

# The Negro Leagues Courier

The newsletter of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

"We are the Ship, all else are the Sea"

December 2001

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\*\* Denotes items available for SASE from Committee Co-Chairman  
Dick Clark - Please affix enough postage (usually 1 stamp/4 pages)

## Commemorating The 1939 New York Cubans

Dear Friends,

As many of you know the 1939 Negro National League New York Cubans were part of the Cooperstown Baseball Centennial Celebration in Cooperstown, New York in 1939. With 4,000 fans gathered to watch, the team played an exhibition game at Doubleday Field on Saturday, July 22, 1939, against the Mohawk Colored Giants. Behind the complete game pitching of Armando "Indian" Torres, the hitting of Esterio Carabello, Antonio Rodriguez, and Pedro Arango and the smooth defense of Strico Valdez and Cando Lopez the Cubans prevailed in a 6-0 shutout. The New York Cubans were the only Negro League team to be invited to participate in this milestone event and to my knowledge, the first Negro League team ever to play at Doubleday Field.

Currently, Doubleday Field is in the process of renovation and restoration. Several years ago an organization was established; "Friends of Doubleday" for the purpose of conducting "a capital campaign to renovate the infrastructure of the grandstand and build an endowment for the future." In an effort to encourage broad participation The Friends of Doubleday and the Village of Cooperstown have agreed to build a plaza of paving bricks at the main approaches to Doubleday Field. These pavers will be inscribed.

Five or six years ago I discussed with Larry Hogan the possibility of creating a memorial at Doubleday for the 1939 Cubans. I was hoping to do something for the 50th anniversary. Unfortunately, we never got beyond the talking stages, but now The Friends of Doubleday have provided the ideal opportunity.

In early October I started solicitations for pavers for the nine New York Cubans who participated in the Cooperstown Baseball Centennial and played and excelled in Doubleday Field in July of 1939. The more than 350,000 visitors a year that come to Cooperstown will have the opportunity to see their names and reflect on their history as they walk through the plaza at historic Doubleday. I truly believe that through this type of commemoration and education we can foster a great sense of appreciation for this history that we all love so much.

So far pavers for seven of the nine players have been purchased. Dick Clark purchased for Autorio Mirabel. Jeff Eastland purchased for Pedro Arango and Antonio Rodriguez. Michael Everett purchased for Armando Torres. Larry Hogan & Friends purchased for Esterio Carabello. And I purchased for Ramon Heredia and Strico Valdez. The pavers will simply say:

Ramon Heredia

1939

New York Cubans

These 4"X 8" pavers can be purchased for \$129.00 each. Replica pavers can be purchased for \$50.  
Remaining players are:

Catcher, Mickey Casey

Center Fielder, Cando Lopez

Hopefully there are a couple of members or readers of the NLC newsletter who would be willing to purchase a paver to honor these two remaining members of the team who played that day. If we want these two pavers placed with the other seven members of the team orders need to be sent by the end of the year. If you are willing to participate please contact me ([tphbolton@aol.com](mailto:tphbolton@aol.com) or 301-824-2375) and let me know which player's paver you would be willing to purchase. All orders should be placed directly with:

Friends of Doubleday  
P O Box 267  
Cooperstown, NY 13326  
(888) 766-0060  
[www.friendsofdoubleday.org](http://www.friendsofdoubleday.org)

Orders can also be placed online or if anyone needs order forms, I will be happy to mail you a copy.

Please note that "Friends of Doubleday" is a Section 501 (c) (3) Foundation. A confirmation letter recognizing your donation will be sent to you for tax purposes. You will also get a very nice certificate detailing your purchase.

We are also seeking contributions for one of the 12"X12" Founders Club pavers that will be dedicated to the entire 1939 New York Cubans team and their appearance at Doubleday. One thousand dollars will be needed for this purchase. Larry Hogan and Michael Everett have agreed to allow the Pop Lloyd Committee, also a 501 (c) (3), to serve as the repository for these contributions until sufficient funds for the Founders paver can be raised. For the Founders paver fund, please send contributions to:

The John Henry "Pop" Lloyd Committee

C/o Michael Everett

1014 Maple Avenue

Linwood, NJ 08221

Be sure to note on your check that the contribution is for the 1939 NY Cubans Founders Club Paver.

Again, I believe this is not only an excellent opportunity for lasting commemoration but also a great way to assist in the restoration and preservation of one of America's greatest ballparks.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Todd Bolton

**NLRAG Progress Report**

The work of the NLRAG continues apace with two landmark pieces of research having already been delivered to the Hall of Fame. A copy of the most comprehensive Negro Leagues ballparks list ever put together now resides at the Hall as does a listing of every Negro Leaguer known to have served in the military during a time of war. Any additional information that is found during the following months will of course be added to these computer databases but the delivery of the first fruits of the project is a milestone we are very glad to have behind us.

While the administrative end of the project is taking more time than had been anticipated, no major problems have surfaced which is indeed good news.

The inputting of box score information into the statistical database has begun with the years from 1920-1930 having been assigned to various researchers across the country. By inputting the information we currently have now, we can get a better idea as to which box scores we are still missing. The result of this will be a more organized and productive use of our box score hunters' time and efforts.

The work on the narrative history of the Negro Leagues continues as well. We have some of the country finest minds in the field working on this aspect of the project and therefore are expecting fantastic results.

A new facet has been added to the project. It is a mystery list. The idea is that the major mysteries of Negro League history will be placed on the list so that researchers can keep in mind important information that needs to be found while going about their work. When a list is put together we will be offering it here. Anyone with what they consider to be an important mystery can submit it to Dick Clark. All ideas will be given due consideration before the final list is compiled.

Any questions regarding any of the above projects or how you can become involved should be addressed to one of the project leaders.

### Contributors

You can't blame all this on me. Others responsible are: Scott Allen, Bob Bailey, Carlos Bauer, Todd Bolton, Adrian Burgos, Dick Clark, Jeff Eastland, Tom Garrett, Tom Hill, Larry Hogan, Signe Knutson, Larry Lester, Jerry Malloy, Gary Maurer, Rick Morris, Jim Overmyer, Lou Parrotta, Bob Peterson, Bob Potts, Jay Sanford, Wayne Stivers, and Lyle Wilson.

### Member and Reader Updates

Scott Allen new information is 633 Lillian St. Collinsville, IL 62234 (618) 344-6554. E-mail is po4101@yahoo.com

Tom Garrett will be living the good life as of January 1, 2002 when he officially joins the ranks of the retired. Congratulations, Tom! (Hey, Clark! We need to talk retirement benefits for this job. Hope they are better than my salary.)

Stew Thornley has a new e-mail address and website. The e-mail is [stew@thornley.net](mailto:stew@thornley.net) while the website is <http://stewthornley.net>.

### From The Mailbag

Dick Clark received the following letter just before this issue of *The Courier* was sent out to the printers. It was such good news, that we decided to reformat the layout to make room so that we could include it here.

Dear Dick,

If you remember I am chairman of "Judy Johnson Night, A Tribute to Negro League Baseball", an annual Negro League tribute held for the past six years here in Wilmington, Delaware. Sponsorship is by the City of Wilmington and the event takes place at our local minor league ballpark, Frawley Stadium. The field at the ballpark has been named Judy Johnson Field in tribute to Judy.

I just wanted to let you know that my committee has accomplished something that is beyond our wildest dreams. The Delaware Sports Hall of Fame has been planning to open a museum at Frawley Stadium where the owner, Matt Minker has given them a large room that was created this past year by an

expansion of the stadium. I have been working with the Delaware Sports Hall of Fame officials to see if a greater tribute could be extended to Judy who is an inductee into the Delaware Sports Hall of Fame. I wished to have a life size figure of Judy placed into the new museum. The Hall of Fame officials didn't seem too interested in committing space to this type of display since they felt that others would want similar figures placed of their favorite athlete.

Last year, in 2006, our local newspaper conducted a reader poll to see who the readers thought should be Delaware's athlete of the century. Judy Johnson much to my surprise was voted as athlete of the Twentieth Century. Remembering that Judy played in the twenties and thirties practically no one today would have seen him play. We've had other notable athletes with the Cowboy's Randy White, and the Phillies Chris Short among them.

I went back to the Hall of Fame people and reminded them that they had the Athlete of the Twentieth Century inducted into their museum and it would be fitting to put more emphasis on Judy. They ran the idea by their interior architect, Ed Sheeley who designed the Kansas City Negro League Museum, and he was very much in favor of such a figure. The Hall of Fame people decided to accept my offer to provide the figure with the recommendation by Ed Sheeley that we include a figure of a young boy so that Judy would be seen talking with the boy. Judy loved children and I agreed and committed \$10,000 to the project. This money came out of the proceeds of the Judy Johnson Night's silent auctions held over the past six years.

I had the figures created by a local artist and unveiled them on August 18th at our last Judy Johnson Night Tribute. They will be placed on permanent display in the new museum when it opens next spring. I will let you know when a date is decided on for the opening.

Best regards, Joe Mitchell

### Final Resting Places

Once again Bob Bailey has come through for us and supplied the following gravesites:

Henry Kimbro- Greenwood Cemetery, Nashville, TN

Colonel W. Strothers- Lincoln Cemetery, Harrisburg, PA

Charles Ruffin- Lincoln Memorial Cemetery, Portsmouth, VA

### Negro League Related Articles

"Nat Peeples and the Failure of Integration In the Southern Association" by Kenneth R. Fenster and "Bonnie Serrell" by Barry Mednick are both available through the SABR Research Exchange. See the latest issue of *The SABR Bulletin* for info on how to go about ordering items from the exchange.

NEW YORK TIMES 9/17/01, "Cool Papa's Legacy Lives With a Statue in St. Louis" \*\*1pg

"A Party For Birthday Boy Buck O'Neil, 90" from the 11/21/01 issue of *USA Today's baseball Weekly* \*\*1pg

Web version of "Events Celebrate Buck O'Neil's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday" from *The Kansas City Star*. \*\*1pg

Web version of "90 Years Have Given Buck O'Neil More than One Story To Tell" from *The Kansas City Star*. \*\*3pgs.

A program from the Asheville Tourists "A Tribute To The Stars of the Old Negro Leagues" from 1997 is available. \*\*11pgs.

### On The Web

Pictures of the Jerry Malloy Bench Dedication have been added to the Tom and Helen Hill Homepage along with some other additions, including a link to Becki Taylor's pictures. Becki is Jerry's younger sister! Please connect through the Tom and Helen Hill Homepage at:  
<http://thomashill.home.mindspring.com>

## The Marketplace

Bill James has a new book out which is, appropriately enough, entitled **THE NEW BILL JAMES HISTORICAL BASEBALL ABSTRACT**. While I have not read the entire book, I have had the chance to read the thirty-page chapter on the Negro Leagues. For someone who is, by his own admission, not an expert on the Negro Leagues, Mr. James did much better than most of the other non-experts that have attempted to write books on the Negro Leagues. I will gladly admit that even I, with twelve years in this field, learned a couple of things from the book, such as a nickname worn by Chet Brewer I had never heard of previously. There were a few glowing omissions from James' lack of expertise, such as White Sox Park in Los Angeles being the only stadium he knew of being built solely for the Negro Leagues. There were in fact several built solely for the Negro Leagues including Lewis Park (later Martin Park) in Memphis, Wilson Park in Nashville, and Greenlee Field in Pittsburgh.

As with any book that ranks players, someone is going to have a problem with some of the rankings. The difference between other people and me however, is that I have a place to voice my concerns. Overall, James' rankings of players by position (I was disappointed that he left out a pitchers ranking) were really pretty good at most positions and was pretty close to what most of the experts I know would have done. The position I really had a problem with though was his catcher rankings. I just cannot see how anyone could rank Ted Radcliffe, Quincy Troupe, and Joe Greene higher than Memphis' Iron Man Larry Brown. While James was right in his statement that Brown was not "a great hitter", he couldn't have been further off the mark when he said Brown was "probably not top-notch as a handler of pitches". When the most dominant left-handed pitcher in black baseball in the 1940's, Verdell Mathis, endorses someone as a great handler of pitchers, what more do you need?

**BEERBALL: A HISTORY OF ST. LOUIS BASEBALL** by Ed Gans and published by Writer's Showcase contains 19 pages on the Negro Leagues.

**THE MONARCHS: 1920-1938: FEATURING WILBER "BULLET" ROGAN, THE GREATEST PLAYER IN COOPERSTOWN** by Phil Dixon and published by Mariah Press is out. Ordering info is available. \*\*1pg.

**BASEBALL AND THE AMERICAN DREAM: RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND THE AMERICAN PAST**, which is published by M.E. Sharpe and edited by Robert Elias is now available at a bookstore near you.

**JACKIE ROBINSON: RACE, SPORTS, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM** edited by Joseph Dorinson and Joran Warmund, also by M.E. Sharpe is also out. Ordering info for the two M.E. Sharpe books is available \*\*2pgs.

**BLACKBALL SUPERSTARS: LEGENDARY PLAYERS OF THE NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUES** by Ace Collins and John Hillman contains short biographies on twelve former Negro League superstars.

**PAST TIME: BASEBALL AS HISTORY** by Jules Tygiel and published by Oxford University Press has a twenty eight page chapter on the Negro leagues entitled "Unreconciled Strivings: Baseball in Jim Crow America."

**THE PITTSBURGH CRAWFORDS** by Jim Bankes is available from McFarland.

**THE BEST PITCHER IN BASEBALL: THE LIFE OF RUBE FOSTER, NEGRO LEAGUE GIANT** by Robert Cottrell is out. It is published by New York University Press and contains 276 pages. It can be ordered online at [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com). Dick received a copy from Bob Cottrell. He hasn't had a chance to read it, as yet. But will have a complete review in the next newsletter. Dick says it looks very well researched with chapter footnotes included. (Anybody else notice that I have to do all the hard work while all Clark has to do for the newsletter is read all the free books he gets?)

Dick has not read the new Bill James Historical Abstract (discussed elsewhere) but eleven Negro Leaguers make his list of Top 100 players of all time. They are Charleston 4<sup>th</sup>, Gibson 9<sup>th</sup>, Paige 17<sup>th</sup>, Stearnes 25<sup>th</sup>, Lloyd 27<sup>th</sup>, Suttles 43<sup>rd</sup>, Williams 52<sup>nd</sup>, Leonard 65<sup>th</sup>, Torriente 67<sup>th</sup>, Bell 76<sup>th</sup>, Wells 86<sup>th</sup>, and Dihigo 95<sup>th</sup>. Listing \*\*1pg

Dick has just read the younger readers book **THE JOURNAL OF BIDDY OWENS** and found it nicely done. (Don't work too hard now, Dick.)

Jim Stinson Sports has some great autograph items for sale. \*\*1pg

### **Recent Events –**

On October 27, 2001 the Buck Leonard Association For Sports and Human Enrichment held its first annual Buck Leonard Day Luncheon. The NLC was represented by Jeff Eastland and Tom Garrett. A program from the event is available. \*\*2pgs.

### **Upcoming Events**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Jerry Malloy Negro Leagues Committee Conference has been awarded, as was mentioned in a previous issue of *The Courier* to Memphis, TN. A tentative date for the conference has been set. It is July 18-20, 2002. More info as it becomes available.

### **The Final Pitch**

This version of *The Courier* will have arrived late to all of you who receive a hard copy of it through the mail. I would like to apologize for the delay. A family emergency resulted in me having to spend a week in Nashville over the Thanksgiving holiday. Despite several tense moments and a Thanksgiving dinner of a double cheeseburger and onion rings in the cafeteria of Vanderbilt Hospital, everything is much better now and I am back at work bringing you all the news that's fit to print. Yeah, I know that the news that isn't fit to print is always more interesting but Mr. Clark won't let me put it in. Anyway, I would like to close this final issue of 2001 with a wish for Happy Holidays for all of you from all of us here at *The Courier*.