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### Ballpark History

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By Barbara McHugh  
New York Mets

Shea Stadium opened on April 17, 1964 in Flushing Meadows, Queens as the New York Mets played the Pittsburgh Pirates before 48,736 fans. The \$25.5 million stadium marked a new beginning for the young club that had played its first two years at the Polo Grounds. The stadium was originally to be called Flushing Meadow Park but was later named for the popular attorney, William A. Shea, who spearheaded the drive to bring National League baseball back to New York following the departure of the Dodgers and Giants in 1957.

The architectural firm of Praeger-Kavanagh-Waterbury designed the stadium to be the first all-purpose facility capable of hosting baseball and football games, seating 55,300 for baseball and 60,000 for the New York Jets football team.

With the Mets in a new ballpark adjacent to the World's Fair, Flushing became a mega attraction for tourists. Shea Stadium is located in the geographic and population center of New York City and since its opening has drawn over 73 million fans. Convenient access by train or car allows fans from all five boroughs to get to the ballpark easily.

At Shea Stadium's opening ceremonies, Bill Shea christened the Mets' new home with two symbolic bottles of water: one from the Gowanus Canal near Ebbets Field, former home of the Brooklyn Dodgers and one from the Harlem River near the Polo Grounds, where the New York Giants had played and later the Mets during the 1962 and 1963 seasons.

Jack Fisher started the first game at Shea with a called strike to Pittsburgh's leadoff batter, Dick Schofield, and got

### Shea Stadium Firsts

#### Game

April 17, 1964: Pirates 4, Mets 3 (WP-Bob Friend; LP-Ed Bauta)

#### Batter

Dick Schofield, Pirates (popped up to Mets second baseman Larry Burright against pitcher Jack Fisher)

#### Met Batter

Tim Harkness (grounded out, shortstop Dick Schofield to first baseman Donn Clendenon against Bob Friend)

#### Hit

April 17, 1964: Willie Stargell, Pirates; second inning home run off Jack Fisher

#### Met Hit

April 17, 1964: Tim Harkness, third-inning single off Bob Friend

#### Single

April 17, 1964: Bob Bailey, Pirates; second inning off Jack Fisher

#### Double

April 17, 1964: Ron Hunt, Mets; fourth inning off Bob Friend

#### Triple

April 18, 1964: Roberto Clemente, Pirates; sixth inning off Jerry Hinsley

#### Met Triple

out of the inning without giving up any runs. In the second inning, future Hall of Famer Willie Stargell introduced the ballpark to its first home run, when he belted the 12th of his 475 career home runs. Fisher pitched well for seven innings but was relieved by Ed Bauta. Bauta picked up the loss in the ninth inning when Bill Mazeroski, another Hall of Famer, drove in the winning run for a 4-3 Pirates victory.

In 1964, Philadelphia's Jim Bunning pitched the first and only complete perfect game in Shea Stadium history, with a 6-0 win over the Mets in the first half of a doubleheader on June 21. In their first season at Shea the Mets attracted 1,732,597 paying customers, an increase of 700,000 over their 1963 attendance at the Polo Grounds. Shea was also the site of Major League Baseball's 1964 All-Star Game on July 7 of that inaugural season.

Over the years, Shea Stadium has hosted many other sports, entertainment and cultural events. The Stadium has opened its gates to college and pro football, soccer, boxing, religious conventions, a visit from Pope John Paul II, numerous musical events and even the Ice Capades. An overwhelming crowd of 60,000 screaming Beatles fans packed the stadium for the first major outdoor stadium concert on August 15, 1965. The Beatles were followed by other rock and roll legends including the Rolling Stones, The Who, The Police, Simon & Garfunkel, Elton John and Eric Clapton. Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix also made a little known appearance at Shea for the 1970 Summer Festival for Peace.

Shea Stadium has even served as the home field for the Mets' crosstown rivals, the New York Yankees. After the Yankees completed their stadium's 50th anniversary season in 1973, the team moved to Shea for the 1974 and 1975 seasons while Yankee Stadium underwent extensive renovations. Again in the 1998 season, the Yankees were forced to play at Shea due to a fallen piece of concrete at Yankee Stadium. On Wednesday April 15, the Yankees played Anaheim in a 12:05 p.m. day game and the Mets hosted the Cubs for their regularly scheduled 7:40 p.m. start, creating a very unusual doubleheader. In 1975, the New York football Giants also played at Shea, marking the first and only time two professional baseball teams, the Mets and Yankees and two professional football teams, the Jets and the Giants played at the same stadium in the same year.

In 1982, the giant DiamondVision video display screen debuted in left-center field. The screen -- 35 feet, 8 inches wide by 26 feet, 3 inches high -- shows replays, special in-game features, statistics and more. The 12-person

May 8, 1964: Jess Gonder; first inning off Ernie Broglio, St. Louis

#### Met Home Run

April 23, 1964: Ron Hunt; eighth inning off Dick Ellsworth, Chicago

#### Stolen Base

April 19, 1964: Joe Christopher, Mets; sixth inning vs. Pittsburgh

#### Strikeout

April 17, 1964: Roberto Clemente, Pirates; first inning against Jack Fisher

#### Walk

April 17, 1964: Jim Hickman, Mets; second inning against Bob Friend

#### Hit Batter

April 17, 1964: Jim Hickman, Mets; fourth inning against Bob Friend

#### Wild Pitch

May 6, 1964: Larry Bearnarth, Mets; fifth inning vs. Cincinnati

#### Error

April 17, 1964: Bill Mazeroski, second base, Pirates (sixth inning)

#### Met Victory

April 19, 1964: Mets 6, Pirates 0 (WP - Al Jackson; LP - Bob Veale)

#### Shutout

April 19, 1964: Al Jackson, Mets; 6-0 (six-hitter) vs. Pittsburgh

#### Extra-Inning Game

May 31, 1964: (second game) Giants, 8 Mets, 6, 23 innings (WP - Gaylord Perry; LP - Galen Cisco)

#### Night Game

May 6, 1964: Reds 12, Mets 4 (WP - Sammy Ellis, LP - Bill Wakefield)

#### Doubleheader

May 10, 1964: Mets 4, Cardinals 1 (WP - Tracy Stallard, LP - Roger Craig); Cardinals 10, Mets 1 (WP - Ray Washburn, LP - Jerry Hinsley)

production staff captured two 2001 I.D.E.A. Golden Matrix Awards for best overall video and best overall matrix scoreboard display.

Between 1985 and 1987 major stadium renovations included the addition of 50 suites on Shea's press level. The orange and blue panels were removed from the exterior and large blue wind screen panels were installed. Neon outlines of baseball players were placed on each of the six panels, making the present facade consistent with the stadium's principal function and foremost association -- the home of the New York Mets.

In their illustrious history, the Mets have captured four Eastern Division titles, two Wild Card titles, four National League Pennants and two World Series titles. On October 16, 1969 the team won its first World Championship with a 5-3 victory over the Orioles before 57,397 screaming fans at Shea. In October of 1986, the Mets did it again. Delayed one day by rain, the Mets defeated the Boston Red Sox 8-5 at Shea in Game 7 of the World Series to become World Champions for the second time in franchise history.

Shea has also been the site of several Major League Baseball records. Dwight Gooden established a Major League rookie record with 276 strikeouts in 1984. During that season, he hurled a one-hitter to defeat the Cubs, 10-0 on September 7. In that same season he became the first teenage rookie to lead the Majors in strikeouts. On September 14, 1996, Todd Hundley surpassed Roy Campanella's 43-year-old Major League record for the most home runs by a catcher in one season (41) in the seventh inning off of Atlanta's Greg McMichael. Most recently, Lenny Harris became baseball's career leader with his 151st pinch hit on October 6, 2001, surpassing Manny Mota with a one-out single to right field in the sixth inning against the Expos.

The inception of Interleague Play set the stage for the first "Subway Series" at Shea Stadium on June 26, 1998. All three games of the series sold out, drawing 160,740 fans, the most for a three-game series in Mets history.

On July 8, 2000 the Mets and Yankees were involved in yet another historic doubleheader, with the first game at Shea Stadium and the second at Yankee Stadium. This event took place due to a makeup game from a rainout during the previous series at Yankee Stadium in June. It was the first time in 97 years that two teams played each other twice in one day at two different ballparks. Three months later the Fall Classic came back to Shea when the Mets faced the Yankees in the first New York/New York World Series since 1956.

Shea also served as a relief center after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Most of the gate areas were filled with food, supplies and makeshift lodging for the massive rescue effort. Ten days later, on September 21, the Mets made a star-spangled return against the Atlanta Braves. On one of the proudest nights in Shea Stadium history, 41,275 fans attended the symbolic comeback for New York and its citizens.

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