

all of which come from chapter fifteen) and a less than adequate bibliography leaves the process of fact checking an unenviable and daunting task. With her sources, Angelo formats the book as an autobiography or memoir, thus creating the illusion that LeGrande is telling his own story (and with the oral interviews he essentially was), but Angelo also adds background information on ballparks, hotels, or Jim Crow laws at certain points in the book while maintaining the use of first person throughout.

I Found Someone to Play With traces the life of Larry LeGrande from his childhood in Virginia, where he learned the game of baseball, through the journey emanating from his natural abilities that led him to play professionally. LeGrande played a couple of years in the Negro Leagues before signing with the Yankees minor league system, but was ultimately cut from the Florida team because of his skin color. While this ended his dream of playing for his favorite team, it opened up a chance to play for the great Satchel Paige and his barnstorming All-Stars. The team provided a means for many talented black ballplayers to earn a decent living after Major League Baseball's failure to fully integrate following Jackie Robinson's breaking of the color line. While Robinson's accomplishments remain overwhelmingly positive, baseball's integration ruined one of America's most successful industries that opened opportunities for black males. How those leagues would have handled retirement, however, remains open for debate.

Angelo's approach to telling the life story of Larry LeGrande warrants much merit, because it tells the story of one of the most talented ball players from the end of the segregated era. Furthermore, the story continues into life outside of baseball (including family issues, alcoholism, death, and financial corruption). *I Found Someone to Play With*, however, has many shortfalls. For example, there are numerous grammatical errors throughout the book, stories are often out of place or incomplete, and the account lacks considerable chronological progression. Because of these problems, professional scholars will find themselves aggravated at certain points. But for those looking to learn about LeGrande, or more about his close friend Satchel Paige, this book proves to be a great introduction to the person, Negro Leagues baseball, the Jim Crow South, the fight for a living wage in retirement, and African American history. While professional historians will certainly want more from this book, such was not the author's intention or background. For those interested scholars, perhaps, this book will provide the launching pad for a more in-depth analysis of Larry Legrande (and similar players). Until more work is done, however, *I Found Someone to Play With* offers a conversation with an important figure in the history of the Negro Leagues.—Joshua Butler

William J. Plott. *The Negro Southern League: A Baseball History, 1920–1951*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-7864-7544-5. 276 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

William J. Plott's *The Negro Southern League: A Baseball History, 1920–1951* is the first comprehensive account of one of the most successful black southern business endeavors in the three decades prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*. The book tracks the evolution of a league that was almost always considered "minor," but that included

many of the most important black baseball players in the first half of the twentieth century. It was an organization that succumbed to significant booms and busts, developing in an uneven fashion, but consistently included powerful teams and talented players that eventually populated the more successful Negro National and Negro American Leagues. Plott admits that his account is less about the historical context that surrounded the development of a decades-long successful black business in the heart of Jim Crow racism and more about the product that business produced. And that is okay. While understanding the sociological impact of such endeavors is ultimately important, it is an impossible task without first understanding the baseball itself, and Plott's account is exhaustive in its description of the teams and players that made up the NSL.

The Negro Southern League was founded in Atlanta in 1920, largely featuring teams in cities that also had established white Southern Association teams in hopes of capitalizing on the popularity of those clubs, on the interest of baseball in the cities, and, sometimes, on the white team's park. Some founding members, like the Birmingham Black Barons and Atlanta Black Crackers, would go on to leave lasting Negro Leagues legacies, while others, like the Jacksonville Stars, New Orleans Caulfield Ads, and Pensacola Giants, would have more sporadic professional careers. The Montgomery Grey Sox won a contested pennant that first season, but the broad success of the league ensured that controversy or not, the new organization would thrive.

That success would lead in the mid-1920s to the elevation of the Birmingham Black Barons and Memphis Red Sox to the Negro National League, which would only lead to mediocre seasons for those teams and the league they left behind. Fortunately for southern fans, however, the experiment was a failure, which led to what Plott describes as a "revival of the Negro Southern League" in 1926. With its star teams back in the fold, the NSL had a banner year, the Black Barons defeating the Red Sox in a postseason playoff for the league championship. The problem, however, was that their renaissance led both teams to think better of returning to the majors, again leaving their original organization in the lurch.

Both teams would return in 1931 to revive the fledgling league, and after the collapse of the Negro National League at the end of that season, hurt as it was by a Great Depression that left little disposable income for black baseball fans, the NSL became in 1932 the "major" league. The National reformed in 1933, pushing the Southern back to its minor status, but its previous success and an increased reliance on teams in Louisiana, Arkansas, and other points west of the Mississippi River, allowed the league to survive through much of the turbulent 1930s. Some of those teams came from much smaller markets than those original 1920 entries. The Claybrook Tigers, for example, came from a small Arkansas sawmill town owned by black entrepreneur John C. Claybrook. It was a group that could only have found success after its forebears in larger cities built the popularity of southern baseball across the region. The difficulty of the Depression and the coming of World War II would ultimately eliminate both teams like Claybrook and the league that gave them their start. After the 1936 campaign, the Negro Southern League would disband for the next nine years.

When it returned in 1945, the league rotated on an axis firmly in Tennessee, with teams from Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga joined by fellow members from Atlanta, Little Rock, Mobile, New Orleans, and Asheville, North Carolina. The success of the postwar economic boom would give the NSL strong seasons through 1946, but they would be short-lived. In 1947, Jackie Robinson integrated major league baseball, and Thomas T. Wilson, owner of the Baltimore Elite Giants and NSL stalwart who was serving as league president that season, passed away. Each would usher in its own problems. With the continued integration of white baseball, even major league black baseball suffered at the box office. Minor league black baseball was even more vulnerable. Meanwhile, lack of effective leadership and established, veteran teams only led to chaotic seasons that dissolved early with no clear champion. When fans had no reasonable expectation of a legitimate conclusion to the season, and at the same time had new, more sensational baseball options to follow, leagues like the Southern were doomed. Attempts at organization continued through the late 1940s and early 1950s but suffered various fits and starts. It officially disbanded in 1951.

Almost sixty years later, in 2010, this author published an essay in *Blackball* titled "A Case for the Negro Southern League," arguing that the understudied region deserved more attention as a legitimate hub of black baseball, as a developer of talent for other organizations, and as the core source of sport for the region with the vast majority of the country's black population. William J. Plott's masterful account, obviously already long in process at the time of that essay, is just what the study of southern black baseball needed. It will in years to come be the foundational text for studies of the Negro Southern League, its players, administrators, and fans. It is encyclopedic in its scope. It includes appendices chronicling championships and rosters. Its bibliography is a roadmap for any would-be historian of the NSL to begin work in the field.

For all of its benefits, however, we do need more of those would-be historians to take what Plott has given us and continue his project. His chronicle is one "focusing more on the baseball than the sociology of the Negro leagues" (2). It is necessary and successful in its work. But now that we have such a chronicle, future scholars should use Plott's masterful account as the basis for the kind of work that provides the historical and racial context surrounding the seasons, organizations, and players that anyone reading *The Negro Southern Leagues* will know so well. William J. Plott has written an amazing book about an understudied segment of black baseball history, but he has also penned the starting point for future amazing books to come.—Thomas Aiello

McGregor, Robert Kuhn. *A Calculus of Color: The Integration of Baseball's American League*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-7864-9440-8. 224 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

If one wants to study the history of integration in major league baseball, there are a number of excellent books available for consideration. However, a great number of these books feature the experience of Jackie Robinson, and tend to place much of