

OUT AT HOME:
HOW TELEVISION AND MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S
WESTERN EXPANSION CRIPPLED THE PACIFIC COAST

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Baseball fans living in California, Oregon, and Washington flooded Pacific Coast League (PCL) ballparks in 1947. Since no Major League Baseball (MLB) teams existed West of the Mississippi River at the time, the minor leagues provided the only form of professional baseball for the rest of the United States. Of the dozens of minor leagues in the country, the PCL distinguished itself from the others with eight strong franchises from Seattle to San Diego. The league set a new league attendance record for the fourth straight year that season and petitioned to become a third major league, joining the American and National under the MLB umbrella.¹ MLB elevated the PCL, also known as the Coast League, to Class AAA status in the mid 1940s. As more soldiers came home from World War Two, more fans returned to the ballparks.²

The Coast League enjoyed the same post-World War II prosperity that much of the rest of the country experienced. However, attendance fell at ballparks due to the advent of television in the late 1940s. During the 1950s, rumors of major league expansion turned true with the moves of the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants into California cities in 1958.³ Nationally televised major league games on the West Coast and the infringement of the big leagues onto PCL territory transformed the Coast

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1. Michael Lomax, "Not Quite Ready for Prime Time: The Pacific Coast League's Attempt to Become a Third Major League in Baseball," *Journal of the West* 47, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 19-21.
 2. Lomax, "Not Quite Ready for Prime Time," 18.
 3. Steve Treder, "Open Classification: The Pacific Coast League's Drive to Turn Major," *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 15, no. 1 (2006): 99.

League into just another minor league by the end of the decade.

Organized baseball on the West Coast began as early as 1866, but it did not evolve into the Coast League until 1903. A year later, the six-team league joined the American Association, then the governing body of minor league baseball. The game began producing star players and managers who came and went over the decades.⁴ During the twilight of his career, the great Ty Cobb spent two seasons in the Pacific Coast Winter League as both a player and manager for the San Francisco Seals in 1920 and 1921. He later made unsuccessful attempts to buy the team in the early 1930s.⁵ Future Hall of Famer Ted Williams played two seasons for the Padres in 1936 and 1937 before joining the Boston Red Sox⁶. San Francisco native Joe DiMaggio showed great potential playing for his hometown Seals. DiMaggio played with the Seals from 1932 to 1935 before leaving for New York and starring for the Yankees.⁷ The Coast League eventually grew to eight teams and emerged as the top tier of the minor leagues by the eve of the Second World War.⁸

The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor two days before the MLB held its winter meetings in Los Angeles halted discussions of expanding the league to California. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "green light" letter encouraged the 1942 season to proceed, proclaiming that baseball provided Americans a diversion from the events overseas. Once the major leagues decided to continue playing, the PCL and the rest of minor league baseball followed the MLB's lead. Wartime precautions decreased the number of night games due to a fear of air raid, particularly on the West Coast. The enlistment of players and fans into the military resulted in a reduction of quality player and limited attendance in 1942 and 1943.⁹ Leagues also faced restrictions on travel and scheduling due to wartime demands. However, by 1944 night-game restrictions were lifted and ballplayers and fans

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4. William G. Swank and James D. Smith III, "Voices of the Pacific Coast League Padres, 1936-1958," *The Journal of San Diego History* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 3.
 5. Al Stump, *Cobb: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994), 299-301.
 6. Arthur Sampson, *Ted Williams: A Biography of the Kid* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1950), 11-13.
 7. Maury Allen, *Where Have You Gone, Joe DiMaggio: The Story of America's Last Hero* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1975), 27-31.
 8. Bill O'Neal, *The Pacific Coast League, 1903-1988* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1990), 78.
 9. Lomax, "Not Quite Ready for Prime Time," 18.

came back to ballparks from their military service. The Coast League drew more than 2.3 million fans in 1944 and more than 2.9 million the year the war ended. The PCL enjoyed a post-war renaissance through 1947.¹⁰

The growing popularity of the Coast League inspired its president, Clarence Rowland, to lobby the major leagues for inclusion. Rowland took over as the Los Angeles Angels general manager in 1942 and the PCL named him league president just two years later.¹¹ Baseball leagues across America prospered in the years immediately following the war. The PCL, however, significantly elevated itself above all other minor leagues in the country by an even wider margin than it had prior to WWII because of its location in major cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, and due to the athleticism of its star players. The PCL's eight team presidents met at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles in October 1945 and drafted a resolution stating their desire to become a major league.¹²

“Baseball leagues across America prospered in the years immediately following the war.”

A letter to MLB Commissioner Happy Chandler followed in December. The *New York Times* ran part of the resolution in a story announcing the Coast League's wishes.¹³ The minor leagues recently added the Class AAA level and the Coast League joined with the International League and the American Association as the only minor leagues

with the AAA designation. The PCL also wished to be excluded from the major league draft so the MLB could draft its best players.¹⁴

Chandler denied the Coast League's proposition, but promised to give the idea future consideration. He contended that MLB considered the West Coast “potential major league territory” and did not believe that the

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10. Paul Zingg and Mark D. Medeiros, *Runs, Hits and an Era: The Pacific Coast League, 1903-1958* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 106.
 11. Joseph P. Murphy Jr., “The Busher from Dubuque: Pants Rowland Wore Many Hats,” *Baseball Research Journal* 24 (1995): 121.
 12. California Historical Society, North Baker Research Library, San Francisco, Dick Dobbins Collection of the Pacific Coast League 1866-1999, Board of Director's Minutes 1923-1967.
 13. *New York Times*, December 5, 1945.
 14. Richard E. Beverage, *The Angels: Los Angeles in the Pacific Coast League, 1919-1957* (Placentia, CA: Deacon Press, 1981), 157, 162, 183.

PCL would be able to pay “top major league salaries.”¹⁵ Seals owner Paul Fagan, also a strong advocate of the PCL turning major, emphasized that it must pay its players big league salaries. In 1946, he paid all his players at least \$5,000, the minimum major league salary. The MLB felt that Coast League ballparks did not meet MLB standards. Seals Stadium, one of the largest ballparks in the PCL, sat just 25,000 spectators, several thousand less than typical major-league parks. Seals Stadium eventually hosted the San Francisco Giants in 1958 and 1959 while Candlestick Park was being built.¹⁶ PCL attendance began dipping in 1948. Though it crept back up slightly in 1949, it dropped by 15 percent in 1950 and continued a downward spiral that lasted for decades. The PCL’s dreams of becoming a major league dwindled each year.¹⁷

Tuned In and Turned Off

The advent of television had an increasing effect on the lives of Americans in the 1950s. MLB televised games as early as the 1940s, but television’s impact skyrocketed the following decade. Television gave West Coast baseball fans another alternative; they watched the best baseball being played in the world without having to leave their homes. Television hit the consumer market in the mid-1940s and grew in popularity during the Cold War era. The popularity of TV negatively impacted attendance at baseball games. Fewer than 200,000 TV sets occupied American homes in 1947 as compared to thirty-five million by 1955. Attendance at major league games dropped from nearly twenty million to about 16.5 million and the number of minor leagues around the country decreased from fifty-nine to thirty-three during that span.¹⁸

MLB began nationally televising games on a regular basis in 1950. Prior to 1950, few games were televised outside local markets, except for the World Series and All-Star games.¹⁹ Mutual Broadcast System bought

15. *New York Times*, December 12, 1945.

16. Dick Dobbins and Jon Twichell, *Nuggets on the Diamond: Professional Baseball in the Bay Area from the Gold Rush to the Present* (San Francisco: Woodford Press, 1994), 170-171, 191.

17. Beverage, *The Angels: Los Angeles in the Pacific Coast League*, 183.

18. *America*, “World Series and Baseball,” October 8, 1955, 30.

19. Francis Wallace, “Are the Major Leagues Strangling Baseball?” *Collier’s*, March 10, 1951, 19.

the right to televise the first five World Series shown on television, paying \$65,000 to show the 1947 Series.²⁰ Gillette paid the sum of \$800,000 to be the exclusive television sponsor of the 1950 World Series. The razor company paid \$600,000 more than it did for the 1949 Series in an attempt to stave off competition from Chevrolet.²¹ In 1948, as many as 10,000 people lined up at Boston Common to watch one of 100 televisions set up in the park and to catch a peak of the World Series.²² CBS broadcasted the first major league game in color in August 1951 (the Dodgers defeated the Boston Braves eight to one). The telecast went smoothly except for the occasional streaking of colors when objects moved and occasionally a player's white uniform turned green blending in with the grassy background. Despite these minor glitches, big-league baseball on television marched on.²³

Advertising and sponsorship played a significant role on televised sporting events from the beginning. *Saturday Review* writer Goodman Ace complained about the incessant camera shots of Schaefer Beer billboards shown in the ballpark during its "half" of the broadcast. If a ball hit to an area of the park showed a competing billboard in the background, the camera quickly panned off it and focused on something else to avoid upsetting the sponsor.²⁴ Early on, sponsors secured naming rights for pre-game and post-game interview shows. Large corporations spent significant amounts of currency to sponsor sporting events on television. Gillette spent \$1.5 million of its \$5 million advertising budget in 1950 on the World Series alone.²⁵

To combat their decreasing attendance, some major league teams either cut back on televising home games or only showed road contests. Several magazines in the early 1950s ran stories speculating that television adversely affected sports attendance with headlines including, "Are the Major Leagues Strangling Baseball?" "Does Television Really Spoil the Gate?" "TV Can Kill Baseball," "TV Disrupts Sports Business," and "TV Ruins

20. *Business Week*, "World Series Televised," October 4, 1947, 65.

21. *Business Week*, "Gillette Plays Up Series TV ... With Tears in Its Eyes?" September 16, 1950, 84-85.

22. *Business Week*, "World Series on Boston Common ... By Television," October 16, 1948, 54.

23. *Time*, "Baseball in Color," August 20, 1951, 65.

24. Ace Goodman, "3B Television: Baseball, Beer and Butts," *Saturday Review*, May 30, 1953, 31.

25. *Time*, "Bat, Beer and Camera," April 26, 1954, 104; "Gillette Plays Up Series TV ... With Tears in Its Eyes?" 85.

the Gate but Boosts the Take.” These articles blamed television for keeping people at home instead of heading out to the ballpark. The minor leagues suffered the most dramatic drops in attendance. Several teams intentionally moved to cities that did not broadcast major league games as the only way to avoid the infringement.²⁶

Countering the theory that television adversely affected sports attendance, University of Pennsylvania graduate student Jerry Jordan conducted his own research project in 1950 in which he concluded that television only had a temporary effect on sports attendance. After the novelty wore off, he reported, fans returned to the ballparks and stadiums. He theorized that exposure to televised sporting events brought in new fans, which led to a longer-range effect of increased attendance.²⁷ The paid admissions of four teams that broadcasted home games on TV actually went up by more than 200,000 from 1950 to 1951.²⁸ However, that only represents a small sample of the overall fan base. The effects of television took further hold over attendance at sporting events for years after Jordan’s study.

Going Rogue

By late 1950, MLB broadcasted games nationwide multiple times per week, drastically reducing the Coast League’s attendance figures. The league persisted in its quest for recognition as a third major league as the population in the western region of the U.S. continued to grow, and that growth significantly increased the number of baseball fans. Rejected again by MLB, the Coast League, led by Rowland, threatened to leave organized baseball and become an “outlaw league” if MLB did not exempt it from the player draft.²⁹ The Coast League planned to pull out of its Class AAA designation, but Rowland ultimately decided the league would not drop from the National Association, one of the minor league governing bodies.³⁰ Chandler convinced Fagan and the other PCL owners to accept an unprecedented “open” classification, meaning it elevated above the International League and American Association in status and players could opt to join the major leagues but could not be taken in the player draft. The new clas-

26. *Business Week*, “Does Television Really Spoil the Gate?” September 27, 1952, 38, 40.

27. *Newsweek*, “Attendance: Short and Long of It,” July 31, 1950, 74.

28. *Business Week*, “Does Television Really Spoil the Gate?” 40.

29. Lomax, “Not Quite Ready for Prime Time,” 21.

30. *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1950.

sification did not mean that the Coast League closed in on major league status, although it remained the goal.³¹

In the second half of 1951, the federal government began investigating the leagues. Congressional hearings were held to investigate MLB's antitrust exemption to determine if its national broadcasts constituted interstate commerce.³² Legal disputes against MLB because of its ability to air its games nationally without competition and the PCL's fight to become a major league sparked the hearings.³³ The Supreme Court ruled in 1922 that MLB was not a business, but a sport, so it could essentially operate as a monopoly. Television, however, complicated that precedent. Congress decided that, since minor league teams acted as independent clubs with working agreements with the major leagues, MLB was not considered a monopoly and the earlier Supreme Court decision stood.³⁴

New MLB Commissioner Ford C. Frick intended to create a third major league during the 1951 winter meetings. In December, Rowland wrote a letter to National Association President George Trautman official applying for "open" classification (at this time, the National Association shared minor league powers with the American Association). In the letter, Rowland detailed the populations of the eight PCL cities as well as attendance figures of each team from 1947 to 1951. MLB's plan included requiring that the aggregate population for the proposed eight-team league equal at least ten million, maintain ballparks that seated at least 120,000 combined, and draw an average attendance of at least 2.25 million from the previous five years.³⁵ The eight PCL cities combined for 13.6 million, according to *Editor and Publisher*. Rowland wrote, according to the 1950 U.S. Census, the populations of California, Oregon and Washington, the states that made up the Coast League, grew by forty-five percent from 1940 to 1950. Additionally, the 1952 population was projected to grow by another nine percent. Rowland also stated that the league had never and would never impose salary limits. Rowland provided revenues and assets for each of the teams based on the 1951 season. According to the letter, the

31. Brent P. Kelley, *The San Francisco Seals, 1946-1957: Interviews with Twenty-Five Former Baseballers* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002), 116.

32. *Business Week*, "Sports and TV: What's Next?" June 16, 1951, 24.

33. Treder, "Open Classification," 95.

34. Neil J. Sullivan, *The Minors* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 237.

35. Lomax, "Not Quite Ready for Prime Time," 23.

league made more than \$487,000 in profits that year.³⁶

The Coast League met MLB's attendance requirements, but the continuing decrease in paid admissions spelled trouble for its wishes to become a major league. PCL attendance peaked in 1947 at 4.1 million before dropping to 3.7 million the following year. It bumped back up to 3.8 million in 1949, but decreased in 1950 when it fell to 3.2 million, and more drastically to 2.3 million in 1951. Frick refused to award the PCL major league status, but instead granted it "open" status. This gave players the option of exempting themselves from the major league draft, meaning the Coast League had some control over MLB's ability to take away its players. The PCL, however, had to raise its players' salaries to conform to its new status. In January 1952, the PCL formally accepted its "open" designation. The eight PCL presidents made it official by adopting a resolution during its league meeting that month and included it as part of its acceptance letter to Frick.³⁷

Even if the Coast League achieved major league status, it could not afford to pay big league salaries to all the major stars. Documented examples exist of players staying in the PCL due to comparable salaries to play in the majors. Pete Coscarat, a second baseman for the San Diego Padres from 1946-1949, claimed older players would play in the PCL due to the fact that they could play a longer career due in part to the mild climate. Jack Graham, a first baseman and outfielder for the Padres in 1948 and from 1950-1952, won the league's Most Valuable Player award in 1948. He chose to stay in the PCL because getting paid to play a longer season and his MVP bonus was more profitable than his \$6,000 guaranteed salary from the New York Giants. John "Swede" Jensen, who played in the Padres' outfield from 1943-1949 and was actually Danish, remained with the PCL during the years it attempted to become a major league as he felt the competition was similar.³⁸

Numbers Game

Players who could still play in the majors but chose to play in the PCL tended to be past their prime years of athleticism. While the PCL's minimum salaries matched the major league's minimum, the comparisons

36. California Historical Society, *Presidents' Papers* 1915-1972.

37. Lomax, "Not Quite Ready for Prime Time," 23.

38. Swank, "Voices of the Pacific Coast League Padres, 1936-1958," 14-15, 20-21, 27-28.

ended there. Major league salaries were generally significantly higher for most players than the PCL could afford. Players who stayed in the PCL due to their salary would have also earned the same minimum salary in the big leagues. Others had to play the longer season that the PCL schedule provided, upwards of 200 games, just to make the same amount of money playing a shorter, 154-game major-league schedule. Most players held jobs in the offseason to tide them over until they started playing again. If a Coast League player had stable employment in the West and did not want to move his family East, he had the option of staying rather than relocating and finding a new job which may not drastically improve his financial situation.³⁹

During the “open” classification period of 1952-1957, some players took advantage of the waiver allowing them an exemption from the major league draft so they could stay in the Coast League. Marginal major league players typically earned the minimum salary, which equaled the Coast League’s requirement under the “open” status agreement. Several PCL stars, who most likely would not have played much in the majors, stayed in the West and continued to play with the PCL. Len Neal of the Oakland Oaks said that, due to the fact that he was an older player, he would have received the same salary in the majors as he earned in the PCL, but without the bonus he received from the Coast League to sign the draft exemption. Jim Westlake of the Seals faced a similar situation. He stated the Coast League offered him a \$1,000 bonus to sign the exemption in 1954. After he refused it, the league offered an additional \$1,000. He accepted the improved offer and stayed in the PCL.⁴⁰

Revenue in the Coast League depended heavily on paid admissions. While the PCL drew well in the latter stages of the Second World War and through the early 1950s, attendance figures never fairly compared to those of the big leagues. In 1950, the eight Coast League teams combined to draw nearly 3.2 million fans. The same amount of teams in the American League attracted more than 9.1 million paying customers while the National League had more than 8.3 million in attendance. Year after year, major-league clubs drew approximately three times as many fans as PCL teams on average. Since the Coast League never made nearly as much as the majors

39. Treder, “Open Classification”, 104-105, 108.

40. Dick Dobbins, *The Grand Minor League: An Oral History of the Pacific Coast League* (Emeryville: Woodford Press, 1999), 200-201.

in revenue, it would not have been able to afford to pay comparable salaries that the major league teams paid their players. The decreasing attendance also threatened the League's ability to exempt players from the major league draft as paid admissions fell below the qualifying threshold.⁴¹

Television affected attendance figures at all levels of baseball, including the majors. Attendance dropped throughout the 1950s, compared to what teams drew in the 1940s. The PCL's decline outpaced other leagues. In the second half of the 1940s, the PCL drew approximately one quarter of the fans the majors brought in per game. During the Coast League's "open" years, that figure dropped to under seventeen percent.⁴² MLB did not purposely intend to harm the minor leagues as it needed the farm system to develop new players and several major league presidents owned minor league teams. In a November 1953 letter to the MLB's sixteen presidents, Frick outlined the league's future plans involving the minor leagues. The negative impact major league broadcasts had on the minor leagues was evident in Frick's letter. He requested "minor leagues be given fair and reasonable protection against the encroachment of Major League radio and television."⁴³

That did not stop television from further crippling the minor leagues, intentionally or not. Frustrations concerning MLB infringing on minor league territory rights by broadcasting games turned to threats of legal action when Frank Lawrence, President of the Portsmouth Merrimacs of the Piedmont League, asked Rowland to join his pending lawsuit against MLB in September 1954. Lawrence wrote:

"There is no doubt the Majors have violated their agreement with the Minor Leagues, who have in my opinion entailed a loss of over 20 million dollars and the Major Leagues have benefitted (sic) greatly financially by disregarding the territory -- GIVING AWAY FREE MAJOR LEAGUE BALL IN OUR TERRITORIES -- they have over-run us just like Hitler, Mussolini, Japan and now Russia and Red China. The only hope we have is through civil action in the Federal Courts."

41. Treder, "Open Classification," 105.

42. Ibid., 97.

43. California Historical Society, *Presidents' Papers* 1915-1972.

Rowland refused involvement in the lawsuit and ignored Lawrence's repeated correspondence. Lawrence wrote Rowland asking if the PCL was "gutless" which received a curt reply stating "SORRY BUT LEAGUE DOES NOT CONSIDER YOUR PROPOSITION AS PRACTICAL -- IT IS NOT A MATTER OF GUTS BUT OF COMMON SENSE."⁴⁴ The minor leagues ultimately did not take legal action as it was battle they did not think they could win. They asked the major leagues to stop broadcasting games in their teams' areas, but MLB refused because television and radio brought it a rich stream of income.⁴⁵

Major League 'Manifest Destiny'

MLB's broadcast infringement on minor league territory paled in comparison to MLB's next steps in the 1950s: westward expansion. Population growth in the West gave the MLB an opportunity to expand as well. For the first time in fifty years, the MLB landscape changed. Teams moved for various reasons including aging ballparks and plummeting attendance figures. The baby-boomer population provided new fans with a renewed interest in baseball. Nearly half the seats in ballparks by the mid-1950s included women and children. Prior to that, they were mostly filled with men.

The league started its gradual westward expansion in 1953 with the Boston Braves moving to Milwaukee. The Braves were enticed by the large parking lot of County Stadium in Milwaukee, a feature absent in the team's outdated park in Boston. The Philadelphia A's crossed the Mississippi River to Kansas City. The St. Louis Browns, a decade earlier rumored to relocate to Los Angeles, represented the exception to the rule in 1954 when they headed East to Baltimore and became the Orioles. Television factored into teams' decisions to move to growing westward cities. Teams in 1957 made more than \$9 million to locally broadcast their games.⁴⁶

The most significant moves of the 1950s -- those that adversely affected the PCL -- involved the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants. Rumors that the Dodgers sought to move to the West Coast began in 1955, despite denials by Dodgers President Walter O'Malley. The Dodgers

44. California Historical Society, *Presidents' Papers* 1915-1972.

45. *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1954.

46. *U.S. News and World Reports*, "Behind Baseball's Big Moves: Gate Receipts, Parking and TV," April 18, 1958, 94-97.

complained as early as 1947 that the team had outgrown the small and aging Ebbets Field (32,111 capacity). O'Malley claimed the team was losing money as attendance dropped over the course of the decade, despite consistently putting a winning product on the field (six American League titles in ten years from 1947-1956). He negotiated with the city of New York to pay for a new stadium in 1955. After being denied his new stadium, O'Malley secretly searched for a new site for his team in Los Angeles in 1957.⁴⁷ Both the Dodgers and the Giants' relocation to California in 1958 inspired a decade of additional moves and league expansion to Houston, Anaheim, San Diego, Seattle, Oakland and the Dallas-Fort Worth area by 1969. Relocations to these cities brought the game at the highest level to large cities filled with millions of fans eager for its arrival.⁴⁸

Though MLB legally operated as a sport, it did not stop team owners, typically astute businessmen, from threatening to move if their demands for new publicly funded ballparks were not met. O'Malley used baseball's anti-trust exemption to argue that the city of New York should furnish a \$50 million park for the Dodgers. He contradicted himself by claiming he could move his team because it was a business. After the city refused to build a new ballpark in New York City, O'Malley moved the Dodgers to Los Angeles in late 1957. The team played in the Los Angeles Coliseum for four seasons while the city built publicly financed Dodger Stadium.⁴⁹

O'Malley bought the PCL's Angels from Chicago Cubs owner Phil Wrigley for \$3 million, claiming he would make the Angels a Dodgers farm club. O'Malley also purchased Wrigley Field (not to be confused with the famed ballpark in Chicago), but found a more enticing place for his westward bound team. Los Angeles politicians provided a \$10-million, publicly financed, 257-acre spot in Chavez Ravine. O'Malley continued to deny that the Dodgers planned to move West, citing the team's lease with Ebbets Field, which did not expire until 1959, despite the purchase in California. He added that all seven of the other National League teams would have to approve the transfer of the team.⁵⁰ In May, the Dodgers and the Giants

47. *Life*, "O'Malley Scouts a New Home for the Dodgers," May 20, 1957, 127-130.

48. Ron Briley "More Legacy of Conquest: Long-Term Ramifications of the Major League Baseball Shift to the West," *Journal of the West* 36, no. 2 (April 1997): 68-75.

49. David Cort, "O'Malley's Double Play," *The Nation*, June 22, 1957, 548.

50. *New York Times*, February 22, 1957.

received league approval to move West with an eight to zero vote in favor of the moves.⁵¹ The Dodgers planned to split games between Wrigley Field and the Los Angeles Coliseum while the city built Dodger Stadium.⁵²

Giants President Horace Stoneham said his team left New York for San Francisco because of a lack of fan support, and he expected to make \$3 million from paid admissions in his first year in the Bay Area.⁵³ After reaching the World Series in 1954 and drawing more than 1.5 million fans that year, the Giants attendance dwindled to just over 824,000 the following season and 629,179 in 1956. Stoneham announced his intentions to move the Giants in August 1957, despite holding a lease on the Polo Grounds in New York that extended through 1960. Only 11,606 fans⁵⁴ attended the Polo Grounds for the Giants final game. Stoneham began negotiating with the new PCL President Leslie O'Connor to buy the Seals, who were then owned by Red Sox, and move them to another city while continuing to operate the team.⁵⁵

Prior to the announcement, O'Connor expressed fears that MLB moving two teams to PCL cities would cause the latter league to fold.⁵⁶ Previous westward moves served as successful precedents for the Dodgers and Giants. By 1957, the Braves thrived in Milwaukee with attendance eclipsing the two million mark for the fourth straight year while the Dodgers drew only 700,000 in their last year in Brooklyn.⁵⁷ The first positive sign that the New York teams received prior to their move to California occurred when the Giants sold more than \$1 million worth of season tickets before their inaugural campaign in San Francisco even began.⁵⁸ The Dodgers and Giants paid the PCL a \$900,000 indemnity fee for the loss of three franchises: the Seals, Angels and Hollywood Stars. PCL's remaining team, the Seattle Rainiers, Portland Beavers, Sacramento Solons, Vancouver Mounties and Padres, continued to operate within the league. The Dodgers moved

51. *New York Times*, May 29, 1957.

52. *Life*, "O'Malley Scouts a New Home for the Dodgers," 130.

53. *Newsweek*, "The Gold Rush West," September 2, 1957, 84.

54. Art Rosenbaum and Bob Stevens, *The Giants of San Francisco* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963), 50-51, 53, 56.

55. *New York Times*, September 24, 1957.

56. *New York Times*, August 13, 1957.

57. *Newsweek*, "The Gold Rush West," 84.

58. Rosenbaum, *The Giants of San Francisco*, 71.

the Angels to Spokane, Washington. The Giants purchased the Seals and moved them to Phoenix, Arizona. Stars owner Bob Cobb sold the team to a Salt Lake City businessmen and the team moved there⁵⁹, returning after a thirty-two years absence from Utah. The Oakland Oaks, one of the original six PCL teams, moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1955. The Coast League lost many of its teams and its Class AAA designation, which ended the “open” classification era, but did not fold as O’Connor feared.⁶⁰

The first major league game played on the West Coast occurred on April 15, 1958, when 23,448 fans witnessed the San Francisco Giants shut-out the Los Angeles Dodgers eight to zero at Seals Stadium. Ruben Gomez pitched for the Giants and received assistance from Hall of Famers Orlando Cepeda and Willie Mays. Cepeda hit the first major league home run on the West Coast and Mays drove in two runs. The day before, an estimated crowd of 300,000 welcomed the Giants in a parade along Market Street in the Financial District of San Francisco. “I have been tremendously impressed ... by the enthusiasm and interest shown by people here and in Los Angeles relative to major league baseball ... I have a feeling that when we get to Los Angeles for Friday’s opener it will be like another World Series as far as the atmosphere is concerned” O’Malley said. In their first year in San Francisco, the Giants drew twice as many fans as they did in their final season in New York. The Giants played in Seals Stadium for two seasons after the rejection of their proposal for a downtown park. They secured Candlestick Park on the southern outskirts of San Francisco in 1960 and played there for forty years. The Dodgers moved into their new stadium in 1962 and continue to play at Dodger Stadium.⁶¹

Conclusion: Beyond 1958

MLB stepped in when the American Association folded in 1962, threatening the future of minor league baseball. In November of that year, the minor leagues realigned. MLB designated A, AA, or AAA classification to each minor league team and maintained player development contracts with MLB, which remains the current system. Minor league teams function as independently owned franchises. The PCL became a ten-team Class AAA league by gaining Denver, Oklahoma City and Fort Worth-Dallas, but los-

59. Beverage, *The Angels*, 235.

60. Zingg, *Runs, Hits and an Era*, 141-142.

61. Briley, “More Legacy of Conquest,” 72.

ing the Vancouver franchise.⁶² The International League, consisting mainly of East Coast teams, comprised the only other league with Class AAA status. The following year, the PCL expanded to twelve teams, gaining Little Rock, Arkansas and Indianapolis, Indiana, and stretched 4,500 miles West to Hawaii.⁶³ In 1961, Hawaii welcomed the former Sacramento Senators, a PCL team originating from 1918 then known as the Solons. The Padres moved from San Diego to Eugene, Oregon, in 1968 as an MLB expansion team with the same name began playing in San Diego.⁶⁴

The current PCL includes four divisions with four teams in each for a total of sixteen teams, and extends from California to Tennessee. Franchises sign two and four-year player developmental agreements with major league teams while maintaining independent ownership and operations. Teams occasionally move and change affiliations, but the PCL remains a stable minor league. Attendance among the sixteen teams has consistently remained around seven million in recent years.⁶⁵ The PCL, free of its previous problems, has no designs of ever attempting to become a major league again⁶⁶ and it remains just another minor league.

62. Robert Obojski, *Bush League* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), 138.

63. *New York Times*, December 3, 1963.

64. Obojski, *Bush League*, 157.

65. *Ballpark Digest*, www.ballparkdigest.com/201009113058/attendance/news/2010-affiliated-attendance-by-league (accessed October 21, 2011).

66. Treder, "Open Classification," 100.