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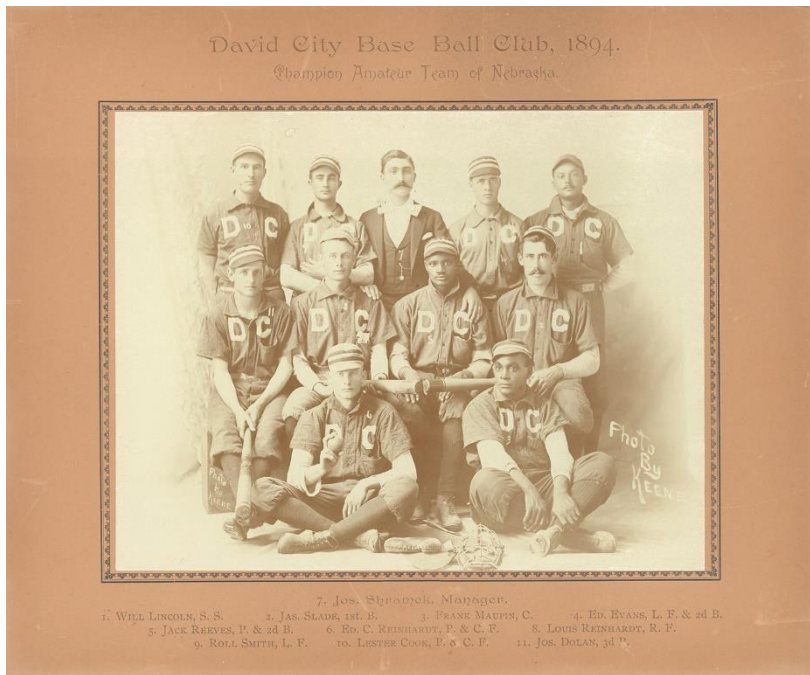
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Black Baseball in Kansas City, 1870–1899



Mark E. Eberle

Black Baseball in Kansas City, 1870–1899

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Prominent black baseball teams in Kansas City, Missouri (KC) from 1871 through 1899. Multiple teams used the names KC Brown Stockings and KC Lone Stars during the nineteenth century. The KC Times Hustlers organized as the Blackville Strutters in 1901. The KC Unions reorganized most years from 1900 through 1909, and the Bradburys returned in 1902–1905. The Lincoln High Schools became the J.W. Jenkins’ Sons in 1900–1907 and the “original” KC Monarchs in 1908–1909. Other than the name, the team had no connection with the KC Monarchs organized in 1920 as a member of the Negro National League.

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	1872	
	1871	
KC Union Stars		
KC Brown Stockings		
KC Pastimes		
KC Novels		
KC Maroons		
KC No. 11 Engine House		
KC Blues		
KC Lone Stars		
KC IXIs		
KC Times Hustlers		
KC Unions		
KC Bradburys		
Lincoln High Schools		

Black Baseball in Kansas City, 1870–1899

Mark E. Eberle

Soon after the US Civil War ended, baseball clubs were organized in towns along the Kansas-Missouri border. From the beginning, racial segregation was the rule among these teams. As with most rules, however, there were exceptions. A few integrated town teams organized on the Kansas side of the border, along with integrated minor league teams and other professional clubs. Bud Fowler and George William Castone were among those who played for integrated town teams and minor league clubs in Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska during the 1880s and 1890s. Bert Wakefield, a black ballplayer from Troy, Kansas, served as captain of a minor league team in the Kansas State League in 1895.¹ There were also a few integrated leagues of segregated amateur or semipro teams. For example, Dwight Eisenhower umpired games in an integrated Sunday school league in Abilene, Kansas during a summer furlough in 1913, midway through his education at West Point.² As in Abilene, integrated amateur or semipro teams and leagues, especially after 1900, were more likely to exist in smaller towns, where residents recognized the ballplayers—black and white—as members of the community. In larger cities, where most white citizens likely knew few, if any, black residents, nearly all teams and leagues remained segregated through the first half of the twentieth century.³

One exception to racially segregated teams in Kansas City was the All Nations team, which had an ethnically diverse, multinational roster. This professional team barnstormed widely, playing local clubs and other barnstorming teams. Organized in Des Moines, Iowa in 1912, manager J.L. Wilkinson moved the operation to Kansas City at the end of the 1915 season.⁴ In 1920, Wilkinson organized a black team named the Kansas City Monarchs, which was a charter member of the Negro National League and one of the most storied teams in baseball history. While the history of the Monarchs has rightly been the subject of detailed study,⁵ other black baseball teams took the field in Kansas City in the decades before the Monarchs came onto the scene.⁶ Little has been written about these early black clubs, but their experiences form the foundation on which the KC Monarchs* and their fan base were built. This narrative is an introduction to the black teams and players who participated in the national pastime in Kansas City on vacant lots and in developed ballparks during the nineteenth century.

1870–1886: “A Home Team That Wins”

Several baseball teams organized in Kansas City during the two decades following the US Civil War. As baseball rules continued to evolve and the sport became established in the region, local clubs scheduled games on an irregular basis. For example, in August 1874, “The colored base ball clubs of Wyandotte [Kansas City, Kansas] and Kansas City [Missouri] played a match on the grounds of the former. The score stood at the conclusion

* The abbreviation KC refers to Kansas City, Missouri; KCK refers to Kansas City, Kansas. Standard postal abbreviations are also used for Missouri (MO), Kansas (KS), and other states.

of the game, Wyandotte 54 and Kansas City 41. The catching of D. Gaston was excellent, and Baby Fields as a batter and runner could hardly be beat.” Which Kansas City team lost is unknown, but the Wyandotte club was the Western Drivers, organized by James “Baby” Fields. The team played under that name in 1874 and 1875.⁷

In addition to local matches, a few black clubs played their counterparts from nearby towns and, on rare occasions, teams from farther away. For example, in 1876, the KC White Stockings hosted the St. Louis Blue Stockings and lost, 30–2, on the ballfield at 18th and Holmes Streets in Kansas City, Missouri (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile west of today’s Negro Leagues Baseball Museum). “A very large crowd turned out.”⁸

There were only a few such games between town teams each summer, and even fewer were reported in newspapers, which usually relied on the clubs for information. Early Kansas City teams apparently provided this information sporadically. In 1877, the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* relayed a notice from the *Leavenworth Times* about an upcoming game in Kansas City between the Leavenworth (KS) Leapers and the KC Brown Stockings. The notice in the *Times* had provided the roster and positions of the hometown Leapers. The information reprinted by the *Journal* ended with a question. “Now who will give us the organization of the Brown Stockings?”⁹ A Lawrence newspaper also bemoaned the lack of information provided by their black club, the Lawrence Eagles, following a game in 1873 against an unnamed team in Kansas City, possibly the KC Union Stars.

Although some of the members [of the Eagles] are tolerably good players, the club lack[s] the most important and most essential qualifications for a successful career—they have no scorer—there is not a player in the club who can keep score of the game. A few days ago they went to Kansas City and engaged in a match game with a colored club there, but not having a scorer[,] no record of their runs was made, and we have it from one of the members who played, that in several innings the Eagles were obliged to put out four or five hands before they came in to the bat. After an unknown number of innings had been played, the Kansas City club suddenly announced that the game was over and that the victory belonged to them.¹⁰

The inconsistent newspaper reports limit what can be documented about these early teams, but a few clubs stand out.

Black clubs in Kansas City that organized multiple years and engaged in intercity competition included the KC Union Stars, sometimes referred to as the Unions, who were active in 1871–1873.¹¹ The KC Brown Stockings (KC Browns) played in 1876–1879, and a team with that name was again active most years from 1881 to 1891, as several black clubs were organized.¹² Both the Union Stars and Browns struggled against teams such as the Lawrence (KS) Eagles, one of the better black clubs near Kansas City during the 1870s. The Eagles had difficulty finding teams willing to play them. Despite Lawrence’s reputation as an abolitionist stronghold before and during the US Civil War, local white teams, such as the Kaw Valley Base Ball Club, were not willing to play a black team. Rather than simply refuse a challenge from the Eagles, a white team from nearby Clinton chose to submit a disrespectful reply through a local newspaper.

We are requested to state that the base ball Shoo Flys do not accept the challenge of the colored base ball Blackhawks, *alias* Eagles. Their position is that the fifteenth amendment [to the US Constitution*] does not apply to base ball matters, and that, consequently, a special act of Congress will be required before they can accept and play with their colored brethren.¹³

The early KC Browns had a reputation for playing games scheduled on their home field but not some of the games scheduled in other cities. In 1878, after being stood up for the third time, the exasperated Lawrence Eagles expressed the wider feeling that the Browns “reputation for reliability has evaporated.” In 1877, there was also an instance of differing accounts for a game scheduled between the Browns and the Leapers in Leavenworth. The Leapers reported to the *Leavenworth Times* that the Browns showed up July 18, a day early. The Leapers offered to pay the Brown’s expenses to stay until the next day, but the Browns refused. The Leapers arrived at their grounds on July 19 and claimed a 9–0 forfeit because the Browns were not there. When the Browns returned to Kansas City, they reported to the *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce* that they defeated the Leapers, 11–2, on July 19.¹⁴

In August 1881, the Leavenworth Leapers traveled to Kansas City, where they defeated the KC Brown Stockings, 10–7, and claimed “the championship of the Missouri Valley.”¹⁵ Such claims of championships during the early years of baseball were mostly exercises in boasting rather than meaningful determinations through a regular schedule of games among teams that culminated in a late-season series between the top clubs.

In 1883, the on-field reputation of black baseball in Kansas City was principally in the hands of two new clubs. In June, the KC Leapers defeated the KC Black Stockings, 10–9. The Leapers faded away the following year, and the Black Stockings played only one season.¹⁶ At least as early as 1887, a team named the Black Stockings from Lexington, Missouri (about 40 miles east of Kansas City) would be a frequent opponent of black clubs in Kansas City for decades. (The team was renamed the Lexington Tigers in 1898 and was still active in the 1920s.) In 1883, baseball games among the black teams were still infrequent, which probably contributed to the large crowd at the June game between the KC Leapers and KC Black Stockings. The *Kansas City Evening Star* described the game in more detail than was usually accorded black clubs in Kansas City at the time, right down to the colors of the uniforms.

The Athletic park was the scene of a thrilling contest yesterday afternoon in the shape of a match game of base ball between two colored clubs, the Leapers and the Black Stockings. All the young colored bloods of the city were there, and, with their ladies, crowded the amphitheatre, while several hundred interested Caucasians hung on the fence and cheered wildly at every brilliant play. The Leapers were clad in pink shirts, red stockings and white pants, while their opponents wore suits of dark blue, relieved by chaste stripes about half a foot wide.¹⁷

* “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

The two Kansas City clubs were easily defeated at least twice each by the Sedalia (MO) Red Stockings later that summer. On a three-game road trip through Kansas City, the Reds added an easy victory over the St. Joseph (MO) Eclipses. The KC Black Stockings also defeated the Eclipses in at least one game of a three-game series for the mythical “championship of the Missouri valley.” The game lasted only five innings.¹⁸

In 1884, yet another club, the KC Pastimes, represented Kansas City, and they would prove to be more competitive. The Pastimes defeated the Sedalia Red Stockings at least twice. After their second victory over the Reds, the *Kansas City Times* published the game summary under the headline, “A Home Team That Wins.” The Pastimes also defeated the St. Joseph Eclipses, and the *St. Joseph Gazette* appraised the baseball potential of the victors. “There is some excellent material in the visiting club, and with proper training the nine might make it interesting for any colored organization in the state.”¹⁹

The KC Pastimes returned in 1885. In May, a meeting was held to organize an amateur commercial baseball league in Kansas City. Ten white clubs sent two representatives apiece to the meeting, and the decision was made to limit the league to 10 teams. “A communication from the Pastimes, a colored club, was received and ordered filed.”²⁰ Segregation in Kansas City would apply to leagues as well as teams. Later that summer, the Pastimes were supplanted by a new black club, the KC Lone Stars from the West Bottoms. The Lone Stars also defeated another newcomer, the KC Hectors. A game in September between the Sedalia Reds and an unnamed “Kansas City colored club,” probably the Lone Stars or Hectors, could not be played because of “continuous rain” for two days.²¹

Still more clubs represented Kansas City in 1886. On August 2, a team resurrecting the name KC Brown Stockings defeated the recently reorganized Eagles in Lawrence. On August 19, yet another new club, the KC Novels, defeated the Eagles in Kansas City. Once again, a *Kansas City Times* headline proclaimed the home team was “A Kansas City Club That Wins.” The story of their victory over the Eagles was accompanied by a detailed box score, something rarely done for black clubs in Kansas City. In fact, it was more detailed than most box scores for the white amateur and semipro teams at the time. To open the return series in Lawrence during early September, the Novels and Eagles paraded in carriages down Massachusetts Street in the heart of the city, led by a band. This time, however, the Novels lost both games, after which the team apparently folded.²²

KC Novels’ catcher, Frank L. Maupin, then joined the Lawrence Eagles for their final games of

AMATEUR GAMES.

A Kansas City Club That Wins.

The *Kansas City Novels* and the *Lawrence Eagles* played a fine game of ball at the league park yesterday afternoon. The game was the first one of a series for the championship of the west, both clubs being made up of colored amateur players. That Kansas City should win surprises nobody, as this town gets to the front on anything that comes under her notice, and the *Novels* did up the *Eagles* to the tune of 17 to 7. The same clubs play again at league park this afternoon.

The following is the full score:

NOVELS.		AB.	R.	1B.	2B.	PO.	A.	E.
F. Maupin, c.....	6	1	1	4	9	3	2	
Johnson, p.....	4	1	2	2	0	10	0	
Washington, ss.....	4	2	1	1	3	2	1	
Burt, 1b.....	4	3	0	0	7	0	3	
Hicks, 2b.....	5	3	1	1	3	2	1	
L. Maupin, 3b.....	5	1	1	2	2	2	0	
H. Burt, cf.....	5	2	2	3	2	0	1	
Choteau, rf.....	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	
Darton, lf.....	5	2	1	1	1	0	0	
Total	43	17	10	15	27	19	8	

EAGLES.		AB.	R.	1B.	2B.	PO.	A.	E.
Anderson, c.....	5	1	1	2	10	4	2	
Memora, p.....	4	1	0	0	0	13	1	
Polk, ss.....	4	2	2	2	1	13	0	
Johnson, 1b.....	5	0	4	4	7	0	1	
Grook, 2b.....	5	2	0	0	7	1	3	
Holmes, 3b.....	5	0	0	0	4	2	1	
Frey, cf.....	5	0	0	0	0	0	4	
S. Berry, rf.....	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	
G. Berry, lf.....	4	0	3	2	0	0	1	
Total	41	7	10	12	27	18	13	
Novels.....	2	1	0	6	0	2	1	5-17
Eagles.....	0	1	2	0	0	3	1	0-7

the year against the Topeka Athletics, a white team with a local black shortstop by the name of James Hightower. In the first game, Maupin caught a young pitcher named George William Castone in a 12-inning, 10–9 loss. Earlier that season, Castone had played for the Topeka Athletics and pitched for the integrated professional team in Concordia, Kansas. Maupin and Castone would comprise the battery for several teams in the region over the next few years. In the second game between the Eagles and Athletics, Maupin caught for Bud Fowler in a 10-inning, 5–4 victory for Lawrence.²³ At the time, Fowler already had a reputation as a skilled player. He has generally been regarded as the first black professional ballplayer in the country. Fowler was in Kansas in 1886 to play second base for the otherwise white minor league team in Topeka.²⁴ Segregation in Topeka was not as absolute as in Lawrence and Kansas City.

1887–1894: KC Maroons and KC Blues

The story of persistent black baseball clubs with highly regarded players in Kansas City has roots in 1887 with the organization of the KC Maroons. As with the earlier teams, their opportunities to compete against clubs in Kansas City were limited. There were few black teams, and some of the white teams refused to play them. For example, on August 8, the *Kansas City Times* published this notice. “The manager of the Kansas City maroons says that he would like to play the [white] Beaton club for \$25 and gate receipts” (equivalent to \$697 in 2018). The following day, the *Times* carried an indirect but clear response. The manager of the Beaton club of Armourdale (now part of Kansas City, Kansas) challenged “any amateur base ball club either in Kansas or Missouri,” but “no colored clubs need apply.”²⁵ The Maroons primarily played—and often defeated—black teams such as the Lexington Black Stockings, Leavenworth Leapers, and Atchison (KS) Lone Stars.²⁶

The side bet mentioned in the challenge by the KC Maroons was a common practice among amateur teams at the time, both black and white, even though gambling was illegal in both states. In addition, the widespread practice of splitting gate receipts 60–40 for the winners and losers, respectively, was also considered gambling. Yet, prohibition of these openly publicized arrangements was not enforced.²⁷ Nor were the side bets always for cash. Baseball equipment was less plentiful in the early years. Thus, the Maroons played the Twelfth Street Athletics of Kansas City for two bats and gate receipts.²⁸

There were also games in which groups other than the teams received the proceeds. For example, “The Kansas City Maroons and the Leavenworth Pastimes, colored clubs, [played] at Exposition park [in Kansas City] ... for the benefit of the colored orphan’s home.” The Pastimes defeated the Maroons, 12–7.²⁹ These sorts of benefit baseball games for local and national causes were played throughout the sport’s early years by both black and white clubs.³⁰

In addition to side bets between teams, gambling occurred in the grandstand. A reporter described one instance at a game between the KC Maroons and Lexington Black Stockings. Only about 60 fans attended the game, but one man “took the lead and offered odds on innings and batters reaching first base with a wonderful alacrity and display of cash. The bets were generally about 40 cents to a quarter that the batter would not reach first base and two to one that Kansas City would win the game,” which they did.³¹

The KC Maroons reorganized in 1888 and played some of their regular opponents from nearby cities, as well as the Springfield (MO) Reds. The Maroons and Reds split a pair of games in Kansas City. During the second game, won by the Reds, arguments between the two clubs “preceded a change of umpires in the sixth inning when a Kansas City white man” was chosen to replace a black umpire from Springfield. The *Kansas City Times* printed a box score for the game, as well as a game between the Maroons and Lexington Black Stockings.³² However, box scores for games between black clubs in Kansas City would continue to be rare for years to come. They were most likely to be published for games between a top black team and a top white team.

In 1889, the KC Maroons were virtually absent from local newspapers, but in 1890, they again played old rivals, such as the Lexington Black Stockings. They also scheduled games against clubs from farther afield. Their most challenging opponent was the Lincoln (NE) Giants, one of the first professional black teams in the region. The Giants routinely defeated the Maroons, due, in part, to the fact that the Maroons’ star pitcher and catcher in 1887 and 1888—George Castone and Frank Maupin—had joined the Giants. The Giants also hired pitcher Jack Reeves. Being from Kansas City, Maupin and Reeves sometimes still played for the Maroons in contests against teams other than the Giants.³³

In 1891, the KC Maroons were absent from local newspapers. In April, the services of Maupin were advertised in the *Omaha Daily Bee* among the paper’s “Interesting Amateur Notes.” The notice had one notable error regarding his experience the previous year. He occasionally played for the Maroons in 1890, but not the KC Haverlys, a white team.

We would like to recommend Catcher Frank Maupin to a team needing a catcher. Maupin played last season with the Lincoln Giants and Kansas City “Haverlys.” He is a fine backstop, good hitter and a speedy base runner and was the most popular man on the Lincoln team. His terms are reasonable and he can be reached at 1422 East Eighteenth street, Kansas City.³⁴

As late as June, Maupin and Castone had no long-term commitment to a team, and they advertised their services as “an excellent battery for any club in need of such.” At the beginning of July, however, the Lincoln Giants reorganized, with Maupin, Castone, and Reeves on the roster. At the time, Maupin was still in Kansas City, recovering from an unspecified illness (he reportedly suffered from asthma). By July 21, “the reliable little catcher of last year’s Lincoln giants [had] rejoined that organization and [would] help to make them a drawing card.”³⁵

A Lincoln newspaper noted the cordial treatment their black ball club received from some of the white communities in Nebraska where they played. “At David City the boys were met by the committee and David City band on their arrival in the morning, and the crowd showed its appreciation of the game with generous applause.” Following a 5–3 victory over the white Burlington Railroad team in Plattsmouth in mid-August, the railroaders signed Maupin and Giants’ infielder Will Lincoln, also from Kansas City, to play for them. After getting off to a late start, the Giants apparently were not making much money, and a few Nebraska towns saw an opportunity to bolster their rosters by

integrating good players from the Giants on their clubs. With the signing of Maupin, Lincoln, and other players, the Giants were forced to disband.³⁶

Segregation continued to be the rule in Kansas City, yet there was a small break in the color line in 1891. Maupin was considered an outstanding catcher, noted for his ability to throw out runners when they tried to steal a base or strayed too far from first base. He was so good, in fact, that he had the opportunity to play for a top white team in Kansas City, the KC Stars. He was scheduled to catch for the Stars in Atchison in May and June, while he waited for the opportunity to play in Nebraska. In October, after Maupin had returned to Kansas City, another local white team sponsored by the Schmelzer Arms sporting goods store had just completed a successful barnstorming trip through Missouri. Upon their return, they scheduled a game with the Stars for \$25 a side and the entire gate receipts. "Both teams [were] composed of the crack amateur players of the city, strengthened by some Rockford, Atchison, Ottawa and Fort Leavenworth players." Some of these ringers had even played on minor league clubs. All were white, except Maupin, "the celebrated colored catcher." The Schmelzers won the contest, 18–4, but the fielding of Maupin in a losing cause was highlighted in newspaper reports as a feature of the game. The two clubs played a second game won by the Stars, but Maupin did not participate in the rematch.³⁷ Segregated teams were again the rule in Kansas City.

In 1892, the KC Maroons continued their absence in local newspapers, while some of the team's best players—Frank Maupin, Jack Reeves, Will Castone, and Will Lincoln—got a chance to play minor league baseball in Nebraska. Also signing contracts with integrated teams in the Nebraska State League were John Patterson, their former teammate on the Lincoln Giants, and Bud Fowler. The Nebraska State League was one of the last integrated minor leagues in the country during this period. Unfortunately, multiple problems, including racial dissension fomented by some of the white players and managers, led the league to fold early. In late July, Maupin and Reeves were the battery for a picked nine in Kansas City featuring some of the ex-Nebraska State Leaguers in a game against the Kansas City "No. 11 fire crew (colored)." The No. 11s won, 17–8. When the No. 11 baseball club reorganized in April 1893, their roster included Frank Maupin, Jack Reeves, Ed Carr, and Will Lincoln, all former Lincoln Giants. Their first baseman was Preston Greenbury (sometimes spelled as Greenberry or Greenburg in newspapers). He would play for some of the best black teams in Kansas City for several years.³⁸

During 1893–1895, Maupin and other black players bounced around from team to team. In 1894, Maupin, Reeves, and Lincoln had another opportunity to play in Nebraska for an integrated town team in David City, and they posed for the team photo. In 1893 and 1895, Maupin and Lincoln also played for black teams in Hutchinson, Kansas, where it took the players on the top white team "about three innings to learn the fact that they could not steal second with Maupin behind the bat."³⁹ While playing for Hutchinson in 1893, Maupin described a game against a team from Wichita in which the official outcome was determined by the limited amount of equipment available during these early years.

David City Base Ball Club, 1894.
Champion Amateur Team of Nebraska.



7. Jos. Shramck, Manager.
1. Will Lincoln, S. S. 2. Jas. Slade, 1st B. 3. Frank Maupin, C. 4. Ed. Evans, L. F. & 2d B.
5. Jack Reeves, P. & 3d B. 6. Ed. C. Reinhardt, P. & C. F. 8. Louis Reinhardt, R. F.
9. Roll Smith, L. F. 10. Lester Cook, P. & C. F. 11. Jos. Dolan, 3d P.

1894 David City, Nebraska, Base Ball Club. The photograph includes three players who were teammates on the Kansas City Maroons and Lincoln Giants—Will Lincoln (third row, far right), Jack Reeves (second row, second from the right), and Frank Maupin (first row, far right). Image RG3064.PH0-000026 courtesy of History Nebraska (Nebraska State Historical Society). Used with permission.

At the end of the fifth inning the ball began to give out, but was used until during the eighth inning, when one man struck out with two on bases, [and the ball's] total destruction occurred.... [T]here being no more balls on the ground, the umpire gave the game to the Hutchinson boys, with a score of 12 to 5. He afterward called the game back to the fifth inning, when the ball first began to give out, at which time the score stood 11 to 0 in favor of Hutchinson. Sixty per cent of the gate receipts were turned over to the Hutchinson boys.⁴⁰

In early 1895, Maupin was announced as the catcher for the Page Fence Giants, a new black barnstorming team based in Adrian, Michigan. His former teammate and opponent in Kansas and Nebraska, Bud Fowler, organized the professional club with Grant "Home Run" Johnson during the 1894–1895 offseason. However, Maupin was ill during the spring and never joined the team.⁴¹

Later that summer, Maupin returned to the integrated David City club, along with Will Lincoln. However, Lincoln was released after two weeks “for not being in shape to play” a single game. The release of his friend, the only other black player on the team that year, apparently did not sit well with Maupin. On July 1, after Maupin received his paycheck, he departed for Lincoln to purchase another glove, promising to return, but he went to Kansas City instead. On July 3, David City defeated the visiting YMCA team from Hastings, Nebraska. “Some of our people feared that the home team would be weak, owing to Maupin, the colored catcher, having jumped the town. Maupin left numerous creditors and has soured the people on colored players.”⁴² Segregation was becoming more entrenched on Nebraska and Kansas diamonds as the century ended.⁴³ In August, Maupin and Lincoln were back in Hutchinson, playing for the local black club.

During the late 1890s and into the new century, city directories show that Maupin largely remained in Kansas City, where he worked as a barber when he was not playing baseball for local teams. His barbershop in the neighborhood of 18th and Vine Streets was considered one of best in Kansas City, each of which also included a bathroom, billiard hall, and reading room. In July 1894, Maupin mixed his two professions. “Rival colored base ball clubs, composed of South end barbers under the management of Frank Maupin and North end barbers coached by A. W. P. Griffin, will meet in a match game shortly.”⁴⁴ In 1898, Maupin was among 200 black men whose names were submitted to the local county court as part of an effort to diversify the racial make-up of the pool of potential jurors. The *Kansas City Journal* published their names under the headline, “They Demand Equal Rights.”⁴⁵

The initial departure of Maupin and others for Nebraska in 1890 had coincided with the end of the KC Maroons run as a top amateur ball club in the city, but their absence was not the sole reason the Maroons folded. Good players, such as Frank Maupin, were simply responding to circumstances that allowed them to earn more money elsewhere.

This stood in contrast to support for the KC Maroons. Attendance at games hosted by the Maroons was poor. As noted earlier, an 1888 game against the Lexington Black Stockings was attended by only about 60 fans, and a game in late August 1890 against the St. Louis Mohawks, featuring the return of the Maroons’ stellar battery of Jack Reeves and Frank Maupin, drew only a “small but enthusiastic audience, composed mostly of colored people.” Yet, it was the size of the crowds, not their enthusiasm, that the players noticed. “The home club players complained bitterly of the small audience, and said that they do not receive encouragement from the colored people of Kansas City that they do in other places.”⁴⁶ Playing for the Lincoln Giants in 1890, Maupin and Reeves would have been able to speak to the difference in support for teams of black ballplayers in Kansas City and Nebraska. This lack of community support in Kansas City presumably made it difficult for the Maroons to continue to field a team.

Yet, young men in Kansas City still wanted to play baseball. In the absence of the KC Maroons, other black teams were organized during the early 1890s. Most were short-lived, but one club played multiple years. Although the team played at least one game in 1892, a 9–3 loss to the Leavenworth Pastimes, the *Kansas City Times* announced in April 1893 that,

“An amateur base ball team of colored players, to be known as the Kansas City Blues, has been organized for the season.” Frank “Shorty” Woodson was listed as the manager. A white minor league team named the KC Blues played in the Western Association that year, so newspapers sometimes referred to the black club as the “Kansas City colored Blues.” The first game for the “colored Blues” came in May against the No. 11s for “the colored championship of the city and \$25 a side.” The Blues won, 14–7, but the No. 11s rebounded in the rematch a few days later, 7–6. In August, the Blues also defeated the reorganized KC Maroons, 12–7, in another city “championship game.” The Blues continued to play other clubs from Kansas City and nearby towns through 1895. In August 1894, they scheduled a game with Miller’s Athletes at McCook Field in Lawrence, Kansas “for the colored championship west of the Missouri river and a \$200 prize” (equivalent to \$5,792 in 2018). If the game was played, I could not find a game summary or score.⁴⁷

Two other black teams were mentioned several times in newspapers during the early 1890s. In August 1893, a team known as the IXLs was organized. (The history of their name is summarized at the end of this monograph.) Their first game was on the field at Fifteenth and Vine Streets against a club resurrecting the 1885 name KC Lone Stars. Both teams would play through 1895. During their first two years, they mostly played teams rarely mentioned in newspapers, as well as picked nines. However, in April 1894, after defeating the Lone Stars, 10–5, the IXLs lost to the black KC Blues, 15–5.⁴⁸

Despite the challenges, teams such as the KC Maroons had sown the seeds of quality black baseball in their hometown and displayed the talent of local ballplayers, such as Frank Maupin. During the late 1890s and into the next century, the number of black baseball teams increased in Kansas City, although some played only a season or two. As the number of both black and white amateur and semipro teams increased, local newspapers organized most of the information concerning challenges, notices of games, and scores, usually only a sentence or two, under the banner “Amateur Base Ball Notes” (which became “Amateur Baseball Notes” in 1906). With teams continuing to serve as the principal sources of information, details of games were still spotty and occasionally contradictory. They rarely included line scores, let alone box scores. This limits the depth to which many teams and players can be documented. However, one black team occasionally filled more column inches than the others. The reason: the players wore the name of the *Kansas City Times* on their jerseys.

1895–1897: KC Times Hustlers and KC Unions

The Junction Hustlers baseball club was organized in Kansas City in April 1895. In May, the team’s name was changed to the Times Hustlers because it was “composed entirely of colored newsboys who carry The Kansas City Times.”⁴⁹ A founding member of the Hustlers, who played for several years on area teams, was “Frog” Emery (first name unknown). He played almost every position—pitcher, catcher, infielder, and outfielder—and he was a strong hitter. Emery was even jokingly offered to the minor league KC Blues to shore up their struggling pitching staff.⁵⁰

However, the player most associated with the Times Hustlers was their promoter, catcher, and first baseman—Henry “Toots” Woodson. Shorty Woodson, who led the

black KC Blues, also played for the Hustlers on occasion, but it was Toots Woodson who usually provided information about the team and its games to the newspapers, primarily the *Kansas City Times*. The *Times* even printed a drawing of Woodson in his blue 1897 uniform.⁵¹ A realistic sketch of a black baseball player published in a white-owned newspaper—not a demeaning, exaggerated caricature—was extremely rare during this period. The paper also described his presence on the field during a game.

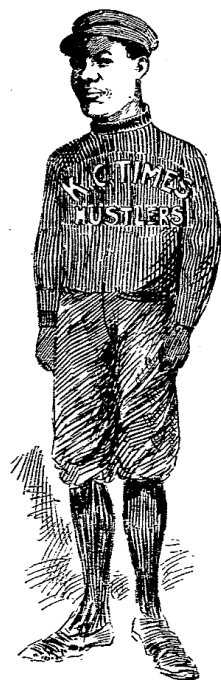
Toots Woodson, president and captain and first baseman of The Times Hustlers, master of ceremonies and director general of the entire show ... is easily first and foremost on the list of attractions. Without him, all is as nothing.⁵²

The ball ground used by the KC Times Hustlers (and other teams) was an open field at Fifteenth and Vine Streets.* The *Kansas City Times* described the grounds in the summary of an 1897 game in which their namesake Hustlers defeated the KC Invincible Elevens, 21–14. It creates a vivid, if somewhat exaggerated, image of early baseball played by prominent amateur clubs on vacant lots.

“When it comes to happiness, unalloyed and real downright fun, there is a little spot out on Fifteenth street, where more of these things can be found on a Sunday afternoon than in any other place in Kansas City.”⁵³

There was no wooden grandstand or bleacher, but the playing field sat “about four feet below the level of the street.” This allowed about 100 spectators to use the sidewalk as makeshift seating. However, there was no backstop, so a foul ball or an errant pitch could be dangerous. When that occurred, “there [was] a break in the ranks, but the gap soon [filled] with other venturesome souls.” Those who could not find a place behind the plate lined the paths to first and third bases, where they were also at risk from foul balls and errant throws. “The danger, however, only seems to add spice to the sport[,] and the human line ever moves itself nearer and nearer to the base line.” Thus, men were assigned to deal with this encroachment on the playing field.

In order that the catcher may be able to catch an occasional glimpse of first and third, three men move up and down the line and try to keep a clear road. The first of these is the pathfinder. In the absence of the long chalk lines seen on a regular field, this scout lays out a path of his own. He trails a bat along in the yielding dust and marks out a line that only the most intoxicated citizen could walk. Behind him come a pair of [men] with long sticks in their hands. Their duty is to keep the crowd back of the line drawn by their co-laborer. This they do with many injunctions, gentle and



Mr. Captain Toots Woodson, Who Pilot
The Times Hustlers to Victory.

* Fifteenth Street is now Truman Boulevard. The area south of the old intersection of Fifteenth and Vine Streets is now the site of the Urban Youth Academy baseball facility in The Parade, a city park north of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

otherwise. Their march is perpetual, for by the time they reach the first base the crowd has moved in until the pitcher is sending his curves through a narrow chute of rooters.

Other ad hoc features of the playing field included the bases.

Unfortunately, the second, third and home bases used in these games are not securely sewed to the ground. They are either bricks or blocks of wood, which ever [sic] is nearest to hand. The ordinary player in stealing a base must slide, slip, stop and squirm around without dislodging the base.

Prior to 1893, pitchers delivered the ball from a flat piece of ground in the center of the diamond delineated by four lines as a “box.” In 1893, a version of the rectangular pitching rubber (or “slab”) similar to those used today was introduced, and pitching mounds began to appear from the 1890s through the turn of the century.⁵⁴ The pitcher’s position on the field at Fifteenth and Vine was atypical by any standard.

“Box” and “slab,” it must be understood, are purely fanciful and imaginary terms when applied to the Hustlers’ games. As a matter of historic fact, the pitcher stands in the dry bed of a little rivulet, which runs from the home plate to where the pitcher’s quarters are usually located. The curve balls follow the course of this little stream and land on the bat, batter or the base.

Black teams in Kansas City also used enclosed regulation fields, some associated with minor league and major league teams, just as the KC Maroons had done (Table 1).

In 1895, a principal rival for the KC Times Hustlers was the KC Lone Stars. By the first of June, the Hustlers’ new uniforms had arrived, and they were to wear them for the first time in a game against “the best colored team in town, the Lone Stars.” Yet, no results for the June 2 contest were published. Perhaps no game was played. However, the two teams did play at Fifteenth and Vine on June 16, with the Hustlers defeating the “hitherto

Table 1.—Partial list of ballparks used by black baseball teams in Kansas City in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Part of the site of Association Park is now a public recreational space (with a baseball field) named Blues Park. The grounds of Old League Park, in part, are now within Belvidere Park. At various times, minor league teams and the Federal League (a major league) used all of the ballparks in Missouri, except Shelley Park.

Association Park, 20th & Olive Streets, Kansas City, MO
Exposition Park, 15th Street (Truman Road) & Montgall Avenue, Kansas City, MO
Federal League Park, 47th Street (Cleaver Blvd.) & Tracy Avenue, Kansas City, MO
Kerr’s Park, 18th Street & Minnesota Avenue, Kansas City, KS
Old League Park, Independence & Lydia Avenues, Kansas City, MO
Riverside Park, 2nd Street & Franklin Avenue, Kansas City, KS
Shelley Park, Independence Avenue & Oak Street, Kansas City, MO
Sportsman’s Park, 17th Street & Indiana Avenue, Kansas City, MO

invincible Lone Stars” in 11 innings, 21–20. This reportedly gave the Hustlers a record of 10–4. “They are beyond questions the champions of their weight and age in the Greater Kansas City.” However, a game between the two rivals on July 14 at Exposition Park, a regulation ballfield, went to the Lone Stars, 17–2. A Few days later, the Hustlers rebounded to defeat the “original colored Kansas City Blues.”⁵⁵

The KC Times Hustlers also played games in other towns near Kansas City, and they occasionally played white teams. On July 4, they defeated a white team in Warrensburg, Missouri. Apparently, the Warrensburg club was unaware that the Hustlers were black when they scheduled the contest. They “refused to play at first on account of color, but the people of their city made such a big roar that they decided to play the Hustlers.” However, “Joseph Brown was not allowed to umpire the game on account of his color.”⁵⁶ Perhaps blocking the use of a black umpire, thereby insisting on limits to integration, made playing a black team less objectionable to the white team, embarrassed that they unknowingly invited a black club to be their holiday opponent.

Despite their successes, the KC Times Hustlers did not reorganize in 1896, although they would return in 1897. The KC Lone Stars and IXLs were also absent. In their place, a new black team that would play for several years made its debut—the KC Unions. Little information about the team or their games was published during their first year. The manager was A.L. Dorsey, and the club played games on the grounds at Fifteenth and Vine, although they apparently preferred other venues. Like the Hustlers, the Unions played both black and white teams in Kansas City and nearby towns.⁵⁷ At the close of the season in October, they scheduled two games against strong white teams. In the first game, their opponent would be the J.J. Fosters at Exposition Park for the “all-around championship of Kansas City.” This suggests the Unions played well their first year. A week later, it was announced that the Unions would play a “picked team” of professional ballplayers who were in Kansas City at the end of the season.⁵⁸ However, the results of the games, if they were played, apparently were not reported in local newspapers.

In February and March the following year, the KC Maroons attempted to reorganize with at least three players from the old team—Frank Maupin, Jack Reeves, and Will Lincoln. The attempt was unsuccessful, and Maupin later joined the KC Times Hustlers. Instead, a team of white 18-year-olds played under the name KC Maroons during 1897.⁵⁹ The frequent reuse of team names by different groups of players makes it challenging to follow the histories of some clubs.

The KC Times Hustlers reorganized in April 1897 with new uniforms and some familiar names on the roster, including Toots Woodson and Frog Emery. The Hustlers issued their first challenge to the KC Unions in mid-May, and the Unions put up the forfeit money with the sporting editor of the *Kansas City Times*. The game was played at the end of May, with the Unions defeating the Hustlers, 21–7, due in large part to four homeruns by a player named Bright. Undaunted, the Hustlers took the field against other teams around Kansas City throughout May and June as they waited for a rematch with the Unions. One of these teams was the Traveling Stars of Belvidere Hollow (in the Missouri River bottoms west of The Paseo). The Hustlers won the game, 21–13. Emery was the winning pitcher,

and he contributed to the offense with a grand slam. One the players for the Traveling Stars was Tom Stearman, whose name was variously spelled as Sterman, Stirman, or Sturman (and occasionally as Sherman) in newspapers. Stearman played in the outfield for top black teams in Kansas City for nearly two decades. The Hustlers played well during May, but on June 6, they lost to an unnamed black team from the West Bottoms, 28–11. The Hustlers had beaten this team on May 23 in a close contest, 21–17. The *Kansas City Times* suggested the loss in the second game was especially embarrassing, because the West Bottoms team did not even have uniforms. However, the Hustlers regrouped and returned to their winning ways through the end of June.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the KC Unions spent the latter half of June on a barnstorming tour through northern Missouri. Someone, probably A.L. Dorsey, reported the team's progress to Kansas City newspapers. Although the reports do not provide a complete record of their games, it seems to have been a reasonably successful trip in terms of their record.⁶¹ Whether or not it was financially successful was not mentioned.

When the KC Unions returned home at the end of June, the much anticipated rematch with the KC Times Hustlers could finally be played, weather permitting. It did not. Rain prematurely ended their game on July 4 for the "championship of Kansas City." The Unions led, 6–3, after 4½ innings. They claimed the Hustlers had already completed their half of the fifth inning, which would have been enough to declare the Unions the winner, but the umpire examined the scorebook and saw they were an inning short. The game was promptly rescheduled.⁶²

On Sunday, July 11, the KC Times Hustlers and KC Unions returned to the field at Fifteenth and Vine, this time playing the game to its conclusion. Unfortunately, each team drew its own conclusion. The game was called because of darkness in the last half of the ninth inning with the Hustlers at bat. There were two outs, but the Hustlers were down by only one run, 20–19. They had already scored five runs that inning, so they disputed the decision to call the game before the last out was made. A pitchers' duel it was not. Toots Woodson had already hit two 3-run homeruns, for which he claimed he was intentionally hit in the head by a pitch. (He was wearing a bloody bandage around his head when he stopped at the *Kansas City Times* office after the game.) Under the circumstances, the score of the called game would revert to the last completed inning. At the end of the eighth inning, the Unions were also ahead by one run, 16–15, which would give them the victory.⁶³ However, both teams seemed to realize it was an unsatisfactory way to determine the top black baseball team in Kansas City.

Toots Woodson and James Davenport, manager of the KC Times Hustlers, requested a meeting with the manager A.L. Dorsey of the KC Unions on July 26 with the intention of scheduling a game at Exposition Park on Sunday, August 8 "for the colored championship of Kansas City, Mo., and \$100 a side" (equivalent to \$3,012 in 2018). Instead, the game was played on August 4, during the Emancipation Day celebration in Fairmount Park (now within the cities of Sugar Creek and Independence, Missouri). A crowd of more than 1,000 spectators enjoyed a good ballgame. In the last half of the ninth inning, with the Hustlers ahead, 4–1, the Unions loaded the bases with no outs. The Hustlers' starting

pitcher stiffened and allowed only one run, giving his team a 4–2 victory and earning them the coveted bragging rights and \$200.⁶⁴

The KC Times Hustlers and KC Unions continued to play other teams through the end of the season, and both reorganized in 1898. However, competition for the championship of Kansas City would now be more than just a two-team affair.

1898: Enter the Bradburys

Preparation for the 1898 season did not begin with the reorganization of the KC Times Hustlers or KC Unions. It started with a meeting on January 20 to organize the Bradbury baseball club. The name was taken from the Bradbury Piano Company, but in newspaper accounts, the team was usually referred to simply as the Bradburys and occasionally as the Brads. Manager George Jones requested, “All good colored players take notice.” A follow-up meeting of the players took place on February 17. The early start for this new contender suggested just how serious they were. On St. Patrick’s Day, they met to choose the design of their uniforms—dark gray with “Bradbury” in white letters across the front of the jersey. The belts and stockings would also be white. Following that meeting, they began practicing and issued a challenge to the Hustlers and Unions for the opening game at \$25 a side (equivalent to \$753 in 2018). A month later, Jones was still seeking a game with these two clubs, as well as teams in towns within 150 miles of Kansas City.⁶⁵

Perhaps stimulated to action by this upstart club, the KC Unions reorganized in February and recruited players from other Missouri cities as far away as St. Louis. On May 1, Unions’ manager A.L. Dorsey placed a \$5 deposit with the sporting editor of the *Kansas City Journal* as a guarantee to play the Bradburys for \$25 a side on May 6. The Bradburys accepted the challenge in the next day’s *Journal*, but the game was postponed until May 10, so it could be played at Exposition Park.⁶⁶

In the meantime, the Bradburys split a pair of games with the Lexington Tigers (formerly the Lexington Black Stockings).⁶⁷ The Tigers usually featured two or more of the Lindsay brothers, who would also play for teams in Kansas City and elsewhere through the years. In addition to the Bradburys and KC Unions, the KC Times Hustlers had organized in early March. The roster submitted by the Hustlers included Frog Emery and Toots Woodson, along with veterans Frank Maupin and Jack Reeves.⁶⁸

The first game between the Bradburys and KC Unions was reported by the *Kansas City Journal* in more detail than usually accorded the city’s black teams. The newspaper apparently had their own reporter at the game. The paper also published the rosters of the clubs on the day of the game. The weak fan support that had plagued the KC Maroons was also evident at this game. Only about 150 fans came to watch the Bradburys take on the Unions, who wore blue uniforms obtained from the minor league KC Blues. The Bradburys first baseman, Preston Greenbury, had played for the No. 11s in 1893 and the Unions in 1896. He was also invited to play with the KC Maroons in 1897. Now on the Bradburys’ roster, his “artistic coaching ... elicited applause from the grandstand,” and his “playing was of a high order.” The score after two innings was 2–1 in favor of the Bradburys, and the game remained close through the sixth inning. The Bradburys broke the game open in

the seventh, scoring three runs, and adding one more in the eighth for a 6–1 victory. They also claimed the \$50 purse. According to the *Journal* reporter, “The game was a better exhibition than is sometimes given by more widely advertised [white] teams.”⁶⁹

Having vanquished the KC Unions, the Bradburys scheduled a game with the KC Times Hustlers for May 26 at Exposition Park. The teams would play for \$25 a side and bragging rights. The *Kansas City Journal* again published the rosters of the clubs, with Toots Woodson at first base, Tom Stearman in center field, and Frog Emery in left field for the Hustlers, while Greenbury was back at first base for the Bradburys. The *Journal* also published a summary of the game under the headline, “They Are Champions No Longer.” The Hustlers scored eight runs in the fifth inning and six more in the eighth to pull away to earn a 20–13 victory and the \$50 purse.⁷⁰

With the season underway, the Bradburys, KC Unions, KC Times Hustlers, and Lexington Tigers continued to play among themselves and against other clubs through June. After the Bradburys split a pair of games with the Tigers at the beginning of May, the clubs scheduled two more games on May 28 and 29 at Exposition Park. “As the Bradburys are the strongest team in the city and the Lexingtons are the strongest in the state, an exciting game is expected.” The Bradburys won both games against the Tigers.⁷¹

On June 30, the KC Times Hustlers (who claimed a record of 17–2) and the KC Unions played their first game at Exposition Park for the “colored championship of Kansas City.” This time there was little press coverage of the game, which the Unions won, 19–13. Although this gave each of the three Kansas City teams a record of 1–1 in head-to-head competition, the Unions claimed the championship, apparently because they were the last team to earn a victory. However, the Unions followed this victory with a loss to the Lexington Tigers.⁷²

The championship claim by the KC Unions not only ignored the records of the three teams in the city competition, additional games among the contestants were scheduled “to decide the championship of the city.” After all, it was only the end of June. On July 9, the Bradburys defeated the Unions for the second time, 16–13, in the first of two scheduled games. The following day, a “team made up from the Lexington Tigers, Times Hustlers and Kansas City Unions defeated the Bradburys,” 8–4. The Unions denied the claim by the Bradburys of a mixed roster, but the team playing under the name KC Unions included Frog Emery and Tom Stearman from the Hustlers, and John, Jim, and Walter Lindsay of the Tigers.⁷³

Reports of ballgames for the KC Unions vanished from Kansas City newspapers after the mixed team defeated the Bradburys. Perhaps they made another tour, but there is no indication that they did. The Lexington Tigers, however, played through August, even defeating the Bradburys, 7–6, in 12 innings at the end of the month.⁷⁴ The KC Times Hustlers also continued to play through August, although Frog Emery had jumped to the Bradburys, his third team of the season. During a game in which the Hustlers hosted a team from Shreveport, Louisiana, Tom Stearman took over as catcher for the Hustlers, which warranted special mention in the *Kansas City Times*.⁷⁵

Did you ever see a left-handed catcher? The probabilities are that you never did, and therefore you can not [sic] imagine how strange it seems to see a man with a mit [sic] on his right hand behind the bat. A north mit backstop looks all out of place, and he keeps you wondering what he is going to do and how he is going to handle certain balls. Kansas City has at least one left-handed catcher. His name is Tom Sturman [sic], and he is one of the crack local negro players. When he is with the Times Hustlers he usually plays in the outfield, but yesterday in a game between the Hustlers and a Shreveport (La.) delegation, Tom went behind the bat for a while. As he is a versatile [player], he can officiate in the box if it becomes necessary, but his catching is worthy of study.⁷⁶

In addition to Kansas City's top three black teams, another club was organized in May—the KC Colored Porters, who were perhaps connected to an 1895 “nine composed of porters at different tailor shops.” They apparently “shared” a few players with a team known as the Black Sports, who played under the name Crescents in July and August. The Crescents competed with teams of 16-year-old players in Kansas City.⁷⁷ The Colored Porters, on the other hand, played in both Kansas City and nearby towns.

Following a 6–4 loss in Holden, Missouri on May 15, the “Porters left James O'Brien in the colored hospital at Holden, as he was badly used up in the cutting affray [knife fight]. He has been released [from the club], as he has caused the team considerable trouble out of town.” O'Brien apparently anticipated his tenure with the Porters was about to end, because he advertised his search for a new team several days earlier in the *Kansas City Star*. After his discharge from the hospital on May 29, he once again advertised his desire to play for a new team, “the Times Hustlers preferred.”⁷⁸

Meanwhile, to replace O'Brien, the Porters signed Tom Shea to play first base. “Shea is an old timer, having played in and around Kansas City for the last twelve years.” Thus, it can be inferred that the roster of the Colored Porters was not limited to teenagers, such as those borrowed from the Crescents. In addition to O'Brien, the Colored Porters released two other players for violent behavior. “The manager of the Colored Porters Base Ball team writes The Star as follows: ‘The Cold. Porters [apologize] for the actions of Chas. Smith and John Wise in their unprovoked [sic] assault on Geo. Wilson Sunday. They have released them for their conduct.’”⁷⁹

The KC Colored Porters are not known to have played the Bradburys, KC Times Hustlers, or KC Unions. However, they were invited to a meeting of these clubs on June 9 called by Charles Smith, who had played that season for the Porters before being released for fighting. He had previously played 16 years for teams in and around Springfield, Missouri. The purpose of the meeting was to organize a league of black teams in or near Kansas City. “The managers of the Unions, Bradburys, Times Hustlers, Colored Porters and any other good teams are invited to be present.”⁸⁰ Nothing came from the proposal, but it would not be the last attempt to organize a league of black baseball teams involving Kansas City clubs prior to 1920, when the KC Monarchs became charter members of the Negro National League.

While the Bradburys were establishing themselves as the top black team in Kansas City in 1898, they announced their desire to play “games with other teams, either white or colored, at home or abroad.” Under circumstances similar to those surrounding the game between the KC Times Hustlers and the white team in Warrensburg in 1895, a game scheduled between the Bradburys and a white team in Atchison was canceled. An Atchison newspaper reported the story under the headline, “Called Off. ... The Bradburys Were Black.” The reporter rode back on the train with the Bradburys as far as Leavenworth and interviewed their manager. He said the Bradburys received their money from the Atchison club and had no “kick” about not playing. They hoped to return to Atchison for a game with the local black club.⁸¹ Early black clubs in Kansas City rarely played under the name of white-owned businesses. It is probably not a coincidence that the two exceptions during the 1890s—the KC Times Hustlers and Bradburys—were assumed to be white teams by their white challengers in other cities.

The first game the Bradburys arranged with one of Kansas City’s best white teams—the Schmelzers—was scheduled for July 17. The contest at Exposition Park “for \$50 a side and the amateur championship of Kansas City” went to the Schmelzers, 6–2, “in one of the fastest games of the season.” Although the Bradburys lost, the reported “feature of the game was the batting of Greenbury.”⁸² The two clubs scheduled another game at Exposition Park on August 21 for \$100 a side (equivalent to \$3,012 in 2018), plus gate receipts. The Schmelzers’ first baseman was a former major league pitcher, Bill Kling, and their third baseman was his brother, Johnny Kling, who would begin his major league career as a catcher in 1900. Frank A. Cross, the “human megaphone,” was slated to serve as umpire. Despite his booming voice, it was his first time to umpire a game, and he was replaced after only two innings. The Schmelzers won another close contest, 9–6, but the “fast team work of the Bradburys” was praised.⁸³ The Bradburys played a few other black and white teams in Kansas City and nearby towns through August to end their season.⁸⁴

1899: The Lincoln High Schools Begin a Legacy

The competition to claim bragging rights as the top black baseball team in Kansas City became even more crowded in 1899. The KC Times Hustlers, KC Unions, and Bradburys all reorganized, although it was June before the Unions returned.⁸⁵ It was also in mid-June that a fourth quality team was first mentioned as an opponent of the Bradburys (the game was rained out). The players at the heart of this team included brothers John Thomas McCampbell and Ernest J. McCampbell and half-brothers Arthur E. “Chick” Pullam and William H. Houston. All four graduated from Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri—Pullam and Houston in 1898, Thomas McCampbell in 1899, and Ernest McCampbell in 1904. Thus, the team they organized in 1899, with Houston serving as the manager and catcher, was called the Lincoln High Schools.⁸⁶ The team would become the nexus for the story of black baseball in Kansas City for 10 years under different names.

The opening contest of the 1899 baseball season came at the end of April, when the KC Times Hustlers, with Toots Woodson, Frank Maupin, and Jack Reeves back on the roster, challenged the Bradburys to a game for either \$25 or \$50 a side. The Hustlers also expressed an interest in playing “any colored team within 250 miles of Kansas City for any

amount from \$25 to \$100 a side” (equivalent to \$753–3,012 in 2018). They began the season against the Lexington Tigers and less challenging opponents.⁸⁷

Rather than play the KC Times Hustlers, the Bradburys began their season where they left off in 1898, playing local white clubs during May and early June. Their first game was on May 7 against a “picked team” of white semipro players at Exposition Park for \$25 a side and gate receipts. The Bradburys’ roster included Preston Greenbury, Tom Stearman, and one of the Lindsay brothers from Lexington. The third baseman for the white team was Joe Tinker, a future inductee into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Tinker was born in Muscotah, Kansas (north of Topeka) in 1880, but his family moved to Kansas City when he was two years old. About 500 fans attended the game, which merited a full box score in the *Kansas City Star*. The Bradburys led 6–1 going into the ninth inning and won 13–2. All but one of the Bradburys had at least one hit, and all but one scored at least one run. The Bradburys also benefitted from nine walks. Tinker was hitless in four at bats, but he started one double play—Tinker to Wilson—not quite as poetic as the refrain Tinker to Evers to Chance would become for the Chicago Cubs.⁸⁸

The next game for the Bradburys was May 11 against the Black Wonders of St. Joseph, Missouri, managed by Bud Fowler. Fowler’s participation did not improve the outcome for the Black Wonders, who lost to the Bradburys, 21–7. The energetic and seemingly ubiquitous Fowler gave up control of the Black Wonders in June to focus on baseball projects elsewhere.⁸⁹

The Bradburys’ third game was with the white Schmelzers at Exposition Park on May 14. This time, the Bradburys were no match for their opponent, “the strongest amateur team that has been organized in Kansas City for some years.” The Schmelzers scored five runs each in the third and seventh innings on their way to an easy 14–3 victory.⁹⁰

In June, Greenbury jumped from the Bradburys to the KC Times Hustlers, while Frog Emery moved the opposite direction to become the Bradburys’ catcher. Such midseason movement was not unusual. The Bradburys defeated another white Kansas City team on June 4, the Ferd Heims,* at Exposition Park. The “Brewers had naught but experience to show for the tussle.” The final score was 11–4. Among the features of the game were the “hard hitting of Emery” and the “work of Hanley” at first base; “Press Greenburg [sic] was not missed.”⁹¹ A week later, back at Exposition Park, the Bradburys had a rematch with the Schmelzers and their third baseman, Joe Tinker. After seven innings, the Schmelzers were up 8–6. In the bottom of the eighth inning, however, the Bradburys exploded for eight runs and went on to win the game 14–9. The Bradburys also led in hits (15–7), but the Schmelzers committed more errors (10–6).⁹²

By this time, the KC Unions and Lincoln High Schools had both organized, placing four black teams in the mix for bragging rights as Kansas City’s top amateur (or more accurately, semipro) ball club. The four teams in the city, along with the Lexington Tigers and St. Joseph Black Wonders, arranged several games among themselves. On June 21, the

* The Ferd Heim Brewing Company bottling plant at 507 North Montgall Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2016.

Kansas City Journal carried three announcements about these clubs. The Bradburys had scheduled weekend games with the Lincolns on June 24 and the Black Wonders on June 25. The Unions announced a game with the Tigers on June 25. Meanwhile, Toots Woodson was said to be trying to get the KC Times Hustlers back in the game. Only two days later, on June 23, the Bradburys challenged the Unions and Tigers to games on June 27 and 28 for a purse between \$25 and \$100, with the loser also paying for the use of Exposition Park.⁹³ The Bradburys' ambitious plan was to play four of their five top rivals in less than a week.

Rain forced the cancelation of amateur games in Kansas City on Saturday, which included the game between the Bradburys and Lincoln High Schools. In the Sunday matchups, the Bradburys easily defeated the Black Wonders, 20–6, and the KC Unions had an easy time with the Lexington Tigers, 24–6.⁹⁴ Still wanting a game during the week, the Bradburys deposited \$5 with the sporting editor of the *Kansas City Journal* as a forfeit for a game with any team at Exposition Park on Wednesday, June 28. However, teams with players from more than one club, such as the composite team that had defeated them the previous summer, were barred from accepting the challenge. The winner would take the purse (\$25 a side) and all gate receipts, while the loser had to pay for the rent of the ballpark. The Unions were the preferred opponent, but the challenge remained open on Wednesday morning. Meanwhile, the KC Times Hustlers scheduled a game with the Lexington Tigers for the following Sunday, July 2. The Hustlers also wanted to arrange a game with the Unions, who had split a pair of games against the Lexington Tigers on July 4 and 5.⁹⁵ Challenges for games among black ball clubs around Kansas City had never been so numerous.

The Bradburys continued to seek games during July, and they finally arranged a doubleheader for July 23 at Exposition Park. The first game would be between the Lincoln High Schools and the Argentine Tigers.* The two teams had scheduled a game earlier in the month, but the Tigers did not show up. The second game of the doubleheader would feature the Bradburys and KC Unions. In the opening game, the Lincolns defeated the Tigers, 14–4, behind the pitching of Thomas McCampbell, who struck out 12 batters. In the main event, the Bradburys defeated the Unions, 12–4. A feature of the game for the Bradburys was the hitting of Greenbury, who had rejoined the team. In addition, Maupin had replaced Emery as the Bradburys' catcher.⁹⁶ The KC Times Hustlers were having trouble holding their roster together.

The doubleheader arrangement worked well enough that another twin bill was scheduled for the following Sunday at Kerr's Park on the Kansas side. (The Schmelzers and Armours, two white teams "composed of professionals and semi-professionals," were playing at Exposition Park.) In the first contest at Kerr's Park, played for \$15 a side, the Lincoln High Schools were victorious over the Wyandotte Sunbeams, 22–8. The "masterly pitching" of Thomas McCampbell was again a feature of the game. He struck out eight

* Argentine was an independent city named for its silver smelter (*argenti* is Latin for silver). The city was annexed by Kansas City, Kansas in 1910 (Schutt 1974).

Sunbeams in seven innings, at which point, the Sunbeams walked off the field. In the second game, for \$25 a side, the KC Unions reversed their fortunes and easily defeated the Bradburys, 25–8. A longtime catcher in Kansas City now playing for the Unions, who was listed as Sayers or Sawyers, had six hits—three doubles and three triples.⁹⁷

After early July, the KC Times Hustlers no longer appeared in Kansas City newspapers, but the Bradburys and Wyandotte Sunbeams (first mentioned at the end of July) apparently picked up some of their players. Although 1899 was the final season for the Hustlers, Toots Woodson would organize the Blackville Strutters in 1901, with familiar names on their roster, such as Frog Emery. Similarly, the defeat of the Bradburys at the hands of the KC Unions on July 30 seems to have signaled the end of their season, although they had played well. The Bradburys sought games with teams outside Kansas City in early August, but I found no game summaries.⁹⁸ The Bradburys would return after a two-year hiatus. In the meantime, Bradbury players found spots on other clubs. The reasons why the Hustlers and Bradburys folded are unknown.

With the KC Times Hustlers and Bradburys folding and the young Lincoln High Schools perhaps not quite ready to challenge for the top black club in Kansas City, the KC Unions embarked on a barnstorming tour through the Indian Territory (Oklahoma), Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri during August and September. Unions' manager A.L. Dorsey traveled ahead of the team, arranging games with black and white teams. Just before leaving on the tour, the Unions played games in Olathe and Ottawa, Kansas, southwest of Kansas City. The Unions lost to the Olathe Yellow Hammers, but rebounded to easily defeat the Ottawa Blues twice. A complete record of the Unions' games during the tour has not been documented, but of 20 game reports I found in the *Kansas City Journal*, *Kansas City Star*, and *Kansas City Times*, the Unions' record was 16–4. The Unions also picked up players on their trip—a shortstop in Sherman, Texas and a catcher and another player in Hot Springs, Arkansas.⁹⁹ Undertaking extended tours through other states and the hiring of players outside the immediate region around Kansas City marked an early move toward high-quality professional black baseball clubs that would reach its zenith a decade later with the KCK Giants and KC Royal Giants, followed by the KC Monarchs in 1920.

While the KC Unions were on their tour to the south, Dorsey was thinking ahead to games in Kansas City upon their return in September. He was initially unaware that the Bradburys were no longer playing and announced in the *Kansas City Journal* a desire to play their rivals. Subsequently, attempts were made to schedule a game with the Schmelzers at Exposition Park on September 17 or 24, but apparently, the two teams did not play.¹⁰⁰

After the KC Times Hustlers and Bradburys folded and the KC Unions embarked on their five-week barnstorming tour, the focus of black baseball in Kansas City shifted to mostly younger teams, including the Lincoln High Schools. Most of the black teams in Kansas City who played the Lincolns during August and September did not appear in local newspapers until late in the season, as if they were filling the void left by the Hustlers, Bradburys, and Unions. The Argentine Tigers had been the first to appear in mid-July, and they remained active through mid-September. However, no information about their players was published in Kansas City newspapers. The Wyandotte Sunbeams were active

briefly during late July and early August, perhaps organized around former players from the Times Hustlers. The Great Westerns did not appear in newspapers until early August. At about the same time, former members of the Times Hustlers and Bradburys, along with new players, organized the KC Moonlights, captained by Fred Montgomery. The team was active through September. The KC Stars was a “crack 17-year-old colored team,” though they were rarely mentioned in local newspapers. In contrast to the organization of several new teams, a team playing under the resurrected name of the KC Lone Stars disbanded in mid-August, “owing to their inability to arrange games with other 18-year-old teams.” Some of their players then joined the Lincoln High Schools, Great Westerns, and KC Stars. The following year, a team of twelve-year-old boys picked up the name Lone Stars.¹⁰¹

After defeating the Argentine Tigers and Wyandotte Sunbeams in late July, the Lincoln High Schools initially played teams in other towns. Among these games was a 7–6 loss to the St. Joseph Black Wonders.¹⁰²

On August 11, the KC Moonlights announced that the team had organized, and they published their roster, noting each player’s position. The experience several of the team’s members obtained during their years playing for the KC Times Hustlers and Bradburys might explain why the Moonlights made more use of the local newspapers than the teams of young players. The Moonlights also immediately challenged the Lincoln High Schools to a game on August 13 at the Belt Line Flats. The Lincolns won the game, 12–10, but the Moonlights were undaunted.¹⁰³

Following their loss to the Lincoln High Schools, the KC Moonlights tried to arrange a doubleheader on August 20 against the Argentine Tigers in the morning for \$10 a side and against the Lincolns in the afternoon for \$25 a side. The Lincolns needed time to recover from injuries and could not play that weekend, so a game between the Lincolns and Moonlights was scheduled for the following Sunday. I found no game result. The Tigers agreed to play the Moonlights on August 20, but, again, no game result was found.¹⁰⁴ In fact, virtually no game results among the Lincolns, Moonlights, Argentine Tigers, Great Westerns, Wyandotte Sunbeams, and KC Stars were apparently published through the end of the season in mid-September. Instead, newspaper notices focused on challenges and announcements of upcoming games.

The most ambitious of these challenges came from the KC Moonlights for September 3, the Sunday during Labor Day weekend. The Moonlights wanted to play a tripleheader starting at 9:00 that morning, in which they would play the Argentine Tigers, Great Westerns, and Lincoln High Schools. As it turns out, three games were scheduled that day, but not the tripleheader proposed by the Moonlights. The Moonlights played the Lincolns at Belt Line Flats in the morning, the KC Stars played the Great Westerns on the same field in the afternoon, and the Argentine Tigers played the Fairdales at Kerr’s Park in the afternoon. The only game result published was the Moonlights’ victory over the Lincolns in a close contest, 6–5. The two clubs apparently played again on September 17, but the outcome is unknown.¹⁰⁵ Following these games and the unsuccessful attempts to arrange a game between the KC Unions and Schmeltzers in late September, the 1899 season ended, with the Unions replacing the 1898 Bradburys as Kansas City’s top black baseball club.

In 1900, the only prominent black clubs to reorganize were the KC Unions and Lincoln High Schools, playing under their new name, J.W. Jenkins' Sons.* In subsequent years, the Bradburys would reorganize and new teams would join the competition, including the KCK Nelsons, KCK Giants, KC Royal Giants, KC Cyclones, and KC Allies (during the First World War). Then, in 1920, came the KC Monarchs of the Negro National League.

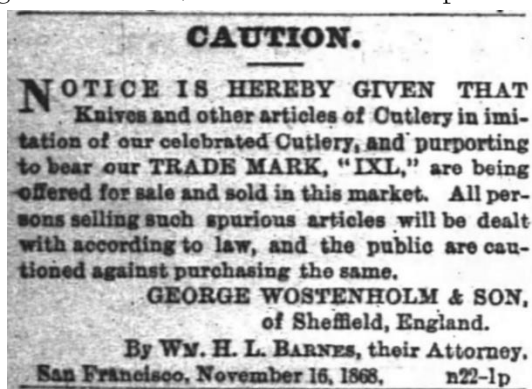
Post Script: IXL

Names of baseball clubs during the late 1800s often reflected uniform colors, especially the stockings. Sometimes names acknowledged a team's sponsor, although the KC Times Hustlers and Bradburys (named for the Bradbury Piano Company) were rare instances of black clubs in Kansas City using the names of businesses during the nineteenth century. Other names, such as Giants, were simply popular among teams.† The name IXL does not seem to fit clearly into any of these categories. So, where did the name originate?

The trademark "IXL" has its roots in fine English cutlery. It was first registered to W.A. Smith in 1787, but the mark books of The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire show I*XL registered in October 1831 to George Wostenholm, one of the world's premiere manufacturers of cutlery.¹⁰⁶

The original trademark included an asterisk—I*XL—suggesting the phrase "I excel," but a notice in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1868, printed it with only the letters. The purpose of the notice was to warn manufacturers who were using the trademark on imitation cutlery of possible legal action.¹⁰⁷

Coincidentally, the same page of the *Chronicle* had a notice warning against imitation products purporting to be Dr. Henley's Wild Grape Root IXL Bitters. Ingredients for the beverage were derived, not from grapes, but from a plant known as Oregon-grape, an evergreen shrub in the Barberry family native to western North America. Louis Gross of San Francisco introduced IXL Bitters in 1868, and it quickly became popular, spawning rivals. The newspaper notice claimed that other businesses were "imitating either the name or the style of the label, both of which have been duly secured by the laws of the State to the proprietors of the I X L Bitters."¹⁰⁸



* The Lincoln High Schools picked up a sponsor in 1900—the J.W. Jenkins' Sons Music Company. The team would play as the Jenkins' Sons through 1907. In 1908 and 1909, the club played under the name Kansas City Monarchs. They are now usually referred to as the "original" KC Monarchs.

† Buck O'Neil offered an explanation as to why so many black teams were named Giants. "[M]any newspapers across the country refused to print pictures of black people. But there were a lot of excellent black teams around, and they were a big attraction, even in predominantly white towns. So Giants became a code word. If you saw a placard in a store window or an advertisement in the newspaper announcing that the River City Giants were coming to town to play the local semipro team, you knew right away that the visiting team was a black one." (O'Neil et al. 1996, page 41).

During the mid-nineteenth century, use of IXL in the names of businesses and products became widespread. In the January Term of 1880, the Supreme Court of Oregon addressed these uses of IXL in the case of “M. Lichtenstein, Appellant, v. Mellis Bros., Respondents.” The owner of the I X L General Merchandise Auction Store claimed the name Great I X L Auction Company infringed on his trademark rights. The court ruled no infringement occurred. In part, the ruling read,

It is claimed that the letters “I X L” could not be used by the respondent after being appropriated by the appellant. These letters have been used by many manufacturers to denote their wares, as on cutlery and bitters, and were not the invention of the plaintiffs, but taken from former proprietors and inventors thereof, and do not by themselves make a trade-mark any more than the word “excelsior,” which is often used with other words to [make] a trade-mark or sign.¹⁰⁹

Among the groups using IXL in their names were baseball teams, including the I. X. L. club composed of black players in Kansas City, Missouri in 1893–1895. Perhaps the first such use was during the late 1860s and 1870s, with the founding of the I. X. L. Base Ball Club in Cincinnati, who were soon joined by the IXLs in other Ohio towns, including Zanesville in 1868 and Eaton in 1870.¹¹⁰ East Saginaw, Michigan also had an I X L Club in the early 1870s.¹¹¹ The first named team known to have played in or near Colorado Springs, Colorado was the IXL Club of 1874, possibly sponsored by the local IXL Creamery.¹¹² That same year, the I. X. L. Club of East Braintree, Massachusetts lost to the Noname Club from nearby Weymouth.¹¹³

During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, other IXL baseball clubs were organized around the country. IXL teams with players of various ages, both black and white, were organized in St. Louis and nearby cities at least as early as 1884. Teams using that name played several years through 1908, although teams after the mid-1890s appear to have been composed of teenagers and pre-teens. The name was resurrected in 1940 in one of the latest examples of its use in baseball.¹¹⁴ In another saintly city in 1886, a pitcher for the IXL Club in San Francisco broke his arm during a game. Two of the area’s top clubs scheduled a benefit game for their injured compatriot.¹¹⁵ To the south, in Lompoc, California, the IXL Store supplied uniforms to a team in 1890. In gratitude, they christened themselves the I. X. L. Nine. A year earlier, Brady’s I. X. L. Base Ball Club had played out of Los Olivos and Ballard, about 20 miles east of Lompoc.¹¹⁶ Beginning in 1890, Sioux City, Iowa had amateur IXL teams, who played local clubs and teams from other towns in Iowa and Nebraska. As in St. Louis, teams in Sioux City played under the name IXL through 1895, and the name was resurrected periodically through 1907.¹¹⁷

This survey is not exhaustive, but use of the name IXL for baseball teams during the late nineteenth century declined after 1900. Given the widespread use of IXL by a variety of businesses, baseball teams sometimes adopted the name IXL to acknowledge a sponsor. However, it was also used for its own sake. As use of IXL declined, its meaning also disappeared from the public lexicon. The unusual nature of a name largely unknown today and its brief period of widespread use begged the question of IXL’s history.

Acknowledgements

I accessed newspapers online through Newspapers.com, Genealogy Bank, and the State Historical Society of Missouri. I also viewed newspapers on microfilm at the Central Library of the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library. As work on this monograph was completed, James Brunson's three-volume reference, *Black Baseball, 1858–1900*, was published. This monumental compilation allowed me to verify much of what I learned from my research. I also appreciate the assistance of Martha “Marty” Miller and Mary-Jo Miller of History Nebraska (Nebraska State Historical Society), who provided a digital copy of the David City, Nebraska baseball club and permission to use the photograph. Dollar equivalents were estimated with the formula and data provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/community/financial-and-economic-education/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800>).

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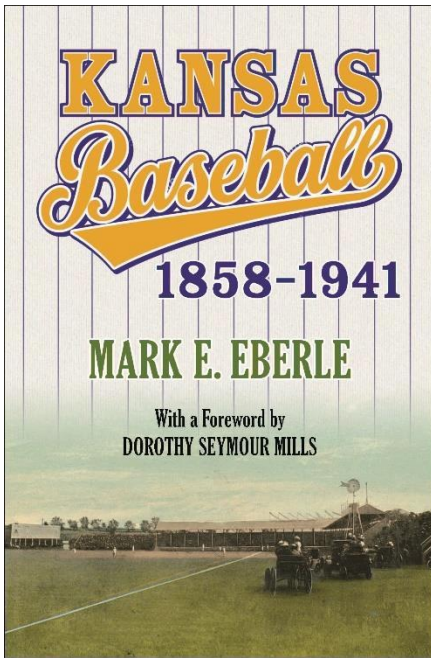
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You can learn more about the early history of baseball played by teams throughout Kansas, including the Kansas City Monarchs, in the book *Kansas Baseball, 1858–1941*, published in 2017 by the University Press of Kansas and available in paperback or e-book through bookstores and online retailers.

The book explores the early game played by hundreds of town teams composed of white males, as well as teams of women, African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans. Also described are the regional minor leagues and major league tours, along with the histories of towns still playing baseball in the state's oldest ballparks constructed between 1924 and 1940.