

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Producers Park Grandstand in Riverside Park

Other names/site number Shulthis Stadium Grandstand; Riverside Park Grandstand; KHRI #: 125-332

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 520 East Oak Street

--

 not for publication

City or town Independence

--

 vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Montgomery Code 125 Zip code 67301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date _____

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture: Sports Facility/Stadium

Recreation and Culture: Other (Ticket sales, Restrooms, locker room for sports facility)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Not applicable

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete; Brick

roof: Concrete

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

The Producers Park Grandstand is located in the 106-acre Riverside Park in Independence, Montgomery County. The concrete and brick wing-shaped structure faces northeast at the southwest corner of Shulthis Stadium. The 1918 grandstand was built to accommodate 2500 spectators in both bleachers and box seating; below the seating area are a series of rooms for various supporting functions. Historically used for minor league baseball, the baseball field was replaced with a football and track field for Independence Unified School District #446. This grandstand is the sole remaining resource from the first night game in organized baseball history. Because the ball field and original light fixtures are no longer extant, only the grandstand itself is nominated.

Elaboration

Setting

The Producers Park Grandstand is located in Riverside Park, northeast of the intersection of East Oak and North 5th streets on the north side of Independence. The park itself covers 106 acres and is roughly bounded on the east by the Verdigris River, on the south by East Oak Street, on the west by North 5th Street, and Wells Drive on the north. The park currently includes the 1918 Shulthis Stadium, 1917 limestone shelter house, a miniature train ride, a miniature golf course, a 1950 Allan Herschell carousel, a swimming pool, tennis courts, playgrounds, and the Ralph Mitchell Zoo (Figure 1).¹

The grandstand is located in the southwest corner of Shulthis Stadium. North 5th Street is located on the west side, and west of the street is the city cemetery. To the north and northeast, beyond the stadium wall, is zoo. South of the stadium is the location of the community 4-H buildings, and south of those are the tennis courts. The miniature train ride, playground, and carousel are located east of the stadium.

Grandstand

The Producers Park Grandstand was built in 1918. The wing-shaped structure faces northeast towards the football field. The two story grandstand has a reinforced concrete substructure and seating area and red brick curtain walls (Figure 2).² When built, the grandstand had a seating capacity of 2500 provided by two rows of box seating and 14 rows of bleachers.³ The two rows of wooden boxes (no longer extant) were located closest to the field on concrete terraces that run the length of the grandstand (Figures 3 & 4).

The *Independence Daily Reporter* reported on March 28, 1930 that the foul ball screen was being replaced for the first time since the grandstand was new. This implies that the field side of the grandstand had not been changed up to this point in time. At the same time there was also an addition being tacked onto the bleachers to give additional seating capacity.⁴ Since the grandstand already had box seating prior to this, the addition added on would have been an additional row of box seats (Figure

¹ The park's general layout is attributed to Kansas City, Missouri-based landscape architect George E. Kessler. The zoo includes a swan pool, various animal pens, and the 1932 Monkey Island. This island consists of a stone castle surrounded by a moat. Monkey Island is the birthplace of Miss Able, a rhesus monkey, who on May 28, 1959 became one of the first monkeys to go into space and return alive.

² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Independence, Kansas, June 1923; *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 3, 1918; Independence Centennial Committee, *Independence, Kansas, 1870-1970*. N.p.: Author, 1970, 63.

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Independence, Kansas, June 1923.

⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 28, 1930.

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4). In Figure 3 from April 28, 1930, the lower row of box seating is shown, and the upper row of box seating is partially shown in the photo. In the lower right corner of the photo the unique shape of the field side of the grandstand can be seen. In Figure 4, from April 17, 1930, the lower row of box seating is shown, and the upper row of box seating is partially shown in the photo. In the lower left corner of the photo the unique shape of the field side of the grandstand can also be seen.

The grandstand has six sides. The bleacher side (north side) tapers down from the south to the baseball field. The remaining five sides are concrete piers with brick in the space between the piers. A large entrance located in the center of the grandstand, on the south side, allowed baseball fans access through the grandstand to the seating on the north side. There is also a tunnel running east to west through the grandstand, with an entry way on each side. Sixteen glass windows are located on the south side of the grandstand. A foul ball screen was also placed on the north side of the grandstand. In 1920 showers and toilets were added under the bleachers inside the grandstand.⁵ In 1921 work started on adding a metal roof that covered all the seating area (no longer extant). In 1922 it was reported that the roof was repaired where the tin was blown off the previous summer.⁶ The same article said that there were five rooms enclosed below the grandstand, and they were as follows: A lavatory for ladies, a lavatory for gentleman, a ground keeper's room, a players club room, and a rub and bath room. The box seats in the grandstand were also painted green.⁷

The above description also describes how the grandstand looked during the historic night game in 1930. Since then there have been several changes made. The large entrance on the south side has been blocked, with cement blocks covering the lower half. There is a ticket booth window located there now. The metal roof over the bleachers was removed, and all the glass windows have been boarded over. Cementitious stucco was applied over all the red brick on the outside of the grandstand.

The concrete box seating and bleachers are in poor condition and no longer used. The restrooms located inside the grandstand are still in use, along with the ticket booth. The remaining rooms inside the grandstand are used for storage. In 2012 an engineer found the grandstand to be structurally sound.⁸

Baseball was first played on the field in 1913.⁹ In the 1920s the stadium became a multi-use facility with the addition of football.¹⁰ The field was converted to football during football season, and then back to baseball in the spring.¹¹ In 1931 an oval running track was added around the baseball / football field.¹² To make room for the track, the baseball field was expanded to the north and east. Because of the field expansion, a new stadium wall was added around the field.¹³ The wall, which is mostly still intact, is the same one that was there when Mickey Mantle played for Independence. The wall is made of concrete and is in good condition.

The last minor league baseball team played on the field in 1952, and lower level baseball teams stopped playing on the field in 1970.¹⁴ In 2014 the dirt field was replaced with artificial turf for football and soccer.¹⁵ The oval track is also still in use.

⁵ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 28, 1920.

⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 15, 1922.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ **CITATION NEEDED.**

⁹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, August 18, 1913.

¹⁰ *Independence High School Annual, 1930; Independence Daily Reporter*, March 28, 1930.

¹¹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 28, 1930.

¹² *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 21, 1931.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <<http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/team.cgi?city=Independence&state=KS&country=US>>

¹⁵ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 6, 2014.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)
Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1918-1952

Significant Dates

April 28, 1930

1949

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance covers the years from the construction of the grandstand to the stadium's last year of use for minor league baseball.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The nominated property, the 1918 Producers Park Grandstand, held viewers of the first night baseball game in the history of organized baseball played at Shulthis Stadium on April 28, 1930.¹⁶ Organized baseball is defined as Major League Baseball and the minor league teams associated with them.¹⁷ Mickey Mantle, who was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1974, started his professional career as an Independence Yankee in 1949.¹⁸ Larger cities used the stadium for their spring training, and Major League baseball teams came here to play.¹⁹ Though exhibition games were played in the stadium until 1956, the period of significance ends in 1952 when the last minor league game was played.²⁰

Elaboration

Independence had its first minor league baseball team in 1896, and the team finished first in the Kansas State League. The city had its next minor league team in 1906, the Independence Coyotes. That team also finished first in the Kansas State League. In 1908 the minor league team was called the Independence Jewelers. The star of that team was pitcher Gene Packard, who pitched a perfect game against Bartlesville on August 8, 1908.²¹ Independence had the top attendance for games in the Oklahoma-Kansas League in 1908, and *Sporting Life* said the city was "base ball mad." The league included larger cities like Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Muskogee.²²

When the world's championship baseball series was played in 1912, Independence again showed their baseball enthusiasm. The city had a giant electric score board built, ten feet by eight feet, and it contained about 100 lights. It had a large diamond on it, and viewers could see who was at bat, follow the pitches, and even see who fielded the ball. A telegraph operator receive game updates, and by making connections on a duplicate smaller board, update the large electric score board. Independence was said to be "the only small city in the country with enterprise enough to give games on electric board."²³

Before the grandstand was constructed in Independence, baseball was played in what is now Riverside Park. The City of Independence passed a resolution to adopt the park on February 26, 1914. Before the city adopted the park, Riverside Park was the name given to the baseball park located at the site.²⁴

¹⁶ <http://baseballhall.org/node/8133> (National Baseball Hall of Fame).

¹⁷ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Organized_Baseball>

¹⁸ John G. Hall, *Mickey Mantle: Before the Glory* (Leathers Publishing: Leawood, KS, 2005), 127-129;

¹⁹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 6, 1921.

²⁰ *Independence Daily Reporter*, August 7, 1956; sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <<http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/team.cgi?city=Independence&state=KS&country=US>>

²¹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, August 10, 1908.

²² *Sporting Life*, August 8, 1908, 25.

²³ *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 7, 1912.

²⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, August 18, 1913. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Independence, Kansas, June 1923; *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 3, 1918; Official Centennial History, Independence, Kansas, 1970, pg. 63; *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 12, 1915.

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After Shulthis Grandstand was built in 1918, the next minor league baseball team was the 1921 Independence Producers. The team was in the Southwestern League, and they finished in first place. With a record of 103-38, only four other minor league teams in history have won over 100 games with fewer losses than them. The team is listed by MiLB.com as one of the Top 100 Minor League Baseball teams in history. One team member, Glenn Wright, led the league with 22 home runs.²⁵ In 1925, while playing for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Glenn became the fifth player in Major League Baseball history to make an unassisted triple play.²⁶

Independence again fielded minor league baseball teams in 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1928, and 1929. The team name for all the years in the 1920s was the Producers.²⁷ The 1930 team was also the Producers, and their plans for starting the season were grand. The opening day features included a team parade, a Mid-Continent band concert, and the city's Mayor throwing the first pitch. Also part of the ceremony was a man leaping from a balloon, only hanging to a parachute by his teeth.²⁸

Before discussing what was going to take place next in Independence, a discussion of night baseball games is needed. To begin with, the first night baseball game using electric lights took place on September 2, 1880. The teams that played the game, the Jordan Marsh and Company and the R.H. White and Company, were department store teams. During the following 50 years there were some other exhibitions using lights for night baseball games, but organized baseball considered them novelty experiments. One of those experiments took place on June 24, 1927, an exhibition game between two minor league Baseball teams. The teams, Lynn and Salem, played seven innings on a neutral field, the General Electric Field in West Lynn, Massachusetts.²⁹

Night baseball still had opposition. The *Sporting News* said that fans might possibly have difficulty sleeping after attending night games. They also thought eating a large meal before a night game, and then getting excited at the game, would cause indigestion. There were also people that thought night baseball would increase player injuries and damage their eyes.³⁰

Attendance at minor league baseball games was being held back for two reasons. Some summer afternoon games were a hot experience, but more importantly, many workers could not attend weekday games.³¹ When 1930 arrived, the Great Depression had reduced attendance for professional sports. The Great Depression meant middle class America had less leisure time and money than they enjoyed during the 1920s.³² The good news is that lighting technology was much better than it had been in 1927.³³

Marvin L. Truby, president of the Independence Baseball Club in 1930, believed night baseball would improve attendance. Truby said, "I have never seen a proposal which looked as good as night ball. It will eliminate the uncomfortable sitting in a hot grandstand on a sultry afternoon, and the play should be

²⁵ Bill Weiss and Marshall Wright, "Top 100 Teams: 77. 1921 Independence Producers." The Official Website of Minor League Baseball, accessed online at <<http://www.milb.com/milb/history/top100.jsp?idx=77>>

²⁶ <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/feats/feats8.shtml>

²⁷ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <<http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/team.cgi?city=Independence&state=KS&country=US>>

²⁸ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 24, 1930.

²⁹ Oscar Eddleton, "Under the Lights," in *Baseball Research Journal* 9 (1980): 39.

³⁰ David G. Surdam, *Wins, Losses, and Empty Seats: How Baseball Outlasted the Great Depression* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 220.

³¹ Larry G. Bowman, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzy, Myself," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 251.

³² Chad Seifried, "The Evolution of Professional Baseball and Football Structures in the United States, 1850 to the Present: Toward an Ideal Type," in *Sport History Review* 41, 1 (May 2010): 64.

³³ Larry G. Bowman, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzy, Myself," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 253.

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every bit as fast and as good.”³⁴ In 1930, the Independence Producers were going to have lights installed in their park, and Truby was making it possible by advancing the money to cover the cost.³⁵

In 1930 the grandstand was called the Producers Park Grandstand since the minor league baseball team at the time was the Independence Producers.³⁶ The name was changed again in 1937 to Shulthis Stadium to honor the donor of the grandstand, A.W. Shulthis.³⁷ Shulthis was the president of the Western States Portland Cement Company.³⁸ Because of his donation, the Western Baseball Association gave Shulthis grandstand box seating for life beginning January 25, 1922.³⁹

On February 26, 1930, the *Independence Daily Reporter* said there were plans to light the stadium, for both baseball and football, and a company that could supply the lights had made an offer. Just five days later it was announced that a contract was signed for the lighting equipment.⁴⁰ The Mayor of Independence, Charles Kerr, said, “Night baseball will be the greatest thing ever staged, in my opinion.”⁴¹ Night baseball was coming to Independence, but there was a lot of work ahead to make it happen.

The lights for Producer Park were purchased from the Giant Manufacturing Company located in Council Bluffs, Iowa.⁴² The towers for holding the lights would be 60 feet tall, and constructed of steel pipe. It was announced on March 13, 1930 that some pipe had already been obtained for the towers. The workers that would be welding the steel pipe were also obtained. There would be six sets of lights, and the construction was scheduled to be completed by April 3, 1930.⁴³

On March 17th, the local newspaper reported that the lights had arrived in Independence.⁴⁴ Eleven days later it was reported that the light towers were assembled, although they had not yet been erected. One interesting sentence that appeared in the local newspaper said, “And the grandstand, which has looked on diamond history, continues bearing down its vision on the field, wondering, if grandstands wonder, just what change is taking place out there.”⁴⁵ The grandstand would soon find out.

Light technology made night baseball possible, but there was more required to make it a success. It was reported in April 10, 1930 *Independence Daily Reporter* that, “In the matter of arrangement of the lights lies the entire secret of the ability of artificial illumination to cope with rays of the solitary orb, insofar as making night baseball possible.”⁴⁶ GE Lighting reports that when lighting a stadium, the most time consuming part of the lighting design is the aiming of the lights. Debbie Johnson, a GE Lighting designer, said, “The most challenging process is coordinating the fixture locations to achieve the

³⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 12, 1930.

³⁵ Larry G. Bowman, “I Think It Is Pretty Ritzzy, Myself,” in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 253-254.

³⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 18, 1930.

³⁷ Independence Centennial Committee, *Independence, Kansas, 1870-1970*. N.p.: Author, 1970, 77; “City News,” *Kansas Government Journal* 23, 8 (August 1937): 33.

³⁸ William E. Connelley, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, vol. 4* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), 1870.

³⁹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 18, 1930.

⁴⁰ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 3, 1930.

⁴¹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 12, 1930.

⁴² Larry G. Bowman, “I Think It Is Pretty Ritzzy, Myself,” in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 254-255.

⁴³ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 13, 1930.

⁴⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 17, 1930.

⁴⁵ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 28, 1930.

⁴⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 10, 1930.

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optimum lighting levels.”⁴⁷ Independence still had much work to do after the lights were installed on the towers.

The *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 17, 1930, said, “An organized baseball club for the first time in history will play baseball on its own baseball field under the rays of floodlights. It starts at 7:45 p.m. at Producers field.” It added, “Independence is thus leading the world in the plan which experts say will ultimately result in adoption by practically every minor league baseball team in the world.”⁴⁸ Both of those statements would soon become true. Although the April 17th game would later be overlooked and forgotten by most historians, it was truly a historic first. An organized baseball team had never before purchased lights and installed them on their home field. What makes it more historic than that is the fact that they were permanent lights, which marked in history the commitment to night baseball by an organized baseball team. The April 17th game began a new era in professional baseball.

The Independence Producers defeated the House of David, 9-1, on April 17, 1930. It was an exhibition game, and the House of David was not an organized baseball team. The game, played at Producers Park, took place at night. It took 90,000 watts of electricity to light the field in front of 1,200 fans. Mrs. Julius Frohlich, a fan that watched the historic game, was asked what she thought of night baseball. She replied “I think it is pretty ritzy, myself. It's a clever idea and I hope it's a success which it undoubtedly will be. It's keeping in progress with the city and is something different. It's unique and I think it's real nice.” The baseball manager from Joplin, along with a Brooklyn team scout, were late getting to the ballpark. They said they saw the ball park lights eighteen miles away from Independence. Mrs. Ed Hatcher, who watched the game, commented, “There are people here tonight that probably haven't seen a baseball game in years. The night games will certainly stimulate interest.”⁴⁹

Independence again played the House of David the next night, but lost 5-16.⁵⁰ That was Independence's last exhibition game before starting league play. The next home game for the Independence Producers would be against the Muskogee Chiefs. The *Independence Daily Reporter* claimed it would be “the world's opening of the floodlight-lighted organized baseball season.”⁵¹ On April 28, 1930, Independence played the first night game in the history of organized baseball.⁵² organized baseball is defined as Major League Baseball and the minor league teams associated with them.⁵³ The Producers lost to Muskogee in that historic game, 3-13.⁵⁴ The catcher for the Producers commented that playing under the lights did not cause any problems, but that he did notice a shadow on the ball.⁵⁵

Unlike the newspaper story about the April 17th game, the story written about the April 28th game did not reflect any excitement. The newspaper did say the game was notable since it was the first night game in organized baseball, but not much else.⁵⁶ It seems as if Independence had thought the important game, as far as history, took place on April 17th, and not April 28th. That view later changed, at least by 1947.

⁴⁷ http://pressroom.gelighting.com/news/shining-a-light-on-night-baseball-240036#.U_6mcWPjyPY

⁴⁸ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 17, 1930.

⁴⁹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 18, 1930.

⁵⁰ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 19, 1930.

⁵¹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 28, 1930.

⁵² <http://baseballhall.org/node/8133> (National Baseball Hall of Fame).

⁵³ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Organized_Baseball>

⁵⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 29, 1930.

⁵⁵ Oscar Eddleton, “Under the Lights,” in *Baseball Research Journal* 9 (1980): 40. Accessed online at <<http://research.sabr.org/journals/under-the-lights>>

⁵⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 29, 1930.

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On the back of a 1947 Independence Yankee schedule, printed by the Oakes Printing Company of Independence, it noted April 28, 1930 as being the first night game in organized baseball.⁵⁷

Exhibition games are not considered organized baseball games.⁵⁸ Baseball historians seem to view the April 17th game just like all the previous night game exhibitions, experiments. That could be because the details of the game, especially that permanent lights were used, is not known by many. Even Tim Wiles, Director of Research at the National Baseball Hall of Fame, in 2010 wrote, "The first professional baseball night game held under a permanent lighting system took place May 2, 1930, at Des Moines, Iowa..."⁵⁹ It is still widely believed that the lights used for the April 28th game were borrowed from another baseball team, temporary lights.⁶⁰ Whether permanent or temporary lights were used for the April 28th game does not seem to change the fact that it was a first for organized baseball.

Organized baseball is also defined as all the teams under the authority of the Commissioner of Baseball, and Shulthis Stadium is where world history was made by playing the first organized baseball night game.⁶¹ The lights Independence used in 1930 were permanent lights. Independence had 55 scheduled home night games in 1930 and used the same lights for the Independence High School and junior college football games in the fall of 1930.⁶² The same lights were again used for the 1931 baseball season.⁶³ Photos taken at Shulthis Stadium in 1930, 1944, and 1949 show the same light towers being used (photo numbers seventeen through twenty). Mickey Mantle, who played for Independence in 1949, played under the historic lights.

Minor league baseball soon changed after the April 28th game in Independence. By the time the 1930 baseball season had ended, the fourteen minor leagues had a minimum of 38 teams playing night baseball on their home fields.⁶⁴ In 1934, there were 19 minor leagues, and 15 of the leagues had at least one team playing night games at home. Oscar Eddleton summed it up nicely by saying, "Indeed it is fair to say that night baseball was the economic savior of many minor league teams during those dark days of the depression."⁶⁵ Other countries that played professional baseball, including Japan, Cuba, Canada, and Mexico, all played their first night games after Independence.⁶⁶ Major League Baseball also followed, playing their first night game in 1935.⁶⁷ Shulthis Stadium is truly the birthplace of professional night baseball.⁶⁸

So why was the survival of baseball important? One reason can best be explained by a gallery label located in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, which says, "In the worst years of the Depression, Americans looking for good news avidly followed the fortunes of their sports heroes. The first official

⁵⁷ John G. Hall, *The KOM League Remembered* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 23.

⁵⁸ Oscar Eddleton, "Under the Lights," in *Baseball Research Journal* 9 (1980): 38. Accessed online at <<http://research.sabr.org/journals/under-the-lights>>.

⁵⁹ <http://baseballhall.org/news/history/light-baseball> (Time Wiles, National Baseball HOF).

⁶⁰ Bill Weiss and Marshall Wright, "Top 100 Teams: 77. 1921 Independence Producers." The Official Website of Minor League Baseball, accessed online at <<http://www.milb.com/milb/history/top100.jsp?idx=77>>

⁶¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_baseball ; <http://www.historyorb.com/events/april/28>

⁶² *Independence Daily Reporter*, September 27, 1930, October 4, 1930.

⁶³ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 20, 1931.

⁶⁴ Larry G. Bowman, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzy, Myself," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 257.

⁶⁵ Oscar Eddleton, "Under the Lights," in *Baseball Research Journal* 9 (1980): 40. Accessed online at <<http://research.sabr.org/journals/under-the-lights>>

⁶⁶ <http://madmax.lmtonline.com/textarchives/030708/s5.htm>; <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/time/sports-1.htm>; <http://english.baseball-museum.or.jp/showcase/storage/history.html>; <http://www3.telus.net/jgbennie/nightbaseball.htm>

⁶⁷ Oscar Eddleton, "Under the Lights," in *Baseball Research Journal* 9 (1980): 41.

⁶⁸ Larry G. Bowman, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzy, Myself," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 253.

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minor league game to be played under lights took place in Independence, Kansas in 1930. The National League president harrumphed that 'night baseball is just a step above dog racing', but working-class Americans flocked to join industrial leagues and town teams. The new lights meant that people lucky enough to have jobs could go to games after work, and the extra revenue helped struggling clubs survive. The baseball field gave isolated and apprehensive Americans a place to take comfort in the crowd, and the success of the home team encouraged those in the bleachers to believe in their own dreams."⁶⁹

On January 15, 1942, which was shortly after America had entered World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Baseball. In the letter, which is called the "Green Light Letter," President Roosevelt said, "I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before." He continued, "And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off of their work even more than before." President Roosevelt then added, "And, incidentally, I hope that night games can be extended because it gives an opportunity to the day shift to see a game occasionally."⁷⁰

For most of history, human activities during night hours were very limited. With the invention of the electric light bulb, that all started to change. Professional night baseball was a milestone for light technology. Baseballs, being small, and traveling at speeds reaching 100 mph, are a challenge to hit or catch even in normal daylight. The size of the baseball field, being greater than a football field, added to the challenge light technology had to achieve to make professional night baseball games possible.

Independence had started a new era for professional baseball.⁷¹ Professional night baseball was achieved, and the defining moment in history when that took place was April 28, 1930. The point in time when history changed is like when Neil Armstrong first stepped onto the moon. John Young also walked on the moon, but being ninth did not define the moment in history when man first walked on the moon.

In 1947, Independence became home for the Independence Yankees. The team was a Class "D" New York Yankee farm team.⁷² The Independence Yankees belonged to the Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri League, and they called Independence home for four seasons (1947, 1948, 1949, and 1950).⁷³ Independence did not field a minor league team in 1951, and the last Independence minor league team was the 1952 Independence Browns.⁷⁴

Mickey Mantle started his professional career here playing for the Independence Yankees in 1949. Mantle was 17, and living in Commerce, Oklahoma when he signed with the Yankees. He wanted to play baseball near Commerce, and his father, Mutt, agreed. The president of the Independence Baseball Club, W.B. "Cap" Tole, wanted Mantle, and Tole called New York and made the request. Mickey Mantle signed his contract to play for the Independence Yankees on June 13, 1949.⁷⁵ On June 30, 1949, Mantle hit his first professional home run, and it was at Shulthis Stadium.⁷⁶ The ball went over the center field

⁶⁹ Smithsonian American Art Museum website, "Baseball at Night (1934), Morris Kantor, artist. Accessed online at <<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=12930>>

⁷⁰ http://www.baseball-almanac.com/prz_lfr.shtml (President Roosevelt Letter).

⁷¹ Larry G. Bowman, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzzy, Myself," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, 4 (Winter 1995): 253.

⁷² John G. Hall, *The KOM League Remembered* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 19.

⁷³ John G. Hall, *The KOM League Remembered* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), Introduction, 34, 54, and 70.

⁷⁴ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Organized_Baseball>

⁷⁵ John G. Hall, *Mickey Mantle: Before the Glory* (Leathers Publishing: Leawood, KS, 2005), 127-129.

⁷⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, July 1, 1949.

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wall, a distance of over 460 feet.⁷⁷ Mantle played 89 games for the Independence Yankees, and finished the season with the highest batting average on the team.⁷⁸

Mickey Mantle went on to play for the New York Yankees from 1951-1968. During his Major League career, he played in twelve World Series, and was a seven-time World Series champion. He still holds the World Series record for the most home runs, eighteen. In 1956 he won the Triple Crown, and finished his career with 536 home runs. He is remembered for his power hitting, and considered by many to be the greatest switch hitter of all time. Mantle was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1974.⁷⁹

Riverside Park started out as land being donated to the city in 1914. The citizens of Independence continued to donate in the years that followed. The first big donation was the magnificent Stich Shelter house, donated by Mrs. A.C. Stich in 1917.⁸⁰ That donation was followed by the Western States Portland Cement Company in Independence donating a band stand.⁸¹ The third big donation was Shulthis Grandstand in 1918, with the name of the donor being kept from the public at the time.⁸² The donor of the grandstand was made public in 1922, and it was A.W. Shulthis, President of the Western States Portland Cement Company in Independence.⁸³ There were two more large donations made to the park in 1918. The playground equipment was the fourth donation, and the fifth was a two-story, 35 by 70 feet building by Harry Sinclair.⁸⁴ Riverside Park is a wonderful example of citizens giving to their community, and Shulthis Grandstand is one of the best examples in the park.

After the grandstand was completed, it became an attraction for baseball teams across the country. C.L. Van Buskirk, a Spalding (sports company) representative, visited the stadium in 1921. He said the grandstand was a dandy, and one of the finest he had ever seen.⁸⁵ In 1921 the Sioux City Packers used Shulthis Stadium for their spring training, and the Chicago White Sox played at Shulthis Stadium.⁸⁶ The attraction continued in 1922, with the Pittsburg Pirates coming to Shulthis Stadium to play.⁸⁷ In the years that followed, the House of David, Detroit Bloomer Girls, Kansas City Monarchs, Harlem Globetrotters, New York Black Yankees, and Indianapolis Clowns played games at the stadium.⁸⁸ One of the famous players from a visiting team was Satchel Paige.⁸⁹ The last major exhibition game at the stadium was in 1956, and was between the Memphis Red Sox and the Kansas City Monarchs.⁹⁰

Charlie Tidwell, Independence native, ran track in Shulthis Stadium while he was in high school. Charlie set a national high school record in track in 1955.⁹¹ Charlie also played for the Independence Ban

⁷⁷ *Independence Daily Reporter*, July 1, 1949.

⁷⁸ Sports Reference, Baseball-Reference.com. Accessed online at <<http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/team.cgi?city=Independence&state=KS&country=US>>

⁷⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Mantle

⁸⁰ *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 3, 1918.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Independence Centennial Committee, *Independence, Kansas, 1870-1970*. N.p.: Author, 1970, 63.

⁸⁴ *Independence Daily Reporter*, October 3, 1918.

⁸⁵ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 16, 1921.

⁸⁶ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 6, 1921.

⁸⁷ *Independence Daily Reporter*, March 31, 1922.

⁸⁸ *Independence Daily Reporter*, April 19, 1930; May 29, 1914; August 18, 1938; July 22, 1954; September 9, 1954; and July 1, 1955.

⁸⁹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, July 22, 1954.

⁹⁰ *Independence Daily Reporter*, August 7, 1956.

⁹¹ *Independence Daily Reporter*, May 23, 1955; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Tidwell

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Johnson baseball team in 1955.⁹² Charlie went on to the University of Kansas, where he set four world records in track. He was inducted into the Kansas Relays Hall of Fame in 2005.⁹³

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⁹² *Independence Daily Reporter*, May 22, 1955.

⁹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Tidwell

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property _____

Provide latitude/longitide coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------|------------|
| 1 | <u>37.238826</u>
Latitude: | <u>-95.703412</u>
Longitude: | 3 | _____ | _____ |
| | | | | Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2 | _____ | _____ | 4 | _____ | _____ |
| | Latitude: | Longitude: | | Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Shulthis Stadium grandstand sits in the southwest corner of Shulthis Stadium, a size of about 100 feet by 200 feet.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark Metcalf

organization _____ date 8/25/2014

street & number 1891 Brookside Drive telephone _____

Producers Park Grandstand in Riverside Park
Name of Property

Montgomery County, Kansas
County and State

city or town Independence state KS zip code 67301
e-mail kansas41uwant@yahoo.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Independence
street & number 120 N 6th Street telephone _____
city or town Independence state KS zip code 67301

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: _____
City or Vicinity: _____
County: _____ State: _____
Photographer: _____
Date Photographed: _____

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- #1: Aerial view, postcard, before 1931, T C Company, Chicago.
- #2: Aerial view, before 1931,
http://www.georgekessler.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119:kansasindependenceriverside-park&catid=48:miscellaneous-projects-&Itemid=75
- #3: NE view, <http://www.forpaz.com/Park-History-62901.asp>
- #4: Field view from grandstand, April 28, 1930, G. Barrett.
- #5: Field view from grandstand, April 17, 1930,
http://www.baseballlibrary.com/excerpts/excerpt.php?book=house_of_david&page=7
- #6: N view, April 17, 1930, http://www.baseballlibrary.com/excerpts/excerpt.php?book=house_of_david&page=7

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- #7: N view, Polk's Independence (Montgomery County, Kans.) City Directory, 1954.
- #8: SE view, after 1931, Independence Historical Museum and Arts Center.
- #9: Aerial view, after 1931, Independence Historical Museum and Arts Center.
- #10: SE view, 5/25/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #11: NE view, 5/25/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #12: NW view, 5/25/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #13: SW view, 7/7/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #14: NW view, 7/7/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #15: NW view, 7/7/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #16: SW view, 7/7/2012, Mark Metcalf.
- #17: Shulthis Stadium light tower photo, April 28, 1930, G. Barrett.
- #18: Shulthis Stadium light tower photo, "I Think It Is Pretty Ritzy, Myself", Larry G. Bowman.
- #19: Shulthis Stadium light tower photo, 1944 Independence Army Air Field photo.
- #20: Shulthis Stadium light tower photo, 1949 Independence Yankees photo.

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

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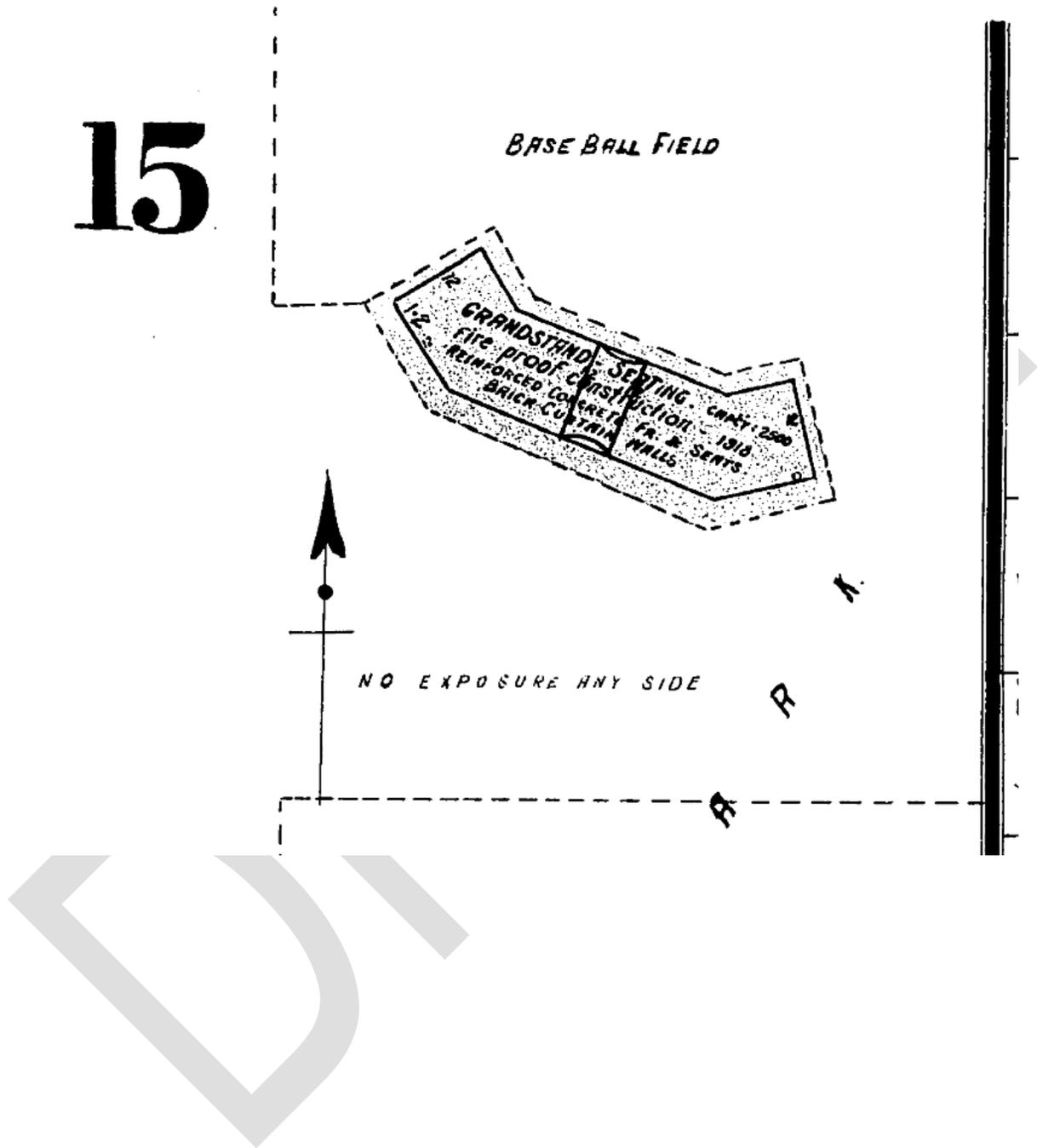
Figure 1. Google aerial image, showing grandstand in box.



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Figure 2. June 1923 Sanborn. Partial view of sheet 15, showing grandstand.



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Figure 3. Field view from grandstand, April 28, 1930. Photo by G. Barrett.



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Figure 4. April 17, 1930. Photo from Baseball Library.com: The Home of Baseball History
http://www.baseballlibrary.com/excerpts/excerpt.php?book=house_of_david&page=7 (accessed 06/04/2015).

