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Negro Leagues, and Tournament Teams**

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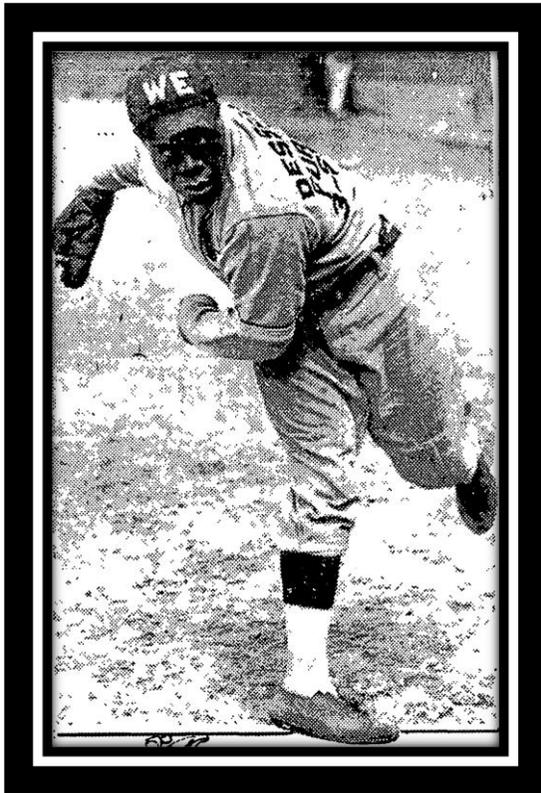


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25th Infantry, Negro Leagues,  
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*Alfred “Army” Cooper: A Baseball Career with the 25th Infantry, Negro Leagues, and Tournament Teams.*  
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Cover image: Alfred “Army” Cooper pitching for the White Elephants of Denver (*Denver Post*, 22 July 1935, p 17; probably taken by staff photographer E.O. Eisenhand; used with permission). See pages 18–19 for context.

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# Alfred “Army” Cooper: A Baseball Career with the 25th Infantry, Negro Leagues, and Tournament Teams

Mark E. Eberle

Alfred Mayart Cooper Jr. was born in Kansas City, Kansas on 1 November 1899 to Alfred and Mollie Cooper. The month and day are from his draft registration cards. His World War I draft card listed the year as 1900, and his World War II draft card listed 1902, but Alfred’s age in the June 1900 census was recorded as seven months. He had a younger sister born in 1902 named Captolia (the spelling differed somewhat in a few records). Mollie filed for divorce in 1907 and asked for custody of the two children.<sup>1</sup> In the 1910 census, she was married to Frank Henderson, but her children were listed as Alfred and Captolia Cooper. In the 1915 Kansas census, “Maully” was listed as the wife of Snow Hawkins. Hawkins was also the last name given for “Captolea.” Alfred was not listed with the family, although there was a son named Henry Hawkins, who was 15 years old. On his World War I and World War II draft cards, Alfred listed Captolia as his contact, suggesting he had lost touch with his mother, or she had passed away. According to the 1915 state census, Alfred Sr. lived in Kansas City, Kansas with Mary Cooper. He died a few months later.

Nothing else was found about Alfred Cooper Jr. prior to 1918. However, in August 1914, the Amateur Baseball Notes in the *Kansas City Times* reported the results of a game between two Black ball clubs of young adults. The Kansas City Mohawks defeated the Kansas City Royal American Giants, 12–8. “Cannon Ball Cooper pitched fine ball for the Mohawks.”<sup>2</sup> Cooper was not a rare surname, and the age of Alfred Cooper would have been only 14 years and 9 months. Thus, it is unknown if this report was about him. However, the possibility cannot be dismissed without additional information. Consistent with the nickname Cannon Ball, Cooper would later earn a reputation as a hard-throwing pitcher.

## With the 25th US Infantry Regiment, 1921–1927

Some references state that lefthanded pitcher Andrew “Andy” Cooper, an inductee into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, served with the 25th US Infantry Regiment. The regiment’s baseball team included several future Negro Leaguers, one of whom was a pitcher sometimes referred to as Lefty Cooper. However, the 25th Infantry was not deployed to Europe, where Andy Cooper said he served during the First World War. In addition, Andy Cooper’s time in the military was brief. He played baseball in Wichita, Kansas in 1919 and started his career in the Negro National League with the Detroit Stars in 1920.<sup>3</sup>

The Lefty Cooper serving with the 25th Infantry was Alfred Cooper. Just when he enlisted is, as yet, unknown, but his grave marker at Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery lists his service with the 25th Infantry and his service during World War I. He completed his draft registration card on 12 September 1918. His residence was given as Kansas City, Kansas, and his occupation was listed as a teamster for the Hinshaw Transfer Company in Kansas City, Missouri. The 25th Infantry served in Hawai’i during the First World War until August–September 1918, when it was transferred to southern Arizona, where Cooper

apparently joined the regiment. However, Alfred Cooper was not listed in the January 1920 census for the regiment at Camp Stephen D. Little in Nogales, Arizona. The census included William H. Cooper, who was born in 1895 in Missouri, as were his parents (as were Alfred's parents). However, William Harvey Cooper was also recorded in the 1930 census for the military post and died in Arizona in 1966. In addition to William, the 1920 census for the 25th Infantry included Daniel Cooper from Louisiana and Robert Cooper from Alabama.

The earliest mention of Alfred Cooper found thus far was a single reference in a history of the 25th Infantry published in 1927. It included a report on the first-place performance of the regiment in a Corps Area Track and Field Meet in July 1921. Second place in the 100-yard dash went to "Private Alfred Cooper, Company F."<sup>4</sup> A master index card from the Veterans Administration gives his enlistment date as October 1924, which is apparently a reenlistment date. The discharge date was listed as February 1928.

The first mention of Cooper found in an Arizona newspaper was published on 18 June 1922 in the *Arizona Republican*. The 25th Infantry baseball team was scheduled to play two games in Phoenix against an independent Black ball club named the Western Giants. The published roster listed "Cooper" (no first name given) as one of three pitchers for the soldiers. The box score for the first contest included pitchers Howard and Jasper for the infantry, who lost, 6–3. The winning pitcher for the Giants was "Wiz" White, who was reportedly a veteran pitcher from the Ninth US Cavalry. No box score was published for the second game, a 9–2 victory for the soldiers. "Cooper, the southpaw ace for the Nogales team," was the only pitcher listed in the line score for the infantry. Despite praise for Cooper as the ace, 40-year-old George Jasper was actually considered the regiment's top pitcher. He had pitched for teams in the regiment since at least 1910,<sup>5</sup> and probably earlier.\*

In June 1923, Cooper was not listed among the players traveling to Phoenix with the regiment's baseball team for a three-game series with the Giants. Game one was a 10–9 hitting contest, with White again getting the victory over Jasper. There were seven homeruns, one triple, and five doubles in the game. In game two, the infantry pitchers, Woodfolk and Williams, gave up 17 runs in the first four innings, and the catcher, Perkins, was put on the mound to finish the game, won by the Giants, 23–6. In game three, the Giants again won easily, 15–5, after Jasper gave up seven runs in the bottom of the eighth inning.<sup>6</sup>

Why Cooper did not accompany the team to Phoenix in June 1923 is unknown, though the team could have used him. In August, the 25th Infantry ball club was scheduled to travel to Tucson for a game with the newly organized Merchants White Sox. On this occasion, Cooper was listed as one of the three pitchers, along with Jasper and Branch. However, the ballpark was in poor condition on gameday, so the White Sox notified the 25th Infantry not to come.<sup>7</sup>

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\* George Weaver Jasper was born in Louisville, Kentucky on 15 May 1882. He first enlisted with the 49th US Volunteer Infantry organized in 1899 for service in the Philippines in 1900–1901. Upon his discharge, he enlisted in the 25th US Infantry and retired in December 1925 as a first sergeant after 26 years and 24 days of military service. Jasper moved to Los Angeles, where, at age 46, he married Eugenia Lewis. Both worked as "tonsorial artists." Eugenia died in October 1942, and George died on 3 May 1944, twelve days short of his 62nd birthday. George W. Jasper was buried in Los Angeles National Cemetery. (Sources other than census and military records are in the paragraph endnotes.)

In early May 1924, the Phoenix Giants would host the Jerome Miners. Instead of Wiz White, the pitcher for the Giants was to be “Cooper, ace of the 25th infantry at Nogales.” Likely based on information provided by the Giants’ manager, Cooper, “one of the best pitchers in the state,” was said to be on a two-month furlough, during which he would bolster the Giants pitching staff. “Cooper is a portsider and his cannon ball delivery promises some hard ones for the invaders [from Jerome] to solve.” What was expected to be a pitcher’s duel turned out to be a slugfest, with Jerome on top, 16–13. Cooper pitched a complete game, striking out 11 batters but also giving up 12 hits. His contributions on offense included a two-run homerun and four runs batted in. Cooper played for the Giants through May, but he was not reported with the team in June.<sup>8</sup>

Soldiers of the 25th Infantry who were discharged and then reenlisted were sometimes given a one-month furlough, while other soldiers were simply granted furloughs. For example, Wilber “Bullet” Rogan was granted a three-month furlough while serving with the regiment in Hawai‘i in March 1917. While on leave, he pitched for teams in Kansas City during April and May.\* Rogan returned to the regiment in June and was included in the 1920 census for Camp Little.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Cooper’s furlough, it came in May 1924, and he reenlisted in October, which leaves a five-month gap in his known activities.

That gap continued through 1925. Competition among the 25th Infantry’s company ball clubs took place at the beginning of the season. At the end of August, a regimental team was selected to play town teams and those of other military units.<sup>10</sup> However, no mention of Cooper’s participation was found, and virtually no information was published about the regimental team in available newspapers.

News of Cooper and the baseball team returned in 1926. However, there was little coverage of the games scheduled from May through October, other than notices of the upcoming contests. Prior to a game with the Southern Pacific Railway team from Tucson in August, it was reported that the clubs had split a doubleheader in June. The Southern Pacific team won game three, 5–4 in 11 innings, but Cooper and the soldiers restored parity in September by winning game four, 7–1. Also in August, businesses in Nogales donated uniforms to the regimental team—white, trimmed with deep blue. As the season came to a close in October, it was reported that the 25th Infantry had a record of 12–2, with the two losses coming against the railroad team. They added one more win, taking game five from the Southern Pacific team, 3–2. At the end of October, for unstated reasons, two games with the All-Nations team from Kansas City were cancelled by the barnstorming club.<sup>11</sup>

In 1927, Camp Little joined the Southern Arizona League with the Douglas Blues, Nogales Internationals, and Tucson Missions. The 25th Infantry was the only team composed of Black players. The costs of these sorts of leagues were a challenge. In addition to player salaries (for teams other than the 25th Infantry), expenses included such items as the salary of the player-manager (\$150 per month for Nogales) and transportation. Even the Camp Little team had to provide their own transport, which included renting trucks to carry them to games in Tucson (\$25) and Douglas (\$35). In addition, it was Nogales

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\* Bullet Rogan played, managed, or both for the Kansas City Monarchs from 1920 to 1938. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998.

businesses that had provided uniforms for the soldiers the previous year, not the army. Fundraisers were also held. For example, in June, after starting the season with a record of 3–6, Nogales hosted a dollar dance to help raise money to hire a new pitcher. The schedule of Sunday and holiday games for the league was to run from late April to early October, with the second half of the season to begin on July 10. As the season progressed, however, problems arose. The Douglas Blues dropped out at the end of June, which resulted in the cancellation of games on July 3 and 4, a potentially significant loss of revenue. In addition, the manager of the Tucson Missions resigned. The last two functioning clubs, Camp Little and the Nogales Internationals, made the best of their situation and played each other in nonleague contests over the holiday weekend.<sup>12</sup>

After the holiday, it was suggested that two teams in Tucson's Commercial League (city league) join the Southern Arizona League, with one game played in Tucson and one in Nogales each Sunday afternoon. Instead, the Southern Arizona League decided to add the top team in the Commercial League—the Recreations—and a reorganized Douglas Blues. Camp Little was declared the winner of the first half of the season, and the second half would begin July 17. However, on the very next day, the arrangement to add two teams from Tucson was resurrected, and Douglas was out. The Tucson Recreations and Tucson Grays (and later the Elks) would join the two clubs from Nogales for the second half of the season. In the meantime, the clubs at Camp Little and Nogales patiently waited and played each other again on Sunday afternoon. For the three nonleague games in Nogales during the league reorganization, “the gate clicked up from \$250 to \$350, which is not so bad at 50 cents a head.”<sup>13</sup>

Data in available digital records for games in the Arizona Southern League that summer were incomplete, but Tucson's *Arizona Daily Star* provided partial coverage with box scores, including games not involving Tucson teams. Cooper regularly pitched for the 25th Infantry, though during the first half of the season, he seemed to do better when pitching in relief. In eleven games for which data were available, he had 69 strikeouts and 37 walks. The numbers of innings pitched, hits allowed, and pitcher of record were rarely reported. He was sometimes referred to as “Lefty” Cooper, although that nickname was (and is) associated with pitcher Andy Cooper in the Negro Leagues of the 1920s and 1930s. The use of the nickname Lefty for Alfred Cooper contributed to subsequent confusion of the two pitchers. The *Daily Star* also occasionally referred to Alfred incorrectly as Lefty Joe Cooper.<sup>14</sup>

The Tucson Recreations won the second half of the season, as well as the one-game playoff with the first-half champion 25th Infantry. The score was close, 6–5, and the outcome was tainted. Cooper did not pitch, but when he pinch hit in the ninth inning, he drove in the soldiers' fifth run. However, he was called out running to third base on the play, although the ball was dropped. The base umpire was out of position, and the home plate umpire could not see the play clearly. In addition, a sports columnist for the *Arizona Daily Star* chastised the Recreations for their decision to improve their chances of winning the second half and the playoff game by importing players from Tucson, Phoenix, and Bisbee late in the season. For example, in the championship game, the imported catcher from Phoenix had four of the Recreations' eight hits, scoring one run and driving in three.<sup>15</sup>

Camp Little sure got the bad breaks and were on the raw end of the deal all around. The breaks went against them on plays, and the umpire's decision in the ninth was a tough break. The fact that they played the rest of the Southern Arizona league was the raw deal.

Camp Little is in a position that makes it impossible to secure players from other teams in the league—and they refused to load up with players from Fort Huachuca [10th US Cavalry] or Camp Jones [in Douglas]. Lieutenant Charles Sargent, the athletic officer, did right in using the same lineup, and showed himself to be one of the cleanest sports in the league.

Of course, it was all right to get in players, but it was not exactly the right thing to do as far as playing square went. The winning of a pennant in the Southern Arizona league does not mean a whole lot, but the action of the Recreations in taking advantage of the situation means quite a bit.<sup>16</sup>

The Recreations refused to participate in a postseason match with the winner of the Central Arizona League—the Phoenix Giants—because some of their imported players would be unable to play. Instead, the Giants arranged a game with the Camp Little club as a benefit for the Disabled American Veterans. The match was scheduled for the neutral, centrally located ground at Tucson. By the time the game rolled around in October, the clubs had been away from competition about a month. The Giants won an error-filled game, 10–6. Each team committed nine errors, more than the number of hits for either club. “Both clubs showed a lack of practice.” Cooper pitched a complete game in the loss.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to baseball, Cooper entered the boxing ring while in Arizona, usually as a light heavyweight at 162–165 pounds (years later, his 1942 draft card listed him as 178 pounds and 5 feet, 9 inches). The first report of “Cyclone Cooper” was published in July 1924, after he fought Johnny O’Keefe of Ajo. The decision was awarded to O’Keefe in the fourth round of a scheduled eight-round bout after he was headbutted by Cooper. According to the *Arizona Daily Star*, “Neither man looked like a boxer at any time.” Yet Cooper continued to train and box, mostly in the winter. One fight was part of a boxing event held in the bull ring across the border in Nogales, Sonora. In January 1926, Cooper was knocked out by the Arizona light heavyweight champion, Jack Lynch, in the fourth round of a scheduled ten-round bout. However, Cooper rebounded to win a string of fights from February 1926 to February 1928. The connection between Cooper the pitcher and Cooper the boxer was made in the *Tucson Citizen* in 1927. “Cooper is also in good condition and will be able to go at top speed in his six round go with Buck Newman. Cooper is the star twirler for the Camp Little team [of the Southern Arizona League] so is naturally in the best shape.” Cooper ended up fighting Jock Milton of Phoenix and winning by decision. The last mention of Cyclone Cooper was his knockout of Garland Hicks as part of a fight card organized at Camp Little on 22 February 1928, the month he was discharged.<sup>18</sup>

In March 1928, there were rumors about the upcoming season for Tucson’s Commercial League. One of the new teams said to be entering the league was a Black club named the Cardinals, which was sponsored by the Dunbar School. Their roster reportedly would include “several members of the squad from the 25th Infantry, who have received their

discharge.... Lefty Cooper, who when he was right, set all the teams in the Southern Arizona league last year on their ear, is said to be the backbone of the Negro players' team." However, Lefty Cooper, aka Alfred "Cyclone" Cooper, would leave Arizona. Several months after his departure, in August 1928, the 25th Infantry baseball team merged with the team from the 10th Cavalry. "Many faces familiar to last season's fans will be missing, however, notably that of Pitcher 'Lefty' Cooper. Cooper is now playing with the Kansas City Monarch[s]."<sup>19</sup>

## With the Kansas City Monarchs and Cleveland Stars, 1928–1932

Alfred Cooper had, indeed, joined the Kansas City Monarchs, and he pitched for the club while it was a member of the Negro National League from 1928 to 1930. In addition to league contests, the Monarchs played numerous exhibition games against town teams and similar clubs to fill empty dates and generate revenue. These sorts of barnstorming games are not included in his major league statistics. During his three years with the Monarchs while they were members of the Negro National League, Cooper finished in the league's top 10 for wins in 1929 (11 wins) and 1930 (9 wins) and led the league with 6 saves in 1929. In addition, he finished in the top 10 all three years in winning percentage (.636 in 1928, .786 in 1929, and .750 in 1930). The hard-throwing Cooper also led the league in 1930 with 8.7 strikeouts per nine innings, and his 104 strikeouts that year were the second most in the league.<sup>20</sup>

In 1928, the Monarchs opened spring training in Hot Springs, Arkansas on March 24. In a report of an exhibition game in Hot Springs on April 11 against a team from Little Rock, the Monarchs' new pitcher was referred to as "Lefty Cooper, the Monarchs' recruit from the army." After pitching three days later in Joplin, Missouri, he was referred to as Alfred "Army" Cooper, the name used today. The line score included both Alfred Cooper and Andy Cooper.<sup>21</sup> Andy "Lefty" Cooper was another new arrival for the Monarchs that spring after pitching the previous eight seasons with the Detroit Stars. Andy and Army Cooper were added to the Monarchs' roster to complement the other three starters for the Monarchs—William Bell, Chet Brewer, and manager Bullet Rogan—who were all righthanded. Despite Alfred's new nickname, similarities between the two Coopers still led to confusion among newspaper reporters and historians.

The Monarchs opened the season at the end of April in Memphis against the Red Sox. Andy and Army Cooper lost the first and third games, respectively. Andy Cooper's start on April 28 lasted only one inning, and Army Cooper's game, the second of a doubleheader on April 29, was only seven innings. For the game on May 2, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* identified the Monarchs' pitcher as "A. Cooper," and given his short start in game one, it would be logical to assume it was Andy Cooper. However, the *Kansas City Times* reported the pitcher was "'Army' Cooper, the Monarch's recruit pitcher." Initials typically were used in box scores and line scores to distinguish two players with the same last name on a club. The frequent use of "A. Cooper" for the Monarchs was of no value in distinguishing Alfred "Army" Cooper and Andy Cooper without additional information. However, Kansas City newspapers did a reasonably good job of clearly identifying the two Coopers. In the Monarchs' second series in St. Louis, Andy started against the Stars and was relieved by "Alf.

Cooper.” with Andy taking another loss.<sup>22</sup> Despite the rough road trip, Army Cooper’s rookie season in the Negro National League at age 28 was underway.

After arriving in Kansas City for the first homestand, Andy Cooper pitched a two-hit shutout in the opening game against the Cleveland Tigers. In game two, Army Cooper pitched eight solid innings, giving up four hits and three runs, while striking out eight and walking two. The Monarchs won in the eleventh inning on a squeeze play, with Frank Duncan bunting and Eddie Dwight scoring the winning run. Chet Brewer got the win in relief. The remainder of the series was rained out. Next up, the Detroit Stars arrived for a four-game series. With the Monarchs’ pitching staff well rested, Andy Cooper again got the start but lasted only four innings in another loss. After the Monarchs also dropped the first game of a doubleheader the next day, Army Cooper pitched well in game two, reversing the Monarchs’ fortunes with a 9–1 victory. As the second game of a doubleheader, it was only seven innings, and he made the most of the short contest. He gave up only four hits and two walks and rang up ten strikeouts. In fact, 8 of the first 12 outs for the Stars were by strikeout, while the Monarchs scored seven runs. The fourth game of the series was played in Clinton, Missouri (about 65 miles southeast), because the Kansas City Blues (a Class AA minor league club) returned home. Player-manager Bullet Rogan hit three homeruns to power the Monarchs’ victory and even their record for the young season at 8–8.<sup>23</sup>

The Monarchs’ record improved as the summer progressed. Overall, they finished second in the standings. The St. Louis Stars won the first half of the season, while the Chicago American Giants won the second half. In lieu of a Negro Leagues World Series that year, St. Louis won five games in a nine-game postseason series with Chicago to solidify their claim as league champions.<sup>24</sup>

Negro National League final standings in 1928.

| Team                    | W  | L  | T | Win % |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|-------|
| St. Louis Stars         | 63 | 26 | 0 | .708  |
| Kansas City Monarchs    | 50 | 29 | 1 | .633  |
| Detroit Stars           | 53 | 36 | 0 | .596  |
| Chicago American Giants | 55 | 38 | 1 | .591  |
| Birmingham Black Barons | 46 | 53 | 0 | .465  |
| Memphis Red Sox         | 33 | 51 | 0 | .393  |
| Cleveland Tigers        | 20 | 59 | 0 | .253  |
| Cuban Stars West        | 13 | 41 | 0 | .241  |

In the Monarchs’ final league contest, Army Cooper pitched a complete game victory over the Chicago American Giants, 4–3. This took his documented record in 17 league games to 7–4 (selected data summarized in Table 1). Although he started a comparable number of games to the club’s four other principal pitchers, Cooper only completed 5 of his 15 starts, which was relatively fewer than his teammates (33% vs. 53–80%). He also had the staff’s highest earned run average (ERA). Consequently, he pitched the fewest innings of the five pitchers. Despite this, Army Cooper led the Monarchs in total strikeouts and walks, and his strikeout rate of 7.4 per nine innings was second best in the league. His high number of walks was somewhat offset by the fewer hits per nine innings he allowed, a category in which he led the league. As noted in the *Kansas City Times* summary of the final league contest, “Cooper’s control ... was a bit shaky, the left hander walking six batters.”<sup>25</sup> As with the 25th Infantry, Cooper’s pitching with the Monarchs would be inconsistent. Yet, when he pitched with control, Army Cooper could dominate opposing lineups.

**Table 1.**—Selected pitching statistics for Alfred “Army” Cooper in games against Negro Leagues opponents and teams of similar quality compared to the pitching statistics of the other principal pitchers for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro National League. Other pitchers by year—1928: William Bell, Chet Brewer, Andy Cooper, and Bullet Rogan; 1929: William Bell, Chet Brewer, and Andy Cooper; 1930: William Bell, Chet Brewer, Johnny Markham, and Henry McHenry. Data from Baseball-Reference.com (accessed 15 March 2022).

| Year  | Record | Win % |           | Games |        | Games Started |        | Innings |             |
|-------|--------|-------|-----------|-------|--------|---------------|--------|---------|-------------|
|       |        | Army  | Others    | Army  | Others | Army          | Others | Army    | Others      |
| 1928  | 7–4    | .636  | .429–.833 | 17    | 17–24  | 15            | 10–17  | 95.0    | 114.0–150.0 |
| 1929  | 11–3   | .786  | .778–.882 | 23    | 21–26  | 12            | 15–21  | 125.2   | 149.0–158.2 |
| 1930  | 9–3    | .750  | .300–.769 | 15    | 14–18  | 15            | 12–16  | 107.1   | 95.2–154.1  |
| Total | 27–10  | .730  |           | 55    |        | 42            |        | 328.0   |             |

| Year  | Strikeouts and SO per 9 innings |         | Base on Balls and BB per 9 innings |         | Hits and H per 9 innings |          | Earned Run Average (ERA) |           |
|-------|---------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|
|       | Army                            | Others  | Army                               | Others  | Army                     | Others   | Army                     | Others    |
| 1928  | 78                              | 49–54   | 39                                 | 14–28   | 79                       | 115–144  | 3.60                     | 2.64–3.52 |
|       | 7.4                             | 2.9–4.3 | 3.7                                | 1.1–2.1 | 7.5                      | 8.6–9.6  |                          |           |
| 1929  | 45                              | 64–104  | 25                                 | 38–64   | 142                      | 104–145  | 3.08                     | 1.93–3.52 |
|       | 3.2                             | 3.9–6.2 | 1.8                                | 2.2–3.8 | 10.2                     | 6.3–8.6  |                          |           |
| 1930  | 104                             | 39–83   | 53                                 | 16–46   | 111                      | 100–161  | 5.37                     | 2.95–5.69 |
|       | 8.7                             | 3.7–5.9 | 4.4                                | 1.3–2.9 | 9.3                      | 8.2–10.9 |                          |           |
| Total | 227                             |         | 117                                |         | 332                      |          | 3.98                     |           |
|       | 6.2                             |         | 3.2                                |         | 9.1                      |          |                          |           |

In 1929, the Monarchs had essentially the same pitching staff as in the previous year, except that Bullet Rogan pitched only three innings of relief in a single league contest, and Hubert Wilson pitched in 11 games, 10 of them as a starter. The feature game for Army Cooper was a 4–0 victory in a combined no-hitter against the Chicago American Giants on June 29. Cooper pitched the first seven and a third innings and had only two strikeouts and one walk. Chet Brewer relieved Cooper in the seventh inning to complete the no-hitter.<sup>26</sup>

Army Cooper’s record during his second season improved to 11–3 (Table 1). All of the Monarchs’ pitchers had a winning percentage of .778–.882. The four principal pitchers took the mound in comparable numbers of games, but Army Cooper again started the fewest games and pitched the fewest innings. However, he completed 9 of 12 starts, and his ERA of 3.08 was fifth best in the league. Teammate Chet Brewer was first in the league (ERA of 1.93), and all four Monarchs’ pitchers were in the top ten. In addition, Army Cooper pitched eleven games in relief and led the league with six saves. Coinciding with this improvement, Cooper’s strikeouts declined to 3.2 per nine innings, only 43% of his 1928 average. His walks also declined, but he gave up more hits. Overall, however, it was perhaps his best season in the Negro Leagues and an important contribution to the Monarchs’ success.

As suggested by the staff's pitching statistics, the Monarchs substantially increased their winning percentage from .633 to .788 in the same number of games as in 1928, and they claimed first place by a comfortable margin. In addition, they won both the first and second halves of the season, negating the need for a league championship series, but calls for a Negro Leagues World Series went unanswered.<sup>27</sup>

Negro National League final standings in 1929.

| Team                    | W  | L  | T | Win % |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|-------|
| Kansas City Monarchs    | 63 | 17 | 0 | .788  |
| St. Louis Stars         | 56 | 34 | 1 | .622  |
| Chicago American Giants | 51 | 40 | 0 | .560  |
| Detroit Stars           | 39 | 42 | 0 | .481  |
| Birmingham Black Barons | 33 | 56 | 1 | .371  |
| Cuban Stars West        | 17 | 37 | 1 | .315  |
| Memphis Red Sox         | 21 | 54 | 1 | .280  |

In 1930, Army Cooper was the only player on the Monarchs' roster with that surname. Andy Cooper had returned to the Detroit Stars, though he would rejoin the Monarchs in 1932 and become the club's manager in 1936, while also spending some of his time during the offseason in Wichita.<sup>28</sup>

In April, the Monarch's headed to Houston in search of warm weather as they prepared for the upcoming season, but their first game against the Houston Black Buffaloes followed a week of cold weather to open the month. After playing in Texas, the team headed north, where they planned to use their new portable lighting system. The first night game was to be played in Arkansas City, Kansas on April 26. A fleet of trucks carried lights and poles, as well as a generator and cables, so the team could play games in the evenings, when fans would be off work. Most ballparks at the time had no lights, so the novelty of night baseball offered by the Monarchs portable system would generate additional interest in their barnstorming games. Rain forced the postponement of their inaugural contest under the lights until April 28 in Enid, Oklahoma, where the Monarchs defeated the Phillips University Haymakers, 12-4. In addition to smalltown ballparks, the Monarchs lit up Muehlebach Field, the minor league stadium in Kansas City.\* Army Cooper pitched the second night game in as many days at Muehlebach Field as the Monarchs defeated the Nashville Elite Giants in an official Negro National League contest. These two league games with Nashville made the Monarchs the first major league club to host night baseball games in Kansas City on June 13 and 14.<sup>29</sup>

Army Cooper pitched in only 15 league games, and all were starts. This was comparable to the workload of the other four starters (Table 1). Cooper was the pitcher of record in all but three of the games, earning a record of 9-3, and he was third on the staff in innings pitched. He achieved these positive results despite a substantial jump in his ERA to 5.37. Cooper's number of strikeouts rebounded from 1929, and his 104 strikeouts were the second most in the league. His strikeout rate of 8.7 per nine innings was the best in the league, ahead of Satchel Paige in second place at 8.2. In fact, it was the best in *all* major leagues that year. In addition, the number of walks Cooper issued continued to match the rise and fall of his strikeouts, increasing to 4.4 per nine innings.<sup>30</sup>

\* The stadium would have other names in subsequent years and would serve as the home ballpark for the Kansas City Athletics and Kansas City Royals under the name Municipal Stadium.

At the close of the 1930 season, the Monarchs' final place in the standings was the same as in 1928, albeit in fewer games. They finished in second place between the winner of the first half (St. Louis Stars) and the winner of the second half (Detroit Stars). St. Louis repeated their postseason performance of 1928 by winning four of the seven games in the closing series with Detroit to claim the overall league championship in lieu of a world series matchup.<sup>31</sup>

| Team                    | W  | L  | T | Win % |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|-------|
| St. Louis Stars         | 69 | 25 | 1 | .734  |
| Kansas City Monarchs    | 40 | 23 | 0 | .635  |
| Detroit Stars           | 52 | 37 | 0 | .584  |
| Chicago American Giants | 53 | 49 | 0 | .520  |
| Birmingham Black Barons | 46 | 48 | 2 | .489  |
| Cuban Stars West        | 25 | 41 | 0 | .379  |
| Memphis Red Sox         | 30 | 51 | 0 | .370  |
| Louisville Black Caps   | 16 | 28 | 0 | .364  |
| Nashville Elite Giants  | 26 | 55 | 1 | .321  |

After the 1930 season, the Monarchs left the Negro National League due to financial challenges exacerbated by the Great Depression. In 1931, the Monarchs did not take the field for their first year as an independent club until July. In the meantime, the House of David team barnstormed during the spring with the Monarchs' portable lighting system. Leasing the lights provided income for Monarchs' owners J.L. Wilkinson and T.Y. Baird that would allow them to fund the Monarchs' barnstorming tour. This left the players in search of other opportunities to earn money playing baseball in May and June.<sup>32</sup> For example, pitcher Henry McHenry and catcher Frank Duncan went to New York to play for the Harlem Stars before returning to the Monarchs.<sup>33</sup>

In 1931, newspapers reported that Army Cooper played for Gilkerson's Union Giants barnstorming team. The reports in late June through early August were taken from advance press information and published in cities where the Union Giants were scheduled to play during a tour through the Northwest. Cooper was no longer with the team, but from May 7 to June 14, he pitched and occasionally played in the outfield for the Union Giants against minor league and independent teams in Illinois, Iowa, and South Dakota. Available box scores were few, but Cooper apparently won more games than he lost as a pitcher, although he walked about as many batters as he struck out. Given the dates he traveled with the Union Giants, Cooper likely did not play for the Kansas City (Kansas) Giants against a local white team on May 10, as announced in advance in the *Kansas City Times* on May 7.<sup>34</sup>

Cooper left the Union Giants in June. On June 20, he was scheduled to pitch for the segregated Roy Curd American Legion Post in St. Joseph, Missouri. Cooper was to be joined by fellow Negro League players Theodore "Chappie" Gray (catcher), Lincoln Jackson (first base), Carroll "Dink" Mothell (second base), and Eddie Dwight (left field). The other four positions for the Legion team were to be filled by local Black ballplayers. However, the game was rained out.<sup>35</sup>

The 1931 season for the Kansas City Monarchs began in July with games in Chicago. Army Cooper was one of the pitchers in the first doubleheader, and he continued to pitch regularly for the Monarchs until mid-September.<sup>36</sup> On September 26, he was the losing pitcher for a team referred to as the Negro League All-Stars in a game with the St. Joseph

(Missouri) Saints of the Western League (a Class A minor league).<sup>37</sup> The Monarchs played through October, but the number of pitchers on the roster was reduced to three—Charlie Beverly, Chet Brewer, and Henry McHenry. In San Antonio, Texas on October 19–22, the Monarchs won five games in four days—three against the Mexican Nationals and two against a team of minor league “all-stars.” Beverly and Brewer each pitched two games, and McHenry pitched one. Afterward, the Monarchs headed back north.<sup>38</sup>

In most newspaper reports about the Monarchs in 1931, Cooper was listed only by his last name, but in at least two instances during July, the name used was Lefty Cooper. He was also referred to by the more unusual nickname of Southpaw Cooper in a Nebraska newspaper on August 3. Use of the name Lefty Cooper contributed to reports that Andy Cooper played for the Monarchs that year, but it was clearly not him pitching in the July games. At that time, Andy Cooper was playing for the Philadelphia Royal Giants in Hawaii, and his time overseas that summer ran from May 23 to August 7.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the lefthanded Cooper who pitched for the Monarchs from July through mid-September 1931 was Army Cooper, as correctly identified several times in newspapers after August 7.

Of at least 18 games in which Cooper pitched for the Monarchs, he started four games against top teams, such as the Homestead Grays, compiling a record of 1–3. In 22 innings, he allowed 23 hits and 10 walks, with only 7 strikeouts. His ERA was 7.77. As with Gilkerson’s Union Giants earlier in the year, Cooper apparently won most of the games in which he was the pitcher of record against the other teams played by the Monarchs.<sup>40</sup>

In 1932, Cooper played for the Cleveland Stars in the East-West League. It was his final season with a Negro League club. The Kansas City Monarchs were again getting a late start to the barnstorming season, and Cooper was joined on the Stars by other Monarchs’ players Charlie Beverly and Dink Mothell. Starting a new baseball league during the Great Depression after the Negro National League had folded was a challenge. Adding to the league’s difficulties was talk in the press that two of the clubs (Homestead Grays and Detroit Wolves) and possibly a third (Cleveland Stars) were controlled by a single person—Cumberland “Cum” Posey. Trouble for the East-West League came early in the season. On June 4, the *New York Age* reported that two competitive “associate franchisers”—the Pittsburgh Crawfords and New York Black Yankees—had been added to the league schedule. This had an immediate effect on the Cleveland Stars, whose record was a dismal 5–11 (.313). The new schedule replaced the Stars in a series against the Grays with the Crawfords. A few days later, the Newark Browns disbanded, followed by a merger of Posey’s Homestead Grays and Detroit Wolves. Then, in mid-July, the league folded. At the same time, the Kansas City Monarchs began barnstorming. They picked up Dink Mothell and some of their other veterans playing in the East-West League, but Army Cooper was not among them.<sup>41</sup>

| Standing of Teams    |    |    |      |
|----------------------|----|----|------|
|                      | W. | L. | P.C. |
| Detroit              | 13 | 5  | .722 |
| Pittsburg (H. Grays) | 12 | 5  | .706 |
| Baltimore (Bl. Sox)  | 11 | 5  | .688 |
| Washington           | 8  | 10 | .444 |
| Cubans               | 8  | 10 | .444 |
| Phila. (Hilldale)    | 6  | 9  | .400 |
| Cleveland            | 5  | 11 | .313 |
| Newark               | 1  | 9  | .100 |

Cooper's record as a starting pitcher with the Cleveland Stars against East-West League and Negro Southern League teams was 1-2. The lone victory was a 6-4 decision over the Birmingham Black Barons, with relief help from Roosevelt Davis. The box score published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on May 30 provided little detail about his performance other than his four strikeouts and four walks, but the Black Barons had only three hits to go with three errors by the Stars. In his two losses, Cooper had an ERA of 13.50 (seven runs allowed, five of which were earned, in only three and a third innings). The *Plain Dealer* reported that Cooper had trouble controlling the locations of his pitches.<sup>42</sup> Information about where he might have played that summer after leaving the Stars was not found.

| FIRST GAME.      |            |          |           |           |                |            |          |           |           |
|------------------|------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Stars.           |            |          |           |           | Barons.        |            |          |           |           |
|                  | A          | H        | O         | A         |                | A          | H        | O         | A         |
| R. Cooper.s      | 4          | 1        | 2         | 2         | Tate.cf...     | 3          | 1        | 2         | 0         |
| Robinson.3       | 4          | 1        | 0         | 2         | M'Alister.1    | 2          | 1        | 1         | 0         |
| Mothell.2.       | 4          | 2        | 2         | 0         | Petway.rf.     | 4          | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Redus.cf..       | 4          | 2        | 2         | 0         | Hend'son.s     | 4          | 0        | 1         | 3         |
| Harris.1..       | 4          | 0        | 1         | 5         | Drake.c..      | 4          | 1        | 1         | 1         |
| Russell.rf.      | 3          | 2        | 0         | 0         | Borden.3..     | 4          | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Singer.lf..      | 3          | 1        | 1         | 0         | Oliver.2...    | 4          | 0        | 2         | 0         |
| Wilson.c..       | 3          | 0        | 4         | 0         | Peterson.lf    | 4          | 0        | 0         | 0         |
| A. Cooper.p      | 2          | 0        | 1         | 3         | Blank'h.d.p    | 4          | 0        | 0         | 3         |
| Davis.p...       | 0          | 0        | 0         | 1         |                |            |          |           |           |
| <b>Totals.</b>   | <b>.31</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>Totals.</b> | <b>.31</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>15</b> |
| Cleveland .....  | 3          | 0        | 0         | 1         | 0              | 1          | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Birmingham ..... | 1          | 0        | 0         | 0         | 3              | 0          | 0        | 0         | 4         |

Errors—Drake, Harris 2, Wilson.  
 Two-base hits—Tate, Drake, Russell.  
 Redus. Three-base hits—Singer, R. Cooper.  
 Stolen bases—Mothell 2, Russell 2, Tate 2.  
 Bases on balls—Off Cooper 4, off Blankhead 2. Struck out—By Blankhead 2, by A. Cooper 4. Umpire—Harris Walker.

## With Tournament Teams and Other Semipro Clubs, 1933-1939

Although his Negro League career was behind him, 33-year-old Army Cooper was still a competitive pitcher against independent semipro and town teams. Thus, in 1933, he joined the Arkansas City (Kansas) Beavers. In early May, Cooper and Thomas Jefferson "T.J." Young formed the battery for the Beavers in an exhibition game against Wichita's club in the Western League (a Class A minor league), managed at the time by Rube Marquard, former major league pitcher and future inductee into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. The Beavers lost 7-3. Cooper was relieved on the mound by a player named Jones, but no box score and few details were provided. A few days later, Young left to rejoin the Kansas City Monarchs.<sup>43</sup>

The Beavers played competitively against town teams in Kansas and Oklahoma from May through early August. Cooper pitched and played in the outfield, though he did not play in every game. Only three reports of games in which he pitched were found, and he was listed second or third in the list of pitchers for the Beavers in two games, suggesting he pitched in relief.<sup>44</sup> However, in July, former and future Negro League players were added to the Beavers' roster prior to the team's entry into the state semipro tournament held in Wichita, Kansas during August. White teams similarly imported players with minor league and occasionally major league experience. The bolstered roster for the Beavers included Alfred "Army" Cooper, George Brown, Jim Starks, Willie "Mallie" Prophet, Wayman "Red" Longley, and Hurley McNair. There was also a player at shortstop named Hawkins. Robert Hawkins of Kansas City had played shortstop for John Donaldson's All-Stars in 1932. However, an Oklahoma newspaper later gave the player's first initial as "L," which suggests Lemuel Hawkins, who usually played at first base for the 25th Infantry in Hawai'i and in the Negro Leagues from 1921 to 1928.<sup>45</sup> Cooper, Hawkins, and McNair had played for the Beavers earlier in the season, while the others joined the tournament team for an opportunity to earn a share of the prize money awarded to the top clubs.

Segregated teams were welcome to enter the tournament, but integrated teams were not. The first Black ball club to do so was the Wichita Blue Devils in 1932, who had one win and two losses in the double-elimination tournament.<sup>46</sup> In 1933, two Black ball clubs entered the tournament. In addition to the Arkansas City Beavers, the Ninth US Cavalry, which was posted at Fort Riley, Kansas, also participated. They were eliminated with a record of 1–2, but the team received the tournament's sportsmanship trophy.<sup>47</sup>

The Beavers won their first contest in the tournament, 12–0. Cooper did not play. They won their second game, 18–1. It was called after seven innings because of the lopsided score. Cooper pitched the final two innings, with four strikeouts, no walks, and no runs allowed. The Beavers also had no trouble winning their third game, 12–2. Cooper came on in relief in the first inning and finished the game. He gave up runs in the second and third innings but pitched shutout ball the rest of the way. “Army Cooper, Beaver star southpaw, was a trifle wild when he first took the mound to relieve Rand with none out and two men on base, but he soon settled down.” His line in nine innings was 14 strikeouts, no walks, and 7 hits (including one double and one triple). The Beavers committed only one error, so both runs might have been earned, but that could not be determined from the game summary and box score.<sup>48</sup>

With three commanding victories to open the tournament, the Beavers were in the spotlight, as described in a sports column in the *Wichita Eagle* by Pete Lightner. “The Beavers are the biggest drawing card of the tournament, it has been proved. ... Those Beavers did have color in more ways than one, and they’ve been a big help to the tournament from the standpoint of playing power and drawing power.” Their win in the third game with Cooper on the mound was the feature contest of the evening and drew 3,000 fans, the largest crowd of the tournament to that point.<sup>49</sup>

Their fourth game drew 4,500 fans, who watched the Beavers defeat their rivals, the Arkansas City Shell Dubbs, whom they had played several times prior to the tournament. The fans got their money’s worth. The final score was 10–9, and the game lasted 10 innings. The Shell Dubbs led 9–4 in the bottom of the ninth, when the Beavers rallied to tie the score. After shutting out the Shell Dubbs in the top of the tenth, the first batter for the Beavers struck out. Hurley McNair hit a single and then tried to score on Hawkins’ double but was thrown out at the plate. Hawkins advanced to third base on the throw and easily scored the winning run on Jim Starks’ two-out single.<sup>50</sup>

In their fifth game, the Beavers faced the only other undefeated team—Wichita Water. Cooper came on in relief with one out in the third inning and the Watermen leading, 4–1. At the end of the eighth inning, the Watermen led 4–2, but Cooper weakened in the top of the ninth. Two walks, a single, an error, and a sacrifice fly netted the Watermen three insurance runs. “A great running catch by [first baseman] Starks of the Beavers in the ninth was the fielding gem of the evening.” In the bottom of the ninth, a double, single, and another double gave the Beavers a run and put men on second and third with one out. Yet, another comeback for the Beavers was not to be. The next two batters were struck out by the Watermen’s pitcher, Max Thomas, who had an 18-year career in the minor leagues from 1923 to 1941 and 1949 (except in 1925 and 1933).<sup>51</sup>

The Beavers rebounded in game six, taking a 19–3 victory from the team representing Abilene and Milford. The game was called by agreement after seven innings. Cooper did not play, but after a brief rest, he started game seven against the Shell Dubbs. “Cooper, who had been threatened continually during the game and saved in several instances by fast fielding,” benefitted from strong offensive support by his teammates. Jim Starks had three homeruns, and Hurley McNair had a single, two doubles, and a triple. Going into the ninth inning, the Beavers led, 10–6. In the bottom of the inning, however, the Beavers’ defense collapsed. McNair in right field dropped a fly ball, allowing two runs to score, and a throwing error by the second baseman allowed the tying and winning runs to cross the plate. Cooper had been relieved with one out in the inning. His line in 8.1 innings was 5 strikeouts, 7 walks, a hit batter, 13 hits, and 10 runs (not all were earned, but it was unclear how many were).<sup>52</sup>

Eliminated from the tournament with a record of 5–2, the Beavers finished in third place, but the size of the purse they earned from gate receipts was not found. Wichita Water (7–0) defeated the Arkansas City Shell Dubbs (6–2) to claim first place.<sup>53</sup>

However, the Beavers were not yet done with tournament play. A week after the tournament ended in Wichita, the first annual Oklahoma-Kansas Sandlot Baseball Tournament began in Blackwell, Oklahoma (about 60 miles south of Wichita). There were six clubs in Class A, the top class, and the Beavers were the only Black ball club. The format was double elimination. Cooper played in the outfield during the first two games, a 10–9 loss and a 9–0 win, the latter pitched by Hurley McNair, who also captained the team. Game three for the Beavers on August 27 was rained out. The game was rescheduled for September 1 but rain during the fifth inning halted play. Cooper was pitching, and the Beavers held a 2–0 lead and had runners on base when the game was stopped. The game was started afresh on September 7, but Cooper did not play. The Beavers won the contest, 5–0, to avoid elimination. In their next game, they took revenge on the only team to have defeated them in the tournament, winning by a score of 7–3. Neither Cooper nor McNair played (the reason will be explained in the next paragraph). As the final team with only one loss, this set up a three-game series with the undefeated Turvey Packers of Blackwell for the championship. The two clubs split a doubleheader, with the Beavers winning game one, 3–1, and the Packers taking game two, 5–2. Cooper played in neither game but pitched the Beavers to a 4–1 victory in game three to “clinch the bunting.” He gave up only four hits and four walks and had seven strikeouts. The Beavers share of the prize money came to \$140.22. A few days after the end of the tournament, the Beavers played a doubleheader against one of the other tournament teams, the Southern Kansas Stage Lines in Wichita. The Beavers won both games, 13–5 and 8–3. Cooper started the first game, but it is unclear if he was the winning pitcher. He did not play in the second game.<sup>54</sup>

The reason Cooper and McNair missed one of the elimination games in Blackwell was because they had been selected as members of the Kansas semipro tournament all-star team, which was to play a game against the Kansas City Monarchs. The rain delays in Oklahoma contributed to the scheduling conflict. Jim Starks was also selected for the all-star team, but he had joined the Monarchs after the tournament. However, he chose to play for the all-star

team, despite the initial objections of the Monarchs' owner, J.L. Wilkinson. The fact that tournament officials selected three Black ballplayers from the Arkansas City Beavers for an all-star team was surprising, given that no integrated clubs were allowed to participate in the tournament. The game itself was no contest. The Monarchs won easily, 15-1. Max Thomas started for the all-stars but gave up nine runs in four innings and was relieved by Cooper, who allowed six runs in his five innings of work (five of the runs came in a single inning). On offense, McNair had two hits in four at bats, but Starks and Cooper were both hitless in three attempts.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the fact that Cooper, McNair, and Starks played on an integrated team in 1933 makes the game historically significant.

In 1934, Cooper found a new team in another state that would end up returning him to Kansas for the state semipro tournament. That might seem odd, given that the team was the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Cuban Giants. In May, the roster of the Cuban Giants featured several former or future Negro Leagues players, including John Lyles (shortstop), Mitchell Murray (catcher), Juan Padrón (pitcher), Bobby Robinson (third base), Townsend Tapley (second base), Olan Taylor (first base), and Eli Underwood (outfield). Some of these players would join Negro Leagues clubs later that summer, and none of them would travel to Kansas for the tournament. While the team was still in Michigan, other players filled openings in the roster, including Army Cooper.<sup>56</sup>

Cooper was not the only Kansas native to join the Cuban Giants. Russell Havis Moore was born in Carbondale, Kansas on 9 March 1913, but his family moved to Wichita shortly after his birth. In 1932, he joined the Church of Christ, serving as minister and evangelist from 1936 until his death in 1970. He began his career with the church in Alabama, then moved on (in alphabetical order) to Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Washington, before finally settling in California. An athlete in high school while growing up in Wichita, Moore was reportedly offered a monthly salary of \$350 to play baseball for the Chicago American Giants, but he declined the offer to pursue his career as a minister. Before leaving baseball, Moore left Wichita at the beginning of July 1934 to join the Cuban Giants in Michigan. He returned with the team when it entered the tournament in Wichita in August. Moore played second and third base but left the team for an unknown reason after the game on August 12.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to Cooper and Moore, the Cuban Giants' roster included a third Kansas native, William Hershel Schnebly, who caught and played right field. Schnebly was born in Hill City, Kansas, but grew up in Overton, Nebraska. He was in Michigan to attend school but eventually ended up at Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he was a standout in football. While attending Wilberforce, Schnebly returned to Nebraska during the summers to play semipro baseball until joining the US Army during the Second World War.<sup>58</sup>

The state semipro tournament had one Black ball club in 1932, two clubs in 1933, and six in 1934. In addition to the Cuban Giants, who would represent Topeka, the other Black ball clubs were the Arkansas City Beavers, Colored All-Stars, Kansas City Colts, Wichita Colored Elks, and Wichita Wolverines. The initial field of 54 clubs was reduced in a preliminary tournament, which was single elimination instead of the double-elimination format of the main tournament. On the first day of the preliminary round, the Wolverines

eliminated the Colored All-Stars by a score of 15–2. In their second elimination game, the Wolverines won by forfeit when their opponent failed to arrive for the game. Thus, five of the six Black ball clubs entered the double-elimination phase of the tournament.<sup>59</sup>

As the tournament got underway, a controversy arose over the initial name given to the Cuban Giants—the Topeka Darkies. As quoted by sports editor Bennie Williams of the *Wichita Negro Star*, “They may call us race chauvinists, but we certainly don’t like it about the Topeka team taking on the sobriquet of ‘DARKIES.’” The name Topeka Dodgers was chosen as a replacement.<sup>60</sup>

In the opening round of the double-elimination phase of the tournament, the Black ball clubs found themselves playing each other. In the feature game on the evening of August 4, the Topeka Dodgers defeated the Colored Elks, 12–5, with Cooper pitching a complete game. He had nine strikeouts, four walks, and five hits (all singles). Russell Moore played third base and had three hits in five at bats. Meanwhile, the Arkansas City Beavers defeated the Wichita Wolverines, 15–12, and the Kansas City Colts outscored a white Ban Johnson team from El Dorado, 14–1. The following day, the Colts defeated the Beavers, 8–6. As the tournament progressed, the Wolverines were the first Black ball club to be eliminated with a record of 1–2, followed by the Beavers at 2–2. The Colts (4–0), Dodgers (3–1), and Elks (3–1) all made it into the top ten, the number of teams that would receive prize money. One of the other teams in the top 10 was John Levi’s All-Indians (3–1).<sup>61</sup>

In the process of reaching the top 10, the Topeka Dodgers lost game two, 13–2, with Cooper pitching in relief (few details were provided). Moore switched between second and third bases during the game. Schnebly got a pinch-hit single in the ninth inning, one of only five hits for Topeka. “The contest was marred by constant wrangling in which the crowd joined in, favoring the colored boys.” No other details about the confrontation were reported. The Dodgers came back to win their next game, 6–4, with Cooper again pitching a complete game. The Dodgers claimed their third win against one loss by a score of 14–1, with another complete game from Cooper. This time, he had 13 strikeouts, 4 walks, and 4 hits. Schnebly played in right field and went two for five at the plate, but Moore was no longer with the club.<sup>62</sup>

Except for the Colts and the Arkansas City Dubbs (the second-place team in 1933), neither of whom had suffered a loss to this point, teams faced elimination with every game. The Elks won their next contest, 8–7 in 10 innings. The Dodgers also won, eliminating the All-Indians, 8–5 in 10 innings. Cooper was the winning pitcher in relief, with seven strikeouts and two walks. The number of innings he pitched was not stated, but he had four at bats, while the starting pitcher had two. Schnebly was back in right field. He had a triple and a walk with a stolen base in six trips to the plate. The following day, the Colts lost their first game, 11–3, to the undefeated Dubbs. Now, the Colts, Dodgers, and Elks were all tied with records of 4–1 but still in the hunt for top prize money, as the number of teams dwindled.<sup>63</sup>

The next Black ball club to exit was the Colts, who lost their second consecutive game, this time to the Elks, 9–2. The Dodgers then handed the Dubbs their first defeat, 5–2. Cooper pitched another complete game, striking out nine and surrendering only four hits

(walks were not reported and neither team committed an error). Both runs and three of the four singles by the Dubbs came in the first inning. Cooper had now pitched three games in four days and was credited with the win in all three. In fact, he was the winning pitcher in all five victories for the Dodgers, three as a starter and two in relief. The latest game was praised by the *Wichita Eagle*. “It was easily the most thrilling and also the best played game of the many played in the three weeks the tournament has run. Army Cooper, veteran southpaw who has toiled for the Kansas City Monarchs and other strong clubs, was in rare form and after the first inning mowed the ferocious Dubb hitters down almost in order.” In four at bats, Schnebly contributed to the victory with a single, which drove in a run. Four clubs now remained, each with a record of 5–1: Arkansas City Dubbs, Halstead Doxruas (Wichita Water in 1933), Topeka Dodgers, and Wichita Colored Elks.<sup>64</sup>

In the semifinal matches, the Dubbs beat the Elks, 6–1, and Halstead defeated the Dodgers, 6–2. After pitching more than 20 innings in a span of four days, Cooper did not play. Although both clubs now had two losses, they played one more game to determine third place. On the final night of the tournament, the Dubbs defeated Halstead, 9–2, for first place, while the Elks beat the Dodgers, 13–2 for third place. The Dodgers were never in the game, the rapid pace of the tournament taking its toll on a team with only one competitive pitcher. The *Wichita Eagle* also reported, “The Dodgers were plainly the worse for a celebration the night before.” Cooper showed up in street clothes, changed into a uniform, then changed his mind and changed back to street clothes. He eventually entered the game to pitch in relief. “Cooper was given miserable support, his mates contributing eight errors.” The box score is muddled, but Schnebly apparently started as the catcher, a position with which he had experience, and then was moved to right field. The loss cost the Dodgers almost \$300, a meaningful sum during the Great Depression. The Elks received \$887.74 for third place, and the Dodgers got \$591.88 for fourth place. The Colts tied for fifth place, earning \$295.02. John Levi’s All-Indians tied for seventh place, taking home \$147.95.<sup>65</sup>

The last order of business regarding the state semipro tournament was the selection of another all-star team by the official scorers. As in 1933, the team was integrated. It included the right fielder from the Kansas City Colts (Collins), a pitcher from the Wichita Colored Elks (Smith), and pitcher Army Cooper of the Topeka Dodgers. Several other players from the Colts, Dodgers, and Elks received honorable mention. The opponent of the all-stars this time would be the tournament champion, the Arkansas City Dubbs. Of the three Black ballplayers, the only one still in Wichita to participate in the game was Cooper. He started for the all-stars, giving up three runs in the second inning. He was relieved by Pearson of the McPherson Dickeyes, who “pitched the last half of the game.” The all-stars scored two runs each in the fourth and fifth innings to take the lead, so it is possible that Pearson was the winning pitcher. The all-stars won the game, 5–3.<sup>66</sup>

After the tournament in Wichita, the Topeka Dodgers, nee Grand Rapids Cuban Giants, became the Sioux City (Iowa) Ghosts and entered a tournament in Council Bluffs, Iowa, which also included two other Black ball clubs—the Memphis (Tennessee) Red Sox and Monroe (Louisiana) Monarchs. No evidence was found of Cooper playing for the Ghosts,

whose roster was a mix of players from the Topeka Dodgers and new players. The Ghosts defeated the tournament favorite Monroe Monarchs, 7–4. The winning pitcher was Willie Jefferson. The Ghosts also defeated the Memphis Red Sox, 4–2, in a game called on account of rain in the first half of the seventh inning with Memphis at bat. Memphis protested, and, for some reason, the game was ordered to be replayed from the start. The Red Sox won the rematch, 7–3 in 10 innings. Jefferson pitched a complete game in the loss.<sup>67</sup>

In 1935, Army Cooper found yet another baseball home that would lead him to a tournament, though not in Wichita. In July, he joined the White Elephants in Denver, Colorado, as the team prepared for the *Denver Post* Tournament. Unlike his previous two tournament teams, the Denver ball club was a longstanding organization founded by local hotel owner A.H.W. Ross in 1915, and the team played through 1936.\* From May through July 1935, the White Elephants competed against a variety of local and touring teams. Among the latter were Buck Lai Tin’s barnstorming team (“Chinese All-Stars”) from Hawai’i, the Kansas City Monarchs (with Andy Cooper), the Tokyo Giants, and the Negro House of David. The White Elephants did not fare well against these barnstorming opponents, losing all five games, so Army Cooper was among the players imported to help the club enter the upcoming tournament. He joined Thomas “Pistol Pete” Albright (a regular on the White Elephants) and submariner George “Schoolboy” Walker as the aces of the pitching staff. Former Negro Leaguer Richard “Holy” Gee joined the club as the catcher.<sup>68</sup>

The revamped White Elephants entered the city elimination tournament held the last two weekends in July. The top four of 16 Denver clubs would earn their way into the “Little World Series”—the *Denver Post* Tournament—during the first half of August. One of the other entrants in the city elimination tournament was the other prominent Black ball club in Denver—Joe Alpert’s Clothiers—who imported the New York Tigers for the tournaments. (The team had nothing to do with New York; it was simply a promotional name.) One of the Tigers was 23-year-old John “Buck” O’Neil Jr. at first base. While some of the Tigers and their equipment hitched a ride to Denver with another Black ball club, O’Neil and the rest who could not fit in the automobiles hopped freight trains for the trip from Wichita Falls, Texas. “Since hobos were a common sight in the Depression, we didn’t have any trouble.” The Alpert’s Clothiers also featured Oliver “The Ghost” Marcell at third base. The Louisiana native had relocated to Denver in 1934, following a 13-year career with Negro League and top independent clubs (and clubs in Cuba) that ended in 1930. Tom Gee, younger brother of Rich Gee of the White Elephants, would catch for the Alpert’s Clothiers in the *Post* Tournament.<sup>69</sup>

The White Elephants, with Cooper on the mound, easily won their first game in the single-elimination tournament among the city’s teams by a score of 9–1. Cooper had 14 strikeouts and gave up 5 walks, 3 hits, and a wild pitch. “Army Cooper, speedy southpaw, was a bit wild Sunday.” The intensity with which he pitched is evident in the photo on the front cover, showing Cooper immediately after he released the ball during the game, an

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\* Ross stepped away from management of the White Elephants in 1936, and other Black ball clubs subsequently filled the void in Denver.

image worth a thousand words about a hard-throwing pitcher from the first decade of the Negro Leagues as he plied his trade. Joe Alpert's Clothiers also cruised to a 13-1 victory in their first game. O'Neil and Marcell batted fourth and fifth, and each went three for five at the plate, including a triple for O'Neil. Both teams won their games the following weekend to earn their spots in the *Denver Post* Tournament. The Elephants had to come from behind after Cooper struggled in the seventh inning. They were leading 4-0, but National Fuel scored five runs to take the lead. Cooper was relieved by Schoolboy Walker, who surrendered a homerun in the seventh inning. However, the Elephants scored four in the eighth and one in the ninth for a 9-5 victory. Cooper had 8 strikeouts but gave up 6 hits, 4 runs, and a wild pitch in 6.1 innings (the number of walks was unreadable in the box score). On offense, he had one hit in three at bats—a triple. The Alpert's Clothiers won their game with less drama, 5-1. O'Neil and Marcell were both two for four at the plate.<sup>70</sup>

“White Elephants, one of the prides of Five Points, will have the honor of opening the tournament.” That contest began at 1:00 on August 1 and was called after seven innings because the White Elephants were leading 26-3 over the outmatched Gering (Nebraska) CCC team. Cooper did not play. Schoolboy Walker was the starting pitcher but was pulled early to rest him for future games. Three days later, the White Elephants won their second game, 5-4, against the Eason (Oklahoma) Oilers. Cooper started the game but was pulled in the fifth inning with two runners on, no outs, and the Oilers ahead 2-0. Pistol Pete Albright came on in relief. Both inherited runners scored, but he otherwise shut down the Oilers. Meanwhile, the White Elephants scored two in the seventh and three in the bottom of the ninth. The Albert's Clothiers were not as fortunate, losing their first two games, 6-2 and 8-7, which ended their run in the tournament. On August 8, the White Elephants became the first club to earn three wins and a guarantee of a share of the prize money. Outstanding defense, including two runners thrown out at home plate by right fielder Sandy Thompson, another former Negro Leagues player, allowed Walker and Albright to combine for an 8-4 victory over a team from Los Angeles, California, who had won their first two games. As in game one, Cooper did not play.<sup>71</sup>

Game four for the White Elephants would match them against the only other unbeaten team, the Humble Oilers of Overton, Texas. The White Elephants were crushed, 23-5. Cooper started the game, and they took a 2-0 lead in the first inning. “Starting the second, Cooper paying too much attention to the base runners, couldn't find the plate.” The Oilers loaded the bases on two hits and a walk, but there were two outs. Cooper then threw 11 consecutive balls, walking in two runs. Albright came in with a 3-0 count on the batter. On a 3-2 count, with the runners going on the pitch, a scratch single combined with an error scored all three runners. In all, the White Elephants would use six pitchers, each of whom surrendered runs. The team also augmented the Oilers' 19 hits with 8 errors. The loss was a team effort. That was followed on August 11 by their second loss, this time to the Danciger Roadrunners of Pampa, Texas. Albright started the game for the White Elephants but gave up four hits and two runs in the second inning. Cooper came on in relief that inning and gave up one more run on a sacrifice fly. He finished the game, but the offense was silent. The result was a 7-0 loss. Nevertheless, the White Elephants' 3-2

record was good enough to tie for fourth place. The sports editor of the *Denver Post*, C.L. “Poss” Parsons, compiled a list of tournament superlatives, both positive and negative. It included the “BIGGEST SURPRISE CLUB—White Elephants of Denver.” Of the \$10,713 in prize money, the White Elephants received \$765.99. Joe Alpert’s Clothiers missed out on prize money, because only teams with at least one victory were paid at the rate of \$50 per win for those teams that did not place.<sup>72</sup>

After the tournament, the New York Tigers headed to Wichita to play in the inaugural National Baseball Congress Tournament as the Denver White Elephants, although the *Denver Post* noted it was actually the Joe Alpert’s Clothiers team from the *Post* Tournament. Buck O’Neil and Ghost Marcell were still with the team. The Tigers were initially rejected for entry into the NBC Tournament, though they would be considered if they did well in the *Post* Tournament. This suggests the borrowed name helped the 0–2 team gain admittance, and afterward, the *Wichita Eagle* usually referred to them as the Denver Colored Stars, Denver Colored Club, or a similar generic name. Whatever the name, they had better luck in Wichita, compiling a record of 3–2. That tied them for seventh place among the ten money teams, which earned them at least \$163 and mileage money. The big story of the tournament was the undefeated performance of the integrated team from Bismarck, North Dakota, featuring pitcher Satchel Paige. Meanwhile, the actual White Elephants continued to play in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas into September. Army Cooper remained with the club for at least the early games.<sup>73</sup>

After three seasons playing for successful tournament teams, little is known about Army Cooper’s activities, though additional information may come to light as more newspapers and other sources are digitized. In June 1936, he played for the Capital City All-Nations, also referred to as the Capital City Athletics, of Pierre, South Dakota. The team’s roster included Black, white, and American Indian players.<sup>74</sup> In August, the *Kansas City Times* reported the results (with box scores) of a doubleheader between the Kansas City Monarchs and the visiting Chicago American Giants. In the second game, scheduled for seven innings, the Giants took a 4–3 lead after three innings. “‘Army’ Cooper, of old-time Monarch fame, then came in as a relief hurler, stopping the Giants cold by striking out seven and allowing only two scattered hits in the four innings he occupied the mound.” The Monarchs won the contest, 5–4. Andy Cooper was now managing the team and would do so through 1940. In addition, he occasionally pitched. Given that he and Army Cooper have long been confused in newspaper reports and baseball research, it seems likely the relief pitcher was Andy Cooper rather than Army Cooper.<sup>75</sup>

Army Cooper pitched for the Gatewood Browns of Moberly, Missouri in July–September 1938 and May 1939. Newspaper coverage of the games was minimal, but he apparently pitched only on occasion. Among his games on the mound, Cooper was the losing pitcher in a game in September 1938 to his former club, the Kansas City Monarchs, by a score of 6–0.<sup>76</sup> From 1932 to 1939, Black ball clubs in Moberly—the Panthers, ABCs, and Wheaties—also had a pitcher sometimes referred to as “Lefty Cooper.” This was Raymond Willis Cooper, a local resident, who was born on 26 November 1913. He pitched for the Wheaties in 1938 and 1939, while Army Cooper played for the Gatewood Browns.<sup>77</sup>

## After Baseball

Cooper's time with the 25th Infantry meant he was absent from competition in the first eight years of organized Negro Leagues baseball during the prime years of his career. This leaves us with only a glimpse of his talent in the major leagues during the three years he pitched for the Kansas City Monarchs while they competed in the Negro National League. In those three seasons, Cooper's pitching contributed to the success of the Monarchs, despite his ups and downs. He placed in the league's top ten at least once in strikeouts and in the walks and hits he allowed. Most importantly, he placed in the top ten all three years in winning percentage. Throughout his career, Cooper was a hard throwing, lefthanded pitcher who could rack up strikeouts but also suffered at times from a lack of control. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, he might have been assigned the role of a late-inning reliever, as suggested by his league-leading six saves in eleven relief appearances in 1929, before pitching in relief became a prominent specialty.

Army Cooper's final involvement in baseball included a report that he would play in an old-timers' game on Labor Day in 1950. Other former players scheduled to suit up were Newt Allen, Rube Curry, John Donaldson, William "Plunk" Drake, Frank Duncan, Eddie Dwight, George Giles, Oscar "Heavy" Johnson, Walter "Newt" Joseph, William Joseph, "G. Mayweather" (probably Eldridge "Ed" Mayweather), Carroll "Dink" Mothell, Otto "Jaybird" Ray, and Wilber "Bullet" Rogan. The 2½-inning game preceded a contest between the Kansas City Monarchs and Indianapolis Clowns, in which 19-year-old Ernie Banks played shortstop for the Monarchs during his first season of professional baseball.\* In 1960, Army Cooper was scheduled to appear at another game with some of the Monarchs' all-time great players, this time as honored spectators at a benefit game.<sup>78</sup>

Little else about Army Cooper could be documented in available digital newspapers after 1939, and he was not found in any city directories or federal and state censuses. According to his February 1942 draft registration card, he lived in Centerville, Iowa, where he worked for an automobile company. Although he registered for the draft in Iowa, Cooper listed his sister, Captolia, who lived in Kansas City, as the person who would always know his address (in the 1950 census she was living in New York City). His draft card was amended in January 1944 with a change of address, which noted that he lived in Hastings, Nebraska and worked at a US Navy Ammunition Depot. After the war, Cooper returned to Kansas City. In September 1952, the *Kansas City Times* published a notice that Alfred was granted a divorce from Stella Cooper in Wyandotte County, Kansas (Kansas City).<sup>79</sup> Alfred "Army" Cooper died in Kansas City, Kansas on 19 March 1966 and was buried in Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, about 30 miles up the Missouri River from his hometown.

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\* After his first season with the Kansas City Monarchs, Ernie Banks served in the US Army through January 1953. He returned to the Monarchs that year, and his contract was sold to the Chicago Cubs in September, making him the Cubs' first Black ballplayer. Banks played for the Cubs through 1971 and was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1977.

## Acknowledgements

Newspapers were accessed through Newspapers.com, GenealogyBank.com, and the Texas Digital Newspaper Program (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/TDNP/>). Census and military records were accessed through Ancestry.com. Jan Johnson tracked down some of the documents related to Alfred Cooper's military service. The *Denver Post* gave permission to use the cover image of Army Cooper, and Sarah Ganderup of the Denver Public Library assisted with digital copies of the image.

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<sup>2</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 6 August 1914, p 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Wichita Negro Star*, 30 March 1934, p 3; 30 November 1934, p 5. • Eberle (2021a). • Kern (2022). • Malloy (1995).

<sup>4</sup> Nankivell (1927, pages 148–149 in the 2001 edition).

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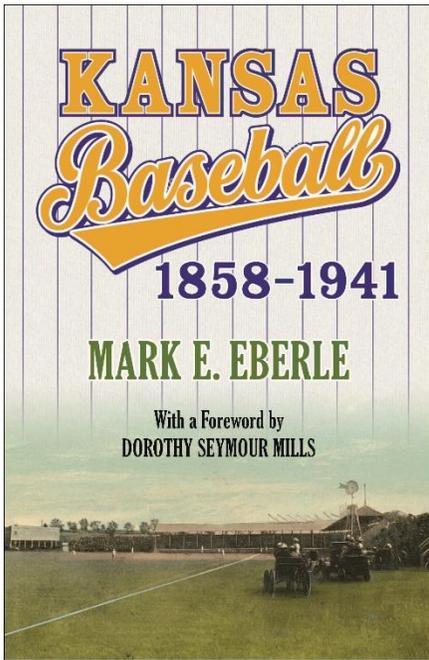
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You can learn about the early history of baseball as played by teams in Kansas in the book *Kansas Baseball, 1858-1941*, published in 2017 by the University Press of Kansas and available in paperback or e-book formats.

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 nine towns still playing baseball in the state's oldest ballparks constructed between 1924 and 1940.