



November 13, 2023

Seth Silber
Fredericksburg Nationals
42 Jackie Robinson Way
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

Re: Summary of Research/ African-American Baseball in Fredericksburg and the History of the Fredericksburg Frogs

Dear Seth:

Dovetail Cultural Resource Group is pleased to submit this memo and two white papers presenting a summary of the history of African-American baseball in Fredericksburg. This research builds on studies completed in 2019 and 2020 to commence the formal exploration of the history of baseball in Fredericksburg. A Year 1 research report was completed in February 2020. This report included a synthesis of the history followed by 13 white papers that presented data on a variety of topics. The current research builds on the 2020 work, and includes Topic 14 (African-American Baseball in Fredericksburg) and Topic 15 (Fredericksburg Frogs). The goal of these studies was to help gather data for a potential commemorative day to celebrate the contributions of Black players in Fredericksburg, to be held in 2025 at the Fredericksburg Nationals ballpark. The data presented here augments concurrent studies being completed by the Fredericksburg Area Museum to locate imagery and other details about the Fredericksburg Frogs for use during the upcoming event.

Topic 14: African American Teams in Fredericksburg and Team Players= Although newspapers and oral histories often focus on the prowess of Fredericksburg's white, semi-professional White Sox, newspaper accounts have helped to also shed light on the concurrent emergence and success of numerous amateur Black teams playing in our region. The first mention of formal African-American teams was in 1885 as part of a larger baseball craze taking the city over in the 1880s. By the early twentieth century, four or more Black teams were playing in the city, including the Blues, White Caps, Greys, and Giants. These teams played each other and also traveled regionally to engage in the sport. The teams swapped days on area baseball fields with the white teams, including playing on Gouldman Park on off days for the White Sox. Attendance at the games was robust, drawing an integrated crowd to watch the successful matches between the skills athletes. Notably, all African-American teams were amateur, meaning they did not get paid. The members worked day jobs ranging from porters to doctors, coming together for five to six months a year to play the sport they loved.

Topic 15: The Fredericksburg Frogs: “The World’s Most Hoppinest Team”= While numerous segregated Black teams played in Fredericksburg between the 1880s and 1940s, additional research was performed on one with the most interesting name—the Frogs. The Frogs were an active amateur club from around 1919 through the 1940s, with their most successful years occurring in the 1920s. Newspapers recounted their play. In fact, in 1922, they played for the colored championship of Virginia against a team from Alexandria. Unfortunately, the results of the series could not be found but this data confirms that the Frogs were one of the two best Black teams in all of Virginia in 1922—an amazing feat. The Frogs played at numerous fields throughout town, including at Fairview Field and Gouldman Park downtown and later in fields further out of town including Sylvania Park south of the city.

We deeply appreciate the opportunity to continue research on baseball in Fredericksburg. If you have any questions on this research, please feel free to contact me at kbarile@dovetailcrg.com or 540-899-9170.

Respectfully submitted,



Kerri Barile, PhD
President

Cc: Gaila Sims, Fredericksburg Area Museum

TOPIC 14: AFRICAN AMERICAN TEAMS IN FREDERICKSBURG AND TEAM PLAYERS

By Danae Peckler and Kerri Barile

The African American experience within the history of baseball has been undertold, but paralleled the national rise in the game's popularity to support its growth and development in communities across the country. Throughout the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this experience was shaped by the rules of the game, but also by the rise and fall of Jim Crow-era laws, policies of segregation, and other social customs that limited the way African Americans participated in the sport of baseball. These conditions fostered the expansion of the "Negro" baseball leagues after the Civil War and through the integration of professional baseball in the mid-twentieth century to strengthen communal bonds between American cities and neighborhoods, embracing the nation's greatest pastime and the athletes it created.

Although they operated alongside white baseball clubs and played on some of the same fields, information about African American baseball teams in the Fredericksburg area was featured less often in local newspapers and with little detail as to players' names. This omission mirrors their presence in most written records over the centuries. Details on Black teams and players was teased out to tell the story of these notable early players.

"Colored" Baseball In Fredericksburg

The earliest mention of African Americans playing baseball in the Fredericksburg area appears in an 1885 article noting the "craze" for the sport that had come over the city's youth. In this piece, a match game between two "colored nines," led by captains Jim Jackson and Madison Jones, was described with racially motivated and destructive language that depicted African Americans as unruly (The Free Lance 1885:3) (Figure 1).

Despite its highly offensive overtones, the article provides a glimpse into how early games of street ball were conducted within the African American community, noting that matches occurred on Saturday nights in June with a small bet, between 10 and 15 cents, placed on the outcome. Furthermore, the article indicated that each captain was allowed to select his team members, presumably from a crowd of willing participants (The Free Lance 1885:3).

By the turn of the twentieth century, an organized baseball club existed within the local African American community that included teams like the Blues and the White Caps. In 1904 and 1905 two articles appear in the local paper detailing matches played by these teams, indicating that they travelled to play in other cities throughout the region; however, both articles, again, depict the players as rowdy and unsportsman-like, noting that each game had ended in a fight (The Free Lance 1904:3, 1905:3). Two additional teams known as the Grays (also Greys) and the Giants were reported to have played locally and travelled

to Petersburg, Richmond, and Washington D.C. as early as 1908 and throughout the 1910s (The Free Lance 1908:3, 1910:3).

Established in 1905 by African American leaders in the community in association with Shiloh Baptist Church, the Fredericksburg Normal and Industrial Institute (FNII) was a local private school that supported its own baseball team as early as 1911 (University of Mary Washington History Department n.d.). Later known as Mayfield High School, during one of their first games, FNII was defeated by a nine-man team from Howard University of Washington D.C. The game was played at the privately owned Hanover Baseball Park—the same park used by the semi-professional, white Fredericksburg White Sox. According to the newspaper, “the game was well played” (The Free Lance 1911:2). This game may have been arranged by John C. Diamond—a graduate of Hampton Institute and Howard University—who became pastor of the Old Shiloh Baptist Church congregation in 1910 (Shiloh Baptist Church [Old Site] 2015).

In the late 1900s and early 1910s, the local newspaper reported on African American baseball teams—including the “two colored nines of this city,” the Grays and the Giants—favorably without the overtly racist language that had marked earlier articles (The Free Lance 1910:3). This change may have been the result of the advocacy of local Fredericksburg African Americans, particularly its church leaders. In 1925, the church’s Reverend Hester successfully pressured the editor of *The News Leader* in Richmond to cease its use of such destructive rhetoric:

Writing on church letterhead in his official capacity as pastor, the Reverend Hester addressed the editor of the News Leader, objecting to that newspaper’s repeated use of ‘derogatory’ and ‘un-Christian’ language in describing people of color. He particularly objected to the use of such terms as ‘darkie’ and ‘coon,’ which the paper had commonly used until that point. After some consideration of the Reverend Hester’s position, the editor of the newspaper wrote him at Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site), agreeing with his reasoning and announcing that from that time forward, those terms would no longer appear in the pages of the News Leader [Shiloh Baptist Church [Old Site] 2015].

The Grays and the Giants, the Frogs and the Kittens

Throughout the 1910s, two Fredericksburg teams regularly dominated the “Colored Baseball” column of the local papers: the Grays and the Giants. Details on the matches also frequently mentioned the names of the teams’ managers and some players. One article also indicates that these matches drew mixed crowds of white and black spectators (The Free Lance 1909:3).

Throughout this time, the manager of the Grays was Charles Bland while the Giants were led by D.M. (Dallas Montgomery) Kay (The Daily Star 1912:2; The Free Lance 1910:3). Charles Canada (C.C.) Bland (1881–1933) grew up in Fredericksburg and was listed as attending school in the 1900 Census while living with his mother, Josephine Bland, on Charles Street (United States Federal Population Census [U.S. Census] 1900). In 1910, he

resided at 919 Liberty Street while working as a “bootblack” alongside D.M. Kay who cleaned and pressed clothes. Kay was also employed as a barber at 503 Commerce Street—the office of a prominent African American physician, Dr. Urbane F. Bass (Piedmont Directory Company 1910). Bland’s World War I draft card identified him as a short and stocky 37-year-old laborer who was missing one leg, while Kay’s described him as a 38-year-old undertaker of medium height and build (United States Selective Service System 1918).

D. M. Kay (1880–1936), who also went by the nickname of “Dal,” lived at 1317 Charles Street in 1917 when he became a licensed embalmer and started an undertaking business, transitioning from the laundry business he established on Commerce Street in 1915 (The Daily Star 1915:3, 1917:3) (Figure 2). Kay was also an active member of the congregation at Shiloh Baptist Church, serving as a deacon and choir leader in 1914 (Shiloh Baptist Church [Old Site] 2015).

Players on the Grays and Giants were singled out in the papers for their skill, including pitchers Fred Harris of the Grays and Arthur Coleman of the Giants (The Free Lance 1909:3, 1910:3). The 1910 city directory indicates that many early team members had recently worked as waiters and barbers; Arthur Coleman was a driver and the Grays’ Fred Harris worked as a barber, then employed by D.M. Kay (Piedmont Directory Company 1910). A 1912 article provided the names of the entire Giants team, shedding light on the many individuals who played the game (The Daily Star 1912:3) (Figure 3; Table 1).

In the 1920s, fewer mentions of African American baseball games appear in the local newspapers, but that does not appear to reflect the community’s engagement in the sport. Although Bland and Kay’s Grays and Giants had disbanded by this time, a “well known local colored baseball team” called the Frogs played a team from as far away as Pittsburgh at the newly constructed Gouldman Park in 1925 (The Daily Star 1925a:1). Local pharmacist, Coleman Maurice Tate noted the popularity of the team in an oral history interview and recalled the Frogs’ playing locally into the 1930s (Tate n.d.:21). C.C. Bland also appears to have remained a fixture in the local baseball scene, managing a new team called “the Kittens,” presumably in a humorous effort to fool the competition (The Daily Star 1925b:2) (Figure 4) (see Topic 15 white paper for more information on the full history of the Fredericksburg Frogs).

Other Twentieth-Century Clubs and Players

In March 1920, notice was given for a meeting at the local public school, likely what was then Mayfield High School, to discuss starting a colored athletic league in Fredericksburg through the “auspices of the community service” (The Daily Star 1920:2). Although no additional information on the topic was found in local papers, a baseball team associated with Mayfield High School played at Gouldman Park in 1931 (The Free Lance-Star 1931:3). In 1935, a new building was constructed at Mayfield High School during the time of segregation that would become known as the Walker-Grant School, and likely maintained a baseball team until the institution was fully integrated with James Monroe High School in the late 1960s (Johnson 2006:8; University of Mary Washington History Department n.d.).

In 1932, an article and advertisement appeared detailing the creation of the “Bass Athletic Club” and providing the names of a number of “well known colored ball players” that had signed on to the team (The Free Lance-Star 1932:3). The 1938 City Directory identified three of these men as general laborers, two as employees at the Sylvania Plant, and one, believed to be Paul Bowes, as the principal of Mayfield High School (Stanton et al. 2012) (Table 2).

Culpeper Native and Negro League Icon: Pete Hill

An important African American professional baseball player in the early-twentieth century with ties to the Fredericksburg area is John Preston Hill (1882–1951), commonly known as “Pete” Hill (Williams n.d.). Hill was born in the rural village of Buena in Culpeper County, Virginia, but his family had relocated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by 1900. The first documentation of Hill’s professional career in baseball appears in January 1901, when “J.P. Hill” was listed on the roster for the “Golden Slides” club in Pittsburgh (Williams n.d.). Hill played for several area teams before joining the Philadelphia Giants in 1904, initially playing left field before switching to center field (Williams n.d.). The Giants’ 1905 team:

...proved a juggernaut, achieving a 128-23-3 record and earning a place among the finest African-American teams of the Deadball Era, if not all time. Per baseball historian Phil Dixon’s research, from the 133 games with box scores (and nine of these lacked summaries detailing extra-base hits and stolen bases), Hill banged out 198 hits, including 37 doubles, 11 triples, and 10 home runs, while stealing 34 bases.¹² Then, concluding a lengthy barnstorming campaign—that for Hill had begun in the Florida Hotel League at the beginning of the year—he finished 1905 as the leading offensive star for an X-Giants squad playing in the Cuban Winter League. [Williams n.d.]

In 1907, Hill joined former Giants’ pitcher Andrew “Rube” Foster in Chicago to play for the Leland Giants, a leading Black team owned by ex-player Frank Leland (Figure 5). In 1911, the team was renamed the Chicago American Giants, and “Hill’s reputation turned from slugger to one of baseball’s finest line-drive hitters” (Williams n.d.). Hill played another 11 seasons for the Giants, serving as captain and as de facto manager in Foster’s absence, before relocating to Detroit where he served as player-manager a new team called the Detroit Stars in 1919. That year:

...Hill finished the campaign with 28 home runs, one less than Babe Ruth hit in his breakthrough final season with the Red Sox. It was his most dominant offensive season since 1910 with the Lelands. The Stars scored 5.6 runs per game, well ahead of the black independent teams’ average of 4.7. Like Ruth, Hill led baseball out of the Deadball Era. Detroit finished alongside Chicago atop the western standings. [Williams n.d.]

Peter Hill went onto play for the Philadelphia Royal Stars in 1922, the Milwaukee Bears in 1923, and the Baltimore Black Sox in 1924 and 1925 (Momodu 2020). Hill moved to

Buffalo, New York, and partnered with former Giants' player Grant Johnson in 1926, "revamping the local Pullman Colored Giants team, calling it Pete Hill's Colored Stars," and was still playing semi-professionally in 1927 for Buffalo's Colored Elks (Williams n.d.). He continued to live in Buffalo and worked for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad as a porter before his death on December 19, 1951.

Sportswriter Fay Young summed up his legacy in the *Chicago Defender* that year, noting that Pete Hill "helped put Negro baseball on the map" and 40 years later, reknowned baseball historian Jim Riley "said that if an all-star outfield was created from the pre-1920 era, it would include Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker and Pete Hill" (National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum n.d.). In 2006, Hill was one of 17 African American players elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Special Committee on the Negro Leagues (Williams n.d.).

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1915 D. M. Kay advertisement. July 17.

1917 D. M. Kay advertisement. February 26.

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1925a "Colored Team to Play." July 22.

1925b Advertisement for the Kittens' Game. July 7.

Free Lance, The [Fredericksburg, Virginia]

1885 "Base Ball Craze." 9 June. Page 3, column 2.

1904 "Game Ends in Dispute." August 20.

1905 "Colored Teams Play Ball and Have Free Fight." April 27.

1908 "Colored Baseball." July 30.

1909 "Colored Baseball." May 20.

1910 "Colored Baseball." May 21.

1911 "Colored Baseball." April 29.

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Figures/Photos/Tables

The Base Ball Craze.

Base Ball seems to have taken possession of the fancy of our entire juvenile population, both white and black, and the small talk of our young folks now relates principally to this absorbing topic.

On last Saturday evening a match game of ball was played between two colored nines, (each picked out by its respective captain,) on a bet of 15 cents to 10 cents. Captains Jim Jackson and Madison Jones commanded the contestants. The playing was very good, and finally resulted in a score of 5 to 4 in favor of Capt. Jackson's nine. This result was received with yells and facial contortions truly African in their nature. 'Twas a sight worth seeing—the antics that marked the progress of that game, while not remarkable for grace, yet reflected great hilarity and wealth of animal spirits.

The Fredericksburg club, recently organized among our young men, announce their first game at Orange Court-house on the 19th instant.

Figure 1: 1885 Article Detailing African American Baseball Game (The Free Lance 1885:3).

D. M. KAY

The old reliable cleaner and presser is prepared to do your work in first-class style at his new shop opposite Harris Bro's. wagon yard, 608 Commerce St.

Panama and Palm Beach Suits washed and pressed, 50 cents. Work called for and delivered. Phone, 441. 16j1w

NOTICE !

I wish to announce to my friends and the public in general that I have engaged in the

Undertaking Business

and will be pleased to serve you at any time. Calls answered day or night. Special attention given to country orders. Prompt and efficient service guaranteed. Having secured the services of a licensed embalmer, I am prepared to look after anything along that line. Office Phone 234.

Residence 1317 Charles St.
D. M. KAY,
Fredericksburg, Va.

nov24-3m

Figure 2: Detail of D.M. Kay's Advertisements from 1915 (Top) and 1917 (Bottom) (The Daily Star 1915:3, 1917:3).

COLORED BASEBALL

In a match game of baseball Wednesday evening at Hanover Park between Charles Bland's Grays and D. M. Kay's Giants, the two colored nines of this city, the game resulting in a victory for the Giants by a score of 16 to 4. Fred Harris was in the box for the Grays and Coleman for the Giants. Both pitched good games.

Figure 3: A "Colored Baseball" Column Details Two Fredericksburg African American Teams in 1910 (The Free Lance 1910:3).

Table 1: Dallas M. Kay's Giants Roster, April 1912 (The Daily Star 1912:3; Piedmont Directory Company 1910). (An * was used in the directory to denote an African American.)

Name	Position	1910 Fredericksburg City Directory
D. M. Kay	manager	*Kay, D Montgomery (Gussie), cleaniug and pressing and barber, 503 Commerce, h 1312 Charles
Arthur Coleman	pitcher	*Coleman, Arthur, driver, h 713 Amelia
T. Robinson	catcher	*Robinson, Tyson, waiter Henry Williams
T. Lewis	short stop	Not listed
D. Young	1st base	Not listed
S. Brown	2nd base	*Brown, Sheppard Jr, waiter, h 506 Princess Anne
W. Hart	center field	*Hart, Walden, butler, h 707 Amelia
L. Brown	left field	*Brown, Lawrence, waiter, h 506 Princess Anne
A. Howard	right field	Not listed
W. Lawson	substitute	*Lawson, Wm, waiter, Central Hotel
C. Alsop	substitute	*Alsop, Chas, barber W H Baylor, h 521 Hanover or *Alsop, Calvin, lab, h 521 Hanover
F. D. Fauntleroy	substitute	Not listed

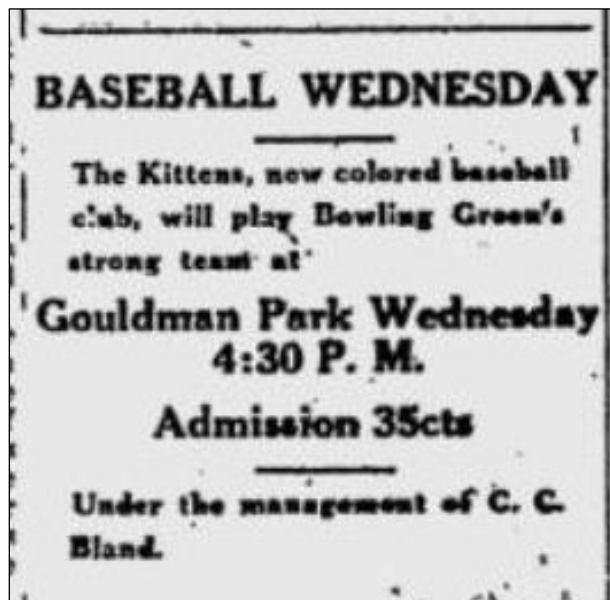


Figure 4: Advertisement Announcing the Kittens' Game at Gouldman Park (The Daily Star 1925:2).

Table 2: Bass Athletic Club Baseball Roster, May 1932 (The Free Lance-Star 1932:3; Stanton et al. 2012). (An * was used in the directory to denote an African American)

Name	1938 City Directory
E. Grimes	*Grimes, Ellis, employed Baylor's B S, r 401 (317) Wolfe
F. Walker	*Walker, Frank, laborer, h 308 Hawke
B. Richard	Unclear; might be *Richardson, Wm H, auto mechanic, r 526 George
C. Lewis	*Lewis, Chas, laborer, h 530½ Princess Anne
R. Brown	*Brown, Robt A, (Rappahannock Hotel), h 520 Princes Anne
D. Coleman	Unclear; might be *Coleman, Robt D Jr, helper Va Sales & Ser Corp, r 1420 Princess Anne
J. Harris	*Harris, John B Jr, employed Sylvania Industrial Corporation, r 1104 Douglas
W. Coleman	*Coleman, Willie M, cook, r 1307 Charles
D. Harris	*Harris, Dewey, employed Sylvania Industrial Corporation, r 905 Barton
P. Bowes	*Bowes, Paul E, principal Mayfield High Sch, r 1310 Charles
R. Bushrod	*Bushrod, Robt, laborer, r 308 Charles
J. Fleming	Not listed
J. Scott	Not listed
N. Bush	Not listed
W. Wright	Not listed

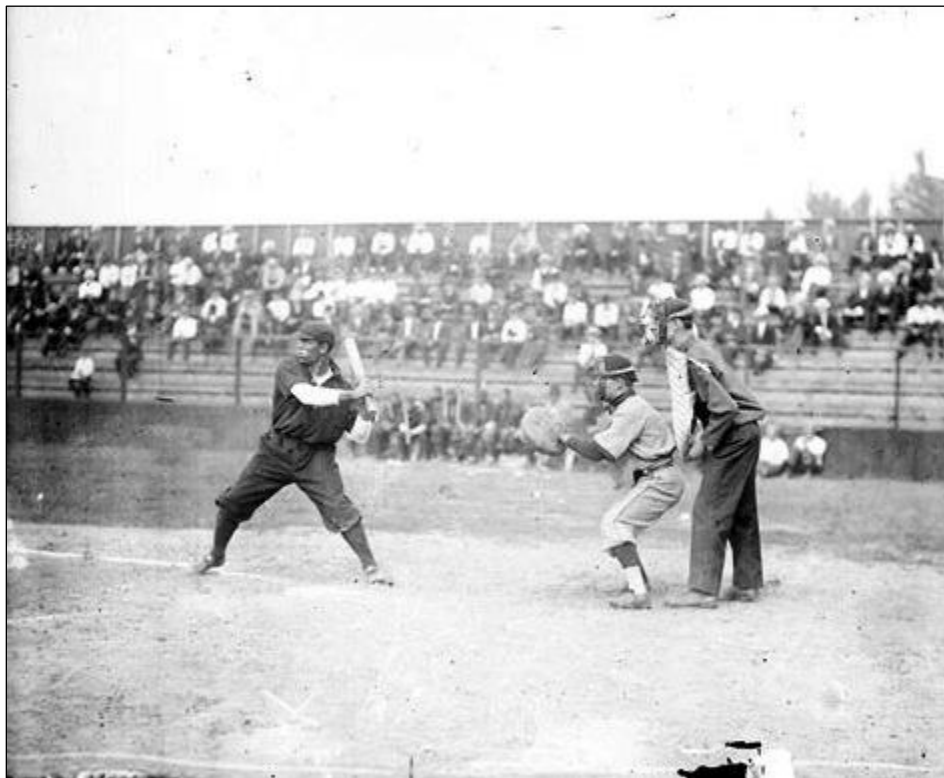


Figure 5: “Pete Hill batting for the Leland Giants in 1909” (Momodu 2020).

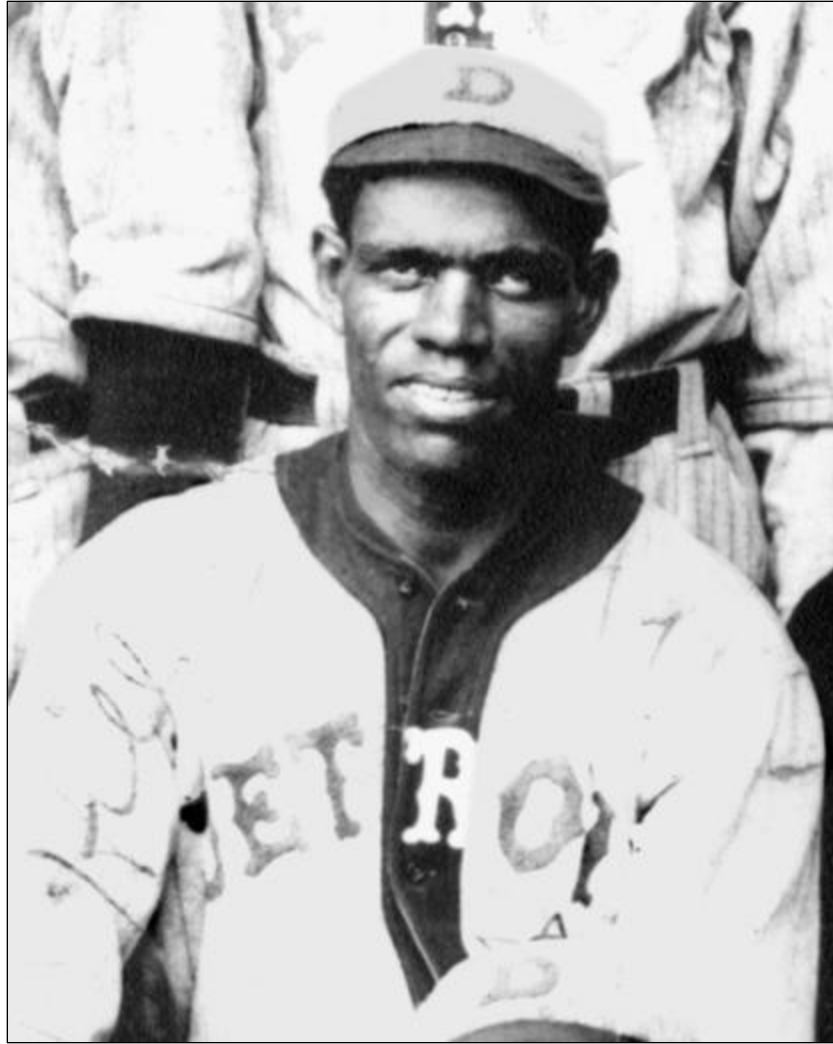


Figure 6: Historic Photograph of “J. Preston ‘Pete’ Hill, Detroit Stars, 1920 - BL-2442.89,” from the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library (National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum n.d.).

TOPIC 15: THE FREDERICKSBURG FROGS: “THE WORLD’S MOST HOPPINEST TEAM”

By Colleen Betti

African American baseball teams were active in Fredericksburg from at least the 1880s through the 1940s, with various teams such as the Blues, the White Caps, the Greys, and the Giants organized within the city. During World War I, many baseball teams and leagues had to take a pause as players were drafted and sent overseas (Barile 2020). In the spring of 1919, after the end of the war, a new Black baseball team was organized in Fredericksburg—the Fredericksburg Frogs. The Frogs were an amateur team, not semi-professional (The Afro-American [AA] 1928:12), but the team was well known for being skilled; many believed that they were talented enough to rival the semi-professional and professional teams (Zitz 1998:B1). The Frogs were very active from 1919 until the late 1930s when it appears that the team stopped playing. However, in 1944, the Fredericksburg Frogs regrouped and played for one last season with a mostly new roster of players (The Free Lance-Star [FLS] 1944a:6). Despite a 25-year-long history and immense popularity in Fredericksburg during the Frogs’ existence, little is known about the team today outside of a few mentions in newspaper articles and oral histories.

Team History

The first known mention of the Fredericksburg Frogs is a newspaper article from May 29, 1919, reporting on their 7–5 victory over Bowling Green Training School (a high school team) and advertising their upcoming game against Quantico (The Daily Star [DS] 1919a). The team was likely organized in April 1919, the start of the baseball season. However, after a first successful year, the Frogs had a rocky start to their second season. In May 1920, it was reported that:

The Frogs baseball team, which have been out of action for some time owing to a hard luck streak, will try to get in the game... Old Lady Luck has been sitting on the Frogs rather hard here lately. First they lost Harris, the third baseman, then Pool, the first sacker retired from the diamond; Dandridge the fast little center fielder got broke up on that Culpeper trip and that weakened the team so that Manager Bland had to postpone a good many games [The Free Lance [FL] 1920a:8].

However, once healthy, the Frogs quickly became a successful team. In 1922, in what was only the team’s fourth season, the Frogs played Lafayette, a team from Alexandria, in a three-game series to decide the colored championship of Virginia (The Alexandria Gazette [AG] 1922a:6). Unfortunately, the result of that series was not reported in the newspapers, but this data confirms that the Frogs were at least one of the two top Black amateur teams in Virginia in 1922. Their success continued throughout the decade, and in 1930, the team

was reported to be “one of the fastest colored diamond aggregations in Northern Virginia” (FLS 1930:5). In 1998, former players, Alfonzo and Chancellor Johnson, remembered that “Once they beat the Homestead Grays, Washington’s Negro League team that was sometimes compared favorably to the New York Yankees in pre-World War II days” (Zitz 1998:B4).

The Frogs generally played local Black teams from Richmond, Quantico, Culpeper, Alexandria, Tappahannock, Bowling Green, Washington, D.C., and other teams within easy driving distance, but occasionally games were played with teams from as far away as Buffalo, New York, and Charleston, South Carolina (FL 1921:4, 1925a:3). From 1925 through 1928, the team manager, Charles C. Bland, would advertise in newspapers that the Frogs were looking for teams to play when they went on tour (AA 1925a:4).

As noted above, the team was amateur, not semi-professional—a fact that manager Charles Bland noted when he put out advertisements looking for teams to play (AA 1928:12). Because of this, the Frogs players were not paid. Chancellor Johnson, when asked about getting paid said, “‘Nah We just got a lot of glory,’ he says with a grin. ‘We got to go places’” (Zitz 1998:B4). However, the team did sometimes raise money for specific causes. One game in 1922 in Alexandria between the Frogs and the Southern Red Socks was played for the “benefit of the railroad strikers” (AG 1922b:3).

While currently, no images of the team or descriptions of their jerseys has been found to date, starting in 1931, the team began leaning into the Frog imagery, at least according to newspaper articles. The team began to be referred to as the “Hoppers” (FLS 1931a:6) and in 1932, the *Free Lance-Star* introduced them as: “The Fredericksburg Frogs, ‘the world’s most hoppinest team.’” The slogan was in quotes, suggesting it was used by the team rather than being made up by the paper. However, it was never mentioned again in known printed materials. In addition to the Fredericksburg Frogs baseball team, there also appears to have been a Fredericksburg Frogs football team that occasionally appeared, with mentions in both 1929 and 1938 (FLS 1929:6, 1938:4).

Additional Black baseball teams appeared in Fredericksburg alongside the Frogs throughout their history, but rarely appeared to rival them in popularity and each only lasted a year despite all having former Frogs players on their rosters. The Kittens were formed in 1925 but disappeared from the newspapers after the announcement of their first game (DS 1925a:2); the Bass Athletic Club played baseball in just 1932 (FLS 1932a:2); and the Barber Shop All Stars appear for just the year of 1936, rivaling the Frogs (FLS 1936a:3).

By 1939, the Frogs were no longer the strong popular team they once were. The team was seen as old, with an article stating, “An eighth inning rally enabled Walker-Grant High to score a 5 to 4 win over a team consisting of members of the old ‘Frogs’ crack Negro baseball team that played here several years ago” (FLS 1939:3). This wording suggests that the Frogs were no longer an organized team by 1939. There are no newspaper mentions of the Frogs baseball team in 1938 and this is the only mention in 1939.

The Fredericksburg Frogs popped back up in 1944, with a record of 10 to 4 in September 1944 (FLS 1944a:6). They had one of the Frogs old stars, Kelsie Deane, on the team along

with new players. The last record of a Frogs game is September 3, 1944, when they played the Washington Knits in a double header at Walker-Grant School (FLS 1944b:6). The Frogs combined record between 1919 and 1944, reconstructed from newspaper reports was 75–31–4, although this is only a partial record of their games and wins were more likely to be reported on in the local papers than losses.

Fields and Fans

During the team's first few years, the Frogs played at Fairview in Fredericksburg, located just east of the present-day Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park and the Fredericksburg National Cemetery around Wolfe Street. On May 29, 1919, the field was called "Fairview lots" but later game descriptions refer to it as Fairview Field or the Fairview Diamond (DS 1919a:3, 1919b:2; FL 1920b:2). Newspapers from the spring of 1919 advertise lots at the former Fairfield estate for sale as part of a new subdivision, and it appears that a baseball field was constructed either on one of these lots or nearby (DS 1919c:2). This field was used by a variety of baseball teams in the city, including white teams named the Shamrocks, White Sox, and Fredericksburg High School (DS 1919d:2, 1919e:1).

In 1923, Gouldman Park was opened, and the Frogs played their games at this new stadium for the next 12 years. The park was located on 4.5 acres surrounded by Pitt Street, Prince Edward Street, and the Fredericksburg Canal (Barile 2020). In 1924, admission for the game was 35 cents, and by 1926, it had gone up to 40 cents (DS 1924:2, 1926:3). Both the amateur African American Fredericksburg Frogs and the once-semi-professional white Fredericksburg White Sox played on this field. While the teams watched each other play and practice, they never played each other (Zitz 1998:B4).

The Frogs continued to play at Gouldman Park until 1935 when they moved to the new Sylvania Park (FLS 1935a:3). The location of Sylvania Park is not known, but was almost certainly located near the Sylvania Plant in Sylvania Heights south of the city boundaries. In June 1935, it was reported that: "Sunday [the Frogs] christened their new Sylvania Park with 30 hits." (FLS 1935b:3) They only played at Sylvania Park for a year, before moving to Douthat Park in 1936. Douthat park was constructed on the Fairgrounds and included both baseball and football fields (FLS 1936b:3). In 1939 and 1944, the Frogs games were played at the new Walker-Grant School fields (FLS 1939:3, 1944a:6).

The Frogs were a popular team. An article recalling the team in 1950 noted that: "Everybody came to see the Frogs, first, to see a good ball game and second because there was always a fight" (Baker 1950:9). The team had dedicated fans, some of whom would travel to away games and others who would come watch practice (FL 1922a:1; Zitz 1998:B4). A former fan recalled that "the team had quite a following. Even the practices attracted a crowd. "If a person passed [by Gouldman Park] and they were practicing, he might have thought there was a ball game going on [Sprow] said" (Zitz 1998:B4).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was consistently noted that there were large crowds watching. Spectators were both Black and white, with a report in 1922 noting that: "A large and enthusiastic crowd of both colors witnessed the contest" (FL 1922b:2). Sprow, quoted

above and a former Frogs fan, described the Frogs popularity and fans during an interview in 1998:

White shopkeepers closed their stores at 2 in the afternoon on days the Frogs played and spent the afternoon at the field with their customers. “I’ve seen two grandstands filled and people standing along the sidelines,” Sprow says. “White fans too. They were very popular. There were probably more white fans watching them than black ones.” The White Sox drew crowds of the same size—and made up mostly of the same people [Zitz 1998:B4].

Players

The Frogs players were highly accomplished and included at least one former Negro League player and one player who was recruited for a Negro League team. Many others were accomplished high school and college ball players, and it was reported that “the entire Frog team is composed of some of the best Negro stars in the state, products of Howard, Hampton, Union Seminary etc” (The Orange Review 1935). We know the names of at least 68 members of the Frogs’ teams from 1919 through 1944. Four additional names, listed in blue in Table 1 (p. 14), are nicknames, which likely belong to a player already listed elsewhere, but whose exact identity is not known. While some of the players only appear to have played for a single year, many others were with the team for over a decade and were accomplished players.

Coleman Brothers

There were five Coleman family players on the Frogs team through the years. Arthur, Herman, and Clarence Coleman were brothers who all played on the Fredericksburg Frogs team between 1919 and the 1930s. Arthur, the oldest, was born in 1891 and was playing for the Fredericksburg Giants by 1912 (DS 1912:3; United States Federal Population Census [U.S. Census] 1920). In August 1914, he was recruited for the Brooklyn All-Stars as a pitcher (DS 1914:3). The All-Stars was an independent Negro League team only in existence for a single year in 1914. However, though recruited, it does not appear that Coleman ever played for the team and his career in the pro league does not appear to have advanced beyond that recruitment (Seamheads.com 2023). Arthur joined the new Frogs team in 1919 and remained with the team through the 1928 season. In 1921, he and his brother Herman were taken for a tryout by the semi-pro Buffalo Stars team, from Buffalo New York; the invitation was sent after the Stars and Frogs played each other and the managers noted their skills. The Colemans appear not to have joined the Buffalo Stars, but kept playing for the Frogs. Arthur worked as a laborer (U.S. Census 1920, 1930).

Clarence Coleman, born in 1900, joined the Frogs the latest of the three brothers, only playing from 1927 until 1931 or 1936 (U.S. Census 1920). If Clarence was “Duck” Coleman, a pitcher for the Frogs from 1931 until 1936, then he played until 1936, but the association between Clarence and “Duck” is only speculative. His lateness in joining the team is possibly due to two traumatic head injuries he suffered in the 1920s (DS 1925b:1).

It was reported that in a game against the “Y” team from Newport News, “the Frogs sent their ace Colman [sic], one of three brothers on the team, to the mound... Coleman was a master of the entire situation and handled the locals almost at will” (Daily Press 1927:9). He worked as a truck driver in Fredericksburg (U.S. Census 1930).

Herman “Bus” Coleman, the youngest of the Coleman brothers, was born in 1902 and played for the Frogs from 1919 until 1936. He may have taken a break between 1927 and 1936 as he was not mentioned in articles during those years. He was a good hitter, with one article stating, “Herman Coleman’s home run started a rally for the Frogs, and they hopped on the locals and made 12 long hops, beating the “Y” to the tune of 12 to 6” (Daily Press 1927:9). Herman worked as a cleaner and presser for the United States Marine Corps Base at Quantico (U.S. Census 1940).

In the 1930s, two different Coleman brothers, the sons of the original Coleman brothers’ cousin Alvin, also played for the Frogs while being star players for the local Mayfield Colored High School team (FLS 1934a:3). Cecil “Skinny” Coleman was with the team in 1933 and Reggy “Babe” Coleman from 1933 until 1936.

Kelsie Deane

Kelsie Deane was the Frogs’ main pitcher throughout much of their history. He was born around 1900 in Fredericksburg and operated a local pool hall (Baker 1950:9). He joined the team in 1925 as an outfielder and quickly became the Frogs’ main pitcher. In 1925, it was reported that: “Deane of the Frogs pitched airtight ball and scoring his second shut out in three days” (FL 1925b:5). In 1931 after a 10–4 win over Tappahannock, the *Free Lance Star* reported that Deane was primarily responsible for the win due to his pitching and because he “in addition to getting credit for the win, contributed two singles, a double and a triple to the Hoppers’ total” (FLS 1931b:8). A few weeks later it was reported that “largely through Deane’s brilliant pitching, did the Frogs hop home ahead of their Tidewater foes” (FLS 1931c:7). Deane stayed with the team through the 1930s and played in their comeback season in 1944. Deane also played football for various Black Fredericksburg amateur teams (FLS 1931d:5).

Dr. James “Jimmy” Shields

Jimmy Shields was one of the most accomplished members of the Fredericksburg Frogs, both on and off the field (Photo 1, p. 16). Born around 1908, he grew up in Petersburg and played both baseball and football in for Peabody High School before attending Virginia Union University in Richmond (Seamheads.com 2023; U.S. Census 1950). While there, he played both football and baseball, attracting great acclaim and attention for both sports. He was selected as a half back on the Black All-American football team and was scouted to play professional baseball while still in school. However, he refused all professional contracts until he graduated from college (AA 1925b:7). After graduating with his Bachelor of Science, Shields pitched for the Bacharach Giants, a Negro League team in New Jersey in 1928 and 1929 before turning his attention to his medical career (FLS 1932b:2; Seamheads.com 2023). He graduated medical school from Howard University in 1931 and

did his medical internship at Freedman Hospital in Washington, D.C. (FLS 1932b:2). He also played football while at Howard University (FLS 1932c:2).

His accomplishments were well known when he moved to Fredericksburg in 1932 to take over his uncle's medical practice. Articles in the local papers stated things like, "Jimmy Shields who formerly pitched with the Bacharach Giants will toe the slab for the locals" (FLS 1933a:3) and "Dr. Jimmy Shields, former Howard University star" (FLS 1935c:3). While in Fredericksburg he also played for and coached a local Black football team (FLS 1932c:2). Dr. Shields played for the Frogs from 1933 until 1936.

Charley "Hickory" Lewis

Charley Lewis, likely the Lewis who played shortstop on the Frogs team called "Hickory," was one of the best players on the team. In 1998, former players Alfonzo and Chancellor Johnson remembered Mr. Gouldman who owned Gouldman Park and the local white baseball team, saying that if Charlie were white, he could have easily made it to the majors (Zitz 1998:B1). Instead, Charlie, who was born around 1908, worked as a laborer in a tie yard (U.S. Census 1930) and played for the Frogs from 1925 until 1935, getting praise in local papers such as "The Frogs played a near-perfect game afield with Grimes, Charley Lewis, and Fleming starring" (FLS 1932d:10). As a shortstop, though, his accomplishments were not mentioned as often as the pitchers. Charley was an accomplished athlete and also played football and duckpin bowling for local Black teams (FLS 1931d:5).

Paul E. Bowes

While not considered a leading star of the Frogs, Paul Bowes was a highly decorated teacher. Born around 1911, he graduated from Howard University and Columbia before teaching school in Stafford from 1931 until 1942. He was transferred to Newport News in 1942 (Daily Press 1980:34). While teaching in Stafford, he played for the Frogs from 1931 to 1933 as a first baseman.

George "Shine" Ferguson

Not much is known about "Shine" Ferguson, except that he was the star of the "famous" 1925 Frogs team and came out of retirement in 1936 to captain the team again (FLS 1936a:3). He was secretary of the team in 1925. George was born around 1898 and was employed as porter in a hotel (U.S. Census 1920). In addition to playing baseball, he was part of a singing trio along with fellow Frogs, James Ferguson and Augustus Watts (FLS 1932e:3).

Bernard "Sippy" Richardson

Sippy was both a baseball and football player in Fredericksburg (FLS 1931d:5). Born in 1905, he played on the Frogs team from 1925 until 1934. When not playing sports, Richardson worked as a shoe shiner in a barber shop (U.S. Census 1930).

Augustus “Gus” Watts

Gus was one of the longest-playing members of the Frogs. He was with the team from their founding in 1919 until 1936. He was likely the player remembered by the Johnson brothers in 1998 as “Apple Gus” (Zitz 1998:B4). Watts was born in 1899 and died in 1950. He worked as a cleaner and presser in Fredericksburg (World War I Draft Registration Cards 1917–1918). As well as playing baseball, Watts was an accomplished singer, performing in an ensemble with his fellow Frogs, James and George Ferguson, as noted above (FLS 1932e:3).

William “Button” Brown

Button Brown, as he was always referred to, was an incredibly accomplished athlete. He was the star of the Mayfield High School football and baseball teams during his tenure there and played for the Frogs while still in high school (FLS 1933b:2, 1934b:3). In addition to both those sports, he was also an active and successful boxer (FLS 1933c:2). He was a member of the Frogs from 1932 until 1935. Brown was born in 1915 and by 1930 he was working as a pin setter in a bowling alley in Fredericksburg (U.S. Census 1930). As an adult, he worked in construction (U.S. Census 1940).

W. “Red” Brown

One of the Frogs’ star players during the 1930s was “Red” Brown, who played for them from 1933 until 1935. A local paper recounted, “[t]he vesper encounter, a seven inning affair, was featured by the sensational pitching of young ‘Red’ Brown, Frog rookie” (FLS 1933d:3). Like Button Brown, Red was a star athlete at Mayfield, playing on both the football and baseball teams (FLS 1933e:3, 1934c:2). His first name is unknown as he was always referred to as Red, but it appears to have started with a W (FLS1933e:3).

Johnson Brothers

Alfonzo “Fonzie” and Chancellor Johnson were brothers from Quantico who played for the Frogs during the 1920s. Fonzie is mentioned in a few articles and appears to have played for the Frogs from 1920 until 1925, but no mention of Chancellor was found in the records. Their tenure with the team is known from an interview they did with the *Free Lance-Star* in 1998. The brothers said that despite being from Quantico, not Fredericksburg:

The Frogs found them. They called Fonzie “Kid Johnson” then. He was a junkball pitcher who fooled batters with breaking pitches. “The Frogs recruited us,” Fonzie Johnson says, pride still evident in his voice. The Frogs had a reputation. “The Frogs were good,” Chancellor Johnson says. “Really good.” So they rode the train south to Fredericksburg for games [Zitz 1998:B4].

Chancellor's son recalled that Fonzie was an ambidextrous pitcher who "used to pitch one game right-handed and pitch the next game left-handed...I guess his right arm was tired the next game I guess he just throw it with his left arm" (Johnson 2019).

Robert Barley Johnson

Johnson, a World War I veteran, was an umpire who often called games for the Frogs when they were playing at home in the 1920s. In the 1950s, a description of his umpiring was published in the local paper, "Barley Johnson, a great, big, fellow, was the umpire – as polite an umpire as you've ever seen. He always added "suh" whenever he called anything, like "That's a strike, suh" or "You're safe, suh" or "You're out suh." (Baker 1950:9). Johnson was a World War I veteran, but not much else is known about his life (FLS 1960:2).

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Photos and Tables

Table 1: Known Players on the Fredericksburg Frogs. Names in blue represent nicknames, which likely belong to a player already listed elsewhere but that cannot be definitively connected to a known player.

Name	Known Years with the Frogs	Position
Bland, Charles C.	1919–1936	Manager
Bowes, Paul E.	1931–1933	First Base
Brooks, Joe	1933	Unknown
Brown, William "Button"	1932–1935	Pitcher
Brown, Joe	1933–1934, 1944	Unknown
Brown, W. "Red"	1933–1935	Pitcher
Bushrod, Robert	1931–1933	Left Field
Bushrod, "Tucky"	1933	Unknown
Canada	1944	Unknown
Catlett, W.	1944	Unknown
Coleman, Arthur	1919–1928	Second Base, Shortstop
Coleman, Clarence	1927–1931	Pitcher, Right Field
Coleman, Duck	1931–1936	Pitcher
Coleman, Herman "Bus"	1919–1927, 1936	Catcher, Second Base
Coleman, Reggy "Babe"	1933–1936	Unknown
Coleman, Cecil "Skinny"	1933	Unknown
Dandridge, D.	1919	Catcher, Center Field
Day	1920	Center Field
Deane, Kelsie	1925–1944	Pitcher, Left Field, Right Field
Diamond	1944	Unknown
Ferguson, F. "Black Hawk"	1919–1922	Pitcher
Ferguson, George "Shine"	1919–1931, 1936	Shortstop, First Base, Captain
Ferguson, James	1919–1920	Right Field, Center Field
Fleming, J.	1931–1932	Left Field
Fleming, W.	1932	Pitcher
Gray, G.	1944	Unknown
Gray, W.	1944	Unknown
Grimes, Ellis	1931–1932	Second Base
Grimes, Frecks	1935	Unknown
Grimes, M.	1933	Unknown
Guss, Alfred	1920–1921	3rd Base, Pitcher or Catcher
Guss, "Bad"	1936	Unknown
Hailstalk	1931	Left Field
Harris, Clocky	1936	Unknown
Harris, Ding	1936	Unknown
Harris, Dewy	1919–1931	Third Base

Name	Known Years with the Frogs	Position
Harris, John B.	1926–1932	Catcher
Jannifer, "Kotsy"	1934–1935	Unknown
Johnson, Alfonzo "Fonzie"	1920–1925	First Base
Johnson, Chancellor	1920s	Unknown
King, J.	1944	Unknown
Knox, Raymond	1933–1935	Unknown
Lester	1944	Unknown
Lewis, "Hickory"	1925	Unknown
Lewis, Charley R.	1925–1935	Shortstop
Lewis, E.	1944	Unknown
Lewis, F.	1925	Catcher
Lewis, J.	1925–1933	Catcher
Lewis, Uly	1931–1936	Unknown
Lewis, V.	1932–1934	Third Base
Lewis	1919–1920	Right Field
Lucas, Francis	1933	Unknown
Minor	1920	Left Field
Owens	1944	Unknown
Parker	1919	Center Field
Poole, W.	1919–1925	First Base, Right Field
Pratt	1944	Unknown
Richardson, Bernard "Sippy"	1925–1934	Pitcher, Center field
Richardson, Ox	1935	Unknown
Russell	1932	Pitcher
Scott, B.	1932	Catcher
Scott, J.	1932–1933, 1944	Pitcher
Shepherd	1932	Third Base
Shields, Dr. Jimmy E.	1933–1936	Pitcher
Sprow, A.	1931	Unknown
Taylor	1944	Unknown
Tyler, G.W.	1925	President
Walker, Billy	1932–1933	Catcher
Walker, Tommy	1932–1934	Catcher
Watson	1926	Unknown
Watts, Augustus "Gus"	1919–1936	Left Field, Center Field
White, S.	1920–1927	Pitcher

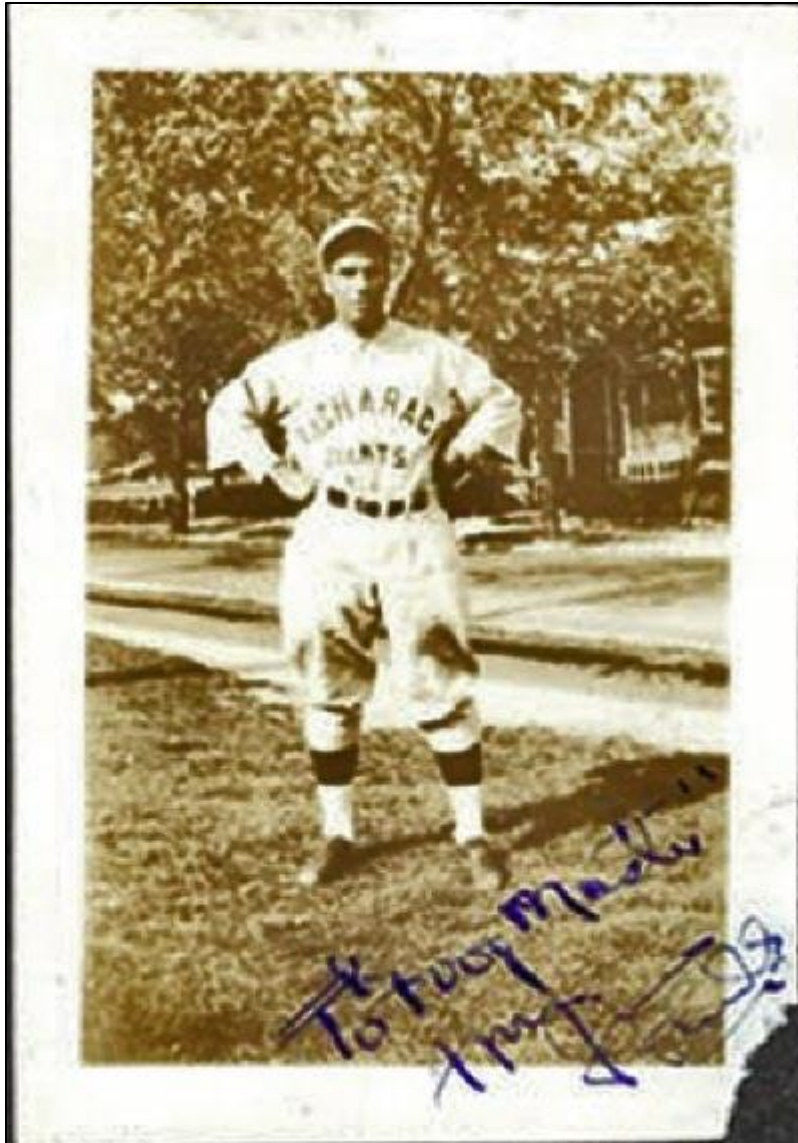


Photo 1: Jimmy Shields in Either 1928 or 1929 Playing for the Bacharach Giants
(Cusick 2014).