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Yankee Stadium (1923)

Introduction

In terms of art and architecture, few stadiums can compete with Yankee stadium. Opened in 1923, the stadium has remained an iconic figure in any work of architecture drawing no comparisons. Currently, the stadium acts as the home-ground for the New York Yankees, a club participating in the Major League Baseball. There are suggestions that the stadium will also serve as the home-ground for New York City FC, a football club participating in the Major League Soccer. Over the years, the New York Yankee stadium has undergone some renovations in order to ensure it meets the modern requirements in ensuring the safety of people is guaranteed. For instance, the stadium was renovated in the year 2009. Although such renovations have been necessary in ensuring it meets the modern requirements, much of the design borrows from the original stadium. To date, the stadium remains the most expensive stadium (baseball) to be ever built. It also remains the second-most expensive field (any kind) to be ever built, only bettered by New Jersey's MetLife Stadium, found in East Rutherford (Durso, 34). These impeccable qualities and its reputation all over the world make it a good structure to discuss and analyze. The discussion in this paper will address issues such as the Stadium's design, the materials that were used to build it, the tools and equipment that were used and the labor force available at that time. It will also analyze the methods that were employed to come up with the stadium, the civilization within which it was built, the culture that prevailed, among many others. By discussing the above elements, the paper seeks to give a clear analysis and perspective of the art employed.

Yankee Stadium (original) was opened in the year 1923 and was located in the Bronx, New York. As already argued above, the stadium served as the home ground for the New York Yankees (Baseball). It also served as the home-ground for the New York Giants (football) in the period between 1956 and 1973. The stadium is nicknamed ‘The House that Ruth Built’. This nickname was derived from the legendary baseball superstar (Babe Ruth). By the time the stadium was being built, Ruth was in her prime years, connoting the winning history of the Yankees. Construction of this stadium took place between 192 and 1923. The major reason for the construction of this stadium was so as to cater for the Yankees (they had been sharing Polo Grounds for ten years with a football team). Opening of the stadium took place in 1923 when the 1923 MLB season commenced. In the country, Yankee stadium was hailed as one of its kind, based on its size and the architecture skills behind it (Durso, 87). The stadium went on to become among America’s most famous grounds, hosting various historic moments. To think that its original idea came up back in the year 1923 gives it a better reputation in terms of design.

Size of the Stadium

Over the past, Yankee Stadium has in a number of occasions changed its dimensions. Reconstruction and constant renovations to meet the modern requirements mean that the current stadium is different from what it was back at the time. As such, most of the available photographs about the stadium differ, depending on the period when the photo was taken. The original stadium was renovated in the year 1976, then again in the year 2009. When the stadium was built (1923) its left field line measured 285 ft

(87 m), while its straightaway left field measured 395 ft. The left center measured 460 ft (140 m), and the straightaway center field measured 520 ft (160 m). The right center measured 425 ft while the straightaway right field measured 350 ft (110 m). Its right field line was 295 ft (90 m) and its backstop measured 82 ft. However, these measurements have been altered from time to time when reconstructing the stadium. By 1988, for instance, most changes had already taken place, giving the stadium a very different appearance. As per 1988, the stadium's size was as follows: Left field line: 318 ft (97 m); straightaway left field: 379 ft; left center: 399 ft (122 m); straightaway center field: 408 ft (124 m); right center: 385 ft; straightaway right field: 353 ft (108 m); right field line: 314 ft (96 m); backstop: 82 ft. A comparison between the year 1923 and the year 1988 shows that the renovations changed several elements of the stadiums in terms of its size (Durso, 107).

The Yankee stadium under construction

Civilization of the Time

In art, civilization refers to an increase in a structure's complexity as compared to the earlier phases. Such increase is brought about by an increase in man's productive capacities. The New York Yankee stadium was built in the early civilization. Early civilization was characterized by a heritage of art's ancestral forms and transforming them slowly, developing them so as to adapt to the new context. This civilization sought to fulfill both the new and analogous functions of art. In a way, therefore, the New York Yankee stadium incorporated the traditional mechanisms and the new mechanisms of art. This period also connoted the birth of the art industry.

Specialized craftsmen and art workers were being recognized for their role they were playing in the community. This early civilization played a significant role in determining the stadium's structure and design. In the 1920, the Yankee stadium was considered the first facility in America having three tiers. This is in spite of the fact that the triple deck only extended to the right and left corners. As an iconic stadium during the prevailing culture, the Yankee stadium was much idolized. To ensure that the prevailing culture was well-represented, Frank Sinatra's song (Theme from New York) was constantly played over the loudspeakers. The Yankee stadium was built in a time when art, design, and architecture were being embraced in America. Cultural aspects were also incorporated and were reflected in terms of style, make and design of the stadium.

How the Stadium Was Built

Construction of the ground commenced on 5th May, 1922 and was completed on 18th April, 1923. The walls of the stadium were made of a durable and extremely hard concrete that Thomas Edison developed.

Design of the Stadium

In America, the Yankee stadium is known to be the first sports facility that is three-tiered. It is also regarded as the first ever baseball park to have a 'stadium' title. This triggered a lot of anxiety because typically, baseball is played by teams in a field or a park. This facility was different from all others that existed during the time. Deliberately, it was designed as a multi-purpose facility, contrary to all other facilities during the time. At the time, the field was surrounded by a running track (0.40 km) and a misshapen (0.25 km). The field's right and left bleacher sections were set to be roughly right-
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angled. The stadium's third base is positioned for field-and-track events, including football. The stadium also introduced an electronic scoreboard which features the scores and lineups of the games that were on-going. The stadium's design was hugely influenced by Ruth Babe. Because she was left-handed, the stadium adopted a left-handed hitting slugger. The original fence was about 90 m from the home plate and was commonly referred to as 'short porch'. The deepest part, on the other hand, was referred to as 'the death valley'. This design gave the stadium a unique identity in terms of its structure and art.

How the stadium looked after it was completed

Materials Used

In building sports venues, construction materials are very essential. Right from the start, attention and due care is needed. This is so in order to ensure that the structure that is put up is not only sustainable, but also has the strength to overcome various weather conditions and climatic changes. The construction of the Yankee stadium used a variety of materials, ranging from the synthetic materials that are expensive to the natural materials such as wood, sand, and clay. In selecting the construction materials, the construction committee sought to use materials that would withstand pressure due to the regular large attendances.

In deciding the materials to be used for construction, the committee took into account the fact that the baseball is played on a field that has both exposed soil and turf. In the pitcher's landing area, the constructors used clay so as to ensure the field had stability to prevent it from degrading because of the increased traffic. The mixture used consisted of 20 % silt,

40% sand and 40 % clay (Pitoniak, 321). The individual components were mixed together to ensure they were evenly distributed. Other materials used included steel and iron for the roof. A plastic cousin that was transparent and ETFE were also used for their self-cleaning properties. All these were combined with the ordinary construction materials such as cement and nails.

Tools and Equipment

The tools and equipment used in constructing the New York Yankee stadium were similar to the ones used in modern constructions. In essence, these are the items that constructors use to go through their construction works. For instance, the constructors used industrial vehicles to facilitate transportation of materials from one end to the other. This was preferred over human beings because of its mobility and easiness to use. It would also increase productivity. The welding & plasma cutting equipment ensured that the constructors had an easy time through which they could make the correct cuts of metal materials such as steel to the required size. Electronic tools were equally used. Conveyors played a significant role. In a way, they were used to provide versatility through using various configurations, making the process easy to assemble and pack. Other tools that were used include laser and optical levels, siding brakes, traffic safety equipment, trailers and chain hoist & air winches. These tools and equipment were necessary for the construction of the New York Yankee stadium. In essence, the constructors employed them to carry out their services. It is worthy to note that these were not the only tools and equipment to be used. However, they were the most common (Pitoniak, 93).

Labor Force

Construction of the New York Yankee Stadium came during the sharp decline in the labor movement. During this time, union membership terribly fell because of the void in leadership. The unions were not able to organize strikes. Because of this lack of unity among workers, construction industries exploited the services of the workers that were readily available (unionless). New York's White Construction Company was awarded the contract of overseeing the construction of the stadium. With everything in order, the company was able to hire cheap labor from the community to construct the stadium. The fact that labor movements had declined during this time handed the construction company a major boost because of the availability of cheap labor during this period. The availability of African Americans who had traveled to look for better-paying jobs also ensured that there was sufficient labor for the construction company to hire. This was a big factor in the construction of the stadium (Pitoniak, 187).

How the Stadium Would Have Been Built Today

There is no doubt that advancement in technology and knowledge can be directly transferred to all sectors, including the construction sector. With the discovery of many facts as compared to the early periods where technology was low, it would make sense to argue that the building of the New York Yankee stadium would have employed a different approach. Equally, superior materials and tools would have been employed to come up with a state-of-the-art structure.

As compared to modern stadiums in the world such as the Emirates stadium and Wembley, New York Yankee stadium (original) does not meet the

modern criteria used in such constructions. This raises arguments that were the stadium to be constructed to date, several things would be changed. Unlike the modern stadiums, the New York Yankee stadium is very plain and was constructed for sporting purposes only. This is not the case with modern stadiums where several other facilities are incorporated. If the Yankee Stadium was to be built today, then it would have a number of hotels, restaurants and related facilities. The essence of this is to retain people in the stadium, giving them a lot of activities to do. This way, the people will end up spending more cash than they planned, to the benefit of the club. This is another way of raising revenue for the club. The New York Yankee stadium does not have such facilities.

There is little doubt that the insulation used during the construction of the stadium in 1923 would be bettered if it were built today. The advancement in technology means modern structures are better insulated, and are cooled/heated using a more efficient technology. The ventilation of the Yankee stadium would have been worked on in a better manner. On a similar note, lighting of the stadium would have been approached from a different perspective. Currently, the romex-type is safer than the traditional knob-and-tube that was used in building the stadium.

Roofing of the stadium would have been approached in a different manner. The stadium employs the galvanized steel technique (lead-soldered) which corrodes, promoting poor water pressure. In modern construction, there is no doubt that the embraced plastic and copper last longer and as such, are preferred by many constructors. Modern stadia have preferred these materials, hence no doubt that the New York Yankee would have been constructed in a similar manner.

Technology has also dictated that modern stadium construction materials are superior when compared to the traditional materials. That said, it would suffice to put up an argument that the materials that were used in constructing the New York Yankee stadium in 1923 may not be used in modern constructions because of the inferior nature. The wood framing on the walls of the stadia is a perfect example for this. The wood used in constructing the 1923 stadium is large, giving a joist spacing that cannot be accepted in modern constructions. Modern construction of stadia and other facilities such as homes employs code-approved spans that boost the quality of the wood used. Modern construction also has an eye on the electrical/plumbing/hvac, meaning the wood is supported to increase its quality.

The Yankee stadium also used lath and plaster in the wall covering. Whereas this covering is much better when it comes to insulation of sound, it requires extra labor to put up. Because of this, constructors have shifted their methods and architectural styles. There is a tendency of making use of the drywall which can easily be put up and easy to work with. Because of this change, most recent stadia have not used the traditional wall covering mechanisms similar to the ones in Yankee stadium. This leads to a conclusion that were the stadium to be constructed today, this issue would be addressed.

There is a big doubt whether the design used in constructing the stadium in 1963 would be used today. In essence, the design was meant to honor one of their legends- Ruth Babe, a left-sided hitter. Modern baseball players find such a design difficult to use because they are right-handed. This would have been changed if the stadium was to be constructed in the modern times.

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The necessary changes above speculate that modern construction styles are better than the traditional practices. However, this is not to discredit the construction of the 1923 stadium. The artistry and skills employed by the constructor were exceptional by then, representing the art, design and architecture of the time. With the advancement in technology and improvement of the architectural style, there are very slim chances that the construction would be carried out today in such a manner.

Conclusion

The New York Yankee stadium was built using the best materials and technology available at the time. In New York, it represented a major improvement in infrastructure as it promoted the entertainment industry. Its three-tiered nature also means it was the first of its kind. This construction was as a result of great architectural styles. Although it cannot be compared to the modern stadia which have employed better technology, the stadium still stands out as a masterpiece in the construction industry. The tools and equipment used by the time reflect the technological development of the time. If it were to be constructed today, there is no doubt it would have embraced a different technique. Nevertheless, the constructors did a great job.

Works Cited

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