida in general into a spring training center is St. Petersburg's Al Lang (Zissner 1988, McCarthy 1996, Friedman 1999). Lang moved to St. Petersburg from Pittsburgh in the early 1910s, and then started enticing major league baseball teams to come to the area for spring training (Lang would be twice elected mayor of St. Petersburg in the late 1910s). In 1914, Lang brought the St. Louis Browns to St. Petersburg, though they stayed only one year following a dispute over who would pay the team's expenses.

Lang continued working to bring spring training to St. Petersburg in the 1920s. In 1920, Lang orchestrated the building of a new ballpark in St. Petersburg, and brought the Boston Braves to the city in 1922 (McCarthy 1996). In 1925, he lured the New York Yankees to St. Petersburg. With Babe Ruth as the main attraction, ticket sales to Yankees spring training games soared, with 270,000 fans watching Ruth and the Yankees during the 1928 pre-season (Friedman 1999). Lang also encouraged other teams to move close by so that by the mid-1920s the Tampa-St. Petersburg area was baseball's premier spring training center (Zissner 1988).

While some teams stayed in one city for a decade or more, others moved frequently. For example, while the Yankees trained in St. Petersburg from 1925 to 1942, their New York City cross-river rivals, the Giants, trained in nine different cities during that time period (Sarasota; Miami; Miami Beach; Winter Haven; Augusta, Georgia; San Antonio, Texas; Los Angeles; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Havana, Cuba).

As is the case today, cities in the 1920s and 1930s offered economic inducements to entice teams to train in their cities. The St. Louis Cardinals provide one example. In 1923, the Cardinals became Bradenton's first spring training tenant, leaving Texas after Bradenton's Spring Training committee "agreed to sell two thousand dollars worth of tickets" to Cardinals' exhibition games (Zissner 1988, 25). The Cardinals spent only two years in Bradenton, moving on to Stockton, California in 1925 and San Antonio, Texas in 1926. However, the city of Avon Park was able to lure the Cardinals back to Florida for the 1927, 1928, and 1929 seasons after the city "guaranteed" Cardinal ownership fifteen thousand dollars per year to hold spring training in their city (Stockton 1961, 227). Officials in Avon Park struggled to make

their 1928 and 1929 payments, and in 1930 the Cardinals moved back to Bradenton, where they would remain through 1936 (Zissner 1988). In 1937, the Cardinals moved their spring training operations to Daytona Beach in exchange for a payment of five thousand dollars (Friedman 1999). However, their stay in Daytona Beach lasted only one season, and in 1938 the Cardinals moved back across the state to St. Petersburg, which, except for three years during World War II, would be their spring training home for the next sixty years.

Thus cities competed with each other, offering cash inducements and other amenities to attract teams. This is not to suggest that places in Florida did not gain from the arrangement. Through their investments in stadiums and teams, Florida communities in the 1920s were able to buy themselves publicity in northern baseball cities at a time when baseball's popularity was soaring, and also at the time of the Florida land boom and as the state's popularity as a tourist destination was increasing (see Rogers 1996). In addition, there were more tangible benefits. McCarthy (1996) notes that the Yankees agreement in the early 1930s to house their players and entourage in St. Petersburg's Don Ce Sar Hotel reportedly saved the resort from "financial ruin" during the Depression.

Spring Training in Florida: 1943-1960

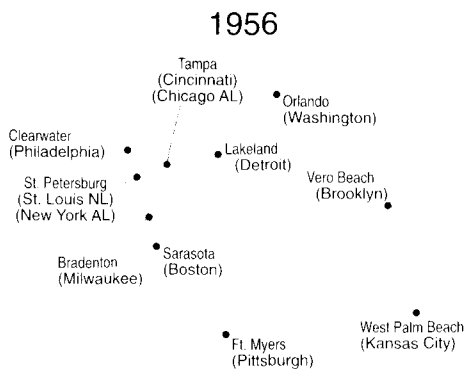
World War II travel restrictions kept major league baseball teams close to home for spring training in 1943, 1944, and 1945. So, Chicago's Cubs and White Sox trained in French Lick, Indiana; the Washington Senators trained in College Park, Maryland; while the New York Giants trained in Lakewood, New Jersey.

After a three-year hiatus, spring training returned to Florida in 1946. Between 1946 and 1960, spring training locations would stabilize, as many teams retained semi-permanent spring training sites. In 1946, the Philadelphia Phillies moved their spring training to Clearwater, where it has remained since. The Detroit Tigers returned to Lakeland, still their spring training home. The Washington Senators returned to Orlando, their spring training base through 1990. In fact, the Senators spring training location was more stable than the franchise itself, which retained their Orlando spring training base even after the franchise moved to Minnesota before the start of the 1961 season.

In the fifteen seasons after World War II (1946-1960), Florida solidified its hold as the nation's premier spring training region (Figure 5). Seventy percent of baseball's spring trainings during

this time period were held in Florida (including 13 of baseball's 16 teams in 1955). Within the state, the Tampa Bay region retained its hold as the core area for spring training, as 56% of all Florida's spring trainings and 39% of all of baseball's spring trainings during the time period were held in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Bradenton and Sarasota (including the six spring trainings in Fort Myers, the Florida Gulf Coast hosted 59% of Florida's and 41% of all spring trainings).

Figure 5
Spring Training in Florida



Southeast Florida grew as a spring training site during the time period, though not rivaling that of the Tampa-St. Petersburg area, as 22% of Florida's and 15% of all spring trainings from 1946 to 1960 were held in Miami, Miami Beach, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Vero Beach. Central Florida continued as a minor spring training region, with Lakeland and Orlando serving as hosts for 18% of Florida's and 13% of baseball's spring trainings.

The stabilization of spring training sites hides the time period's biggest challenge to spring training in Florida (and to Major League Baseball itself): racial integration. In 1945, Brooklyn Dodgers' General Manager Branch Rickey signed Negro League player Jackie Robinson. Robinson played the 1946 season for Brooklyn's top minor league farm team in Montreal, and in 1947 he became the first African American in the 20th century to play in the Major Leagues. Cleveland Indians' owner Bill Veeck followed in 1947 by signing Larry Doby, who became the first African American to play in the American League. With the majority of

baseball teams training in Florida, many parts of which were still under the control of Jim Crow (Jones 1996, Mohl and Mormino 1996), integration brought challenges to Florida's spring training.²

With the signing of Robinson, the Brooklyn Dodgers first attempt to break baseball's color barrier on the field occurred in March 1946 at their spring training camp in Daytona Beach, a city governed by Jim Crow segregation. Speculation in both the white and black northern press questioned whether Robinson could survive spring training in Florida. As a writer for the *Brooklyn Eagle* wondered the day after the official announcement of Robinson's signing in October 1945,

Probably the first headache will come next spring . . . in Daytona Beach, Fla. and anyone who has traveled that far South can't help but wonder just how things will be arranged. Fundamental things such as where he will sleep and where he will eat. Not to mention what traveling accommodations they'll let him have in deepest Dixie (quoted in Tygiel 1997, 99).

While Jackie Robinson had experienced segregation in the military during World War II, for he and his wife Rachel, both raised in California, their spring training experience would provide painful lessons on living under the rules of Jim Crow. Just getting to Daytona Beach for the beginning of spring training proved to be an ordeal, as their airplane trip from California to Florida turned into a nightmare once they reached the South. Bumped off their connecting flight in New Orleans, the Robinson's would not be served at the airport's restaurants and found only a dilapidated black hotel to wait for the next available flight. Once they left New Orleans, their plane stopped at Pensacola, where the Robinson's were ordered off the plane so two white passengers could board in their place. They bused to Jacksonville, forced to sit in the inferior, crowded, and nauseating Jim Crow section at the back of the bus. Rachel Robinson described the cramped black waiting room at the Jacksonville bus terminal, where they waited for their ride to Daytona Beach, as a "wretched hell hole" (quoted in Tygiel 1997, 100). Upon their delayed arrival in Daytona Beach, Jackie Robinson noted, "Well I finally made it, but I never want another trip like that one" (quoted in Tygiel 1997, 101).

Both the Dodgers and their top minor league farm team, the Montreal Royals to whom Robinson was assigned, trained in Daytona Beach in 1946. Because of local Jim Crow laws, the

Robinson's were not allowed to stay in the team's hotel, and the Dodgers had to find the Robinson's separate accommodations in the black section of the city. However, Daytona Beach officials *did* allow Robinson to play on the field against white baseball players. Other north Florida cities were not as accommodating. Enforcing bans on the mixing of the races on its playing fields, public officials in Jacksonville and Deland canceled scheduled Royals' spring training games rather than allow Robinson and the Dodgers' other black signee, John Wright, from sharing the field with white players. In Sanford, the Chief of Police came on to the field during the middle of a Royals' spring training game and ordered Montreal's manager to expel Robinson and Wright from the stadium or the game would be shut down (Tygiel 1997).

While Daytona Beach officials lobbied the Dodgers to sign a long term contract to keep the team's spring training in the city, Branch Rickey decided otherwise in light of the problems faced, and in 1947 the Dodgers shifted their spring training base out of the South (Tygiel 1997). Despite incurring much higher costs, the Dodgers avoided segregation in Florida by holding their 1947 spring training in Havana, Cuba, while playing their pre-season games in Cuba and Panama (though, ironically, to avoid potential confrontations with white players, the Dodgers had the four black players on their 1947 spring training roster stay at a separate hotel from the rest of the squad in Havana, living and eating in much poorer conditions than their white teammates (Tygiel 1997). Robinson made the major league team in 1947 and became a star in his first season.

After their sojourn to the Caribbean, Branch Rickey moved the Dodgers' spring training back to Florida. However, in doing so, he wanted to avoid the Jim Crow headaches the team faced earlier. Rickey solved the problems of training an integrated team in Florida by leasing a decommissioned naval base in Vero Beach in 1948 and turning it into the Dodgers' spring training complex. "Dodgertown," as it became known, was a city within a city. Controlled and operated by the team, Dodgertown became a "haven of tolerance," insulated from Vero Beach's segregation, a place where "black and white players could room together, eat together, and train together without interference from outside authorities" (Tygiel 1997, 316-317). To allow black players to avoid Vero Beach's Jim Crow system, team officials at Dodgertown showed movies, built a nine-hole golf course for the players, and had an airstrip that could provide transportation in and out of the

facility (Tygiel 1997).

While the Dodgers went to great lengths to provide a shield for its black players from Jim Crow in Florida, other teams in the late 1940s and 1950s avoided the problem altogether by holding spring training outside of Florida and the South. In 1953, five of the seven major league teams with African American players on their rosters held spring training in either Arizona or California (Tygiel 1997, Friedman 1999). The Cleveland Indians, the first American League team to break baseball's color barrier, was one of these teams. The Indians trained in Lakeland in the mid 1920s, Fort Myers in the early 1940s, and Clearwater in 1946, before moving spring training operations in 1947 to Tucson, Arizona, where they would be based for the next 45 years. The Indians and New York Giants, who moved from Miami to Phoenix the same year, became the first teams to train in Arizona since 1929.

Cleveland Indians' owner Bill Veeck was the motivating force behind the team's move west. Veeck had bought the team in 1946, and his decision to move the Indians' spring training out of Florida was based on his experience in the early 1940s as owner of the minor league Milwaukee Brewers team. The Brewers had held their spring training in segregated Ocala. Veeck decided to watch a Brewers' spring training game with black fans in the segregated Jim Crow section of Ocala's ballpark. While Veeck was chatting with the fans, the local sheriff tried to remove him. When he refused to leave, Ocala's mayor came and ordered him out of the black section of the stands for violating a city ordinance. Veeck refused again, and told the mayor that if he were removed, he would immediately pull the Brewers out of Ocala, cancel the team's six-week booking at the Ocala Hotel, and seek national publicity explaining why the team left town in the middle of spring training. Local officials backed off, and Veeck sat in the black section of the ballpark every day for the remainder of spring training (Veeck 2001, 177-178). At that point, Veeck vowed not to return to Florida for spring training until conditions had changed.

The Indians first spring training in Arizona in 1947 was uneventful. In July 1947, Veeck signed Negro Leaguer Larry Doby, who became the second black player in the major leagues. When the Indians returned to Tucson in 1948, management at the Santa Rita Hotel, their base of operations, informed Veeck that Doby could not stay there. The Indians acquiesced. Doby stayed with a local family, but Veeck told the hotel that if all of the team's players, regardless of race, were not allowed to stay in the hotel in

future years the team was moving to another facility (Veeck 2001, 178; Tygiel 1997, 235).

Although some teams training in Arizona faced segregated housing for their players into the early 1950s, most Florida spring training sites remained segregated throughout the decade. While most cities around the state had relented and allowed black and white ballplayers to play on the same field together (in fact, many cities lobbied to have the Dodgers play exhibition games in their ballparks given that Jackie Robinson was a major attendance draw, especially among African American fans), players remained segregated in their housing and eating facilities (Davis 1992, Tygiel 1997). As well, spectators at spring training games were segregated into white and black seating areas. The fan segregation was also true for black and white ballplayers who would sometimes watch spring training games from the stands. For example, in 1955, the Pittsburgh Pirates, training for the first time in Fort Myers and holding only their third Florida spring training since 1918, encountered this problem. As Tygiel (1997, 315) notes, "local officials ordered blacks on the Pirates who did not suit up for the first exhibition game [of the season] to sit in the colored section." Thereafter, the Pirates instructed all players to appear in uniform even if they were not scheduled to play." The Cincinnati Reds encountered a similar situation at their spring training ballpark in Tampa.

In the early 1960s, Florida's spring training facilities finally became fully integrated. In January 1961, the St. Petersburg chapter of the NAACP launched a public campaign to end segregated facilities at spring training sites. St. Petersburg provided a logical site to launch the campaign as it was the leading center for spring training, it was the spring training home of the New York Yankees and St. Louis Cardinals, and it was a fully segregated city into the late 1950s (Davis 1992). Black players on the Yankees and Cardinals, as well as other teams in the state, called for the desegregation of spring training hotels and other facilities. The Yankees requested in February 1961 that their hotel in St. Petersburg, the Sereno, desegregate immediately and allow its black players to room there. The Sereno declined (as did the Vinoy Park Hotel where the white Cardinal players stayed), and the Yankees moved their spring training the following year to Fort Lauderdale, where their hotel allowed all Yankee players, black and white, to stay (though Davis [1992] and McCarthy [1996] suggest that for Yankee ownership, the move the Fort Lauderdale was not based solely for

this reason).

The first major breakdown of segregated spring training facilities in 1961 came as the result of actions by Bill Veeck, who had bought the Chicago White Sox two years earlier and who in the late 1940s had moved his Cleveland Indians to Arizona to avoid Jim Crow. Responding to the NAACP's call for an end to segregated spring training facilities, Veeck canceled his team's reservations at Miami's McAllister Hotel for an upcoming series of spring training games after the hotel informed him that they would not allow the White Sox's black players to stay there. Veeck then asked a nearby hotel, the Biscayne Terrace, to allow all of his players to stay there, and they agreed (Davis 1992).

Veeck's actions were followed by other teams. In March 1961, the Milwaukee Braves eliminated Jim Crow segregation at their spring training ballpark in Bradenton, "abolishing segregated seating requirements and removing discriminatory signs at washrooms, ticket windows, and gates." Other Florida spring training stadiums followed the Braves' lead (Davis 1992, 161).

For the 1962 season, baseball officials and local politicians worked behind the scenes to secure integrated accommodations for most teams training in Florida. In St. Petersburg, arrangements were made for the Cardinals and the expansion New York Mets to stay at hotels other than the Vinoy Park and Soreno (Davis 1992).

While most team's hotels became integrated for the start of spring training in 1962, two exceptions, the Philadelphia Phillies in Clearwater and the Minnesota Twins in Orlando, stand out. In Clearwater, the Phillies' hotel, the Jack Tar Harrison, refused to house the team's black players. In response, black community leaders in Philadelphia announced they would picket the team's regular season home games in Philadelphia that year. Under pressure, the Phillies moved its players to a hotel across Tampa Bay. The Jack Tar Harrison's management changed its policy two weeks later, and the Phillies resumed their affiliation with the hotel (Davis 1992).

The last team to stay in a segregated hotel, the Minnesota Twins in Orlando, agreed to move their spring training operations to an integrated hotel in 1964. As was the case in Philadelphia, the Minnesota chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) vowed in early 1964 to picket the Twins' regular season home games in Bloomington, Minnesota if the team did not move into an integrated spring training hotel. Acceding to the planned protest, the Twins agreed in March to move into an integrated hotel (Davis

1992). Thus, sixteen seasons after Jackie Robinson had integrated organized baseball and the Dodgers' started to challenge Jim Crow on the baseball fields of Florida, the state's spring training had finally become fully integrated.

Spring Training in Florida: 1961-2001

The 1950s and early 1960s saw the beginnings of two related trends in baseball franchise locations. While in the first half of the Twentieth Century major league baseball was only played in the northeastern and midwestern U.S., the 1950s saw the major leagues spreading into a truly "national" pastime, as the majors saw their first franchise shifts since 1903. The boundaries of baseball stretched greatly with two of New York City's three teams, the Dodgers and Giants, moving to Los Angeles and San Francisco after the 1957 season, thus becoming the majors' first teams west of Missouri. The mid-1960s move of the Milwaukee Braves (who had moved from Boston in the early 1950s) to Atlanta gave major league baseball its first franchise in the southeastern U.S.

The movement of franchises occurred at approximately the same time as Major League Baseball greatly expanded its number of teams. In 1961, for the first time in sixty years, baseball expanded beyond sixteen teams, adding eight teams during the decade. While some of these teams reinforced baseball's northeast-midwest core by replacing franchises that had moved away (such as new teams in New York, Washington and Kansas City), other teams further expanded baseball's national reach (e.g., Houston, San Diego, Seattle, and a second Los Angeles area team) and continental reach (e.g., Montreal). With the beginning of the 1998 season, major league baseball had thirty franchises, almost double the number in 1960, and had teams spread throughout the United States and into Canada, a far different geography than in the early 1950s.

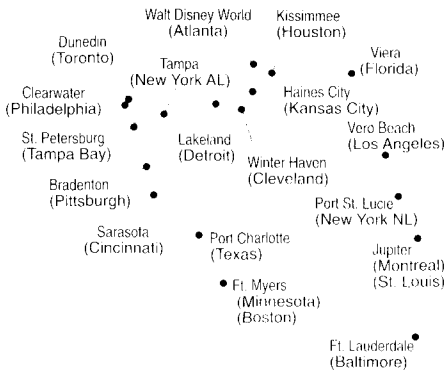
Paradoxically, the expansion and spread of baseball franchises provided both an opportunity and a threat to Florida as baseball's spring training core. With more franchises, more cities in Florida could become spring training centers. At the same time, the spread of baseball teams meant that, unlike in previous periods, various teams were now closer to other potential warm weather spring training sites (i.e., Arizona) than they were to Florida. Also, the development of jet airline service made sites in Arizona "closer" to teams in the northeast and midwest than ever before.

The map of spring training sites also shifted in the 1950s, as Arizona replaced California as the primary challenger to Florida's domination. In the 1930s and 1940s, California was the second leading spring training site, hosting four teams in most years. However, in the early 1950s, spring training in California ended as the leaders of the Pacific Coast League, a top minor league with the majority of its franchises in California, effectively kicked out Major League Baseball teams from spring training sites in the state (Friedman 1998, 571). At the time, the Pacific Coast League was mounting a challenge to the American and National Leagues as a third major league. The result was that Arizona replaced California as the center for western spring training.

Despite challenges from Arizona, between 1961 and 2001 Florida maintained its position as the preeminent center for spring training. During the 41 season span, 70% of spring trainings were held in Florida, with Arizona hosting the remaining 30%.³ Florida hosted a high of 80% from 1966 to 1968 (16 of 20 teams), and a low of 67% (20 of 30 teams) between 1998 and 2001. This latter figure will drop over the next several years as two current Florida spring training teams (Texas and Kansas City) have agreed to move their spring training operations to Arizona.

Throughout this period, the Tampa Bay area specifically and the Florida Gulf Coast in general maintained their positions as premier centers for spring training. The Tampa Bay area hosted six or seven teams during the time period, and the entire Gulf Coast region anywhere from seven to ten (including teams in St. Petersburg, Tampa, Clearwater, Dunedin, Plant City, Bradenton, Sarasota, Port Charlotte, and Fort Myers). Both southeastern and central Florida increased their number of spring training teams as well. In the late 1960s, early 1970s, and again in the early 1980s, seven teams trained along the southeastern coast (two teams in West Palm Beach, and one each in Cocoa Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Pompano Beach and Vero Beach), while in the late 1980s, and again in the late 1990s, five teams trained in central Florida (Haines City, Kissimmee, Lakeland, and Winter Haven, in addition to Orlando in the late 1980s and at Walt Disney World in the late 1990s). These patterns are apparent in the map of 2001 Florida spring training sites (Figure 6). Over the forty one season period from 1961 to 2001, 37% of Florida's spring trainings were held in the Tampa Bay area (with 46% occurring along the Florida Gulf Coast), 34% were held along the southeast coast, and 20% in Central Florida.

Figure 6
Spring Training in Florida
2001



Between the mid 1960s and the mid 1980s, spring training sites in Florida became very stable, with few teams switching locations during this period. Of Florida's sixteen spring training teams in 1966, fourteen held spring training in the same city in 1984. However, the mid 1980s saw the beginning of a period of upheaval in Florida spring training locations that continues to the present. The late 1970s and 1980s was a period in which Major League Baseball underwent re-

newed interest in the U.S., leading to increases in attendance. Increases in interest and attendance were also exhibited at spring training sites (Friedman 1999). With Florida cities competing for national exposure and associated revenue accruing from hosting a spring training team, cities across the central and southern part of the state started a fierce bidding war. The result, in the mid to late 1980s and 1990s, was that Florida cities and counties spent increasing amounts of money to lure teams to their newly built facilities, with teams looking to increase their revenue streams.

For example, in 1985, the Houston Astros were lured from Cocoa Beach to Kissimmee with a new \$5.5 million spring training facility, while two years later Charlotte County built a \$5.6 million complex in Port Charlotte to bring the Texas Rangers from Pompano Beach. The cost of new facilities increased dramatically as demonstrated by efforts in Fort Myers in the early 1990s to bring in spring training teams after the city lost the Kansas City Royals to the Haines City area in 1988. In 1991, Lee County built a \$15 million complex to bring the Minnesota Twins to Fort Myers from Orlando, while the city of Fort Myers spent \$25 million to lure the Boston Red Sox from Winter Haven in 1993. The building of new facilities and stealing of teams continued among Florida cities into the mid and late 1990s. In 1994, Hillsborough County Commis-

sioners approved the building of a \$17 million spring training facility for the New York Yankees (the Yankees moved to Tampa from Ft. Lauderdale in 1996)(McCarthy 1996). Even the Disney Corporation, whose Walt Disney World dominates Florida's lucrative tourism industry and has over the past thirty years been the economic engine driving central Florida's growth (Winsberg 1992), joined the spring training movement, enticing the Atlanta Braves to move from West Palm Beach to its new Wide World of Sports entertainment complex in 1998 (Friedman 1999).

Cities and counties make the argument that spending public funds to build spring training complexes makes economic sense because of the \$20-\$25 million yearly economic impact that each team brings its home community (e.g., ESPN 2001, Florida Sports Council 2001). Academics studying the economic impact of professional sports on local communities (e.g., Rosentraub 1999) urge that such figures be used cautiously because professional sports advocates often wildly exaggerate the impact of pro sports on their home communities. Such charges of exaggeration have been leveled against spring training economic impact studies as well (ESPN 2001).

Whatever the economic gains that come with spring training, Florida cities have demonstrated that there are costs involved as well. The cost of maintaining Plant City's spring training facility, which hosted the Cincinnati Reds from 1987 to 1997, reached \$400,000 per year (about 1% of the city's budget) by the end of the Reds tenure; while by 1997, West Palm Beach was spending approximately \$1 million in annual upkeep costs of its spring training facility (ESPN 2001). Homestead suffered the worst economic loss of any Florida city trying to lure a team for spring training. In 1991, Homestead spent \$22 million to build a spring training facility to entice the Cleveland Indians from their long time spring training base in Arizona. However, Hurricane Andrew significantly damaged the facility, with repairs costing an additional \$8 million. Indians' management rethought their impending move to Homestead, and relocated to Winter Haven instead, leaving Homestead without a spring training tenant (McCarthy 1996).

The building of facilities and chasing of teams continues in Florida. West Palm Beach, which in 1998 lost its two spring training tenants, the Atlanta Braves and Montreal Expos, is considering building a \$35 million complex in an attempt to entice the Baltimore Orioles from Fort Lauderdale and the New York Mets from

Port St. Lucie. The irony is that the Mets moved to Port St. Lucie in 1988, after being lured there from St. Petersburg with a new facility built by St. Lucie County. However, St. Lucie County officials are fighting the potential loss of the Mets by trying to sign them to a new lease agreement, or, if they should fail, targeting the Cleveland Indians to move to Port St. Lucie from Winter Haven (ESPN 2001). Thus cities across central and south Florida continue to engage in ever increasingly expensive franchise chasing.

At the same time that cities in Florida are trying to steal teams from each other, cities in Arizona are also involved in similar spring training franchise chasing and, as well, are attempting to steal teams from cities in Florida. The cost of spring training facilities in Arizona increased greatly in 1994, when the Phoenix suburb of Peoria built a \$32 million complex to bring the Seattle Mariners and San Diego Padres from Tempe and Yuma respectively. In 1998, Tucson built a new complex for the expansion Arizona Diamondbacks and to lure the Chicago White Sox across the country from Sarasota, their spring training home since 1960 (Friedman 1999). The raiding of Florida spring training teams will continue in either 2002 or 2003, as two Florida teams (the Royals and Rangers) have agreed to move into a new \$45 million complex in Paradise, Arizona (the Rangers abandoning their fifteen year old facility in Port Charlotte) (Friedman 2001). In addition, in recent years officials in the Las Vegas area and in southern Texas have discussed building spring training facilities and bringing from four to six teams to these areas (including some from Florida) (e.g., Hilderbrand 1996, Carp 1997, Kantowski 2000). While the Las Vegas and Texas proposals have yet to be realized, these examples suggest that Florida's future dominance of spring training is not assured.

Conclusion

This article has detailed Florida's long-standing dominance of Major League Baseball's spring training. Since the 1920s, the core area of Florida's (and the country's) spring training activity has been found in the Tampa-St. Petersburg region. However, underlying this seeming stability have been periods of instability, both in terms of the locations of teams and the local contexts in which they have trained. While Johnson (1983) correctly notes that of the four long-established professional sports leagues in North America (Major League Baseball, National Football League, National

Basketball Association, and National Hockey League), only baseball franchises have displayed "locational stability" with relatively few franchises moving from place to place, their spring training operations have gone through periods of both locational stability and instability. In many ways, the spring training pattern of teams shifting their operations from city to city on a more frequent basis is more similar to that of franchises in minor league baseball than of the major leagues (Leib 1989, Leib 1990).

Major League Baseball's spring training operations in Florida during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s also demonstrates that baseball (and Florida) were not immune to the local and national contexts in which they were situated. Baseball's efforts at racial integration and desegregation in some cases led and in some cases lagged behind the rest of the country. While today, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is most associated with "Deep South" states such as Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas, the response in Florida's spring training communities to baseball's integration attempts demonstrates that struggles were necessary throughout Florida to achieve civil rights for African Americans in the Sunshine State as well (see Rabby 1999).⁴

Baseball's spring training will likely remain an institution in Florida into the near future. However, challenges from other parts of the country suggest that it is too soon to tell whether Florida will be the dominant spring training region for the next hundred years as it has been for the past hundred years.

Notes

¹The Montreal Expos and St. Louis Cardinals share spring training facilities in Jupiter.

²Tygiel (1997, 33) suggests that issues of Jim Crow laws in Florida spring training cities was one of the excuses given by some in baseball for not admitting black players in the years before Major League Baseball integrated.

³Between 1961 and 1992, the Los Angeles (then California, and now Anaheim) Angels split their spring training each year between Mesa, Arizona and Palm Springs, California. Since 1993, the Angels have held spring training exclusively in Arizona.

⁴Though Major League Baseball officials, owners, players, and spectators, of course, were not themselves always willing participants in the effort to integrate the sport (see Tygiel 1997).

References

- Bankes, J. (1991) *The Pittsburgh Crawfords: The Lives & Times of Black Baseball's Most Exciting Team*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers.
- Carp, S. (1997) "LVCVA Kills Pro Baseball Training Site." *Las Vegas Sun*. September 23.
- Chadwick, B. (1992) *When the Game was Black and White*. New York: Abbeville Press.
- Davis, J.E. (1992) "Baseball's Reluctant Challenge: Desegregating Major League Spring Training Sites, 1961-1964." *Journal of Sports History*. 19:144-162.
- ESPN. (2001) "Outside the Lines: Fields of Green." Aired February 18, 2001. Show Transcript 47. Available at: www.espn.go.com/page2/tvlistings/show47transcript.html (accessed June 3, 2001).
- Florida Sports Foundation. (2001) "Florida Spring Training Attendance Tops 1.5 Million for Third Consecutive Year" (Press Release). Posted April 23. www.flasports.com/2001springatt.htm (accessed June 4, 2001).
- Friedman, M.E. (1999) "Spring Training," in J. Thorn, P. Palmer, M. Gershman, and D. Pietrusza, eds. *Total Baseball, The Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball* (Sixth Edition). pp. 570-573. Kingston, NY: Total Sports.
- Friedman, M.E., ed. (2001) *2001 Spring Training Baseball Yearbook*. Chapel Hill, NC: Vanguard Sports Publications.
- Hilderbrand, B. (1996) "Officials Want to Play Ball in the Majors." *Las Vegas Sun*. April 20.
- Johnson, A.T. (1983) "Municipal Administration and the Sports Relocation Issue." *Public Administration Review*. 43:519-528.
- Jones, M.D. (1996) "The African-American Experience in Twentieth-Century Florida." in M. Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida*. pp. 373-390. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Kantowski, R. (2000) "What About Spring Training?" *Las Vegas Sun*. April 28.

Leib, J.I. (1989) "Going, Going, Gone: Minor League Baseball Franchise Relocations in the Northeast." *Proceedings of the Middle States Division of the Association of American Geographers*. 21:89-97.

Leib, J.I. (1990) "The Historical Geography of Minor League Baseball in Pennsylvania: 1902-1989." *The Pennsylvania Geographer*. 28:3-14.

McCarthy, K. M. (1996) *Baseball in Florida*. Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press.

Mohl, R.A. and G.R. Mormino. (1996) "The Big Change in the Sunshine State: A Social History of Modern Florida." in M. Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida*. pp. 418-447. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida

Peterson, R. (1970) *Only the Ball was White*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Rabby, G.A. (1999) *The Pain and the Promise: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Rogers, W.W. (1996) "Fortune and Misfortune: The Paradoxical Twenties." in M. Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida*. pp. 287-303. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Rosentraub, M.S. (1999) *Major League Losers*. New York: Basic Books.

Stockton, J.R. (1961) "Spring Training in Florida." *Florida Historical Quarterly*. 39:221-230.

Thorn, J., P. Palmer, M. Gershman, and D. Pietrusza, eds. (1999) *Total Baseball, The Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball* (Sixth Edition). Kingston, NY: Total Sports.

The Florida Geographer

Thorn, J., P. Palmer, M. Gershman, eds. (2001) *Total Baseball, The Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball* (Seventh Edition). Kingston, NY: Total Sports Publishing.

Tygiel, J. (1997) *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (Expanded Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

Veeck, B. (2001) [1962] "*Veeck – As in Wreck.*" Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Winsberg, M. (1992) "Walt Disney World, Florida: The Creation of a Fantasy Landscape." In D.G. Janelle, ed., *Geographical Snapshots of North America*. pp. 350-353. New York: Guilford.

Zinsser, W. (1989) *Spring Training*. New York: Harper & Row.