

The Courier

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

Editor, Larry Lester

March 2021

In the News – The BlackHole Planet

Captain's log, Stardate nineteen forty-seven. En route to a distant galaxy in the baseball solar system, where our planet, the BlackHole, has been overrun by Klingons from planet MajorLeague. The Klingon empire, once a dominant, but now a shrinking entity is fighting for continued supremacy between the white foul lines. Meanwhile Black megastars are still fighting for full legitimacy. Every team in the BlackHole has become infested with Klingon scouts. The scouts are looking to harvest and propagate the ebony talents.

Takeover is imminent. Megastars are being transported to MajorLeague at an alarming rate to save their dying planet. Our mission here is critical – to salvage the league and team histories of our collapsing solar system for future SABR generations. Since Stardate, teams have fallen into the shadows – never to see light again.

The shrinking time warp is forcing the remaining BlackHole inhabitants to scramble for survival of their legacy. Unable to resist the gravitational pull to the alien planet, every nanosecond is needed to preserve records, stats and highlights into our time capsule in hopes of reemerging in 2021 as a once prosperous and viable league.

It is time for you to join us in this fight against the ruthlessness and brutality of this warrior caste from the Gamma Quadrant. Please send help N-O-W. Our survival depends on you.

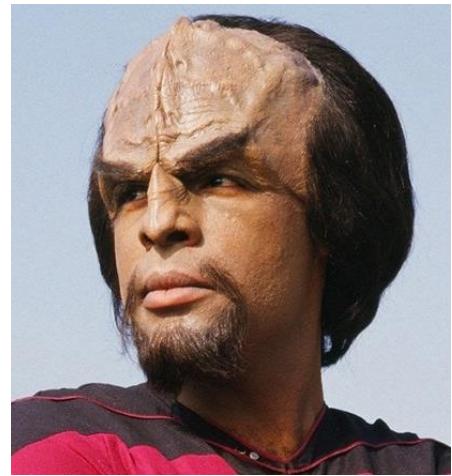
Help came on December 16, 2020. Major league baseball joined the battle to accept the records of the BlackHole planet and granted them full professional league status. The Press Release in part is below:

Commissioner of Baseball **Robert D. Manfred, Jr.** announced today that Major League Baseball is correcting a longtime oversight in the game's history by officially elevating the Negro Leagues to "Major League" status. During this year's centennial celebration of the founding of the Negro Leagues, MLB is proud to highlight the contributions of the pioneers who played in these seven distinct leagues from 1920-1948. With this action, MLB seeks to ensure that future generations will remember the approximately 3,400 players of the Negro Leagues during this time period as Major League-caliber ballplayers. Accordingly, the statistics and records of these players will become a part of Major League Baseball's history.

This long overdue recognition is the product of evaluation throughout this year, which included consideration of: discussions with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and other baseball entities; the previous and ongoing studies of baseball authors and researchers; the 2006 study by the National Baseball Hall of Fame (the Negro League Researchers and Authors Group); and an overall historical record that has expanded in recent years. In particular, MLB commends the work of **Gary Ashwill, Scott Simkus, Mike Lynch**, and **Kevin Johnson**, who drove the construction of the Seamheads Negro Leagues Database, and Larry Lester, whose decades-long research underlies and adds to their work. Other notable contributors to the overall statistical compilations include researchers **Dick Clark, John Holway, Todd Peterson, Bill Plott, Patrick Rock and Wayne Stivers**.

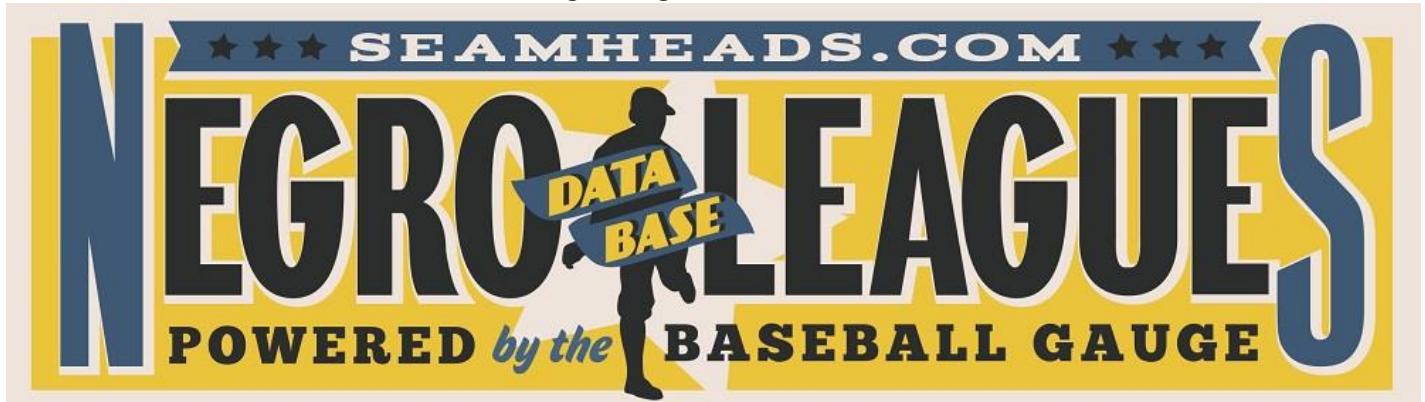
Commissioner Manfred said: "All of us who love baseball have long known that the Negro Leagues produced many of our game's best players, innovations and triumphs against a backdrop of injustice. We are now grateful to count the players of the Negro Leagues where they belong: as Major Leaguers within the official historical record."

John Thorn, the Official Historian of Major League Baseball, said: "The perceived deficiencies of the Negro Leagues' structure and scheduling were born of MLB's exclusionary practices, and denying them Major League



status has been a double penalty, much like that exacted of Hall of Fame candidates prior to Satchel Paige's induction in 1971. Granting MLB status to the Negro Leagues a century after their founding is profoundly gratifying."

John Labombarda, Head of the Editorial Department at the **Elias Sports Bureau**, the Official Statistician of Major League Baseball, said: "The Elias Sports Bureau supports Major League Baseball in its conferral of Major League status on the Negro Leagues. We look forward to working with John Thorn and the people who worked on the research and construction of the Seamheads Negro Leagues Database."



MLB and the Elias Sports Bureau have begun a review process to determine the full scope of this designation's ramifications on statistics and records. MLB and Elias will work with historians and other experts in the field to evaluate the relevant issues and reach conclusions upon the completion of that process.

The seven leagues that comprised the Negro Leagues of 1920–1948 were the Negro National League (I) (1920–1931); the Eastern Colored League (1923–1928); the American Negro League (1929); the East-West League (1932); the Negro Southern League (1932); the Negro National League (II) (1933–1948); and the Negro American League (1937–1948).

This inclusion of records and history affects nearly every SABR committee. For the Ballparks Research Committee, the oldest Major League ballpark in the country is now **Rickwood Field**, built in 1910. For the Business of Baseball and Women in Baseball Research Committees, the first female owner of a Negro Major League team is **Olivia Taylor**, who owned the Indianapolis ABCs from 1922 to 1924. For the Biographical Research Committee, who are the youngest or oldest players to hit for the cycle or pitch a no-hitter. We can no longer rely on **Google** (or Goober as I call it) for major league quality answers. Trivia champions beware, your title is in danger! Check back next quarter as we consult the Klingon Dictionary for the full translation for what just happened to the official record.

Congratulations to Tyrone Brooks

CORE Multimedia Group releases the inaugural **CORE 100 Most Influential Blacks**. The CORE 100 honorees mark and remind the world of the beauty, boldness, and brilliance of Black Excellence at a time when the cultural, economic, and political landscape in the United States has grown increasingly more hostile towards Blackness. The CORE 100 was announced in a series of communications leading up to the full presentation in the *CORE 100 Special Issue Magazine* on February 1, 2021.

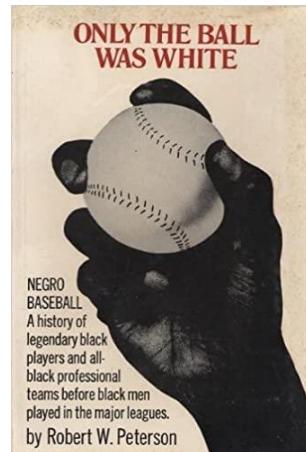
The inaugural CORE 100 of influential individuals includes Senior Director, Front Office and Field Staff Diversity Pipeline Program at Major League Baseball **Tyrone Brooks** (pictured), mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, **Keisha Lance Bottoms**; top 1% orthodontist and philanthropist, **Dr. Heather Brown**; National Institutes of Health viral immunologist, **Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett**; 17-year old Sauce Boss entrepreneur, **Tyla-Simone Crayton**; vice-president elect, **Kamala Harris**; NBA player and social justice advocate, **LeBron James**; founder of Fair Fight Action, **Stacey Abrams**; mayor of Houston, Texas, **Sylvester Turner**; mayor of Newark, New Jersey, **Ras Baraka**; and media mogul and philanthropist, **Oprah Winfrey**.

The addition of the CORE 100 Most Influential Blacks Today to the CORE brand supports the vision of former professional baseball player, coach, and executive; and magazine founder, Mr. **Bo Porter**, to address the void of Black-owned, historical and culturally diverse publications. **Brooks** is a member of the SABR Board and SABR's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) committee.



The 2021 recipients of SABR's Henry Chadwick Award are:

- **Gary Ashwill** (1968 -) is an author, researcher, and historian, primarily of Negro Leagues, minor-league, and Cuban baseball. The **Seamheads Negro Leagues Database** that he co-founded was recently cited by Major League Baseball as being one of the contributing factors in their long overdue recognition of the segregated Black baseball circuits. A freelance editor residing in North Carolina, Ashwill has been writing the critically acclaimed outsider baseball blog **Agate Type** since 2006 and he was a contributor to the National Baseball Hall of Fame's Negro League Researchers and Authors Group (**NLRAG**), as well as the Baseball Think Factory's **Hall of Merit**.
- **Alan Nathan** (1946 -) has been a professor of physics at the University of Illinois since 1977, with a specialty in experimental nuclear/particle physics. Now a professor emeritus, Nathan has spent the past quarter-century creating a body of knowledge around the physics of baseball. His extensive research and numerous articles, in particular on the collision between the bat and ball and the flight of the baseball, has dramatically expanded our quantitative understanding and visualization of baseball's most fundamental interactions. Beyond the physical interactions themselves, Nathan's research has examined their implications, from how a batter's swing might be optimized to the insights extractable out of the data explosion from ballpark-installed technologies.
- **Robert W. Peterson** (1925-2006) was a newspaper writer, a freelance journalist, and the author of several books on sports and contemporary news events. His primary contribution to baseball research was the seminal **Only the Ball Was White**, a 1970 book on the Negro Leagues, which remained a foundation for the next few decades of scholarship in the field. Inspired by his memories of watching barnstorming Black players in his hometown of Warren, Pennsylvania, in the late 1930s Peterson set out to interview surviving players and study the leagues' histories on newspaper microfilm. Peterson later became an active participant in SABR's Negro Leagues Committee, attending several Jerry Malloy Conferences, and was part of the **Special Committee on the Negro Leagues** that elected 17 people to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.



By honoring individuals for the length and breadth of their contribution to the study and enjoyment of baseball, the Chadwick Award will educate the baseball community about sometimes little known but vastly important contributions from the game's past and thus encourage the next generation of researchers.

The criteria for the award reads in part: The contributions of nominees must have had public impact. This may be demonstrated by publication of research in any of a variety of formats: books, magazine articles, websites, etc. The compilation of a significant database or archive that has facilitated the published research of others will also be considered in the realm of public impact.

KROCK WATCH UPDATE

Efforts are well underway to install customized headstones in 2021 for **Newt Allen** at Union Baptist Cemetery in Cincinnati, OH; **Elias "Country Brown" Bryant** at Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Cemetery in Staten Island, NY; **Peter "Creole Pete" Robertson** at Pinelawn Cemetery in Farmingdale, NY; **Henry "Harry" Bridgewater** at St. Peter's Cemetery in St. Louis, MO; **Stanislaus Kostka Govern** at Eden Cemetery in Philadelphia, PA and **William Bill "The Kansas Cyclone" Lindsay** at Forest Grove Cemetery, Lexington, MO.

Allen played from 1922-44, 1947 as a second baseman for several teams including the K.C. Monarchs, St. Louis Stars and the Homestead Grays. He died in 1988. **Bryant** played from 1918-34 for the Bacharach Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants and the Lincoln Giants. He died in 1937. **Robertson** managed the New Orleans Crescent Stars in 1933-34. He died in 1980. **Bridgewater** managed the St. Louis Black Stockings from 1882-1890. He died in 1904. **S.K. Govern** was a manager in 1886-88, 1891 and 1896 for the Philadelphia Pythians, New York Gorhams and the Cuban Giants. He died in 1924. **Lindsay** played for the Kansas City (KS) Giants, Leland Giants and the Chicago American Giants. He died in 1914.

Thanks to Dr. Jeremy Krock, Paul Debono, Brandon Stradford, and Lee Longstreth of Memorial Consultants, LLC for their gallant contributions to this worthy deed of a final recognition to these men. Donations are always welcomed.



The Kansas City T-Bones are renamed the Monarchs.

The Kansas City T-Bones of the independent American Association are being renamed the **Kansas City Monarchs**. Glory hallelujah! The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM) signed a licensing agreement with Mark Brandmeyer's MaxFun Entertainment, owner of the minor league team.



The original Monarchs were founded in 1920 and won 17 league pennants and two World Series, up thru 1955 before they were sold to Ted Rasberry of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

If **MaxFun Entertainment** wants to make Kansas City proud, they should fly the 1924 and 1942 Negro World Series championship flags or banners of the Monarchs to promote the rich legacy of the dynastic team in hopes of encouraging minority attendance. I extended this offer to the **Kansas City Royals** in 2015 with no response.

My low-maintenance idea has *also* been offered to the **Cubs** and **White Sox** to fly the championship flags or banners for the 1926 and 1927 **Chicago American Giants**, the **Philadelphia Phillies** to honor the 1925 **Hilldale Club**, and the **Cleveland Indians** to honor the 1945 **Cleveland Buckeyes**, the **New York Mets** and **Yankees** to honor the 1947 **New York Cubans** and lastly the **Pittsburgh Pirates** to recognize the championships of the 1943, 1944 and 1948 **Homestead Grays**.

Why not? Lots of upside here! Hey, while I have your attention, provide every Negro League veteran a lifetime pass and handicap access to your games!

Today I offer a special and will provide the names of every Cooperstown Hall of Fame Negro Leaguer to each respective club to advance that city's sports heritage and raise cultural awareness. The **Kansas City Monarchs** can boast of 15 inductees. I await your phone call or email. **Batter Up!**

Beep, Beep – Another Milestone

Senator **Barbara Anne Washington**, representing the 9th Senatorial District in the Missouri Senate sponsored SB 189. This act creates a special Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM) **license plate**. Upon making a \$10 donation to the NLBM, a vehicle owner may apply for the plates. Applicants shall also pay a \$25 fee in addition to regular registration fees, but no additional fee shall be charged for the personalization of the plates.

Senator Washington proudly supports increased economic development in her district – including preserving the notable “18th & Vine” district, increased funding for educational opportunities and universal health care for all. In her district, she regularly presents programs designed to bring attention to the importance of small business development, juvenile justice reform, minority mental health awareness, crime reduction and environmental preservation. The proposed effective date for LR #1129S.011 is 28 August 2021.

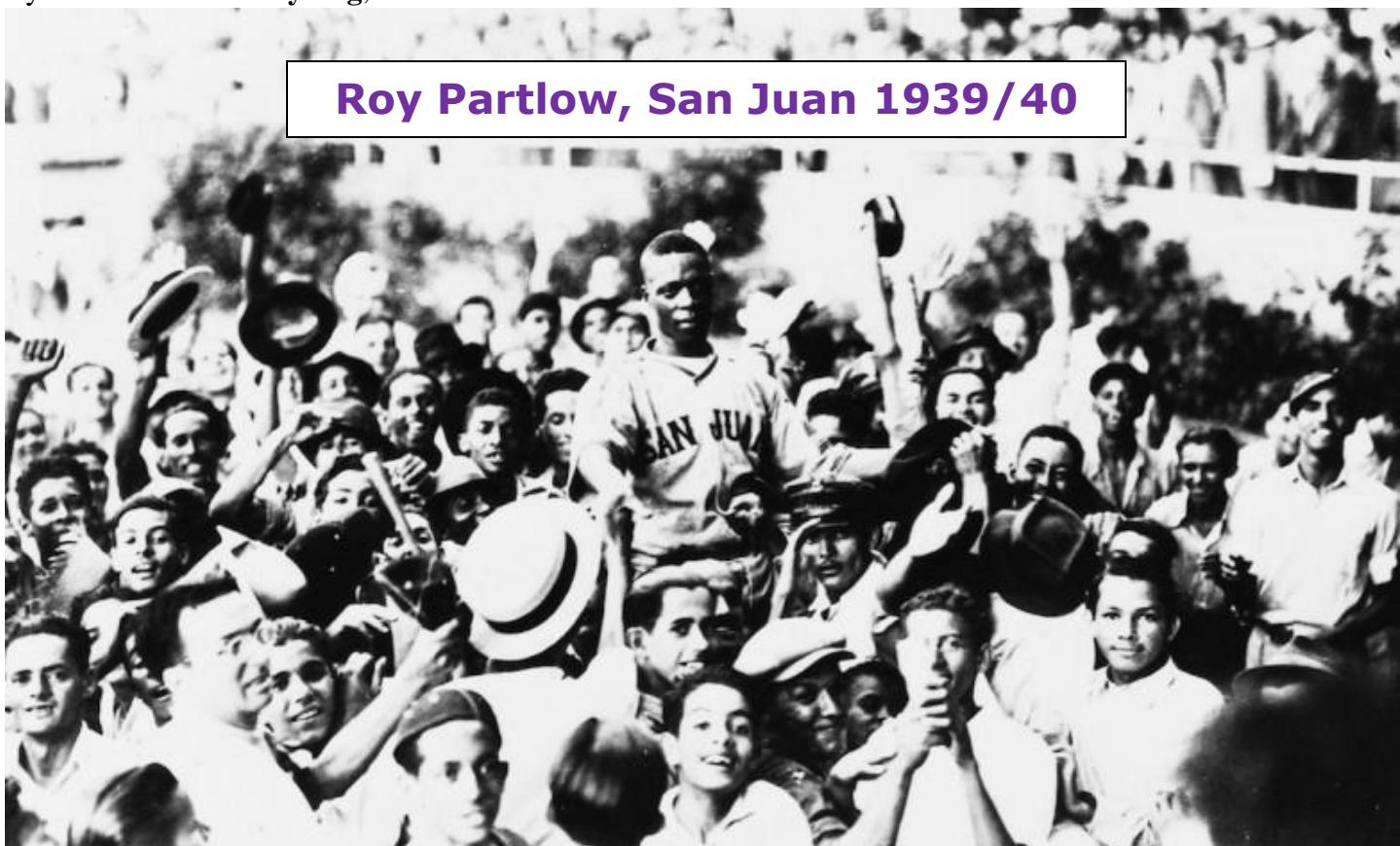


Pictured is a Kansas City bus outside of the midtown Union Station.

Negro Leaguers in Puerto Rico – Brand new website

By Thomas E. Van Hyning, Author/Caribbean Baseball Historian

Roy Partlow, San Juan 1939/40



Major League Baseball (MLB), via a December 16, 2020 press release by Commissioner Robert Manfred, officially “corrected a longtime oversight in the game’s history.” MLB now recognizes 3,400 plus players from seven leagues operating from 1920 to 1948. These Negro Leagues players are now “Major Leaguers within the official historical record.”

So, where does the **PUERTO RICO PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE** come in? Some 220 Negro Leaguers played professionally in Puerto Rico between 1938 and 1968, excluding Negro Leaguers who barnstormed in Puerto Rico in the 1920s and 1930s.

Fifteen Negro Leaguers who plied their trade professionally in Puerto Rico includes Hall of Famers **Josh Gibson**, **Satchel Paige**, **Roy Campanella**, **Leon Day**, **Larry Doby**, **Ray Dandridge**, **Buck Leonard**, **Raymond Brown**, **Willard Brown**, **Willie Wells**, **Hilton Smith**, **Jud Wilson**, **Monte Irvin**, **Willie Mays**, **Hank Aaron** plus **Oscar Charleston** as league umpire.

Negro Leaguers delighted Puerto Rico’s rabid baseball fans with their fine play. They especially enjoyed the Island’s hospitality: they overnighted at the best hotels and could dine at the finest restaurants. Players had time for fishing, socializing in town plazas and having dinner at homes of teammates, fans and team officials.

Jorge Colón Delgado—Official Historian of the Puerto Rico Professional Baseball League, and long-time Negro Leagues researcher—created this web site to inform global researchers of the rich history of what Negro Leaguers did on Puerto Rico’s pro baseball diamonds. This is history that needs to be known. You can access the website at <https://negroleaguerspuertorico.com/>.

At this website you will find a 1) a wonderful Historical Timeline, 2) a list of Negro Leaguers in Puerto Rico, 3) Awards & Titles, 4) Puerto Rican players in the organized Negro Leagues, 5) **Pedrín Zorrilla** biography, 6) **Satchel Paige** career with the 1939/40 Guayama and 7) **Willard Brown**’s record setting 27 homers with Santurce during the 1947/48 season.

This is Béisbol 101.

Dugout Reading:

From Rube to Robinson: SABR's Best Articles on Black Baseball by John Graf with editors Duke Goldman & Larry Lester

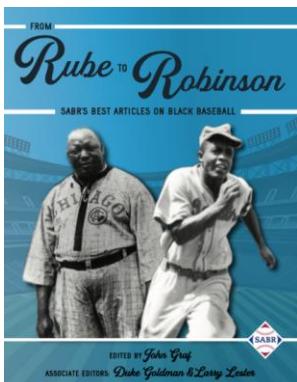
AMAZON SUMMARY: *From Rube to Robinson* brings together the best Negro League baseball scholarship that the Society of American Baseball Research (SABR) has ever produced, culled from its journals, its BioProject, and award-winning essays. The book includes a star-studded list of scholars and historians, from the late Jerry Malloy and Jules Tygiel, to award winners Larry Lester, Geri Driscoll Strecker, and Jeremy Beer, and a host of other talented writers.

The essays cover topics ranging over nearly a century, from 1866 and the earliest known Black baseball championship, to 1962 and the end of the Negro American League. Todd Peterson's "May the Best Man Win: The Black Ball Championships 1866-1923" opens the volume and looks at championships that preceded the Colored World Series of 1924. The late Jerry Malloy covers an early circuit in "The Pittsburgh[h] Keystones and the 1887 Colored League." Malloy points out that the short-lived league garnered the acceptance of the National Agreement of 1883, something no other Black organization was able to do. Not only did Black baseball begin earlier than most fans of the sport may realize, it took root in places that might not be expected either. Steven R. Hoffbeck and Peter Gorton tell the story of legendary southpaw John Donaldson, who pioneered baseball in Minnesota and who would eventually be part of the NNL's 1920 inaugural season with the Kansas City Monarchs.

Two seminal Negro Leagues researchers—Dick Clark and John Holway—place the 1921 NNL season in context, including a sidebar from the original 1985 article detailing SABR's Negro Leagues Committee's efforts to compile a statistical history. Of course there are also profiles of some of the Negro Leagues' now-mythic figures: Sol White (by Jay Hurd), Rube Foster (by Larry Lester), and Oscar Charleston. Jeremy Beer contributes his article "Hothead: How the Oscar Charleston Myth Began," which rebuts the notion that Charleston was a brawler in need of anger management.

Ballparks and venues also get a look, with a Major League field and a Negro League field included. James Overmyer's "Black Baseball at Yankee Stadium" describes the tenant/landlord relationship of Negro Leagues teams with the New York Yankees during the 1930s and 40s, while Geri Driscoll Strecker's "The Rise and Fall of Greenlee Field" is a cradle-to-grave biography of the Pittsburgh Crawfords stadium.

The final section of the book covers integration and the socio-economics of Black baseball. Leading off is Larry Lester's masterful "Can You Read, Judge Landis?" which refutes the contention that Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis was blameless for the persistence of baseball's segregation.



MLB's official historian John Thorn and the late Jules Tygiel weigh in with "Jackie Robinson's Signing: The Real, Untold Story." And Japheth Knopp's "Negro League Baseball, Black Community, and the Socio-Economic Impact of Integration" explores Kansas City as a case study in the effects of integration. Brian Carroll's "Early Twentieth Century Heroes: Coverage of Negro League Baseball in the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender" studies the cooperation among the African American press, local business communities, and baseball men such as Rube Foster to form the Negro National League, and later, the Eastern Colored League. And Duke Goldman presents an in-depth and meticulously referenced recap of the winter meetings and in-season owners meetings from the formation of a second Negro National League in 1933 through the last gasp of the Negro American League in 1962.

The Bona Fide Legend of Cool Papa Bell: Speed, Grace and the Negro Leagues by Lonnie Wheeler

In The Bona Fide Legend of Cool Papa Bell, baseball writer and historian Lonnie Wheeler captures the mythical life of this spectacular player and reflects on the times that shaped his career.

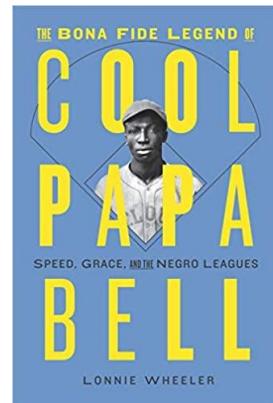
Wheeler charts Bell's ups and downs in life and in baseball, in the United States, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, where he went to escape American racism and MLB's color line. Rich in context and suffused in myth, this is a treat for fans of baseball history.

"Lonnie Wheeler's bio of Cool Papa Bell reads like fiction. That's a tribute to Bell's achievements, which are worthy of legend, and to Wheeler's spellbinding writing and extraordinary ability to sift fact from myth. The only tragedy is that Lonnie isn't here to enjoy the stream of accolades this book is sure to generate." - Larry Tye, author of *Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend*.

"To White baseball fans in his day, Cool Papa Bell was an invisible man at an invisible time. The virtual embodiment of the Negro Leagues, he is honored by Lonnie Wheeler's last, great biography – the portrait of a man and an age only now beginning to be seen by us all." - John Thorn, official historian of Major League Baseball.

Wheeler is also author of *I Had A Hammer with Hank Aaron*, *Pitch by Pitch with Bob Gibson*. Wheeler is one of my favorite authors. Get your copy before the room goes dark at:

<https://www.amazon.com/Bona-Fide-Legend-Cool-Papa/dp/1419750488>



Baseball's Leading Lady: Effa Manley and the Rise and Fall of the Negro leagues by Andrea Williams

Andrea Williams has written a highly readable book for middle childhood students (age 10-14) introducing them to the Negro Leagues and to Effa Manley. Readers will learn about Effa the baseball fan, the savvy business owner, the civil rights activist and the person. Williams uses Effa's story as the centerpiece to tell the larger story of the growth of the Negro Leagues and their importance to the Black community but also to America as a whole.

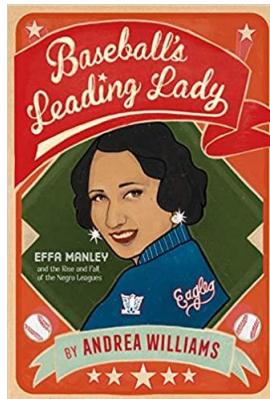
Williams does not shy away from talking about the hardships Effa and her players faced, due to racism and sexism. We see the battles Manley fought to succeed in a man's world during the 1930s and '40s and her triumphs. This book is a great blend of American history and baseball history. Williams research is evident in every page and her writing style will keep the reader engrossed in the story. *Leading Lady* is published by Roaring Brook Press.

Deferred Glory: Heroes of the Negro Baseball Leagues by Danny A. Ingellis

Deferred Glory is about the lives, struggles and desire of Negroes to one day become professional baseball players in the Major Leagues. During this period of their lives, these players while playing in the Negro League endured tough traveling to ballparks in cities both in the South and North in order to play baseball.

They suffered through segregation mostly in the South both on and off the field. These men withstood horrible treatment because of their dreams to become Major League baseball players.

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B087PVL7NJ?ref_=dbs_dp_rwt_sb_tpbk&binding=paperback



Sunrises!

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

MARCH

- 1ST - **VERNELL JACKSON - 91**
4TH - CHARLES MIDDLEBROOK - 85
7TH - JAMES LEON WOODS - 87
13TH - **LEROY HANCOCK - 90**
15TH - ALBERT JEFFCOAT - 88
18TH - **EZELL KING - 91**

APRIL

- 15TH - J.C. HARTMAN - 87
25TH - SAM ALLEN - 85
27TH - TONY LLOYD - 85



MAY

- 1ST - HERBERT "PIANO RED" WALKER - 89
6TH - **WILLIE MAYS - 90**
13TH - **J.W. WINGATE - 92**
17TH - GENE SCRUGGS - 83; **IRVIN CASTILLE - 95**
25TH - LARRY LEGRANDE - 83
29TH - HAROLD HAIR - 89

NOTE: Congratulations to our Nonagenarians: **VERNELL JACKSON, LEROY HANCOCK, WILLIE MAYS, EZELL KING, J.W. WINGATE & IRVIN CASTILLE.**

SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

Larry Lester - chair, 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 . . .

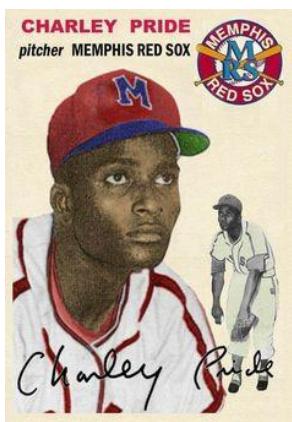
ERNEST LEON (ERNIE) WESTFIELD, SR., 80, died November 4, 2020 in Champaign, IL.

A native of Cleveland, Tennessee, Westfield made his Negro leagues debut in 1959 with the **Birmingham Black Barons** and played for the club through 1965. At 6' 3" and 160 lbs., he batted and threw right-handed, and was the starting pitcher for the East in the 1960 **East-West All-Star Game**.

After his baseball career, Westfield earned degrees from **Eastern Illinois University** and **Roosevelt University** and work for the Illinois Department of Employment Security for 31 years, before retiring in 1999. Outside of his professional life, Ernest was active in the civil-rights movement during the 1960s, serving as President of the NAACP of Champaign County. He also coached First String Inc., Little League, mentored children at Cunningham Children's Home, spoke to students about baseball, wrote and published poetry, and collected and sold Negro League memorabilia.

Some may remember Ernest as "Mister E" from the popular *Sunday Soul* show on WCCR-AM, and later WLRW-FM, from 1968-1979. He is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Champaign, IL.

CHARLEY FRANK (MINNIE) PRIDE, 86, died December 12, 2020 in Dallas, TX.



He would "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" and could pitch a shutout that evening. Pride pitched and played outfield for the **Memphis Red Sox**, **Birmingham Black Barons** in 1953-56 and 1958-59 with time spent in the US Army between teams. Pride appeared in two East-West All-Star games and had tryouts with

the **Los Angeles Angels** and **New York Mets** before pursuing a musical career.

Charley Pride scored 29 number one hits on the US country music charts and won three **Grammy Awards** (one for singing country, and two for singing gospel). He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000 and received the **Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award** at the CMA Awards this past November. Pride was the first Black country artist to co-host the CMA Awards in 1975, alongside Glen Campbell.

His brother Rev. Mack Pride, Jr., also played in the Negro leagues with the Kansas City Monarchs in 1956. The burial site of Mr. Charley Pride is unknown at press time.

A much better obituary written by Jack Dickey of *Sports Illustrated* can be found at: <https://www.si.com/mlb/2018/03/21/charley-pride-texas-rangers-country-music>

GEORGE HERMAN SPRIGGS, 83, died December 22, 2020 in Lothian, MD.

Spriggs played outfield for the **Kansas City Monarchs** and the **Detroit-New Orleans Stars**, 1959-60. At the age of 28, he joined the **Pittsburgh Pirates** from 1965-67, and later the **Kansas City Royals** from 1969-70. Spriggs was on the inaugural Royals team in 1969 and the only player in club history who once played in the Negro Leagues.

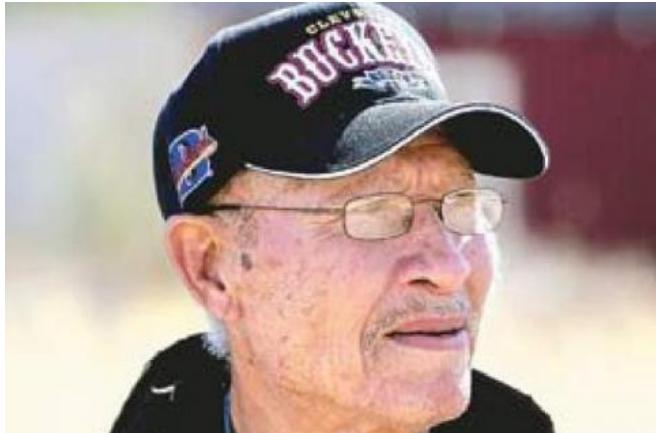


In 1967, Spriggs was drafted by the **Boston Red Sox** in the 1967 rule 5 draft, but never played for them. The next year, 1968, he was returned by the Red Sox to the Pirates. In 1971, his contract was purchased by the **New York Mets**, but Spriggs never made it back to the Major Leagues. He is buried in Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery, Cheltenham, MD.

EUGENE (EARTHQUAKE McGOON)

GOLDEN, 95, died December 23, 2020 in Weleetka, OK.

He attended school in the Clearview area until he quit and joined the military. He served in the U.S.



Navy during World War II, joining October 1943 and honorably discharged, August 1946. Upon returning home, he garnered the name "Earthquake Goon" a comic book character with rowdy behavior. Later, it was shortened to "Goon". Goon grew up in the community playing sandlot baseball. He played in surrounding communities like Nuyaka and Okfuskee of Oklahoma. After his stint in the **Navy**, he continued to play baseball. Golden was a fastball pitcher for the 1950-51 **Cleveland Buckeyes**. He is buried in North Fork Cemetery, Weleetka, OK.

ERNEST D. (SCHOOLEY) JOHNSON, 92, died January 19, 2021 in Des Moines, IA.



As a **Kansas City Monarch** (1949-53) teammate of Ernie Banks in 1953, the 6' 3", 170-pound slugging first baseman, lead the Negro American League in Total Bases with 124 and 10 home runs.

In the 1953 East-West Game, he replaced Billy Ray Haggins in right field for the

West. In the 7th inning, he hit a two-run single off Dave Amaro to score Stony Jackson and Eddie Reed with the last two runs in a 5-1 victory.

"The team we had in '53, I think we could've beat anyone in the minor leagues," Ernie Johnson told au-

thor Brent P. Kelley in *I Will Never Forget*. "We had that much talent!"

Signed by the **Chicago Cubs** in 1954, Johnson hit .288 with the Thetford Mines Miners in the Provincial League. He split the next season with the Magic Valley Cowboys (Pioneer League) and the Macon Peaches (Sally League) hitting over .290.

In 1956, he joined the Des Moines Bruins (Western League) and stayed for two seasons, before going to play for the Sioux City Soos (Western League) in 1958. He finished his professional career with the **Chicago White Sox** affiliate Charleston ChaSox (Sally League) in 1959.

His wife Patricia died five days later January 24th. Married 64 years, they are buried in McLaren's Resthaven Cemetery in Des Moines, IA.

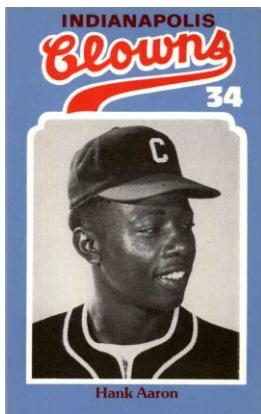
HENRY LOUIS (HANK) AARON, 86, died January 22, 2021 in Atlanta, GA.

He played one season, 1952, with the **Indianapolis Clowns** as a shortstop and third baseman. He was best known for his 755 career home runs that stood for more than 30 years as baseball's golden mark. He was considered one of the sport's greatest stars despite playing for the small-market Milwaukee/Atlanta Braves throughout a Major League career that spanned from 1954 to 1976. He still holds Major League records for **RBIs** (2,297), **total bases** (6,856) and **extra-base hits** (1,477), and he ranks among Major League Baseball's (MLB) best in hits (3,771, third all time), games played (3,298, third) and runs scored (2,174, fourth).

Aaron was the National League **Most Valuable Player** in 1957 which was the same year the Braves won the World Series, a two-time **NL batting champion** (1956, 1959), a three-time **Gold Glove** winner in right field (1958-1960) and a record 25-time All-Star. He was enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982, receiving 97.8% approval in his first year on the ballot. In 1999, MLB created the **Hank Aaron Award**, given annually to the best hitter in both the AL and NL.

Off the field, Aaron was an activist for civil rights, himself being a victim of racial inequalities. Growing up in Mobile, Alabama, he did not get to play high school baseball because only White students had teams. During the buildup to his passing of Ruth's home run mark, threats were made on his life by people who did not want to see a Black man break

the record. He received hate mail and death threats, while FBI agents escorted his daughter to classes at Fisk University.



After he retired, he joined the Braves as an executive and hoped more Black players could find that type of work after their playing days were finished. Aaron was awarded the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** in 2002 by President George W. Bush. Aaron is buried in South View Cemetery Association, Atlanta, GA.

Note, there were lots of tributes written about this great ballplayer and an even greater human. Perhaps the most remarkable tribute was written by

Jacob Pomrenke. Check it out at:

<https://sabr.org/latest/in-memoriam-hank-aaron/>

Should Pirates erect Josh Gibson statue?

By Robert Kelley 28 Dec 2020

Fellow Bucs Dugout contributor Brett Barnett wrote recently about a section of PNC Park known as **Legacy Square**, which at one time featured a robust area set aside to honor Pittsburgh's connection with the great history of Negro Leagues baseball but later was reconfigured and several sizable statues were removed.

One of those statues honored the legacy of Hall of Famer Josh Gibson, whose connection to Pittsburgh dates back to the early 1920s when his family relocated from Georgia when Josh was still a pre-teen. Legend has it that Gibson got his start in organized baseball at the age of 16 when he joined a team of Gimbels employees – he worked as an elevator operator at Gimbels department store — and a few years later he joined a semipro team in Pittsburgh known as the Crawford Colored Giants.

Gibson's greatness was recognized by the **Washington Nationals**, who installed a statue of Gibson inside the **center field gate at Nationals Park** in 2009. Gibson never played for a Washington team, but the Homestead Grays played many of their games in Washington during Gibson's career. In addition to the statue, Gibson also was added to the **Nationals' Ring of Honor**.

Rob Ruck, a professor of sport history at Pitt who has written extensively about sports, said there's no doubt as to the "legitimacy or appropriateness" of the Pirates erecting a statue of Gibson somewhere at or near PNC Park. He said talk of such a project has surfaced several times over the past 30 years or so. Ruck said last week that when plans were being drafted for PNC Park, they included a statue of Gibson to be built near where the current Mazeroski statue stands. However, the Gibson statue never materialized.

In the fall of 2017, the Josh Gibson Foundation announced plans to erect what it called **Josh Gibson Heritage Park** at Station Square. The park was slated to feature monuments to Gibson and – for starters – three other Negro Leagues icons in Satchel Paige, Cool Papa Bell and Cumberland Posey. But Sean Gibson said Sunday that the foundation was no longer involved in that project.

Perhaps the Pirates should consider making such a statue a centerpiece of what's been referred to a Pirates Plaza – a 15,000-square-foot area that is part of a proposed mixed-use development on the North Shore near the Hyatt Place Hotel and PNC Park. When Pirates officials first unveiled those plans, they said the plaza could serve as a place where Pirates fans could gather before and after games as well as when the Pirates and Steelers were not playing. According to a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* story earlier this year, the plaza could include a "showcase for the nine Pirate retired numbers" as well as Robinson's No. 42.

While Gibson never wore a Pirate uniform, he certainly suited up plenty of times for teams representing Pittsburgh. A statue calling attention to his greatness and his connection to the city would be a suitable way to honor him and cement – or perhaps bronze – Pittsburgh's legacy as a major player in the history of Negro Leagues baseball.

The complete text by Robert Kelley can be read at:
<https://www.bucsdugout.com/2020/12/28/22201991/should-pirates-erect-josh-gibson-statue>

