

# The Courier

A Publication of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee  
"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"

Editor, Larry Lester

March, 2018

## In the News

### The Jerry Malloy Negro Leagues Conference . . .

This year the **JERRY MALLOY NEGRO LEAGUE CONFERENCE** is taking a sabbatical. We plan to come back with a conference upgrade in respect to having more players attend, and expanded programming. As I catch my breath after 20 years of celebrating Negro Baseball League history, I am currently accepting proposals to host the **Biggest and Best Black Baseball in America** in your hometown.

Some of the interested cities are listed below. The tentative deadline is April 15th, tax day. If your local organization or SABR chapter is interested, please contact me at [LarryLester42@gmail.com](mailto:LarryLester42@gmail.com) for an application proposal template. We look forward to hearing from you.



## Salisbury art exhibit celebrates baseball's black history

[Meg Ryan](#), MRyan@Delmarvanow.com Published Feb. 28, 2018 Photos by Ralph Musthaler

A collection of Negro League memorabilia and art is on display at the Salisbury Art Space. A part of baseball's history is coming to life in downtown Salisbury.

"The Art and History of the Negro Leagues" is on display at the Salisbury Art Space through March 31. Located in the Salisbury University Art Galleries at 212 W Main St., the exhibit showcases artwork inspired by famous and under-recognized players with various pieces of memorabilia.

"The exhibition is really designed for people who know nothing about Negro Leagues at all and so we'll give them historical context, talk about society at large, segregation and the racism that the players met, give them that kind of historical context," said Christopher Harrington, interim dean for the School of Education, Social Science and The Arts of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



"It will highlight the most famous players, Satchel Paige and then some players that were in the Negro Leagues and moved into the Major Leagues that people would know like Willie Mays and Hank Aaron. And for those that really know their baseball and know even the Negro Leagues, I talk about lesser-known players but who should be more famous and even some of the obscure players."

In 1920, **Rube Foster** founded the Negro National League. Occasionally, white teams would play black teams in barnstorming games. In 1947, Major League Baseball officially integrated with the entrance of Jackie Robinson.

The Negro National League lasted until 1948 while the Negro American League disbanded in 1960, according to History.com.

Harrington became interested in the Negro Leagues in the early 1990s. He began volunteering for the Negro League Baseball Players Association.

During his time as a volunteer, Harrington was able to meet some retired players. There were less than 100 retirees still alive at the time, he said.



**Christopher Harrington**, Interim Dean, School of Education, Social Science and The Arts at UMES, talks about his exhibition at Salisbury Art Space feature Negro League memorabilia and artwork on Friday, Feb. 23, 2018.

The Association was trying to create interest in the leagues which had primarily been forgotten. With no retirement pension for Negro League players, the men were forced into low-income jobs. The Association hosted signing ceremonies to help them sell their autographs and receive more attention, he said.

The Society for American Baseball Research also created a database on players' statistics which previously were not kept in one place and instead just written in local newspaper articles, Harrington said.

"Now we actually have a pretty good database on statistics and that definitely helped legitimize the fact that these players deserved being in the Hall of Fame," he said.

Over time, Harrington was able to collect the various pieces of signed memorabilia, along with, other historical items like magazines, gloves, a mining helmet used as a batting helmet and a seat from the late Comiskey Park.

The exhibit also includes artwork inspired by the Negro Leagues from Harrington, **Phillip Dewey (a regular presenter at the Malloy Conference)** and Matthew Shockley.

Another section of the exhibit pays homage to a local team, Somerset County's **Oakville Eagles**. The semipro black baseball team stayed active from 1910 to 1978. The team traveled around the Eastern Shore, Pennsylvania and Delaware playing other teams. At one point, the team held a 48-game winning streak. "They were really, really good," Harrington said.

**Kirkland Hall**, president of the Oakville Community Club, has kept the team's legacy alive with the help of his family and other former players. The Oakville Ball Park was restored and now is a registered historical landmark.

Hall played on the team, as well as, his father and uncles. The Oakville Community Club now maintains the field and uses it for various events and the occasional baseball game.

Hall said Harrington mentioned the upcoming Salisbury Art Space exhibit and he provided pictures and articles. He's happy to see what he calls the "well kept secret" of the community in the spotlight.

"It's refreshing," he said.

Coinciding with Black History Month, Hall hopes to see more of the black community learning about a baseball team that achieved success right in their backyard. With only the big names in history like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X taught in schools, he feels it's important for young people to learn about their local black history as well.

Harrington hopes that visitors who come to the exhibit for memorabilia, will be impressed by the art and vice versa. With Salisbury Art Space changing its name from Salisbury Art Institute and Gallery, he said the goal was to make exhibits more relatable and welcoming.

"I think it breaks down the barrier when you think about an art institute or even a museum that's going to put some people off, but if you have an exhibition that's about history and about local history....memorabilia, that's much more approachable," he said.

#### **If you go:**

**What:** The Art and History of the Negro Leagues

**Where:** Salisbury University Art Galleries Downtown Campus, 212 W Main St., Salisbury, Maryland

**When:** Until March 31, Wednesday through Saturday 12-5 p.m.

**Contact:** [Salisburyartspace.org](http://Salisburyartspace.org), 410-546-4748

## **Negro League Baseball part of Tennessee's forgotten history**

By [Anne Holt](#) Published: February 14, 2018

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WKRN) – **Dr. Harriet Kimbro Hamilton** says even fewer people today know the history of Negro League Baseball.

"They played like invisible men, because half of the population in this country didn't know that this was going on," said Dr. Hamilton.

Dr. Hamilton said she's been invited to several places to talk about the Negro Leagues. Her knowledge comes from an impressive collection of Negro League memorabilia and a priceless scrapbook.

"It was old, so old, over 60 years old now, 70 years old," Hamilton said of the scrapbook.

It belonged to Henry Kimbro, Harriet's father.

He played baseball for the **Baltimore Elite (E-Light) Giants**, a team formerly named the **Nashville Elite (E-Light) Giants**.

"It had all the articles, the stats, what the team did, articles about him as a player in Baltimore," she said.

The scrapbook was given to Harriet with her mother's blessing and a request.

"You do something with this scrapbook." In the back of my mind, I knew I had to tell the story," said Harriet. She said like her father, the voices of so many Negro League players and owners have gone silent and their contributions to America's favorite past time forgotten.

A historical marker on 2nd Avenue stands near the site where many local players enjoyed the game, **Tom Wilson Park**.

The city's first black owned ballpark opened as home field of the Nashville E-Light Giants in 1929.

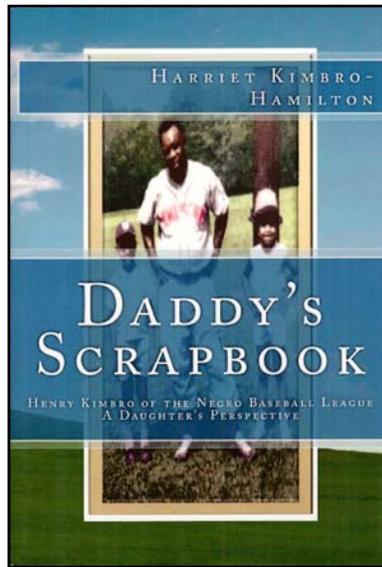
Today, commercial development covers what used to be a place of hope and promise in the lives of segregated black Americans.

"He was born in 1912. He saw a lot of negative things toward African Americans. But you could go to a baseball field and a bunch of guys could get together, and play baseball and the world that you had seen would fade away for a while," said Harriet. "It made life enjoyable."

Harriet chronicled her dad's life and career in a memoir called "Daddy's Scrapbook"

It's a welcomed addition to Negro League history, told through the eyes of family and Nashville Negro League players who helped her father succeed.

Please note, Dr. Hamilton has been a guest author at the Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference.



## The Shrine of the Eternals

**T**erry Cannon, Executive Director of the Baseball Reliquary recently released a list of the 50 candidates for the 2018 election.

Election packets, containing ballots and biographical profiles of all candidates, will be mailed to Baseball Reliquary members on April 2, 2018. To be eligible to vote, all persons must have their minimum \$25.00 annual membership dues paid by March 31, 2018.

The three new inductees will be announced in May, with the Induction Day ceremony schedule for Sunday, July 15, 2018. In addition to the presentation of plaques to the 2018 inductees, this year's ceremony will honor the recipients of the 2018 Hilda Award (named in memory of Hilda Chester and acknowledging a baseball fan's exceptional devotion to the game) and the 2018 Tony Salin Memorial Award (presented annually to an individual dedicated to the preservation of baseball history).

For additional information on the Shrine of the Eternals, contact Mr. Cannon, at P.O. Box 1850, Monrovia, CA 91017; by phone at 626-791-7647; or my email at: [terymar@earthlink.net](mailto:terymar@earthlink.net)

The number to the right of candidates' names indicates the number of years on the Shrine of the Eternals ballot.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Kurt Bevacqua ( <i>New!</i> ) | 26. Masanori Murakami ( <i>New!</i> )    |
| <b>2. Chet Brewer</b> (19)       | 27. Hideo Nomo (7)                       |
| 3. Bert Campaneris (7)           | 28. Dave Parker (5)                      |
| <b>4. Octavius V. Catto</b> (6)  | 29. Joe Pepitone (8)                     |
| 5. Rocky Colavito (6)            | 30. Shorty Perez (2)                     |
| 6. Charles M. Conlon (17)        | 31. Adolfo Phillips ( <i>New!</i> )      |
| 7. Bob Costas (5)                | 32. Phil Pote (16)                       |
| 8. Jim Creighton (8)             | 33. Vic Power (10)                       |
| 9. Mo'ne Davis (2)               | <b>34. Charley Pride</b> (4)             |
| 10. Leo Durocher (4)             | 35. Lenny Randle ( <i>New!</i> )         |
| <b>11. Luke Easter</b> (4)       | 36. Pete Reiser (6)                      |
| 12. Nancy Faust (4)              | 37. J.R. Richard (19)                    |
| 13. Lisa Fernandez (18)          | 38. Bing Russell (3)                     |
| 14. Charlie Finley (8)           | 39. Doris Sams ( <i>New!</i> )           |
| <b>15. Rube Foster</b> (20)      | 40. Annie Savoy (8)                      |
| 16. Oscar Gamble (2)             | 41. Janet Marie Smith ( <i>New!</i> )    |
| 17. Ernie Harwell (15)           | 42. Rusty Staub (13)                     |
| 18. Tommy John ( <i>New!</i> )   | <b>43. George Stovey</b> ( <i>New!</i> ) |
| <b>19. Mamie Johnson</b> (5)     | <b>44. John Thorn (2) - SABRite</b>      |
| 20. Ted Kluszewski (3)           | 45. Jim Thorpe ( <i>New!</i> )           |
| <b>21. Effa Manley</b> (20)      | 46. Mike Veeck (2)                       |
| 22. Dr. Mike Marshall (13)       | 47. Chris von der Ahe (4)                |
| 23. Tug McGraw (15)              | 48. Rube Waddell (20)                    |
| 24. Denny McLain (5)             | 49. Bill White ( <i>New!</i> )           |
| 25. Fred Merkle (12)             | 50. John Young (6)                       |

**Former Negro Leagues Stars are in BOLD print.**

# Press Box Publicity

~PR Consultants for Publishers & Authors~

**ONE OF THE GREATEST SHORTSTOPS IN BASEBALL HISTORY AND OUR LAST .400 HITTER.  
A SUPERSTAR BEFORE THE TERM WAS INVENTED.  
ARTIE WILSON WAS CONFIDENT AND ADORED. TALENTED AND JOYOUS.  
A TRAILBLAZER WHO FLATTENED RACIAL BARRIERS WITH LITTLE HISTORICAL RECORD.  
UNTIL NOW.**

## **SINGLES AND SMILES**

### **HOW ARTIE WILSON BROKE BASEBALL'S COLOR BARRIER**

Artie Wilson was one of the greatest shortstops in baseball history.

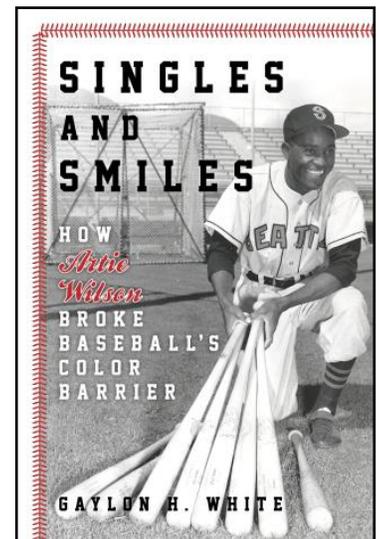
He did amazing things with a bat and glove and could run the bases as well as anyone. A natural leader and a perennial All-Star in the Birmingham Industrial League, Negro Leagues and the Pacific Coast League, his self-confidence and joyous love of the game were appealing and contagious. Teammates and rivals adored him equally. Hecklers became supporters. Artie had a great attitude and always accentuated the bright side of life rather than the dark. That's why he always had a smile on his face. As did those who watched him play.

He was a superstar before the term was invented and a trailblazing talent whose life and career are chronicled in the fascinating new book from Gaylon H. White, **"SINGLES AND SMILES: How Artie Wilson Broke Baseball's Color Barrier"** (Rowman & Littlefield, April 2018). Singles and smiles were Artie's trademarks, along with being a great role model and a great human being. The color of his skin, and then his age, kept him out of the big leagues, but his .376 lifetime batting average in Negro League play—including the last season a pro player in a top-level league batted .400 (batting .402 for the Birmingham Black Barons in 1948)—confirm that Major League Baseball missed out on showcasing a singular showman.

Artie hit everything pitchers threw up there. The free-swinging leadoff hitter couldn't be stopped, except by the wall between black players and white "organized" baseball. Yet he persisted and had an amazing career.

**"SINGLES AND SMILES"** also covers:

- His youth in segregated Birmingham
- How he was raised by his mother and he saw his father only once in his life
- The work accident early in his career where he lost the tip of his right thumb
- The unusual and usually ineffective "Artie Wilson Shift" or the "(Lefty) O'Doul Shift" used against him because he rarely pulled the ball



- The Artie Wilson style: Nice clothes, snappy berets and Cuban cigars
- Had Branch Rickey considered Artie Wilson to integrate instead of Jackie Robinson?
- His negotiating acumen and how he was able to maximize his salaries when few players were able to do so
- How Artie's listed age as a player was possibly a "mathematical miscalculation of major proportions"
- Playing for the Birmingham Black Barons, the Harlem Globetrotters of baseball, booked by Abe Saperstein
- Artie's role in integrating the Pacific Coast League (PCL)
- Life in the PCL: More money, better working conditions, better family life
- His relationship with Billy Martin playing for the PCL's Oakland Oaks
- The Cleveland Indians' and New York Yankees' "Battle for Art Wilson"—a battle that everyone seemed to lose
- His "cameo" appearance with the NY Giants in 1951 when he was 30 years old
- His nicknames throughout the years: "Li'l Arthur", "Artful Artie", "Mr. Hey Hey!" and ultimately "Ageless Artie"
- His baseball comeback at nearly 42 years of age (maybe 43).

It is a real pity that more people didn't get to see Artie play, but Gaylon White attempts to fill in the historical record with excellent reportage and clean, exuberant prose, as he celebrates the hijinks, fascinating anecdotes and genuine acts of courage of one of the true characters of the game.

Artie pushed the racial boundaries and won the hearts and minds of so many white people along the way. But he wasn't alone. "**SINGLES AND SMILES**" also chronicles the stories of the teammates and icons performing with and against Artie like Luke Easter, Minnie Minoso, Walter "Buck" Leonard, Jackie Robinson, Satchel Paige and Willie Mays to name just a few. Some made it the major leagues and had long, glorious careers. Some were largely passed by, like Artie, who just got one brief opportunity in the majors well after his peak. What if?

When he died in 2010 at the age of 90, he left a legacy of the abiding love and respect for the game. As for all of the missed chances and *what ifs*, he wouldn't have changed a thing about his life and career.

Cherish this story.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

**Gaylon H. White** was a sportswriter for the *Denver Post*, *Arizona Republic* and *Oklahoma Journal* before working in the corporate world for nearly forty years. He is the author of *The Bilko Athletic Club: The Story of the 1956 Los Angeles Angels* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014) and co-author with Ransom Jackson of *Handsome Ransom Jackson: Accidental Big Leaguer* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

#### **SINGLES AND SMILES**

##### **How Artie Wilson Broke Baseball's Color Barrier**

Author: Gaylon H. White

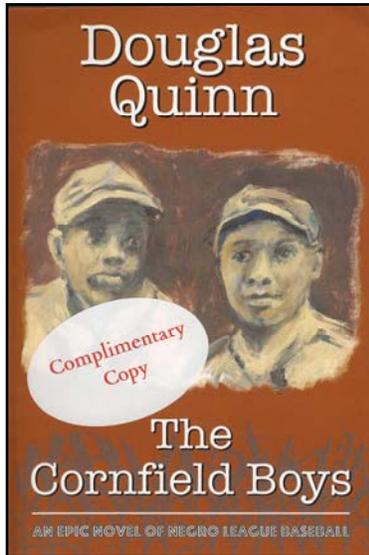
Rowman & Littlefield / April 2018

Hardcover / 240 Pages / \$35.00

ISBN 13 978-1538107904

**The Cornfield Boys by Douglas Quinn**

Ray Ostler, age 91, sits in his rocking chair, waiting for the call from the Baseball Hall of Fame that will assure his place in history. While he waits, he tells a story to his great grandson, Gerald Handy; tells about how he and his boyhood friend, Marvin Riddick, chased down balls hit past the outfield by players from the Sawyer-town A.M.E. Zion Church team; about finally being old enough to play for the Down-Town Skippers of Norfolk, a poorly run barnstorming team owned by a white businessman; about how, after the team folded mid-season, he thought his career was over; about getting word that Malcolm Fullard, a Black man with roots in boot-legging and numbers, was forming a professional level baseball game called the Norfolk Fullards; about his years of playing with the Fullards and, off-season, playing winter ball in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela; about how the Negro Leagues and Black barnstorming teams crumbled and folded after Jackie Robinson and others broke the color barrier in the Major Leagues; about Ray's final days of play in Mexico . . . and about all the things that happened to him and Marvin during those tumultuous years.



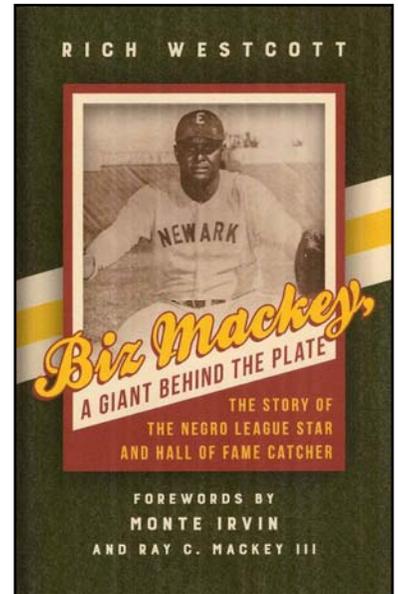
The *Cornfield Boys* is a tribute to all those Black players who lived for the game of baseball but, except for a chosen few, never received the recognition they deserved.

Get your copy of his epic novel of Black baseball history set in River City, North Carolina and Norfolk, Virginia that chronicles two men's journey playing during the 1920s through the late 1950s from:

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[aasmktg@yahoo.com](mailto:aasmktg@yahoo.com)  
[www.obxwriter.webs.com](http://www.obxwriter.webs.com)

**Biz Mackey, A Giant Behind the Plate: The Story of the Negro League Star and Hall of Fame Catcher by Rich Westcott, with forewords by Monte Irvin and Ray C. Mackey III**

Before the time of Josh Gibson and Roy Campanella, James Raleigh "Biz" Mackey was the quintessential catcher in the Negro Leagues. Cumberland Posey, who managed the great Gibson, rated Mackey as his number-one catcher of all time. As a young talent with the

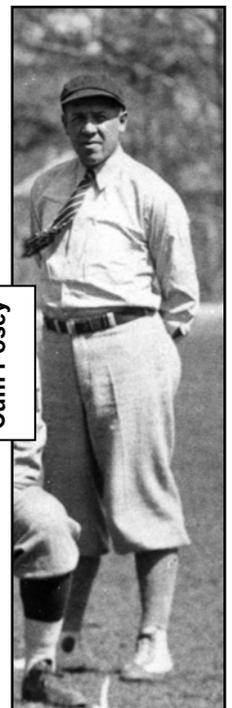


**Baltimore Elite Giants**, Campanella credited Mackey with his own development into a Major League catcher.

In *Biz Mackey*, baseball writer and historian Rich Westcott uses archival materials and interviews with former Negro League players to chronicle the catcher's life and remarkable career and provide an in-depth book at Philadelphia Negro League history. Westcott traces Mackey's childhood as the son of sharecroppers in Texas to his success on the baseball diamond, where he displayed extraordinary defensive skills and an exceptional ability to hit and to handle pitchers.

Mackey spent a third of his career playing in Philadelphia, winning championships with the **Hildale Club** and the **Philadelphia Stars**.

With *Biz Mackey*, this baseball giant finally received the biography he deserves. Published by Temple University Press. To order your copy visit the Press at: [http://www.temple.edu/tempress/titles/2476\\_reg.html](http://www.temple.edu/tempress/titles/2476_reg.html)



## Sunrises!

SEND YOUR FAVORITE NEGRO LEAGUER A **BIRTHDAY CARD**.

### MARCH

- 1<sup>ST</sup> - VERNELL JACKSON - 88
- 4<sup>TH</sup> - CHARLES MIDDLEBROOK - 82
- 7<sup>TH</sup> - JAMES WOODS - 84
- 13<sup>TH</sup> - LEROY HANCOCK - 87
- 15<sup>TH</sup> - AL JEFFCOAT - 85
- 18<sup>TH</sup> - CHARLEY PRIDE - 82; EZELL KING - 88
- 20<sup>TH</sup> - GEORGE ALTMAN - 85
- 21<sup>ST</sup> - **BENNY RODRIQUEZ - 91**

### APRIL

- 15<sup>TH</sup> - J.C. HARTMAN - 84
- 23<sup>RD</sup> - **CHUCK HARMON - 94**
- 25<sup>TH</sup> - **JERRY BENNETT - 97**; SAM ALLEN - 82
- 27<sup>TH</sup> - TONY LLOYD - 82

### MAY

- 1<sup>ST</sup> - PIANO RED WALKER - 86
- 6<sup>TH</sup> - WILLIE MAYS - 87
- 13<sup>TH</sup> - J.W. WINGATE - 89
- 17<sup>TH</sup> - **GENE SCRUGGS - 80**; **IRVIN CASTILLE - 92**
- 22<sup>ND</sup> - GEORGE SPRIGGS - 81; MAURICE PEATROS - 79
- 25<sup>TH</sup> - LARRY LEGRANDE - 79
- 29<sup>TH</sup> - HAROLD HAIR - 85

**NOTE:** Congratulations to our Nonagenarians: **BENNY RODRIQUEZ, JERRY BENNETT, CHUCK HARMON, & IRVIN CASTILLE.**

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**SABR's Negro Leagues Committee**  
Larry Lester - chair, [LarryLester42@gmail.com](mailto:LarryLester42@gmail.com)

*The Courier* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR); in March, June, September and December. Inquiries, submissions and research requests can be sent to Larry Lester. Back issues can be found [HERE](#).

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## Sunsets . . . .

**MAMIE "PEANUT" JOHNSON, 82**, died December 17, 2017, in Washington, DC. Johnson was born to Gentry Harrison and Della Havelow on September 27, 1935, in Ridgeway, SC. Along with **Toni Stone, Connie Morgan, Deseria "Boo Boo" Richardson**, and **Doris Arlene Jackson**, she one of five women to play in the Negro Leagues. Johnson was mocked by K.C. Monarch 3b **Hank Baylis**, as too small to play in the big leagues and named her "peanut." Records show that after 2b Stone left the Indianapolis Clowns in 1953, Johnson joined 2b Connie Morgan on the 1954 team, as a pitcher.



Johnson attended New York University and later received a nursing degree from North Carolina A&T, and worked in the nursing field for roughly 30 years.

Ms. Johnson's honors are many. Former President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hilary Clinton honored her at the White House as a female baseball legend. She is the recipient of the Mary McLeod Bethune Continuing Award. On June 5, 2008, Johnson and other living players from the Negro Leagues were drafted by Major League franchises. The **Washington Nationals** drafted this hometown pioneer.

In 2010, the city of Ridgeway presented her with the Key to the City and named a street after her. Also, a baseball field at the Rosedale Recreation Center in Washington, DC, was named in her honor. Johnson has received proclamations from the City of Miami (FL), and the Town of Ridgeway (SC).

And lastly, Mamie Johnson along with 11 other former Negro Leaguers were honored by former **President Barack Obama** at the White House. (See *Courier* newsletter, September 2013, for details). Ms. Johnson was the last surviving female player from the Negro Leagues.