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Fort Scott, Kansas grew alongside the frontier military post of the same name established in 1842 and now preserved as Fort Scott National Historic Site. During the US Civil War, the First Kansas Colored Infantry, the first black regiment organized during the war, trained at a satellite post named Fort Lincoln, about 12 miles north of Fort Scott. Units of the regiment were the first black soldiers to engage in combat in October 1862, across the border in Missouri, about 25 miles northeast of Fort Scott (commemorated as Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site). The city is also home to the Gordon Parks Museum at Fort Scott Community College, which honors the life of the photographer, filmmaker, author, and composer. Added to these important aspects of Fort Scott's past is the city's place in early baseball history. Fort Scott was represented by the state's second baseball team to join the National Association of Base-Ball Players in 1866. Though not specified, it was probably the Lincoln Base Ball Club (BBC). The first team in the state to join the National Association a year earlier was the Frontier BBC of Leavenworth, adjacent to Fort Leavenworth.¹

As was true elsewhere in the region, the annual organization of baseball clubs in Fort Scott was sporadic, and the Lincoln BBC was short-lived. In 1868, some of the former club members resurrected the team as the Phoenix BBC. These early clubs played games among their own members, as well as a few games with other clubs. For example, the Phoenix club played the Olympic BBC from Uniontown, Kansas and the Panther BBC from Lamar, Missouri. In addition, baseball seasons corresponded to the weather more than the calendar. There was still talk of baseball games in Fort Scott as late as November 1868. The following year, the Phoenix BBC won the silver baseball given as a prize at the local Bourbon County Fair in October, and then the club returned to the ashes.²

These early baseball clubs in Fort Scott were composed exclusively of local white men. The Civil War had ended the institution of slavery in the United States, but the prevailing view was that the races should be segregated in public facilities and organizations. The US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of this view in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. Yet, there would be exceptions on the baseball diamond. Most integrated teams were organized at the local level, but there were a few black players on minor league and major league teams in the nineteenth century, before the color line excluding them from organized baseball was firmly established. Several instances of integrated teams in Kansas and adjacent states have already been described.³ Nevertheless, baseball teams segregated by race (and sex) were the rule in Kansas as elsewhere.

The first black clubs organized in Kansas were the Union BBC of Lawrence and the Independent BBC of Leavenworth in 1868. The teams split a home-and-home series in June and July 1868. The *Lawrence Kansas Daily Tribune* even published a box score with its

summary of the first game.* The Independent BBC was not mentioned in newspapers the following year, and the Union BBC was unable to arrange games with local white clubs. There is also no indication that games were played in Leavenworth between teams of black and white men in the 1860s, although an informal group offered a challenge with a social wager

in the *Leavenworth Daily Commercial* in June 1868. “We, the undersigned nine colored gentlemen of Leavenworth City, do hereby challenge any nine white men in town to a friendly game of Base Ball for the drinks and ice cream.”⁴

In contrast, the first news of baseball in Fort Scott in March 1870 was about games between the city’s white Crescents and an unnamed “colored club.” They were both “juvenile clubs,” but their contests are the first known reports of games between organized black and white teams in Kansas. The Crescents won two games by scores of 76–13 and 26–23. Following the first game, the *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* admonished the teams. “The boys should confine themselves to a ball ground. The ladies complain of danger in passing through the streets.” The teams heeded the advice and scheduled the second game “for a ball and the championship” at the ballpark on March 12, but the contest had to be postponed a week. The day before the game, the temperature was 70°F. On game day, the boys were “making snow forts.”⁵

With regard to adult teams, the *Daily Monitor* reported in June that the city had only “the remains of a ball club.” Perhaps stirred to action, a new white team, the Clipper BBC, was organized the following month. The team mostly played picked nines from the city.⁶ In 1870, these teams were drawn from a population in Fort Scott of 3,711 white residents. There was no mention of a club of black adults, which would have been drawn from only 460 residents. For the next three years, there was no mention of baseball in the city other than a note in 1873. “Base ball has broken out in this city. The colored boys have it bad.”⁷

During this lull in baseball activity in Fort Scott, a few games between black and white teams were reported elsewhere in Kansas, including at least four games in 1871. One of these games was in Leavenworth, where the black Red Stockings defeated the white Athletics, 50–42. Eudora’s Wakarusa Valley BBC, “a colored organization,” defeated the Blue Mound BBC, “a white organization,” 87–53. The game summary and line score for this game in the *Lawrence Kansas Weekly Tribune* ran under the headline, “National Game—Colored vs. White Ballists.” In Ottawa, two unnamed teams played an “exciting game of base ball,” though which team won was not reported. The *Doniphan County Republican* in Troy ran an inning-by-inning account of their contest. The game between the white

Unions.	O.	R.	Independents.	O.	R.					
Lindsey, 2d b.....	8	6	Tilman, c.....	2	9					
Matthews, p.....	4	9	Fields, p.....	3	9					
Berry, c.....	3	9	Green, 1st b.....	2	6					
Harris, 1st b.....	3	11	Rice, 2d b.....	4	6					
Grose, r. f.....	2	11	J. Smith, 3d b.....	2	6					
Kinsey, l. f.....	0	11	Young, s. s.....	3	6					
Wilson, c. f.....	4	10	A. Smith, r. f.....	3	6					
Hunter, 3d b.....	1	12	Perkins, l. f.....	6	3					
Barker, s. s.....	2	11	Robinson, c. f.....	2	7					
Total.....	27	90	Total.....	27	58					
RUNS EACH INNING.										
Inning.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total.
Unions.....	11	2	4	10	16	19	12	8	8	90.
Independents.....	13	12	4	3	3	8	9	3	3	58.

* In early box scores, R was runs scored and O was outs made by the batter. Some box scores also reported fly catches (F C), a noteworthy accomplishment in the days before fielders wore gloves.

Topelians and black Thorntonians was well attended. “Ed Davis’ cornfield fence adjoining the ground became a living mass of men, boys and umbrellas.” In the excitement of the ninth inning, the fence gave way as the Thorntonians rallied but ultimately fell short, losing 22–21.*⁸ The sample is small, but black clubs did well against the white clubs willing to play them.

In 1874, the Douglas Avenue Nine of Wichita “were smoothed out by the club made up of the colored boys of the city ... most gracefully and completely, the score standing twenty-eight to thirteen, in favor of the subjects of civil rights.” When the white El Dorado BBC traveled to Wichita for a game, some of the Douglas Avenue players were unavailable. An El Dorado newspaper reported that the Douglas Avenue Nine filled their roster with “the pick of the colored gentry club, from whom we must say their best playing came.” While games between black and white teams were rare during the 1870s, integrated teams were even rarer. The visitors from El Dorado won the game, as recorded in a box score in their hometown newspaper. The box score also identified the two black ballplayers used by their opponents—Hoit in center field and Johnson at shortstop.⁹

DOUGLAS AVENUE.	R.	O.	F. C.
Hyde, P	1	4	0
Brownie, R. F	1	4	1
Stewart, 2d B	2	3	1
Hoit, (col.) C. F	2	3	0
Massie, L. F	1	4	0
Little, 3d B	3	2	0
McAlinn, 1st B	2	3	4
Johnson, (col.) S. S	3	1	1
Sheets, C	1	3	0
Total	16	27	7
ELDORADO.	R.	O.	F. C.
Gossard, S. S	4	2	2
Shryer, C. F	1	4	2
Rix, 1st B	4	1	1
Frazier, P	2	5	0
Cooper, R. F	3	2	0
C. Clark Cap., L. F	2	4	2
McIntire, C	2	4	0
Myers, 3d B	3	3	1
G. Clark, 2d B	3	2	1
Total	24	27	9

That same year also saw a flicker of life in Fort Scott baseball. The Clipper BBC reorganized and scheduled a game with a picked nine in March. Three weeks later, the Clippers played for the local “champion ball.” They lost to the “Colored Star Club,” 42–38. The club’s name probably came from the Star Barber Shop, established in November 1873 by three black barbers, who operated a single shop until September 1874. Throughout the decade, virtually no names of players on black clubs in Fort Scott were mentioned, other than the club secretaries (for example, Adam H. Pigeon of the Stars) and the Stars’ captain (David Berry†). The club secretaries signed the challenges for games published in local newspapers. There were a few more reports of baseball activity in Fort Scott during 1874, but no other games were mentioned. In September, the *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* summed up the summer. “A sporadic case of base ball broke out yesterday afternoon, just beyond Phillips & Scovill’s; about a dozen young men took it. Base ball is a striking and yet catching disease. The lateness of the season will prevent its spreading much.”¹⁰

* In 1895, Burgess “Bert” Wakefield, a local black ballplayer, served as captain of the Troy BBC in the Kansas State League part of the season as they claimed the league championship (Eberle 2018a).
 † David Berry passed away 29 October 1877 at age 26 (*Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 30 October 1877, p 4).

In 1875, baseball returned to Fort Scott. The principal white team was the Mutual BBC, who challenged the Grasshopper BBC and Smoker BBC, also composed of white players. In June, the black Star BBC returned and issued their first challenge of the season to “any picked nine or any club” in Fort Scott for a game on July 5, a Monday holiday. A few days later, the Bellflower (Belleflower) BBC challenged the Stars to a game on July 5 for a ball and a bat. Newspapers never mentioned whether the Bellflowers were black or white, but their secretary was Frank Eagleson, a black barber in Fort Scott. The Stars accepted the challenge and hosted the contest on their grounds west of the city, although rain delayed the game until Wednesday. The Stars were victorious, but no score was reported. Meanwhile, the Mutuels arranged a game with the team at the Osage Mission (now the town of St. Paul, Kansas) for that same holiday. Thus, the Mutuels had to turn down a challenge for the same date from Fort Scott’s Arctic BBC for a ball and the championship.¹¹ The name Arctic might seem out of place in Kansas, but the Arctic BBC possibly took its name from the Arctic soda water fountain, used at the local Ice Cream Palace and in drug stores across the country to dispense cold, flavored drinks.¹²

The Mutuels continued playing, easily defeating the Smokers, 33–11, in mid-July. A few days later, they defeated the Jayhawkers from Mound City, Kansas, 19–12. At the end of the month, the Mutuels scheduled a game with the Enterprise BBC of La Cygne, Kansas that was postponed twice by rain. When the weather finally cleared in early August, the Enterprise club failed to show for the game in Fort Scott. Through August and September, the Mutuels lost game two with the Mound City Jayhawkers, 33–11, but won game three, 19–18, in 10 innings. They also split a doubleheader, losing to the Panther BBC of Lamar, 49–19, and defeating the La Cygne Stars, 44–29.¹³ All of their opponents were likely composed of white players.

Meanwhile, the Bellflowers scored a one-run victory over the Stars. The Stars also played the La Cygne Eagles, another black club, in a “lively match game” as part of the Emancipation Day celebration in Fort Scott on September 22, but no score was reported.¹⁴

The Mutual BBC reorganized in May 1876, and players from the Grasshopper BBC organized as the Olympic BBC. On June 1, the Olympics defeated the Mutuels, 43–8, in five innings. That was the end for the Mutuels, although the baseball field south of town would still be referred to as the Mutual grounds.* The Olympics were now the top white team in Fort Scott. They played local teams, including the Fast Mails and Pastimes, but they ignored a challenge from the Stars. During the Fourth of July celebration, the Mound City Jayhawkers defeated the Fast Mails and the Olympics to claim a \$100 prize (equivalent to \$2,353 in 2018). The Olympics defeated the Fast Mails for second place and \$25 (equivalent to \$588 in 2018). The Olympics continued to play through the summer against local white teams, as well as a team from Godfrey, Kansas known as the Clodhoppers. However, when the Topeka minor league team barnstormed through the area, it was the Pastimes who represented Fort Scott, losing, 21–15.¹⁵

* The Mutual grounds were south of 12th Street, between National Avenue (formerly Jones Street) and Main Street (*Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 8 June 1875, p 4; Edwards Brothers 1878).

When the Star BBC reorganized for the 1876 season, their first challenge had been to the Olympics a few days after the Olympics had defeated the Mutuels. No reply was published to the challenge for a game on June 16, and no game was apparently played. In July, the Stars defeated the Red Stockings, 14–12. Little was published about this team, although they seem to have been another club from Fort Scott. Their only game mentioned in local newspapers was their loss to the Stars. The Stars also traveled to Mound City, where they played the black Sweepstakes to a 10–10 tie, called because of darkness. In their final game of the year in October, the Stars made their longest trip, traveling to Parsons, Kansas. A picked nine of black players from that city shutout the Stars, 8–0.¹⁶

The 1877 season began in early April, when the white Stranger BBC defeated the UTT club. During the month, “several games” by unnamed teams were reportedly played. Yet, only a month later, the *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* wondered, “Where are the base ball boys this season? ... Don’t believe Fort Scott can boast a nine.” That was followed on June 1 with, “No base ball—no nothing.” Finally, on June 21, the Star BBC defeated the MK&T Railroad team, 14–13, in six innings.¹⁷ Baseball had returned.

The Western BBC, a team of young black players, challenged the Stars to a game on July 18, and the Stars accepted. If the game was played, however, no outcome was reported. At the end of the month, the Stars also received a challenge from the Red Stockings of Ottawa, a white team, but no game was played.¹⁸ Perhaps the Red Stockings did not realize initially that they had challenged a black club. Unlike most newspapers of the time, Fort Scott newspapers did not always denote black teams as “colored.”

In August, the UTT club challenged the Strangers to a rematch, but no game was apparently played. The Strangers were also challenged by the Westerns, who defeated them twice, 24–20 at the end of July and 26–23 on August 8. The Strangers rebounded to win their third game with the Westerns, 12–8, on August 29. A month later, the Westerns defeated the Star Valleys in Mapleton, Kansas, 25–12.¹⁹ The Westerns seem to have been a relatively strong team in the area.

However, the big event on the baseball diamond in 1877 was a game between the Olympic BBC and the Star BBC on August 10. The Stars won, 20–10, and the Olympics reacted angrily in a letter published by the *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* four days later. The Olympics claimed it was a scrub team with a few of their players, not their first nine. They challenged the Stars to a game on August 22 for \$25 and “the championship of Fort Scott.” They ended their challenge with racist venom. “Now, put up, coons, or dry up, as ‘sugar’ talks for us.”²⁰ Strong sentiment, if it was just a scrub team.

The following day, the Stars responded that they had “played the strongest nine that the city afforded” and listed the names of the Olympic players who had participated. Six of the nine players appeared on the Olympics’ rosters in 1876 and 1879 (no rosters were published in 1877 and 1878). In contrast, of the nine players on the Olympics team that defeated the Mutuels in 1876 to become the top white club, only four played for the Olympics when they lost to the Mound City Jayhawkers on July 4 of that year, when a \$100 prize was on the line. Their roster was fluid. The Stars’ response to the challenge from the Olympics continued. “We checked the baggage for the above club, and we can do so

again at any time they meet us on the diamond. Science with the ball and bat talks for us. We are not better, and we will not accept their challenge [for \$25], but will play them for the championship of Fort Scott.” No rematch was played.²¹

The Bellflowers also reorganized in 1877 and scheduled a game with the “Champion Stars” on August 28. The Stars won, 9–4. In September, the Stars also defeated the Drivers from Mapleton, 28–17. In the seventh inning, the Stars’ catcher was hit in the eye by the ball and had to retire, which contributed to the 13 runs the Drivers scored in the seventh and eighth innings.²² The season might have begun slowly, but it was busy in the end.

On 15 March 1878, the Strangers and Westerns continued their rivalry begun the previous year. The Strangers won the first contest of the new season, 16–12. On April 4, the Westerns apparently rebounded to defeat the Strangers, 18–11, although a second report stated that the Strangers left the field after eight innings, down by one run, 12–11.²³ Something was missing from the newspaper reports of the two contests between the Westerns and Strangers.

On May 11, three of the “Base Ball Clubs held a convention ... to take action upon a challenge given by the so-called Western Club. A move was made by the Strangers that any club in the city that accepted the challenge of the Westerns shall be fined not less than \$5 nor more than \$10 [equivalent to \$130–260 in 2018]. That move was seconded by the Stars and adopted as a rule hereafter.” The Bellflowers concurred. The rule was to be in force through November, and any fines were to be split among the teams for the purpose of purchasing balls and bats. Just how the rule was to be enforced was unclear, but the action was undertaken in response to the behavior of the Westerns on the diamond. “The temper of the Westerns being so high when they are getting beat that the different clubs have resolved not to play them any more this season.”²⁴ Perhaps the Westerns were forgiven, because the Stars agreed to play them on August 15. If they did, the result was not published.²⁵ Otherwise, there was little mention of baseball games in 1878.²⁶

That was the last reference to the Star BBC, which did not reorganize in 1879. However, a team of “small boys” played under the name Stars that summer. The Westerns and Strangers reorganized, joined by several other clubs. It was a busy year for baseball in Fort Scott. The Westerns and Liberties were referred to as the “leading colored clubs,” and they played each other several times. The Olympics also reorganized in 1879, and in June, the *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* published the following announcement from the presumptive top club in the city. “We are requested to announce that the Olympic base ball club challenges any white club in the city, for a game to be played Tuesday next.”²⁷ The Olympics had ignored a challenge from the Stars in 1876 and lost to them in 1877. In 1879, the Olympics made it clear they would now observe a strict color line on the baseball diamond, as was occurring across the country. Nevertheless, the Star BBC, a black baseball club, could make the case that they were city champions of Fort Scott in 1874 and 1877.*

* In July 1879, the Olympic BBC lost two games to the white Nameless BBC of Parsons, 32–6 and 25–6. The Olympics were ridiculed mercilessly in the local press, with suggestions that teams of boys or women should challenge them. In September, an unnamed black team from Fort Scott, possibly the Westerns or a composite team, defeated the black team from Parsons, 26–6. The *Fort Scott Daily*

Acknowledgements

I accessed newspapers online through Newspapers.com. 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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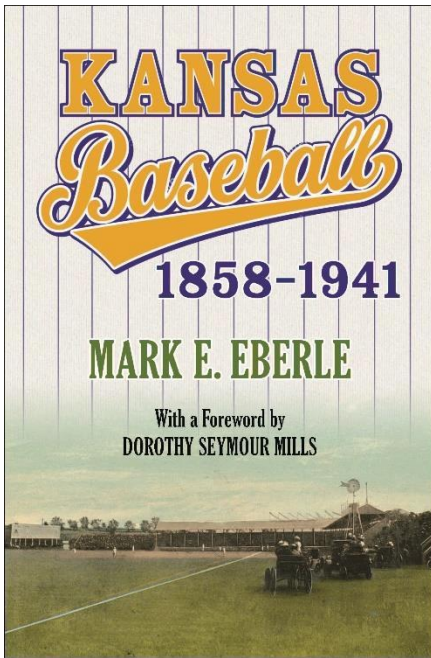
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Monitor postulated, “it is quite possible the colored base ballists of Fort Scott may be able to wipe out the record of the two defeats of our Olympics at the hands of the Nameless by pounding the conceit out of the red-capped colored ball players of Parsons.”

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- ¹ Eberle (2017, page 15; 2018b). • Spurgeon (2014).
- ² *Daily Fort Scott Post*, 16 October 1869, p 3. • *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor*, 17 July 1867, p 5; 24 July 1867, p 5; 31 July 1867, p 5; 7 August 1867, p 5; 18 September 1867, p 5; 16 October 1867, p 5; 18 December 1867, p 5; 19 August 1868, p 5; 9 September 1868, p 5; 23 September 1868, p 5; 30 September 1868, p 5; 7 October 1868, p 5; 4 November 1868, p 5; 25 November 1868, p 5; 21 April 1869, p 5; 11 August 1869, p 5. • *Fort Scott Weekly Press*, 27 June 1868, p 3; 11 July 1868, p 3; 15 August 1868, p 3; 21 May 1869, p 3; 28 May 1869, p 3; 2 July 1869, p 3; 16 July 1869, p 3; 10 September 1869, p 3; 8 October 1869, p 2. • Eberle (2017).
- ³ Eberle (2017; 2018a; 2019a; 2019b).
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- ¹¹ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 20 May 1875, p 4; 22 May 1875, p 5; 23 May 1875, p 4; 30 May 1875, p 4; 4 June 1875, p 4; 8 June 1875, p 4; 12 June 1875, p 4; 25 June 1875, p 4; 30 June 1875, p 4; 1 July 1875, p 4; 3 July 1875, p 4; 4 July 1875, p 4; 7 July 1875, p 4; 8 July 1875, p 4.
- ¹² *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 23 May 1874, p 4; 4 May 1877, p 4. • Tufts (1900, page 80).
- ¹³ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 16 July 1875, p 4; 20 July 1875, p 4; 21 July 1875, p 5; 22 July 1875, p 4; 30 July 1875, p 4; 31 July 1875, p 4; 1 August 1875, p 4; 3 August 1875, p 4; 5 August 1875; 13 August 1875, p 4; 19 August 1875, p 4; 31 August 1875, p 4; 1 September 1875, p 4; 3 September 1875, p 4; 15 September 1875, p 4; 17 September 1875, p 4; 18 September 1875, p 4.
- ¹⁴ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 1 August 1875, p 4; 5 August 1875; 31 August 1875, p 4; 23 September 1875, p 4.
- ¹⁵ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 18 May 1876, p 3; 24 May 1876, p 4; 27 May 1876, p 4; 31 May 1876, p 4; 1 June 1876, p 3; 2 June 1876, p 4; 13 June 1876, p 4; 20 June 1876, p 4; 4 July 1876, p 4; 7 July 1876, p 4; 29 July 1876, p 4; 6 August 1876, p 4; 15 August 1876, p 3; 16 August 1876, p 3; 19 August 1876, p 3. • *Fort Scott Pioneer*, 25 May 1876, p 3.
- ¹⁶ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 6 June 1876, p 4; 29 July 1876, p 4; 30 July 1876, p 4; 5 August 1876, p 4; 19 September 1876, p 4; 24 September 1876, p 4; 19 October 1876, p 4. • *Parsons Sun*, 21 October 1876, p 3.
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- ²⁷ *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, 16 May 1879, p 4; 18 May 1879, p 6; 21 May 1879, p 4; 29 May 1879, p 4; 3 June 1879, p 4; 11 June 1879, p 4; 13 June 1879, p 4; 17 June 1879, p 4; 19 June 1879, p 4; 20 June 1879, p 4; 21 June 1879, p 4; 26 June 1879, p 4; 2 July 1879, p 4; 8 July 1879, p 4; 16 July 1879, p 4; 24 July 1879, p 4; 27 July 1879, p 4; 29 July 1879, p 4; 3 August 1879, p 4; 14 September 1879, p 4; 21 September 1879, p 4; 16 June 1880, p 4.



You can learn more about the early history of baseball played by teams throughout Kansas 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.