

# The Fading of the Greys: Black Baseball and Historical Memory in Little Rock

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HISTORY IS NOT WRITTEN BY WINNERS. It's written about them. And if the quality of victory is measured by the volume of such writing, southern black baseball in the first half of the twentieth century is a compendium of loss. The stifling consequences of segregation colluded, with some notable exceptions, to keep various southern leagues decidedly "minor." Some of these black teams survive in historical memory; others are well nigh forgotten—their respective fates depending largely on baseball's ultimate arbiter, wins. Nothing illustrates this better than the obscurity of a black team of the early 1930s, the Little Rock Greys, as compared to one of their rivals, based barely 150 miles away.

Little Rock, Arkansas, maintained various minor-league black baseball teams throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. Though they appeared under a variety of owners and ownership groups and played in different parks in Arkansas's capital, the teams are almost uniformly remembered as the Little Rock Black Travelers, mirroring the name of the city's white minor-league team. In 1932 and 1933, however, the team in Little Rock played as the Greys. At the same time, 153 miles away a relative newcomer to Negro Leagues baseball, the Monarchs, played in the much smaller town of Monroe, a hub of rural northeast Louisiana.

Little Rock would briefly revive minor-league black baseball in 1945, while the Monarchs would cease to exist after 1936. But during the early 1930s and in the historical record, the Monroe Monarchs would be far more prominent. In 1996, for example, Roosevelt Wright, a black playwright and newspaper editor in Monroe, authored *The*

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*Game*, a two-act play about the 1932 team. In 2005, two former Monroe residents living in Dallas, Texas, founded the Monroe Monarchs Historical Association, which lobbied successfully for a historical marker to be placed near the site of the team's park.<sup>1</sup> No comparable celebrations of the Greys have developed. On the rare occasions when Little Rock's Negro Leagues experience resurfaces, it is the Black Travelers of 1945 who are recalled.

There are a number of reasons that the Black Travelers are better remembered, but an important one is simply that they won more games. A black team in a hostile white community needed to have the support of the black population, and it needed to be able to win. Winning provided the white press with a reason to pay attention to the team. It also encouraged the African-American press in other regions to cover the team. It instilled a sense of stubborn pride in a black community groaning under the weight of both depression and racism. The Monarchs won and so survived the 1932 season. They survived in the cultural memory of both Monroe and Negro Leagues historiography. The Greys did not. They didn't win.

Both teams operated in southern cities cloistered by Jim Crow, but the demography of the two communities differed. Little Rock was Arkansas's capital city and, as far as the U.S. census was concerned, the only metropolitan area in a state with a population of less than 2,000,000. Just under 26 percent of Arkansans were black in 1930. In Pulaski County as a whole, 40,215 of the 137,727 citizens were African-American, and 19,030 of those were employed. Almost 11 percent of those ten years of age and above were unable to read and write. In Little Rock itself, African Americans constituted 24.1 percent of the city's 81,679 residents. Of the city's 19,698 black citizens, 10,727 maintained steady work, and slightly less than 10 percent were illiterate.<sup>2</sup>

Monroe was much smaller than Little Rock, but its 10,112 African Americans constituted 38.9 percent of the city's 26,028 residents. Almost 5,800 of the city's blacks were gainfully employed, and almost 17 percent could not read. Of Ouachita Parish's 54,337 residents, 19,041

<sup>1</sup>Paul J. Letlow, sports editor for the *Monroe News Star*, also publicized the team throughout the 1990s in a number of articles. Ollie Burns interview, conducted by Paul J. Letlow, May 13, 1992, Monroe, Louisiana, in possession of the author; *Monroe News Star*, August 16, 1992, pp. 1C, 5C, February 20, 1999, pp. 1A, 4A, June 17, 2001, pp. 1C, 5 August 2001, pp. 1C, 4C; Roosevelt Wright, Jr., *The Game: A Black Heritage Drama in Two Acts* (Monroe, LA: Free Press Publishers, 1996). For information on the Monroe Monarchs Historical Association, see <http://www.monroemonarchs.org>.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, vol. 3, pt. 1, Alabama-Missouri (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932), 167, 188, 194, 209, 211 [hereinafter cited as *Fifteenth Census*, vol. 3].

were black. Close to 10,000 of them had regular employment, and slightly more than 3,000 were illiterate. Monroe's smaller size stood in contrast to the state's larger population (a quarter million more people than Arkansas), but its relatively high percentage of African-American citizens mirrored the 36.9 percent statewide.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Pulaski County, Ouachita Parish was not a state government center but a rural cotton hub more than 150 miles from the state capital.

In many ways, Little Rock would seem a more conducive setting for a black team's success. With Monroe's black population constituting a larger percentage of a smaller population, African-American achievements such as baseball success might resonate more but so could racial violence.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, Monroe was known as "the lynch law center of Louisiana." The late teens in particular secured the area's reputation. On March 15, 1918, a mob hanged George McNeal, a black man accused of attacking a white woman, from a tree on Monroe's courthouse square. The following day, his alleged accomplice, John Richards, met the same fate. In late April 1919, a Monroe mob entered the St. Francis Sanitarium and tried to pull out George Bolden, who was in the hospital because a prior lynch attempt had left him without a leg. The next day, the mob finally succeeded. From the turn of the century to the close of 1918, the region witnessed thirty lynchings.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, Pulaski and surrounding counties in Arkansas experienced only seven lynchings between 1900 and 1918. None occurred in Little Rock proper. Certainly, Arkansas was no haven for black ballplayers or for black citizens in general. Near the small east Arkansas town of Elaine in 1919, a white-black shootout erupted at an African-American church where a meeting of the Progressive Farmers and Household Union was being held. The causes of the outbreak were (and are) disputed, but the consequences were clear—one dead sheriff's dep-

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 965, 982, 990, 999, 1003.

<sup>4</sup>Numbers alone, however, did not necessarily drive Monroe's seeming propensity for racial violence. As Edward L. Ayers has argued, it was less the size than the transience of the African-American population, especially the arrival of unfamiliar black people, that encouraged lynching; Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 156-158.

<sup>5</sup>*New Orleans Item*, May 6, 1919, pp. 7, 14; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 12, 1919, p. 8; "The Monroe Lynching," *Southwestern Christian Advocate* (New Orleans), June 12, 1919, pp. 1-2; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (1919; New York: Arno Press, 1969), 71-73, 104-105; *Papers of the NAACP*, part 7: The Anti-Lynching Campaign, 1912-1955, ser. A, reel 12 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America microfilm, 1982), 348-352, 354, 356, 373-380, 383, 393.

uty and two days of racial violence. At least twenty-five black citizens lay dead at their conclusion. Hundreds more were arrested, leading to sixty-seven prison terms, twelve death sentences, and a celebratory white population that trumpeted frontier justice as the rule of law. In the 1920s, mobs murdered twenty black citizens in Arkansas, though that represented a decline from thirty-eight the previous decade, forty-nine before that, and eighty in the 1890s.<sup>6</sup>

These murders generally occurred outside Little Rock, though there were exceptions. On April 12, 1927, eleven-year-old Floella McDonald was kidnapped while returning home from the Little Rock Public Library and then killed. Fifteen-year-old African-American Lonnie Dixon was accused of the crime, and the youth eventually confessed. Mobs gathered at the state penitentiary as the grand jury handed down an indictment for murder. At about the same time, an escaped prisoner named John Carter attacked a pair of white women. While police were able to keep Dixon safely behind bars, they had no such luck with Carter. Before officers could return him to prison, a mob hanged him. In frustration over their inability to reach Dixon, members of the mob dragged Carter's body through the streets of Little Rock, prompting the governor to call out the National Guard. Meanwhile, Dixon stood trial, but the proceedings were a farce. A brief hearing resulted in a death sentence, and the fifteen-year-old died in the electric chair.<sup>7</sup> The frenzy following the murder of Floella McDonald was rare, however. Carter's death, in fact, was the first Pulaski County lynching since 1906. For the most part, the size and urbanity of Little Rock tended to guard against the more persistent sort of violence witnessed in northeast Louisiana.<sup>8</sup>

But a culture of racial inequality rests on more than physical violence. It was also maintained in the South through legislation designed to limit African-American suffrage. Both Arkansas and Louisiana en-

<sup>6</sup>*Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States*, 50-52, 104; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 60; Patricia A. Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 159-160; Jeannie M. Whyne, "Low Villains and Wickedness in High Places: Race and Class in the Elaine Riots," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58 (Autumn 1999): 286-287, 293, 313; Richard A. Buckelew, "Racial Violence in Arkansas: Lynchings and Mob Rule, 1860-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arkansas, 1999), 122-126, 210; Richard C. Cortner, *A Mob Intent on Death: The NAACP and the Arkansas Riot Cases* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Grif Stockley, *Blood In Their Eyes: The Elaine Race Massacres of 1919* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup>*Arkansas Democrat* (Little Rock), May 1, 1927, p. 1, May 4, 1927, p. 1; Buckelew, "Racial Violence in Arkansas," 187-209.

<sup>8</sup>Buckelew, "Racial Violence in Arkansas," 210.

forced a poll tax, but Louisiana, unlike Arkansas, had further disfranchisement measures codified in the state constitution. Since 1898, Louisiana had required three hundred dollars in property and proof of literacy for voter registration, but a grandfather clause allowed many white voters to bypass the requirements. Here, too, the situation of Little Rock might seem more congenial to black baseball.<sup>9</sup>

But, clearly, memorable baseball depended on more. Little Rock black baseball teams had been competing in minor league circuits for years. Their starts and stops remain difficult to track, however, because of the lack of press coverage or surviving records. In the late 1920s, the Little Rock Black Travelers competed in the Texas Negro League, though they never took a pennant. In 1931, the Black Travelers entered the Negro Southern League at the season's halfway mark in July. Following that brief stint, a new league formed in Monroe, the Tri-State League, which looked east to Mississippi instead of west to Texas for the Arkansas and Louisiana teams' competition. Two African-American businessmen, Jack Powell and Jesse J. Floyd, headed Little Rock's delegation to early league meetings. Powell was a merchandise wholesaler, and Floyd a pharmacist. Though both found themselves listed as team owners, Powell either owned the team outright or maintained the leadership role among the ownership group.<sup>10</sup>

They and other representatives of what was to become the Tri-State League met on January 22, 1932. "There seem[s] to be a change coming up the road," wrote Pitman E. Nedde, sports editor and columnist for the *Shreveport Sun*, "but don't get glad too quick—it's a little too early." Monroe, New Orleans, Little Rock, and Jackson—the "Big Four"—formed the nucleus of the would-be league, and each team chose a representative to scout the region surrounding its city to investigate conditions in other applicant towns.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Monroe N. Work, *Negro Year Book: An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1931-1932* (Tuskegee, AL: Tuskegee Institute, 1931), 111-112, 114.

<sup>10</sup>*Memphis World*, July 26, 1931, p. 5; *Kansas City Call*, January 1, 1932, p. 5B; *Louisiana Weekly* (New Orleans), January 9, 1932, p. 5, January 30, 1932, p. 8; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 16, 1932, pp. 2-6; *Afro-American* (Baltimore), January 9, 1932, p. 14; *Polk's Little Rock and North Little Rock City Directory, 1931* (Kansas City: R. L. Polk and Co., 1931), 212, 478 [hereinafter cited as *Little Rock Directory, 1931*]; *Insurance Map of Little Rock, Arkansas, 1939* (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1939), vol. 1, p. 30, vol. 2, p. 239 [hereinafter cited as Sanborn Maps].

<sup>11</sup>*Shreveport Sun*, January 2, 1932, p. 5, January 23, 1932, p. 5, April 16, 1932, p. 5; *Louisiana Weekly*, January 9, 1932, p. 5.

Though Powell and Floyd initially appeared confident about the Black Travelers' chances in 1932, by the end of February, their financial standing was becoming more precarious. Monroe backed out of the group to join the Negro Southern League, and the Tri-State League collapsed. Though Floyd remained on with the team in an administrative capacity, the ownership group, led by Powell, sold the team in early March to Ernest "Buddy" Nolan, an African-American real estate investor and service-station owner. Nolan also purchased a custom-made eighteen-seat bus in which his new team could travel to road games. After Nolan bought the team, the Travelers became the Greys, perhaps trading on the renown of Cumberland Posey's Homestead, Pennsylvania, team.<sup>12</sup> The club, like Monroe, gained a franchise in a newly reformed Negro Southern League. The Greys and Monarchs, in fact, were the only two Tri-State teams included in the revamped outfit. In contrast to the minor league of 1931, the Southern League of 1932 was accorded "major" status by the black press when the traditional major league, the Negro National League, folded due to the exigencies of the depression. In his first three weeks of ownership, Nolan, with the aid of Floyd and another administrator, Daniel J. Dubisson, had managed to provide Little Rock its only major-league baseball team ever.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the Little Rock team, ownership of the Monroe Monarchs rested in white hands. Oil magnate Fred Stovall was a Dallas native who had come to Monroe in 1917. By 1932, he owned both the Stovall Drilling Company and the J. M. Supply Company, among other enterprises. He built Casino Park, the Monarchs' home field, for the benefit of Monroe's black citizens, many of whom worked for his enterprises. The date of the Monarchs' inception and Casino's opening is unknown, but the J. M. Supply Company had purchased the Casino Park land in 1927, then sold it to Stovall in 1930 (Stovall essentially selling the property to himself). The Monarchs' minor-league squad was playing at Casino Park by August 1930. Situated in what the *Monroe Morning World* termed a "Negro amusement park," the field was surrounded by a swimming pool, a dance pavilion, and a casino. For rare night games,

<sup>12</sup>In accounts of Little Rock's games, however, the team's name is usually spelled with an "e"—Greys—while Homestead spelled its with an "a"—Grays.

<sup>13</sup>*Kansas City Call*, January 29, 1932, p. 5B, March 11, 1932, p. 4B; *Louisiana Weekly*, March 5, 1932, p. 8; *Atlanta World*, March 20, 1932, p. 5; *Little Rock Directory, 1931*, 400, 592, 634, 636; Sanborn Maps, vol. 3, 302, 332.

the Monarchs also had access to Forsythe Park, home of the white Monroe Twins, members of the 1932 Cotton States League.<sup>14</sup>

The Greys, too, had access to a park for night games. The white Little Rock Travelers played their 1932 Southern Association games in the newly constructed Travelers Field (later renamed Ray Winder Field). The team's former park, Kavanaugh Field, would soon be demolished to clear space for Central High School facilities, but during the 1932 season, its lights made Greys night games possible.<sup>15</sup> The team played the bulk of its home schedule at Crump Park at the corner of Thirty-third and State Streets in Little Rock, however. The park was extremely modest, particularly when compared to the home of the white minor-league Travelers or the elaborate appointments of the Casino Park complex in Monroe. The venue was across the street from a restaurant owned by Arthur Crump and his wife, Dora. It is unclear whether the family owned the ballpark. But their presence in the area cast a long shadow, thus giving "Crump" its name.<sup>16</sup>

Crump Park survived through the 1930s and remained a viable Negro Leagues venue until at least 1941, attracting barnstorming teams like the Memphis Red Sox and Birmingham Black Barons. Four years later, however, Little Rock's Black Travelers played their home games in the city's white park, Travelers Field. After its Negro League days, Crump would become the athletic field of Little Rock's South End

<sup>14</sup>Forsythe Park added lights in 1930 for the first night game in Monroe; *Monroe News Star*, July 1, 1930, p. 2, July 5, 1930, p. 9, July 16, 1930, p. 8, October 9, 1958, p. 1A; *Monroe Morning World*, June 27, 1930, p. 1, July 1, 1930, p. 2, July 14, 1930, p. 9, October 10, 1958, p. 5A; Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 122; DeMorris Smith, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2004; *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 9, 1932, p. 4; "The Realty Investment Co. Ltd. to J. M. Supply Co. Inc.—Mortgage Deed, Sale of Land," Record 79482, April 23, 1927, Conveyance Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 157, page 775-778, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court, Monroe, LA; "J. M. Supply Co., Inc. to The Realty Investment Co., Ltd.—Mortgage Deed, Vendor's Lien," Record 79482, April 23, 1927, Mortgage Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 129, page 707-710, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; "J. M. Supply Co., Inc. to Fred Stovall—Cash Deed, Sale of Land," Record 139386, May 21, 1930, Conveyance Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 20, page 435-456, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of All 271 Major League and Negro League Ballparks Past and Present* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1992), 81; *Who's Who in the Twin Cities* (West Monroe: H. H. Brinsmade, 1931), 167.

<sup>15</sup>Two games of Little Rock's late May series with the Memphis Red Sox are the only ones known to have been played at Kavanaugh in 1932.

<sup>16</sup>Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, *Survey of Negroes in Little Rock and North Little Rock* (Little Rock: Urban League, 1941), 56, 60; Sanborn Maps, vol. 3, 416, 418; *Little Rock Directory, 1931*, 168, 695; *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (Little Rock), July 5, 2005, <http://library.ardemgaz.com> (accessed October 28, 2006); *Atlanta Daily World*, September 30, 1932, p. 5.

School. Arthur Crump died in the late 1940s, as did South End School, and in 1949 the city planning commission purchased the land to create a new public park for the African-American community. As of 1953, the Negro Boys' Club owned the park, which was managed by the City Parks and Recreation Commission and used primarily for youth baseball and softball leagues.<sup>17</sup> During debates concerning the 1949 purchase, engineers argued that the park was below the area's flood contour and noted that floodwaters sometimes covered the fields in wet years. 1932 had seen one of those wet years. Monroe, for instance, experienced the most devastating flood in its history. If the floodwaters did reach Crump Park in January and February, it might very well have contributed to the team's early organizational problems. Whether the waters came or not, however, the field was ready when the season eventually arrived.<sup>18</sup>

On Friday April 22, 1932, the Greys opened their Negro Southern League season at Crump Park against the Monroe Monarchs. With the score tied one to one in the eighth, a home run by the Monarchs' Roy Parnell sparked a five-run inning. Monroe won six to one. The next day, Little Rock fell six to three. Finally, the Monarchs swept a Sunday doubleheader fifteen to six and eight to three.<sup>19</sup>

The Greys' season did not improve after these initial losses. The following weekend, the Cleveland Cubs traveled to Little Rock, winning all three games. The Cubs were new to the Southern League and new to Cleveland, as well. The success of Robert A. Cole's Chicago American Giants, another Southern League member in 1932, drove the team's crosstown rival, the Rube Foster Memorial Giants, to Cleveland, where the team changed its name. The Cubs departed for Monroe, while the

<sup>17</sup>*Arkansas Democrat*, July 5, 1953, p. 3A; *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), May 26, 1949, pp. 1, 8; *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 4, 2006, <http://library.ardemgaz.com> (accessed October 28, 2006). The author would like to thank Rhonda Stewart of the Central Arkansas Library System's Butler Center for Arkansas Studies for her location of these materials. For a discussion of the city's decision to buy Crump Park, see John Kirk, "'A Study of Second Class Citizenship': Race, Urban Development, and Little Rock's Gillam Park, 1934-2004," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 65 (Autumn 2005): 272-275.

<sup>18</sup>*Arkansas Gazette*, May 26, 1949, pp. 1, 8; *The Monroe Morning World, Vicksburg Evening Post*, and *Memphis Commercial Appeal* each reported on flood stages daily through the first months of 1932. See also, *Annual Highest and Lowest Stages of the Mississippi River and Its Outlets and Tributaries to 1960* (Vicksburg: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1961); *The Louisiana-Mississippi Flood of 1932: Official Report of Relief Operations of the American National Red Cross* (Washington, DC: American National Red Cross, 1932).

<sup>19</sup>*Monroe Morning World*, April 21, 1932, p. 6, April 24, 1932, p. 12; *Arkansas Gazette*, April 23, 1932, p. 15, April 24, 1932, p. 15; *Arkansas Democrat*, April 22, 1932, p. 17, April 23, 1932, p. 6; *Louisiana Weekly*, April 30, 1932, p. 8; *Shreveport Sun*, April 30, 1932, p. 5.



Greys practiced through an open weekend before following them south for another series with the Monarchs.<sup>20</sup>

Little Rock's lack of success is hard to account for. The ownership group seemed to have assembled a worthy collection of talent for the 1932 season. The Greys' catcher for the 1932 season was Tommy Young, who usually caught for the successful Kansas City Monarchs. In 1932, J. L. Wilkerson, Kansas City's owner, decided not to field a team until later in the season, when the group would go on an international barnstorming tour. When the Greys' season ended in 1932, Young would join Kansas City in Mexico. Most of the rest of his career would be spent relatively successfully as a Kansas City Monarch. The young left fielder Pete McQueen proved talented enough to spend most of the 1930s with the New York Black Yankees as a utility player. The Greys' shortstop, Wyman "Red" Longley, had a successful career from 1937 to 1949 with the Memphis Red Sox, spending many of those years alongside second baseman Marlin Carter, who some sources cite as having played for the Greys. Pitcher Herman Howard also enjoyed some success after his time with Little Rock, throwing in the late 1930s for the Birmingham Black Barons. Finally, there was Reuben Jones. Jones had been a star outfielder with the Black Barons in the late 1920s. His career began in 1918, with successful seasons for the Indianapolis ABCs, Memphis Red Sox, and Chicago American Giants. He was in the twilight of his career during his time with the Greys, but he had the strongest reputation of any player on the Little Rock or Monroe team.<sup>21</sup>

But the Monroe Monarchs had their own share of talent, and it apparently made them the better team. Homer "Blue Goose" Curry played left field and pitched, later enjoying a long and distinguished career with the Baltimore Elite Giants, Philadelphia Stars, and Memphis Red Sox. Catcher Harry Else went on to play with the Kansas City Monarchs, making the East-West All Star game in 1936. Monroe's shortstop, Leroy Morney, had a well-traveled but substantial all-star career for a variety of Negro National League teams through 1944. Pitchers Barney Morris and Samuel Thompson enjoyed success after leaving Monroe, Morris with the New York Cubans and Thompson with the Philadelphia Stars and Chicago

<sup>20</sup>*Atlanta Daily World*, March 22, 1932, p. 5; *Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1932, p. 8; *Memphis World*, May 13, 1932, p. 5; *Monroe News Star*, May 14, 1932, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup>Most of this information about Little Rock players is from James A. Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1994), 157-158, 396, 450, 493, 542, 585, 673, 891-892. On the occasions when Riley notes a player's association with the Little Rock team in the 1932 season (which is by no means always), he lists him as playing with the Little Rock Black Travelers. In most years, black ballplayers working in Little Rock were playing for the Travelers but not in 1932. Also, *Kansas City Call*, June 3, 1932, p. 4B, July 1, 1932, p. 4B.



Reuben Jones some years after his stint with the Little Rock Greys.  
*Courtesy Thomas Aiello.*

American Giants. Right fielder Zollie Wright was another former Monarch to become an East-West All Star, playing for Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia. Roy Parnell, a center fielder and pitcher, played on a variety of minor southern teams before coming to Monroe, but his most productive years came with the Philadelphia Stars in the 1940s, and his success earned him candidacy for a special Negro and Pre-Negro Leagues election to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Though Parnell was ultimately not enshrined, his candidacy attests to his talent. But the Monarch who would become the most famous player did not join the team until late August, and his only action against the Greys came in a postseason exhibition. Hilton Smith would become a powerful pitcher for the Kansas City Monarchs in the 1930s and 1940s, though his career was often overshadowed by fellow Kansas City pitcher Satchel Paige. He is now a member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. But Smith and the others were young in 1932, and the Monarchs' and the Greys' rosters looked strikingly similar at the start of the season.<sup>22</sup>

While Little Rock had faltered against the Cubs, the Monarchs split a four-game series at the Memphis Red Sox before returning to their home field, Casino Park, for a sweep of Cleveland. In the Greys' next games with Monroe, Little Rock scored seven runs in four games, while the Monarchs totaled twenty-five. The Greys amassed only nineteen hits the entire weekend, ten coming in the second game of the Sunday doubleheader. Despite three hits from left fielder "Sug" Jones, the team only managed to turn two of the ten allowed by Monarchs pitcher Dick Matthews into runs. They stranded six base runners. During the same contest, Monroe managed two doubles, two triples, four stolen bases, and four walks, touching Little Rock pitcher Herman Howard for eight runs and another Monarchs victory. The games left the Greys winless in eleven games. As they limped back to Little Rock, Monroe sat calmly on its fourteen and two mark, waiting for a home series with the Birmingham Black Barons.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Like the Little Rock player descriptions, much of this comes from Riley's *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 206-207, 209, 266-267, 568, 569-570, 605, 723-725, 781-782, 884-885. Also see *Tri-State Defender* (Memphis), April 13, 1974; "Pre-Negro Leagues Candidate Profile: Roy A. 'Red' Parnell," National Baseball Hall of Fame, [http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers\\_and\\_honorees/parnell\\_red.htm](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers_and_honorees/parnell_red.htm) (accessed February 21, 2006); "Pre-Negro Leagues Candidate Profile: Willard Jessie 'Home Run' Brown," National Baseball Hall of Fame, [http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers\\_and\\_honorees/brown\\_willard.htm](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers_and_honorees/brown_willard.htm) (accessed February 21, 2006); Steve Rock, "Former Monarchs Pitcher Hilton Smith Elected to Baseball Hall of Fame," *Kansas City Star*, March 7, 2001, p. D1.

<sup>23</sup>*Monroe News Star*, May 16, 1932, p. 6, May 17, 1932, p. 6; *Monroe Morning World*, May 15, 1932, pp. 8, 10, May 16, 1932, p. 6, May 17, 1932, p. 7; *Louisiana Weekly*, May 21, 1932, p. 8; *Chicago Defender*, May 21, 1932, p. 8.

The Monarchs won two of three from Birmingham before sweeping a four-game series with the Montgomery Grey Sox. The Greys, for their part, cooled their heels. The next two series on Little Rock's schedule were contests with the Atlanta Black Crackers. While the Black Crackers would emerge in the late 1930s and 1940s as a prominent Negro League team, the economic realities of 1932 left them unable to continue the season. To remedy the situation, the league sent Memphis to Arkansas's capital city for a four-game series. Though the scores of those games remain a mystery, later standings charts indicate that Little Rock again fell victim to a sweep.<sup>24</sup>

The Greys' losses only mounted the following weekend, as the team traveled to Montgomery and lost four straight games to the Grey Sox. On their return trip, Little Rock stopped in Knoxville, Tennessee, where they finally earned a victory over the local team. But they lost three more in the four-game set. Meanwhile, Monroe split a series with the Nashville Elite Giants, swept the Montgomery Grey Sox again, and then won another series with Nashville three games to one. In a league that divided its season into two halves, offering a pennant to the winner of each—a relatively common practice in the era—the Monarchs were contending for a championship, while the Greys just could not win.<sup>25</sup>

On June 17, 1932, the *Memphis World* reported that the Greys would arrive to begin a series with the Red Sox. The games may or may not have been played. Certainly, however, the next weekend's scheduled series with Monroe never occurred. The Montgomery Grey Sox replaced Little Rock on the Monarchs' schedule. At the league meetings following the first half of scheduled play, the Greys, along with the Birmingham Black Barons and Atlanta Black Crackers, officially exited the league. The three teams at the bottom of the standings could not win, and therefore could not draw the fans needed to fund the remainder of the season. Team finances were based almost solely on gate receipts—not just for travel and equipment expenses but for players' salaries.<sup>26</sup>

The Monarchs, in the meantime, were robbed of the first-half pennant because league president Reuben Bartholomew Jackson ruled two Monroe victories over Memphis to be losses. Memphis, claimed Jackson, used in-

<sup>24</sup>*Pittsburgh Courier*, March 19, 1932, p. 5; *Atlanta Daily World*, March 22, 1932, p. 5; *Memphis World*, May 31, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>*Atlanta Daily World*, June 9, 1932, p. 5, June 20, 1932, p. 5; *Chicago Defender*, June 18, 1932, pp. 8, 9; *Monroe News Star*, June 13, 1932, p. 6, June 14, 1932, p. 6, June 16, 1932, p. 8, June 17, 1932, p. 17, June 20, 1932, p. 9, June 21, 1932, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup>*Memphis World*, June 17, 1932, p. 5; *Monroe News Star*, June 24, 1932, p. 10; *Chicago Defender*, July 2, 1932, p. 9, July 9, 1932, p. 9; *Atlanta Daily World*, July 8, 1932, p. 5.

eligible players in the games. The decision to remove Monroe wins because of Memphis impropriety was widely viewed as suspicious. The majority of the black press initially ignored the ruling and declared the Monarchs winners of the first half. The *Louisiana Weekly* acknowledged the league ruling but declared Monroe the victor anyway. The paper's coverage noted the protests mailed to the league office by Monroe fans, arguing that the Negro Southern League attempted "to give the Chicago [American Giants] nine something they have not rightfully won. All the southern papers as well as some of the northern and eastern papers carry the standing just as it is with Monroe leading and naturally, the fans are not fooled." The *Atlanta Daily World* listed Monroe's 31-7 and Chicago's 31-8 as the "official standing" of the league in its July 8 edition. Monroe, the paper insisted, won the first-half championship.<sup>27</sup>

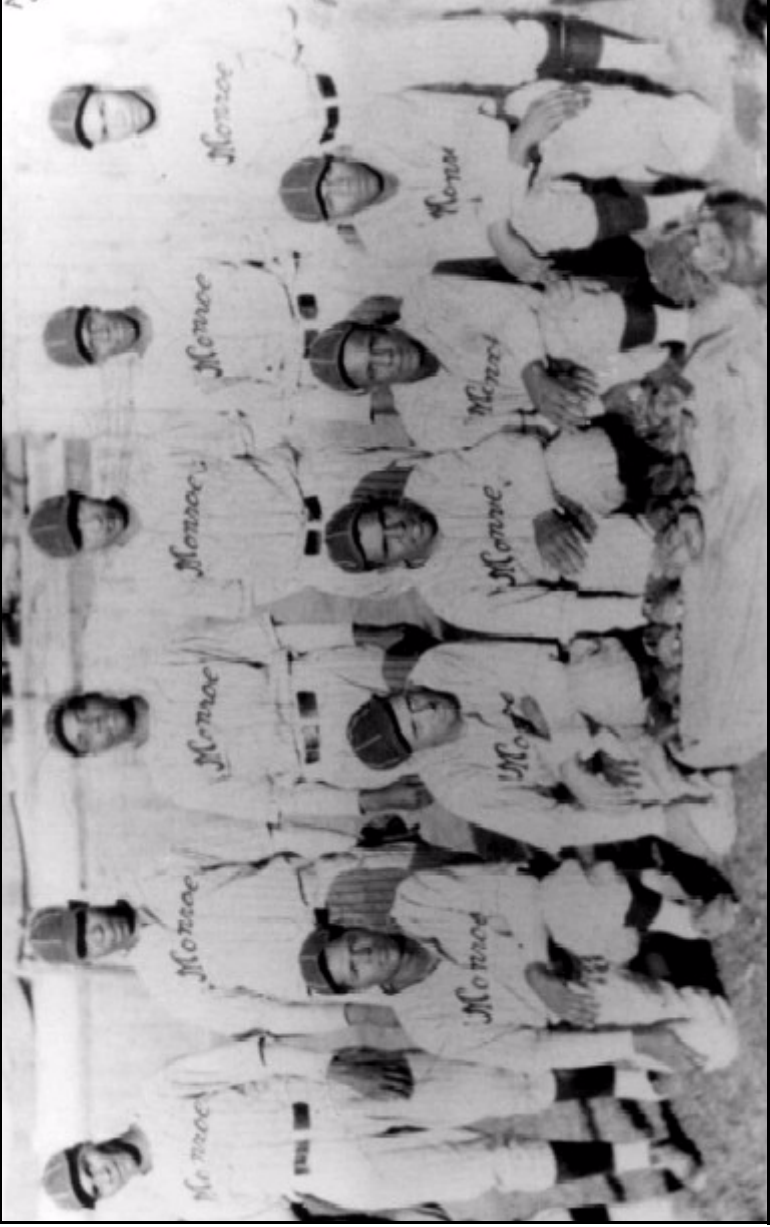
Though Chicago technically won the first-half pennant, Monroe enjoyed a moral victory. On August 8, the team received word, according to the *Morning World*, "that they had won the right to participate in the Negro World Series with the Eastern League champions to be started in Monroe or the eastern town the first week in September." They would, it was later reported, "enter the World Series with Pittsburgh, champions of the Eastern League on Sept. 3 in Pittsburgh with the series starting in Monroe Sept. 10 and lasting until one team has won four games." Though the Pittsburgh Crawfords were not affiliated with an Eastern League, neither the *Morning World* nor *News Star* swayed from this characterization.<sup>28</sup>

They didn't need to. The Monroe-Pittsburgh series—though not technically a "world series" because the Crawfords were an unaffiliated barnstorming team during the 1932 season—received top billing as the championship of black baseball by the majority of the African-American press. Though the Crawfords won the series five games to one, with one tie, the Monroe Monarchs, from the small cotton-farming hub in northeast Louisiana, occupied the Negro Leagues spotlight.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>The Chicago American Giants had the largest market in the Negro Southern League, and its games garnered more national coverage than any other. Jackson's move might well have been based on the league's economic interest more than propriety or fairness. *Louisiana Weekly*, July 9, 1932, p. 8; *Atlanta Daily World*, July 9, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>*Monroe Morning World*, August 9, 1932, p. 7, August 11, 1932, p. 7; *Chicago Defender*, July 2, 1932, p. 8, August 13, 1932, p. 9; *Monroe News Star*, August 9, 1932, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>*Chicago Defender*, August 20, 1932, p. 8, August 27, 1932, p. 8, September 3, 1932, p. 9, October 1, 1932, p. 8, October 8, 1932, p. 8; *New York Amsterdam News*, August 24, 1932, p. 9, September 14, 1932, p. 9; *California Eagle* (Los Angeles), September 16, 1932, p. 11; *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 20, 1932, p. 4, August 27, 1932, pp. 4, 5, September 17, 1932, p. 5; *Monroe Morning World*, September 10, 1932, p. 10, September 11, 1932, p. 9, September 12, 1932, p. 6; *Monroe News Star*, September 12, 1932, p. 6.



The 1932 Monroe Monarchs, champions of the Negro Southern League. Courtesy Ouachita Parish Digital Archive, Special Collections of the Ouachita Parish Public Library.

The Greys did not. They remained in Arkansas while Monroe traveled back and forth to Pittsburgh, but on Sunday and Monday, October 9 and 10, the two teams met at Casino Park for a final three-game series to close out the season. Fittingly, perhaps, no record exists to declare winners and losers.<sup>30</sup>

By that time, the Little Rock Greys were no longer economically viable because the team couldn't seem to win games in 1932. Hoping to recoup some of his initial investment, Ernest Nolan sold the team in January 1933 to a white man, Walter Harvey Laney. A member of the wealthy Laney oil family of Camden—and brother to Benjamin Travis Laney, later Arkansas's Dixiecrat governor—he had come to Little Rock to teach and sell insurance after graduating from Peabody College. After Laney purchased the team, he re-signed Reuben Jones to both play and manage. By 1933, Jones' best years were behind him. But he was a legitimate star, and his presence and new position as manager demonstrated Laney's desire to make the team economically successful.<sup>31</sup>

Laney quickly became involved in a new black league. As early as October 1932, Fred Stovall and the Monarchs had begun planning such a league for the 1933 season. Even the success of the previous season could not pull the small-town Monarchs into consistent major-league status. In 1933, the Negro National League reformed, ushering in the heyday of big-league black baseball. At the same time, teams from Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas vied for spots in a newly forming Dixie League. At an eleven-hour meeting in Memphis on January 28, the Dixie League accepted Monroe, Memphis, and Little Rock from the former season's Southern League, the Crescent City Stars and Algiers Giants from New Orleans, and the Shreveport Sports. H. D. English, the Monarchs' business manager, was elected secretary, and Laney became the league's treasurer. In early February, teams from Jackson, Mississippi, and Alexandria, Louisiana, joined the league, rounding out the eight-team roster. The league initiated a salary cap and promised fans that National League teams would barnstorm through the Dixie League. Hopes were high.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>*Monroe News Star*, October 6, 1932, p. 8; October 9, 1932, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup>*Louisiana Weekly*, January 28, 1932, p. 7; *Little Rock Directory, 1931*, 326; Sanborn Maps, vol. 3, p. 418; "The Laney's of Camden," *Ouachita County Historical Quarterly* 22 (Spring 1991): 20-34; Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 450.

<sup>32</sup>*Louisiana Weekly*, October 8, 1932, p. 7, October 22, 1932, p. 7, January 14, 1933, p. 7, January 21, 1933, p. 7, January 28, 1933, p. 7, February 4, 1933, p. 7, February 11, 1933, p. 7; *Atlanta Daily World*, October 6, 1932, p. 5C, October 27, 1932, p. 5C, November 7, 1932, p. 5C, November 11, 1932, p. 5C, November 12, 1932, p. 17; *Chicago Defender*, October 8, 1932, p. 8, October 29, 1932, p. 9; *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 8, 1932, pp. S2, 5, October 15, 1932, pp. S2, 4; *Shreveport Sun*, October 15, 1932, p. 5, October 22, 1932, p. 5, February 11, 1933, p. 3, February 18, 1933, p. 5.

At the final league meeting in late February, the Dixie changed its name to the Southern, and the teams agreed to play daily games—a revolutionary move for a depression-era circuit that had historically played only weekend series. Meanwhile, Indianapolis, Chicago, and Nashville attempted to revive the original Southern League. Two Southern Leagues and the risky policy of daily games soured the *Louisiana Weekly*'s optimism. Though league games were scheduled to begin in late April, no news from league officials reached the press. Finally, in early May, English released the league standings, with Memphis leading. Their six and one record barely topped Little Rock's six wins and four losses. Monroe followed closely behind with five wins and six losses. Through the confusion, it seemed, Laney had built a potentially successful team.<sup>33</sup>

But confusion would ultimately have its way. Monroe found another way to defeat Little Rock. Less than two weeks after the first standings appeared, Monroe pulled out of the league, causing it to collapse. Stovall and English had chosen to send the Monarchs on a barnstorming tour instead, hoping to make a profit by exploiting the team's 1932 success. "The whole thing in a nutshell," wrote a cynical Earl M. Wright, sports editor of the *Louisiana Weekly*, "is Stovall, English and the other powers that be in the Monarch ranks are disappointed over the showing the Monarchs are making in the league play and don't want to be kicked around by the other big boys." The theory seems more than plausible. Whatever the case, the league folded. After stuttering attempts to continue to play out the remaining schedule, dwindling gate receipts, coupled with the loss of the league's most prominent team, caused the aggregation to disband.<sup>34</sup>

And so a team with seemingly fewer demographic advantages defeated a more cosmopolitan counterpart—on the field in 1932 and off it in 1933. Monroe's winning record gave it power, and that power affected both its contemporary popularity and its historical resonance. The Monarchs, it seems, had always been the more visible team. In March 1932, prior to the season, for example, the Pittsburgh Crawfords came to Hot Springs, Arkansas, for spring training. Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, and Oscar Charleston went through their pre-season paces little more than fifty miles from Little Rock. When they broke camp on March 25, however, the

<sup>33</sup>*Louisiana Weekly*, February 25, 1932, p. 7, March 4, 1933, p. 7, March 25, 1933, p. 7, April 15, 1933, p. 7, April 29, 1933, p. 7, May 6, 1933, p. 6; *Indianapolis Recorder*, December 10, 1932, p. 2, March 11, 1933, p. 5; *Shreveport Sun*, March 11, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup>*Louisiana Weekly*, May 13, 1933, p. 5, May 20, 1933, p. 5, June 3, 1933, p. 5, July 1, 1933, p. 5, July 29, 1933, p. 5.



team played its first games not in Arkansas's capital but in Monroe's Casino Park.<sup>35</sup>

Casino was a more elaborate venue than the Greys' Crump Park, seeming to contribute to Monroe's greater viability. Though the two ballparks were comparable in size, Casino had a swimming pool and a dance hall adjacent to the field. These attractions probably drew a larger audience to the Monarchs, while simultaneously profiting off attendance at baseball games. Monroe Colored High School played its football games at the park, contributing to its success in the off-season. Similarly, the football team of Little Rock's Dunbar High School helped keep Crump afloat.<sup>36</sup>

Monroe might also seem to have had an advantage in consistent ownership, but Little Rock's changes in ownership were responses to the team's losing record, not its cause. No team sale dramatically affected the Greys' roster. After the 1932 season, the Greys came under the control of a member of a prominent white oil family, much like the Stovall family of Monroe. The Laney family, however, never had the opportunity to provide the stability that the Stovalls offered. After the 1933 season, the Greys—and any evidence that Laney continued to field a black team—disappear from the historical record.

The fading of the Greys from historical memory has to do not only with contemporary prowess but also a more concrete problem of sources. A team's renown could be achieved only through the black press. But there is no record of the Greys in surviving hometown papers. Little Rock did have a viable black press in 1932. The *Arkansas Survey* had served the African-American community since 1923. Editor P. L. Dorman's publication lasted until 1935 (it would later reappear as the *Arkansas Survey-Journal*), but a lone issue from 1924 is all that remains. Issues of two other local papers, the *Arkansas State Press* and *Arkansas Times*, also failed to survive from the 1930s. Two black newspapers existed in nearby Hot Springs. Both the *Negro Voice* and *Hot Springs Echo*, however, also survive only in scattered editions, none of which mentions the Greys.<sup>37</sup> Monroe's black newspaper, the *Southern Broadcast*, founded by Sherman Briscoe in 1932, similarly survives in only a handful of issues dating from 1936 and 1937.

<sup>35</sup>*Pittsburgh Courier*, March 12, 1932, pp. S2, 5, March 19, 1932, pp. S2, 5, April 2, 1932, pp. S2, 4; *Shreveport Sun*, March 19, 1932, p. 5, March 26, 1932, p. 5, April 2, 1932, p. 5; *Atlanta Daily World*, March 30, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Dunbar, founded in 1929, served as the city's African-American high school until 1955. See <http://www.ndaaoflra.org/history.html>.

<sup>37</sup>*N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1932), 62; Amanda Saar, *Black Arkansas Newspapers, 1869-1975: A Checklist* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Library, 1976), 31-32; *Arkansas Survey*, September 20, 1924; *Negro Voice*, November 25, 1933; *Hot Springs Echo*, December 19, 1931, June 15, 1935.

But the *Louisiana Weekly* of New Orleans covered both city and state news, including the doings of Monroe's baseball team. This newspaper's sports coverage from 1931 to 1933 survives.<sup>38</sup>

Contributing further to the Greys' anonymity, the team has been overshadowed in its own state by other Negro Leagues baseball franchises. The Little Rock Black Travelers served as a precursor to the Greys in the early 1930s, then disappeared along with the Greys after the failed 1933 season. In 1945, however, Reuben B. Jackson, president of the 1932 Negro Southern League, reformed the aggregation. Little Rock's Sam Parks entered a team he called the Little Rock Black Travelers into the new league. He and his business manager, Charlie Burgs, did not secure a franchise at the February preliminary meetings, but managed to have their team included in late March.<sup>39</sup>

This league, unlike the 1932 Negro Southern League, would not be a "major" league. In 1945, the Negro National League and Negro American League dominated black baseball, producing much of the talent that would break into the white major leagues before the end of the decade. In addition to the Negro Southern League, Gus Greenlee also propagated a new high-profile minor set, the United States Colored Baseball League. Still, the Great Depression was over, the war in Europe would end during the season, and baseball had room to grow. Parks' new team, however, looked much like its 1932 predecessor. The team struggled through the season's first half, managing to win seven and lose thirteen and finish just above Chattanooga at the bottom of the league standings. The second half started much the same way for the Black Travelers, and soon the burden became too much. Citing scheduling difficulties with the team's stadium, Parks moved the Black Travelers to Richmond, Virginia, in late July.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, ed., *1952 Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life* (New York: William H. Wise & Co., 1952), v; *Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1977-1978*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Northbrook, IL: Who's Who Among Black Americans Publishing, 1978), 1:98; *Southern Broadcast*, July 11, 1936, February 6, 1937.

<sup>39</sup>Franchises in the newly reformed Southern League included Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Nashville, Tennessee, Mobile, Alabama, Asheville, North Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana. At the March meetings where Little Rock was accepted for membership in the league, Thomas T. Wilson, president of the Negro National League, was present to demonstrate his support for his friend Jackson and the new league; *Memphis World*, February 16, 1945, p. 5, March 13, 1945, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>The Atlanta Black Crackers would win both halves of the Negro Southern League's 1945 season, but sporadic play and an oversaturated market would make the league another one-year venture. *Memphis World*, February 16, 1945, p. 3, March 13, 1945, p. 5, May 29, 1945, p. 5, June 26, 1945, p. 5, July 27, 1945, p. 6; *Atlanta Daily World*, July 3, 1954, p. 5, July 6, 1945, p. 5, July 8, 1945, p. 8, July 18, 1945, p. 5, August 21, 1945, p. 2; *Arkansas Gazette*, May 13, 1945, p. 8, May 27, 1945, p. 10, June 3, 1945, p. 7A, July 1, 1945, p. 5A.

The 1945 Black Travelers' .350 winning percentage was far better than that of the Greys, but the team remains cited as the only significant Little Rock Negro Leagues team for a number of other reasons. First, Little Rock's white minor-league baseball team calls itself the "Travelers," helping to fix their black namesake in historical memory. The Travelers' organization began in 1901, predating its black counterpart. The original Black Travelers, as well as Parks's 1945 team, intentionally traded on the famous name. Second, the "Black Travelers" (though technically more than a single franchise) played many more seasons than the Greys. Also, the 1945 Black Travelers also played their home games at Travelers Field, the local white park. And they played there in a season that saw baseball flourish in Little Rock. The white Travelers of 1945 also remained near the bottom of the standings throughout the season, but the team's attendance figures were up. Opening day attendance almost doubled from the 1944 season, and over the Travelers' first sixteen games, more than 22,000 fans paid admissions.<sup>41</sup> The Black Travelers played when their white counterparts were away, and when the local black team wasn't playing, other attractions drew the African-American community to Travelers Field. The Memphis Red Sox, playing in the "major" Negro American League, traveled to Little Rock a number of times during the 1945 season.<sup>42</sup> In June, Gus Greenlee's United States Colored League made a stop in Little Rock. The Toledo Cubs faced the Chicago Brown Bombers, and, to ensure a large crowd at the event, Jesse Owens made a special appearance. The Olympic champion held the world's record for the hundred-yard dash at 9.4 seconds, and, after the fifth inning, the sprinter put on a brief running exhibition and gave a speech to the crowd. Renamed Ray Winder Field, Travelers Field still exists, making it one of the only former Negro League parks still standing today.<sup>43</sup>

Though the home park (and, indeed, the hometown) of the Claybrook Tigers no longer exists, that black team also remains vivid in Arkansas's

<sup>41</sup>The white Little Rock opening day attendance was 4,253, up from 2,789 in 1944. The sixteen-game numbers—the only others published for the season—were 22,410 in 1945, up from 16,102 in 1944; *Arkansas Gazette*, May 4, 1945, p. 10, June 10, 1945, p. 9A.

<sup>42</sup>The Red Sox faced the Black Barons in late April, the Cleveland Buckeyes in June, and the Black Barons again in early July. Little Rock, announced the *Arkansas Gazette*, was almost a second home to the Red Sox. *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1945, p. 11, June 14, 1945, p. 14, June 15, 1945, p. 13, July 4, 1945, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup>The Travelers, long since integrated and now called the Arkansas Travelers, played their final game at Ray Winder Field in September 2006. At the time of this writing, the future of the park had yet to be determined; *Arkansas Gazette*, June 10, 1945, p. 9A, June 15, 1945, p. 13; *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 5, 2005, September 4, 2006, 1C; "Ray Winder, Arkansas' Mr. Baseball," in *Arkansans of the Years*, vol. 3 (Little Rock: C. C. Allard and Associates, 1953), 365-372.

historical memory. The Tigers, in fact, were the most successful African-American baseball team in Arkansas history. Formerly twenty miles southwest of Memphis, Claybrook was a town built around the logging enterprise of John C. Claybrook, a black entrepreneur and landowner. To keep his workers (and workers' families) happy, Claybrook formed a company baseball team in 1929 that turned into one of the premier Negro Leagues teams of the 1930s. Though the team existed in 1932 and 1933, it did not become well-known and successful until the mid-thirties. Claybrook began by playing other semi-pro company teams such as the Dubisson Tigers (a Little Rock club sponsored by mortician Daniel J. Dubisson).<sup>44</sup> But by 1935, Claybrook was facing the Cuban Stars, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, and the Chicago American Giants, among other teams. That year, the Tigers also joined the again-minor Negro Southern League and won the pennant. The following year, John Claybrook, hungry for wins, lured Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe to his lumber town. And again Claybrook won the pennant. But when Radcliffe left, success went with him, and by 1938 the team was gone. Claybrook himself left in 1940, and soon after the town was abandoned. Claybrook was far smaller than Monroe or Little Rock, but the team's proximity to Memphis made it a principal stop of Negro National League teams barnstorming through the South. The quality of the competition, combined with the Tigers' success, served to produce a prodigious contemporary record of the team, as well as a historical legacy codified in newspaper features and a film documentary.<sup>45</sup>

Even in 1932, the Greys were upstaged in their own state. The Associated Negro Press (ANP), the largest African-American wire service, reported that Jonesboro's black team played a series of games against white teams from the northeast Arkansas towns of Piggott, Pestor, Holiday, Monette, and Jonesboro. "The team," reported the ANP, "is lavish in its praise of the treatment given it in these communities."<sup>46</sup>

In various ways, both the Claybrook Tigers and Jonesboro's black team won. Though they performed the same tasks as the Greys, wearing similar uniforms in similar venues, they did them better. The Black Travelers, too, won more than the Greys, but the venue, economic climate, and

<sup>44</sup>As noted, Dubisson served as an administrator for the Little Rock Greys in 1932; *Atlanta World*, March 20, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup>Radcliffe was a Pittsburgh Crawford in 1932 and 1933, during the Greys' short existence. *Chicago Defender*, June 25, 1932, p. 8; *Shreveport Sun*, August 22, 1936, p. 5, October 10, 1936, p. 5; *Louisiana Weekly*, April 11, 1936, p. 8, April 18, 1936, p. 8, April 25, 1936, p. 8; *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 4, 2002, pp. 1C, 8C; *Swingin' Timber: The Story of the Claybrook Tigers*, prod. and dir. David D. Dawson (Lemke Department of Journalism, University of Arkansas, 2001, videocassette).

<sup>46</sup>*Atlanta Daily World*, August 17, 1932, p. 5; *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 20, 1932, p. 2.

baseball environment were so vastly different from that of the early 1930s that the teams are hardly comparable.

Black baseball's historical community has proven just as susceptible to forgetting the loser as its local counterpart. John Holway's *Complete Book of Baseball's Negro Leagues*, for example, does not include a Little Rock team in its tally of 1932 Southern League squads. Dick Clark and Larry Lester list the 1932 Little Rock Travelers as a member of the league with a three and three record. Such misrepresentation of the Greys is not the result of conscious bias against a loser. But winning led to community interest, which led to increased newspaper coverage, which helped ensure the preservation of box scores, game write-ups, and opinion pieces. It offered no guarantees. But it made contemporary and historical survival possible.<sup>47</sup>

Little Rock black baseball drifted out of the historical record after 1933, before resurfacing again in 1945 with the Little Rock Black Travelers. The Monroe Monarchs continued to barnstorm until they finally petered out in 1936. Fred Stovall leased Casino Park to a white minor league franchise, the Monroe Twins, for the 1937 season.<sup>48</sup> Both the Greys and Monarchs, however, existed under the lens created by their victories, each team's presence magnified or diminished by its on-field record. The Monarchs won. And the unlikely team from the rural "lynch law center of Louisiana" maintained an historical presence that the Greys have never enjoyed. History, after all, is written about the winners.

## APPENDIX ONE

### *Little Rock Greys Roster, May 14-16, 1932*

Jones, S. (Sug)	center field, right field, manager
Carter, Marlin	second base
Blevins, (first name unknown)	third base
Jones, Reuben	right field, left field, catcher
Longley, Wyman (Red)	shortstop
McQueen, Pete	left field

<sup>47</sup>John Holway, *The Complete Book of Baseball's Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History* (Fern Park, FL: Hastings House, 2001), 292-293; Dick Clark and Larry Lester, eds., *The Negro Leagues Book* (Cleveland: Society for American Baseball Research, 1994), 164.

<sup>48</sup>*Monroe News Star*, December 21, 1936, p. 11; "Fred Stovall to Twin City Baseball Ass'n., Inc.—Lease," record 236603, January 7, 1937, Mortgage Record, Ouachita Parish, book 207, pp. 188-191, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; *Southern Broadcast*, August 15, 1936, p. 7, August 22, 1936, p. 7, August 29, 1936, pp. 7, 8.

Nunley, Beauford	first base
Jackson, Edgar S.	catcher, right field, center field
Haynes (also listed as Haines) <sup>49</sup>	pitcher, left field
Ligon, Rufus C. <sup>50</sup>	pitcher, pinch hitter
Liggons, James	pitcher
Overton, (first name unknown)	center field, left field, pitcher
Howard, Herman (Red)	pitcher
Young, Thomas Jefferson (Tommy)	catcher

*An early June series with the Montgomery Grey Sox evidenced some roster changes, just prior to Little Rock's dissolution for the season. Young, Jackson, and Nunley no longer appear in the box scores. "Sug" Jones replaced Nunley at first base. But there were new faces in the lineup, as well.*

Robinson, Johnny	center field
<i>(replacing Overton in center field, thus moving Overton to left field, McQueen to right field, and Edgar Jackson out of the lineup)</i>	
Cobb, (first name unknown)	catcher
<i>(replacing Tommy Young)</i>	
Coss, (first name unknown)	shortstop
<i>(replacing Wyman Longley)</i>	

Dick Clark and Larry Lester in *The Negro Leagues Book* offer the only other roster for the 1932 Greys. Along with various discrepancies and a notable lack of first names in most cases, the authors also include some players not listed above—players that may very well have been a part of the 1932 team:

<sup>49</sup>Though his full identity remains unknown, Haynes is described in newspapers as a "spitballer." Interestingly, the white major leagues outlawed the spitball in 1920. But realizing that many pitchers made their livelihoods with the now-illegal pitch, baseball produced a list of seventeen pitchers who were exempt from the rule for the remainder of their careers. Burleigh Grimes, a member of that select list, continued pitching until 1934. But by 1932, the spitball was a less than reputable pitch—and certainly not a description players, black or white, would relish; Jim Reisler, *Babe Ruth: Launching the Legend* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004), 99-100.

<sup>50</sup>In encyclopedic treatments, Ligon is sometimes confused with James Liggons, another pitcher and outfielder of the same era. The *Monroe Morning World's* article on the Greys' game against the Monarchs compliments the pitching of "Liggins," but the box score, and all subsequent available box scores, call him "Ligon." Encyclopedic treatments do not list Rufus C. Ligon as a member of the 1932 Little Rock team. Ligon, in fact, is listed as a post-World War II pitcher of little consequence. The discrepancy has led the author to include both players in the Little Rock roster.

Taylor, S. <sup>51</sup>	manager
Buford, <sup>52</sup> (first name unknown)	first base
Carr, (first name unknown)	outfield
Cobb, (first name unknown)	catcher
Faison, (first name unknown)	shortstop
Carter, William <sup>53</sup>	second base

## APPENDIX TWO

*Statistics of the Greys/Monarchs Series, May 14-16, 1932*

Only seven box scores exist for Little Rock games from the 1932 and 1933 seasons. Four of them, from a May 1932 series with the Monroe Monarchs, appeared in the *Monroe Morning World*, offering the only full statistical account of the two teams head-to-head. Calculations come from those four box scores.

**Table 1: Little Rock Greys, Batting, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	AB	H	R	E	2B	3B	HR	SB	RBI	BA
“Sug” Jones	17	5	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	.294
Marlin Carter	16	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	.250
(?) Blevins	15	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.133
Reuben Jones	14	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	.214
Wyman Longley	14	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.071

<sup>51</sup>Clark and Lester list Taylor as the manager for the 1932 team, but Taylor managed only in 1931. Jones served in 1932; *Negro Leagues Book*, 107.

<sup>52</sup>Clark and Lester may be referring to “Black Bottom” Buford, who played on various southern teams between 1930 and 1933. Buford spent most of his career with the Nashville Elite Giants but may very well have spent some time with the Greys in 1932. They may also be referring to Beauford Nunley, the Greys’ first baseman; *Negro Leagues Book*, 107.

<sup>53</sup>While a William Carter played predominantly in the St. Louis region in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Marlin Carter played second base for the Monroe Monarchs early in 1932 before disappearing from the lineup. Since the bulk of his early career was played in Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee, Marlin Carter seems the more likely candidate to be part of the 1932 Little Rock team. That said, there certainly could have been another William Carter who played second base for the Greys; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, December 22, 1993, p. A15; *Monroe Morning World*, April 5, 1932, p. 6, April 9, 1932, p. 8; Riley, *Biographical Encyclopedia of Negro Leagues Baseball*, 157-158.

**Table 1: Little Rock Greys, Batting, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	AB	H	R	E	2B	3B	HR	SB	RBI	BA
Pete McQueen	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	.000
Beauford Nunley	12	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	.250
Tommy Young	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Rufus Ligon	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	.500
(?) Overton	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.125
Edgar Jackson	8	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	.375
(?) Haynes	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.250
Herman Howard	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.333
TOTAL	130	27	1	8	4	1	0	3	7	.208

**Table 2: Little Rock Greys, Pitching, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	Wins	Loses	ERA
Rufus Ligon	0	1	6.00
(?) Haynes	0	1	3.72
Herman Howard	0	1	8.00
(?) Overton	0	1	3.68
TOTAL	0	4	5.40

**Table 3: Monroe Monarchs, Batting, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	AB	H	R	E	2B	3B	HR	SB	RBI	BA
Leroy Morney	14	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	.214
Chuffie Alexander	14	6	5	0	0	1	0	2	2	.429
Augustus Saunders	12	3	4	3	0	0	0	0	2	.250



**Table 3: Monroe Monarchs, Batting, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	AB	H	R	E	2B	3B	HR	SB	RBI	BA
Roy Parnell	12	5	5	0	1	4	0	0	5	.417
Zollie Wright	10	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	.200
W. Walker	13	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	.154
Porter Dallas	11	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	.455
Harry Else	13	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	.154
Barney Morris	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Elbert Williams	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Samuel Harris	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	.500
Dick Matthews	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.333
Frank Johnson	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	.500
TOTAL	119	32	25	4	4	5	0	4	18	.269

**Table 4: Monroe Monarchs, Pitching, May 14-16, 1932**

Player	Wins	Loses	ERA
Barney Morris	2	0	0.52
Elbert Williams	1	0	1.00
Dick Matthews	1	0	2.00
Leland Foster	0	0	40.50
TOTAL	4	0	1.75

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