

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 315

By Beck

A RESOLUTION to honor the return of professional baseball to historic Sulphur Dell.

WHEREAS, Nashvillians started playing baseball as early as the 1850s at French Lick Springs, later called Sulphur Springs Ball Park; and

WHEREAS, by 1870, the baseball ground was referred to as Athletic Park; and

WHEREAS, in 1885, the Nashville Americans minor league baseball team became charter members of the newly formed Southern League and began play in Athletic Park; and

WHEREAS, the Americans played their first regular-season home game on May 4, 1885, against the Columbus Stars; and

WHEREAS, the Americans would be followed by other minor league teams as 19th century tenants of Athletic Park, including the Nashville Blues (1887), Nashville Tigers (1893–1894), Nashville Seraphs (1895), and Nashville Centennials (1897); and

WHEREAS, in 1901, the newly formed Southern Association's Nashville Vols began playing their home games at the ballpark; and

WHEREAS, the semi-pro Negro league Nashville Elite Giants, a forerunner to the Nashville Standard/Elite Giants, began playing at Athletic Park in 1907, and the team remained at the park through the 1928 season; and

WHEREAS, illustrious *Nashville Tennessean* sportswriter Grantland Rice began referring to the ballpark as "Sulphur Spring Dell" in 1908, later shortening the name to "Sulphur Dell," which stuck with the ballpark through its 1969 demolition and beyond; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Vols playing their home games at Sulphur Dell, the minor Negro league Nashville Stars played there in 1942, as well as the Nashville Black Vols/Cubs from 1945 to 1951; and

WHEREAS, Sulphur Dell's infamous outfield had a steep incline that ran along the entire outfield wall, most dramatically in right and center fields; and

WHEREAS, Sulphur Dell also had unusual outfield dimensions, due to the shape of the city block in which the ballpark was located: Left Field: 334', Center Field: 421', Right Field: 262'; and

WHEREAS, the right field embankment began at 224 feet from home plate, rising at a forty-five-degree angle toward the fence and ending at 262 feet. The embankment in left field began at 301 feet from home plate; and

WHEREAS, the ballpark was nicknamed "Suffer Hell" by players who had to navigate the treacherous outfield. Babe Ruth, who came to the Dell for an exhibition game with the New York Yankees against the Vols, reportedly refused to play right field and moved to left field for the game; and

WHEREAS, the Nashville Vols defeated the Lynchburg White Sox in the last professional baseball game at Sulphur Dell on September 8, 1963; and

WHEREAS, the Nashville Sounds, who previously played baseball at Herschel Greer Stadium near historic Fort Negley from 1977 to 2014, broke ground on a new stadium at the original Sulphur Dell site on January 27, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the new stadium, to be known as First Tennessee Park, will reestablish baseball at historic Sulphur Dell, bringing much excitement and economic development to the surrounding neighborhoods of the Jefferson Street corridor; and

WHEREAS, the first pitch is scheduled to be thrown out on Friday, April 17, 2015, as the Nashville Sounds take on the Colorado Springs Sky Sox; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the return of professional baseball to historic Sulphur Dell and wish the Nashville Sounds much success in their new stadium.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.