



# TURNSTILE TALES

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## From livestock to live events: An all-too-brief history of turnstiles

by DAVE MENK

Entering a stadium, fair, amusement park, or train station, the turnstile is a common sight. We tend not to pay much attention to this work horse (other than to avoid banging our knees or hips walking through the gate). That said, have you ever wondered *where* originated and for what *purpose*? Today, they exist to control entry, avoid overcrowding, and count attendance. But these are *far* different from their original use.

Dating back to the first millennium, the *original* turnstile was created by industrious farmers in England. Needing to move between fields while keeping livestock from following them into the crops, farmers originally came up with some stone steps (referred to then as a “stile”) as part of their walls. This involved two steps up, a small platform at the top, and then two steps down. (Imagine the wear and tear on their knees with all those ups and downs!)

One enterprising farmer grew tired of hitting those steps. He dug a hole, drove a pole into the earth and attached a wooden cross to the top. To make it turn, he plunged a long spike in the center of the cross. Just like that, a *turnstile* came to life! (Problem solved—and knees saved!)

Centuries later, when English farmers settled in America, turnstiles were still an agricultural staple. That changed in the late 19th century, with the invention of the self-registering turnstile, patented in 1876 by H.V. Bright of Cleveland, Ohio. According to *Baseball: The Early Years*,

*“In the United States circa the late 19th and early 20th centuries, baseball was coming-of-age. With more people attending games, club owners needed to control access and track gate receipts. This became especially important with the advent of revenue-sharing between home and visitor clubs.”*

Bright’s \$50 turnstile could control access to venues and count to 10,000.

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From then on, turnstiles helped control stadium entry, avoid overcrowding at entrances, and count attendance. (Of note, the earliest use of turnstiles in Europe is credited to Hampden Stadium in Glasgow, Scotland. Opened in October, 1903, it was the biggest stadium in the world, with capacity at well-over 100,000.)

Not long after turnstile use in ballparks and stadiums, commercial use then followed. Clarence Saunders was the first to install them in his Piggly Wiggly supermarket in 1913. He did so as a way to prevent overcrowding in his self-service market as people were so excited to shop there.

Today, we find turnstiles everywhere, from buses to banks to theme park rides and subway stations. It’s been a long, storied history for a device with humble beginnings as a way to keep the cows at bay.



From British farms dating back to the first millennium (TOP) to the entrance of Crosley Field (ABOVE), turnstiles are ubiquitous. But few consider their history and various purposes.

# ON DISPLAY:

## *Jimmy Fund Box*

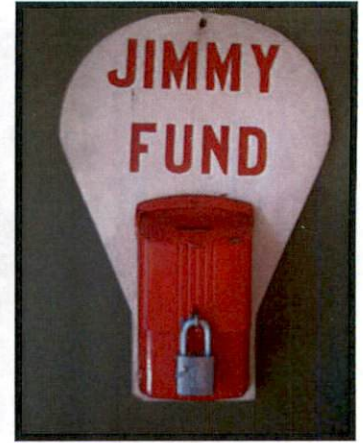
### *from the 1970s*

The Boston Braves founded the Jimmy Fund in 1948, when team publicist Billy Sullivan convinced owner Lou Perini to support a fundraising project for the Children's Cancer Research Foundation. The catalyst was a broadcast of Ralph Edwards' radio game show *Truth or Consequences*, during which a young cancer patient—Einar Gustafson, identified only as “Jimmy”—chatted about his love of baseball and the Braves. The broadcast sparked an immediate response, and donations flooded in from all over the country.

Edwards suggested the foundation's name was too long and came up with “The Jimmy Fund,” believing that this would be easier for the general public to remember. Five years later, when the Braves moved to Milwaukee, Perini asked Boston Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey to continue the charity's work. On April 10, 1953, Yawkey announced that the Jimmy Fund would become the official charity of the Red Sox. Their commitment to the Jimmy Fund continues today.

Any donation to box on display in the museum will go to the Jimmy Fund, supporting the work of Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the National Ballpark Museum.

(RIGHT) Fifty years ago, this Jimmy Fund collection box was used to accrue donations in the name of adult and pediatric cancer care and research, helping to improve the chances of survival for cancer patients around the world. The fund, founded by the Boston Braves, later became the official charity of the Boston Red Sox.



## Hank hits home run in television news feature

At nine-years-old, Hank Turner is the museum's youngest volunteer. He is also a historian in the making, exhibiting his enthusiasm for baseball by providing personal museum tours. In turn, Hank was recently the subject of *Storytellers*, a recurring human interest segment on Denver's KUSA Channel 9 News.

“I really love to show my love for baseball,” Hank told Nelson Garcia, a reporter from the local NBC affiliate. “I'd do anything to come to [the museum].”

Channel 9 also highlighted the baseball bond between Hank and his father, Andrew Turner.

“It's a fundamental part of baseball, right?” Andrew said. “So many of the great players will tell you that their fathers were the start of their baseball career.”

Over footage of Hank guiding out-of-town visitors around the museum, Garcia remarked, “From stories about Reggie Jackson's towering home run in the 1971 All-Star game to stories about the bat of Shoeless Joe Jackson, Hank loves the game...”

“But perhaps *nothing* tests that love better than a little history, [and] working at the museum is the perfect way for Hank to show off that knowledge.”



(ABOVE) Hank Turner directs museum foot traffic while speaking with a reporter from Denver's KUSA Channel 9. Hank was the subject of *Storytellers*, a recurring human interest segment, during a recent newscast.