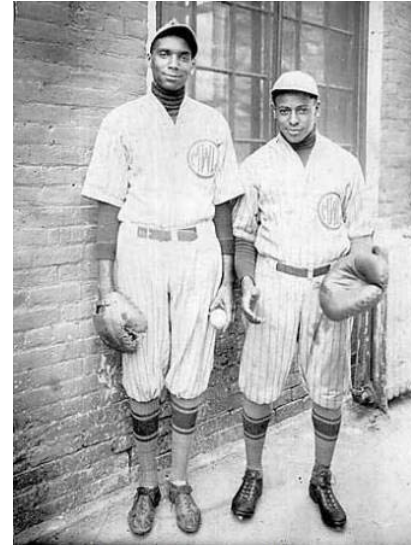


Baseball in Kentucky

On July 19, 1865, the Louisville Grays hosted the first baseball game played under standard rules west of the Alleghenies, where they defeated the Nashville Cumberlands. When Louisville businessman Walter Haldeman and others formed the National League in 1876, this Louisville club was a charter member. The Grays finished fifth in 1876 and in 1877 led the league in the final weeks of the season, losing to the Boston Red Caps in the final game. It was later discovered that gamblers had paid four Louisville players to lose games in 1877 so that Boston would win the championship. Baseball's first major scandal led to the demise of the Grays, and the four team members were banned from playing professional baseball for life. Kentucky has not been represented by a major league team since the turn of the 20th century when the Louisville Colonels switched to the minor league, but minor league baseball has flourished in the state with at least 32 Kentucky cities hosting minor league teams.



Kentucky also has a strong history in the African-American baseball story beginning in 1887 when, although short lived, the Louisville team Falls City joined the League of Colored Baseball Clubs, which was the first national league for black players. Before the formation of the Negro National League in 1920, there were several independent semiprofessional black teams in Kentucky playing in exhibition tours. In 1931 Louisville was the home of the Negro National League's White Sox, and later the home for the League's Black Caps (1932) and the Buckeyes (1949). Former Kentucky governor A.B. "Happy" Chandler, serving as commissioner of baseball from 1945 to 1951, is credited as being instrumental in the racial integration of the major leagues in 1947.

More than 200 Kentucky natives have played major league baseball and four Kentuckians have been elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame: Earl Combs, A.B. Chandler, Jim Bunning and Harold "Pee Wee" Reese.

Oral history interviews with former major and minor league baseball players can be found at <http://passtheword.ky.gov>.

Pass the Word" is a discovery tool for oral histories throughout the state of Kentucky. To learn more about this topic, visit <http://passtheword.ky.gov>.