

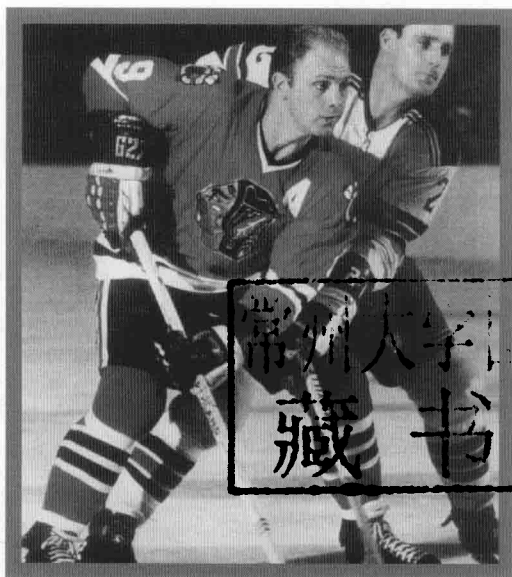
# CHICAGO STADIUM



IMAGES OF SPORTS

*Paul Michael Peterson*

# CHICAGO STADIUM



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藏书章

*Paul Michael Peterson*



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*For the uncles Len, Wally, Ed, and Hube . . .  
like the stadium, living in memories . . .*

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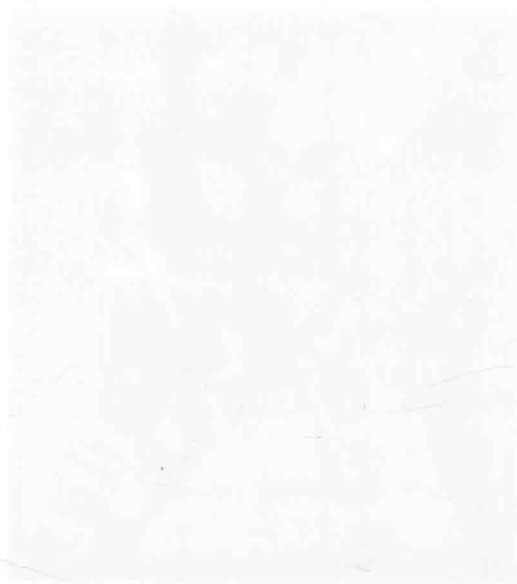
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Find Your Place in History.

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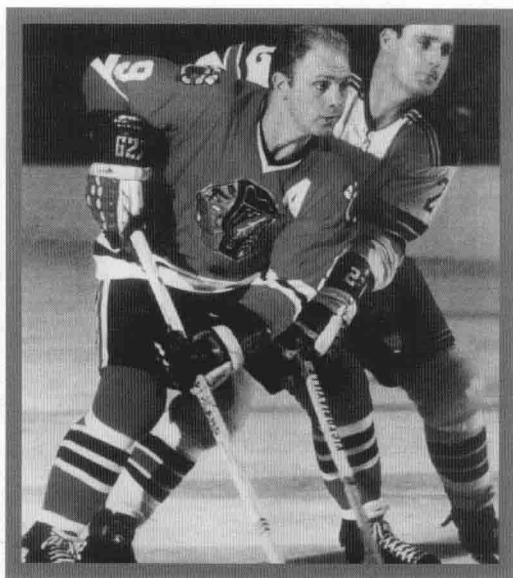
# CHICAGO STADIUM

**FRONT COVER:** Hockey Hall of Famer Robert Marvin “Bobby” Hull (born January 3, 1939, in Point Anne, Ontario, Canada) joined the Chicago Black Hawks in 1957 at the age of 18. Nicknamed “the Golden Jet” because of his striking blonde hair and lightning speed on the ice, Hull led the team to the Stanley Cup in 1961. (Courtesy of author’s collection.)

**BACK COVER:** A Curt Teich postcard dating to 1951 illustrates the sleek lines and Art Deco style of Chicago Stadium. (Courtesy of author’s collection.)

**COVER BACKGROUND:** An exterior view of Chicago Stadium is pictured in the 1960s, the era that would produce four future Hall of Famers. (Courtesy of author’s collection.)

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I imagine that fellow authors would agree with my statement that every finished book is a work in progress frozen in time by publication deadlines: there is always another paragraph one should have written, an additional quote one might have secured, and, in the case of this book, a hidden photograph one could have discovered. Research, however, is akin to the Greek rhetorical device *aposiopesis* in that it must ultimately trail off into silence when competing with the clock.

Thus, despite my desire to have included additional photographs and pages in this pictorial tome, I must pause to offer my thanks and good wishes to those who aided my journey with their patience, expertise, and encouragement. First and foremost, John Pearson and Jeff Ruetsche, both acquisition editors extraordinaire at Arcadia Publishing, who have guided me through four books to date; the research staff at the Library of Congress; Roy Kaltschmidt; Allan Janus and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, New York; the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri; Ruth Whitney, adjunct librarian at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines—who not only culled important source material but also endeavored to make research fun for me and my former writing students at Oakton; Diane, Louise, Melinda, and Nancy from the Department of Academic Success at Harper College in Palatine, all of whom add joy and good cheer to going to work each day (and eat the coffee cakes I bring); Keiko Kimura and the other “Keiksters” in AE/LS who support me professionally, and hopefully financially by purchasing this book; my wife, Joan, and my “little nuggets,” Michael, Ryan, and William, whose unwavering love and support make me a better human being with each passing day.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my thanks to you, the reader, for your interest in this text. I fervently hope the contents of this book, while not exhaustive, offer you a nostalgic respite for that memorable sports palace fondly known as “the Madhouse on Madison.”

A note to the reader: the Chicago Black Hawks spelled the team name consistently as two separate words until 1986, when the franchise initiated the change to “Blackhawks.” Any sins of omission related to photographs, credits, or facts rest entirely with the responsibility of the author and were unintentional.

Unless noted otherwise, all images are courtesy of the author’s collection.

# INTRODUCTION

*The neighborhoods on the West Side of Chicago were neither the best nor the worst in the city . . . For the most part, West Side neighborhoods remained outside the attention of other Chicagoans. They lacked the glamour of the emerging centers of commerce and wealth on the city's Near North Side and sections of the South Side. They were neither as lurid as the city's notorious vice district, the Levee, nor as promising as the lakefront park system planned by architect Daniel Burnham.*

—Amanda Seligman

*Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side*

"The house that Paddy built" . . . "the stadium" . . . "the Big Barn" . . . "the Madhouse on Madison" . . . Regardless of how fans through the decades have referred to Chicago Stadium, all of them can agree on one simple truth: the one-time structure located at 1800 West Madison Street was a lesson in the American dream. An elementary school dropout and the son of poor Irish emigrants realized a vision to build the greatest sports arena in the world. Men emigrated from other countries to play professional hockey on its ice, and, in the process, discovered a new home in the United States, professional success, and the undying adoration of fans who were legion. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States, pledged a "New Deal" under its roof, and four days before the American people would choose the 35th president, the nation's most powerful mayor pushed a young John F. Kennedy through a reported crowd of 30,000 that filled Chicago Stadium to the rafters and over the top of a national election. Boxing matches and circus performances entertained working men and women in the stadium's early years, while a young standout fresh from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill hypnotized the masses throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ultimately leading the Chicago Bulls to three consecutive National Basketball Association (NBA) championships in the stadium's final years.

The area framing the long-lost facade at 1800 West Madison Street was originally dotted by the slums and tenements that housed European emigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A little more than a generation afterward, in the late 1960s, the same area would play host to civil and racial unrest that repulsed those who witnessed its ill effects, driving many residents out of the city and into the waiting arms of nearby suburbs with the promise of a new American dream. And although new glory years lay ahead for the venue in the form of professional basketball and hockey, the aging Chicago Stadium began its inevitable decline as professional sports franchises nationwide began courting their athletes with newer, state-of-the-art facilities.

Today, a more modern 160-million-dollar athletic arena sits adjacent to the ground now occupied by a parking lot that, at one time, housed a 9.5-million-dollar sports palace. Small pockets of the surrounding neighborhood offer evidence of visible gentrification, but such progress will occur

slowly and cautiously in a less optimistic economy. And while the occasional passersby and younger sports fans may have only heard of Chicago Stadium in stories passed down by previous generations, those who witnessed its glory and experienced its lessons in living the American dream in person can still hear the ringing of the fabled 3,633-pipe Barton organ and the echoing noise of crowds cheering loudly during the singing of the “National Anthem.”

Remember the roar . . .

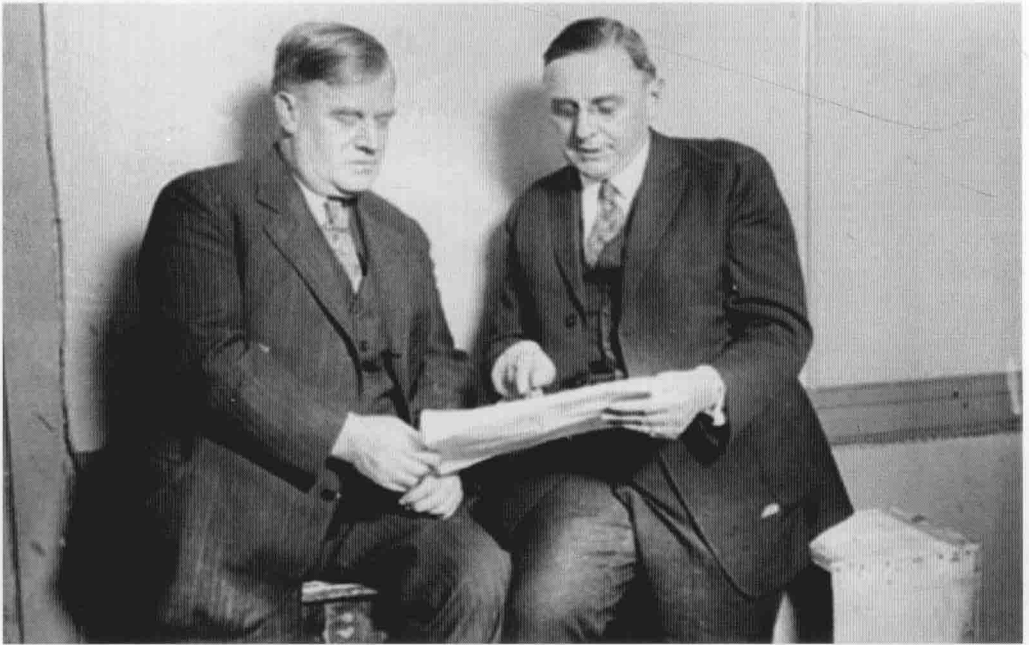
—Paul Michael Peterson  
Chicago, August 2011

## HARMON'S DREAM

*It is not hard to please the public. All you have to do is remember that we are all born children, that we all die children, and that in between times we are children.*

—Patrick T. “Paddy” Harmon

Chicago sports promoter and founder of the Chicago Stadium



In this 1927 image, Patrick T. “Paddy” Harmon (left) confers with Anton J. Cermak, then-president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners. Harmon was born in 1878 near Division and Halsted Streets to Irish emigrant parents from County Kerry. After dropping out of school at a young age, Harmon secured his education on the streets of Chicago and worked a variety of odd jobs to support his family before realizing success as one of the city’s most highly respected dance-hall managers and sports promoters. Despite never having owned a major sports franchise, Harmon’s vision of building the best sports arena in the world came to fruition with the construction of the Chicago Stadium as he financed \$2.5 million of the project’s reported cost of \$7 million. Harmon was ultimately pushed out of the franchise, and, tragically, died penniless in an automobile accident 16 months after the stadium opened. Cermak later became mayor of Chicago and is viewed by history as the father of Chicago’s “Democratic Machine.” Ironically, both men were later honored with public funerals in Chicago Stadium. (Courtesy of *Chicago Daily News*.)



# CHICAGO

claims the world's finest palace of sport — Chicago Stadium. This vast indoor amphitheater cost \$7,000,000, and gives 25,000 people an unobstructed view of circus, rodeo, ice skating, bicycle racing, boxing and track events. *Edison Service* provides unfailing light and power for all provisions for comfort and enjoyment.

## **Commonwealth Edison Company**

*The Central Station Serving Chicago*

*Commonwealth Edison Company has paid 161 consecutive quarterly dividends. Send for Year Book. Stock listed on The Chicago Stock Exchange.*

The city was proud of its new palace, and Commonwealth Edison took the opportunity, in this advertisement, to boast of its role in providing all light and power to Chicago Stadium.



A 1929 interior portrait of the Chicago Stadium depicts stadium founder Paddy Harmon (lower right) eyeing his young daughter Patsy, who stands upon the famous Barton organ as Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson (no relation to the American author) look on. Emerson and his wife were staff organists at radio station WLS and appointed staff and assistant organists when the Chicago Stadium opened. (Courtesy of *Chicago Daily News*.)



Pictured above is a Curt Teich postcard of the Coliseum, the last of three indoor Chicago arenas bearing the same name. Built by candy magnate Charles F. Gunther, the Coliseum operated as a sports venue, convention center, and exhibition hall and was located on Wabash Avenue between Fourteenth and Sixteenth Streets. With a seating capacity of 6,000, the structure acted as precursor to the Chicago Stadium and hosted the Chicago Black Hawks from 1926 until 1929.





Construction for the stadium began in July 1928 on Chicago's Near West Side, with the actual work of wrecking buildings for the excavating crews initiating the stadium's birth. The nearby slums of the surrounding area were home to numerous European emigrants who were part of the mass migration to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Courtesy of *Chicago Daily News*.)



Built in 1927 with a capacity of 15,000, Detroit's Olympia Stadium, also known as the "Old Red Barn," was a model for Chicago Stadium. Detroit's sporting venue paralleled that of Chicago's in that it hosted rodeos, boxing matches, and concerts, in addition to housing the Detroit Red Wings of the National Hockey League (NHL) and the NBA's Detroit Pistons from 1957 until 1961. Neighborhood decline and the inevitable struggle against modernity led to the building's demise in September 1987.