**Baseball Kit Resource Guide**

**Table of Contents**

Introduction…………………………………………………………… 1

Images………………………………………………………………….1

Keywords or events to discuss……………………………….......... 2

Books to share…………………………………………………………3

Websites for teams, museums, and baseball databases…………5

Oral history interviews……………...............................................16

Articles about baseball in Kentucky………………………………..17

**Introduction**

This resource guide is designed to provide you with tools to help people engage with the past and connect with others. There are images to share with your customers, clip art that can be copied and colored or used for another purpose, oral history interviews with Kentuckians that can be played and shared, books with trivia to talk about with your customers, statistics about high school baseball and softball in Kentucky, and articles about baseball in Kentucky.

**Images and objects:**

Encourage your group members to look at the photographs included with the kit and to discuss what is happening in them.

There are several objects included with the kit like a baseball, pennant, and bat. Encourage your customers to hold them and talk about what the objects are. If they want to share stories about their memories related to the objects, please encourage them to do so.

Some conversation prompts can include:

* What do you want to say about what is going on in this picture?
* What do you think is happening in this picture?
* Did you or anyone in your family play baseball or softball? Tell me about the games.
* What was the ballpark like? What food did you eat at the game? Did you bring your own food, or buy food at the park?
* What were the uniforms like? What was the team’s name?
* What team was your rival?
* Did the players have any traditions that they did before or after the game? What were those traditions?
* What is your favorite memory about a sports event?

**Keywords:**

A.B. ‘Happy’ Chandler

Big Sandy League

Birmingham Black Barons (Harlan County)

Bowling Green Hot Rods

Coxton Black Sox (Coxton, in Harlan County)

Doug Flynn

Eastern Kentucky Baseball League

Elkhorn League

Florence Y’alls

Integration of baseball

Lexington Legends/Counter Clocks

Lion Tamers (Campbell County)

Louisville Bats

Lynch Demons

Jenkins Sluggers

Maysville Tigers

McDowell (Floyd County)

Pee Wee Reese

Wayland Wasps (Floyd County)

Weeksbury Club (Floyd County)

Wheelwright Club (Floyd County)

Wild Health Genomes

**Books to share:**

*History of Floyd County* (1992) Turner Publishing Company-Floyd County Bicentennial Committee.

*Floyd County: Images of America* by Lisa Perry and the Wheelwright Historical Society. (2010). Arcadia Publishing: Chicago, IL.

*The Louisville Baseball Almanac* by Philip Von Borries

Though long associated with fine bourbons, riverboats and champion Thoroughbreds, Louisville, Kentucky, is home to another icon--the Louisville slugger. The Louisville Baseball Almanac presents the first-ever comprehensive look at the rich history of professional teams, ballplayers and managers, a history that runs deep within the city. Originally a major-league city that won a pennant in 1890, the early Louisville teams gave rise to a host of legends and eccentrics, in equal measure. And ever since, Louisville has maintained a strong position in baseball history as a top-flight minor league city. Red Sox, Yankee, Dodger, Reds and Cardinals fans--baseball fans --have Louisville to thank for launching the careers of some of the game's most memorable players. Louisville baseball historian Philip Von Borries recounts the breadth of Louisville's ballplaying heritage, his text complemented by numerous vintage photographs. (Summary provided by Amazon.)

*The Ultimate Cincinnati Reds Trivia Book: A Collection of Amazing Trivia Quizzes and Fun Facts for Die-Hard Reds Fans!*

The Ultimate Cincinnati Reds Trivia Book is a staple for anyone who loves baseball, sports trivia, and the Reds.

In these pages, you will find answers to over 350 trivia questions as well as hundreds of interesting facts, including:

* Which team names did the Reds franchise once go by?
* How many MLB All-Star Games have the Cincinnati Reds hosted?
* Who was the first manager of the Reds franchise?
* The Cincinnati Reds have had 16 no-hitters thrown in franchise history.
* The Cincinnati Reds' flagship radio station has been WLW, 700AM, since 1969.

**Websites:**

**Cincinnati Reds**

Hall of Fame & Museum: https://www.mlb.com/reds/hall-of-fame

Retired numbers:

https://www.mlb.com/reds/history/records-stats-awards/retired-numbers

As the oldest franchise in professional baseball, the Reds have one of the more storied histories in the game. The club also enjoyed one of the more profound dynasties in recent history.

Several of the team's all-time greats have been given the great honor of having their number retired by the club. Most of those select few are also enshrined in Cooperstown at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. But not everybody. Of the 10 numbers retired, not including Jackie Robinson, four are not Hall of Famers.

"There's no set rule on that," said Rick Walls, who serves as the executive director of the Reds Hall of Fame adjacent to Great American Ball Park. "Certainly the benchmark is being in the Baseball Hall of Fame. But you take each case and consider the merits of the particular person and go from there."

The Great Eight-Cincinnati Red

https://www.mlb.com/reds/hall-of-fame/history/great-eight

It stands uncontested as the most famous lineup in Reds history: Johnny Bench behind the plate, an infield comprised of Tony Perez at first base, Joe Morgan at second base, David Concepcion at shortstop and Pete Rose at third base with an outfield comprised of Ken Griffey in right, Cesar Geronimo in center and George Foster in left. It is this group that powered the Big Red Machine to consecutive World Championships in 1975 and 1976 and it is this group that made the Machine one of the greatest teams the game has ever seen.

The fabled Great Eight starting lineup was born out of a favor a manager asked of his team captain. It was May 2, 1975, and the Reds were scuffling along with a 12-12 record and manager Sparky Anderson sensed the need for a change to spark the club. Nothing had worked terribly well to that point of the season, but Sparky was particularly unhappy with the weak hitting of third baseman John Vukovich. With none of the Reds hitters producing terribly well, Vukovich’s struggles were magnified. Spending far too much time on the bench was George Foster, a player Sparky felt was primed for a breakout season.

And so it was that Sparky approached Pete Rose, the player Anderson had named team captain in 1970, and asked if the two-time Gold Glove-winning outfielder would be open to moving to third base. Without hesitation, Rose agreed and the next night, after spending the better part of the day fielding grounders at the position off the bat of coach George Scherger, Pete Rose became the Reds new third baseman. The left field position he vacated was soon filled by Foster, a move that completed the Great Eight.

One of the enduring myths surrounding the Big Red Machine is that Sparky Anderson rubber stamped his lineup card before each game with the names of Rose, Griffey, Morgan, Perez, Foster, Bench, Concepcion and Geronimo and forgot about them. The reality is that from its inception on May 9, 1975 through the end of the 1976 season, the Great Eight lineup only took the field as a unit in 63 regular season games. Sparky regularly inserted different players into the lineup both to rest his stars and to keep his bench players fresh. The postseason was a different story as the Great Eight started each of the Reds’ 17 playoff and World Series games in 1975 and 1976.

But on those comparatively rare occasions when the Great Eight were in the same lineup, the results were devastating for the opposition. When postseason games are added to the regular season total, the Great Eight started a total of 80 games together in 1975 and 1976. The Reds record in those games was an astonishing 64-16, an .800 winning percentage that projected over a 162 game schedule produces a record of 130-32.

The run of the Great Eight was as brief as it was dominating. Following the 1976 season, the greatest lineup in the history of baseball was broken up when Tony Perez was traded to the Montreal Expos.

On your next trip to the Reds Hall of Fame & Museum presented by Dinsmore, be sure to stop by the Great Eight Exhibit featuring bronze statues of all eight legendary players. The statues are arranged in celebration of a Reds victory, giving you the opportunity to pose for a celebratory photo amongst the most iconic lineup in Reds history.

**Kentucky High School Athletic Association: Baseball**

https://khsaa.org/sports-activities-events/spring/baseball/

\*Share the printed statistics with your group members.

**Kentucky High School Athletic Association: Softball**

https://khsaa.org/sports-activities-events/spring/fast-pitch-softball/

\*Share the printed statistics with your group members.

**Louisville Slugger Museum**

https://www.sluggermuseum.com/

In 1842, J. Frederick Hillerich (above, second from the left) emigrated with his family from Germany to Baltimore, Maryland. They moved to Louisville in 1856, where J. Fred started a woodworking shop.

By 1864, "J.F. Hillerich, Job Turning" was in business, filling orders for everything from spindles and shutters to steamboat interiors. The eldest son, John Andrew "Bud" Hillerich (pictured left), was born in Louisville in 1866.

1875-“The Louisville Slugger”

The business was thriving. By 1875, the little woodworking shop employed about 20 people. In 1880, Bud became an apprentice in his father's shop. Young Bud also played amateur baseball and made his own baseball bats along with bats for several of his teammates.

There is some debate over the origin story — what set in motion the carpentry shop’s first bat for a professional player. Here, Bud played a key role: getting his father's business involved with what would become the company's signature item.

According to company legend, the first pro bat was created by 17-year-old Bud for Pete Browning (pictured right) in 1884. Browning, megastar on Louisville's major league team, the Eclipse, found himself in the middle of a slump one spring afternoon. On that day, Bud skipped out of work to watch the Eclipse play.

After that game, Browning, having heard about Bud’s craftmanship, asked Bud to make him a new bat. According to the story, by the next game, Browning scored three hits with the very bat Bud made.

It feels fitting that Pete Browning became known for his nickname: "The Louisville Slugger."

1894-Diving into the Baseball Bat Business

While Bud was passionate about adding baseball bats to the family business, his father wanted no part of that product. He didn’t like baseball and he didn’t think there was money to be made in baseball bats. J. Fred believed the future of the business was a very popular, patented, swinging butter churn (pictured left).

However, Bud Hillerich continued to push for and improve the bat-making business; even going on to invent some patented processes.

The Hillerichs' baseball bat business began to grow. In 1894, the name "Louisville Slugger" became their registered trademark; and by 1897, Bud joined his father as a partner.

1905-Enter The Flying Dutchman

The success of the growing bat company took another leap in 1905 when Honus "The Flying Dutchman" Wagner (pictured right), a superstar shortstop for the Pittsburgh Pirates, signed a contract as the first player ever to endorse a bat. His autograph was also the first to be used on a bat — and the first time a professional athlete ever endorsed an athletic product.

1911-Serious Sales and Marketing

In 1911, Frank Bradsby (pictured left), a successful salesman for one of the Hillerich's largest buyers, joined J.F. Hillerich and Son. The Hillerichs knew how to make great bats, but lacked professional sales and marketing expertise. That's where Bradsby came in, bringing transformative drive to the business. In 1916, he became a full partner, and the company name changed for the last time to Hillerich & Bradsby Co.

A disastrous flood along the Ohio River in 1937 hit the business with significant damage. Working almost nonstop for weeks to repair the factory, Frank Bradsby died later that year, devoting his life to save the business. Though Bradsby had no heirs, the Hillerich family has kept his name as a tribute, honoring his amazing contributions to the growth of the company.

1939-WWII

After making equipment for the troops during World War I, Hillerich & Bradsby Co. served the country during World War II by producing M-1 carbine gunstocks, track pins for tanks, and billy clubs for the armed forces. H&B also continued to make baseball and softball bats for the troops. Like many industries, H&B’s WWII efforts marked the first time women worked in the factory.

1970-Growing Popularity

After the war, baseball carried on as the country’s passionate pastime, where Louisville Slugger bats dominated as the stick of choice for the greatest players in the game. Since that first contract with Honus Wagner in 1905, generations of legends have swung Louisville slugger bats; including Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Hank Aaron, George Brett, Ken Griffey Jr., and Derek Jeter.

H&B’s wood bat business branched out into aluminum bats in 1970, moving its factory just over the Ohio River to Southern Indiana from 1970 to 1995 (when more production room was needed). However, throughout every evolution of the business, the corporate headquarters has always remained in Louisville.

1996-Welcome Home

In 1996, Hillerich & Bradsby Co. moved into new headquarters at 800 West Main Street, about seven blocks from the carpentry shop pictured at the top of this history.

Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory is one of the region’s most popular attractions. The world-famous facility is hard to miss. Just look for The Big Bat, the world's largest baseball bat, captivating each guest as they enter the building. To date, more than four million people have enjoyed our museum and factory tour experience at this very location.

H&B’s current President and CEO, John A. Hillerich IV, is the great-grandson of Bud Hillerich: the baseball fan who introduced baseball to the family business back in the 1800s.

In 2015, Wilson Sporting Goods bought the Louisville Slugger brand from H&B, which still owns Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory and the production facility. Exclusively for Wilson now, H&B continues to produce Louisville Slugger bats in Louisville, Kentucky, where the Hillerich family first arrived in 1856.

**Notable Kentucky African Americans Database:** https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/

**Negro Leagues Database:** https://www.seamheads.com/NegroLgs/index.php

**Negro League Baseball Museum:**

https://www.nlbm.com/

Negro Leagues History

African-Americans began to play baseball in the late 1800s on military teams, college teams, and company teams. They eventually found their way to professional teams with white players. Moses Fleetwood Walker and Bud Fowler were among the first to participate. However, racism and “Jim Crow” laws would force them from these teams by 1900. Thus, black players formed their own units, “barnstorming” around the country to play anyone who would challenge them.

In 1920, an organized league structure was formed under the guidance of Andrew “Rube” Foster—a former player, manager, and owner for the Chicago American Giants. In a meeting held at the

Paseo YMCA in Kansas City, Mo., Foster and a few other Midwestern team owners joined to form the Negro National League. Soon, rival leagues formed in Eastern and Southern states, bringing the thrills and innovative play of black baseball to major urban centers and rural country sides in the U.S., Canada, and Latin America. The Leagues maintained a high level of professional skill and became centerpieces for economic development in many black communities.

**Bowling Green Hot Rods**

https://www.milb.com/bowling-green

See the Hot Rods booklet included in the kit to learn more about the team.

**Florence Y’alls**

https://florenceyalls.com/

**Lexington Legends**

https://www.lexingtonlegends.com/

**Louisville Bats**

https://www.milb.com/louisville

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17xrBIDXesr779mNadW0tcYok6sJYdxS8

In a tribute to Louisville’s rich history of Bourbon and baseball, the Bats have rebranded as the Louisville “Mashers” since May 26, 2018. As the most popular “identity” of the Bats, the team has rebranded to the Louisville “Mashers” nine times and has been a staple ever since.

The above team summary was taken from the Louisville Bats Media Guide 2022. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17xrBIDXesr779mNadW0tcYok6sJYdxS8

**University of Louisville fight song:**

University of Louisville fight song:

https://youtu.be/KcR2o4VGzGA

https://youtu.be/-SDSkJqevxg

**Library of Congress’ Early Baseball Digital Collection**

https://www.loc.gov/collections/early-baseball-publications/about-this-collection/?loclr=blogloc

Library of Congress’ Early Baseball Digital Collection. To celebrate the start of the 2023 season, the Library is pleased to announce a new digital collection.

The collection, which will grow over time, provides full-text digitized access to more than 120 early baseball publications.

The initial release includes a large selection of 19th- and early 20th-century annual baseball guides, including many volumes of Spalding’s Official Baseball Record: https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.spaldingsofficia02/?sp=7&r=-0.616,0.076,2.231,1.149,0?loclr=blogloc,

one of the premier baseball publications of its day. Also included are rule books, record books, scorekeeping guides and books on how to hit and play different positions.

Early Baseball Publications updates and expands the Library’s The Spalding Base Ball Guides 1889-1939: https://www.loc.gov/collections/spalding-base-ball-guides/about-this-collection/?loclr=blogloc digital collection, which will be retired in several months once its content has fully migrated to the new collection. The new collection will include the 15 Spalding’s Official Base Ball Guides published between 1889 and 1939 in the legacy collection as well as the 20 Official Indoor Base Ball Guides also found there (“indoor baseball” developed into what we know today as softball).

Many of the more than 120 publications in the new collection were published by Albert Spalding’s American Sports Publishing Company. Among these are not only the annual Spalding guides, but also a number of:

Rule books: https://www.loc.gov/item/tmp96023337/?loclr=blogloc

Instruction manuals: https://www.loc.gov/collections/early-baseball-publications/?q=%22how+to+play%22+spalding&loclr=blogloc.

The 1911 manual How to Pitch, https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.howtopitch00fost/?sp=1?loclr=blogloc, for instance, provides detailed illustrations showing how to grip the ball to throw different pitches, such as the “straight, swift ball” (fastball) thrown by New York Giants ace and future Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson: https://www.loc.gov/item/2007685630/?loclr=blogloc

“The Straight, Swift Ball.” Illustration from “How to Pitch.” American Sports Publishing Company, 1911.

The collection also includes a number of unexpected finds, such as The Orr-Edwards Code for Reporting Base Ball: https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.orredwardscodefo00orre/?st=gallery, an 1890 instruction manual for sports journalists covering the game. It focused on shorthand to use on the telegraph.

While the collection is focused on works of nonfiction, one poetic surprise we discovered was “Chick Gandil’s Great Hit” from 1914. Written by Gilbert Marquardt Eiseman, the poem adapts “Casey at the Bat” by imagining a tense game between the Washington Senators and Boston Red Sox. The hero is Washington first baseman Gandil, whose talent would be overshadowed several years later by his involvement as the ringleader of the 1919 Chicago “Black Sox” game-fixing scandal, https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-chicago-black-sox-scandal/selected-articles?loclr=blogloc for which he and eight other players were permanently banned from baseball.

First page of “Chick Gandil’s Great Hit.” Judd & Detweiler, Inc. c1914.

Early Baseball Publications represents only a fraction of the baseball materials at the Library. You can learn more about our extensive baseball holdings — among the largest in the world — and many other baseball materials by exploring our online Baseball Resources at the Library of Congress, https://guides.loc.gov/baseball?loclr=blogloc.

**Oral History Interview:**

Permission to share this project in the guide has been granted.

*All rights to the interviews, including but not restricted to legal title, copyrights and literary property rights, have been transferred to the University of Kentucky Libraries.  Interviews may only be reproduced with permission from Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, Special Collections and Digital Programs, University of Kentucky Libraries.*

\*\*You may come across language in UK Libraries Special Collections Research Center collections and online resources that you find harmful or offensive. SCRC collects materials from different cultures and time periods to preserve and make available the historical record. These materials document the time period when they were created and the view of their creator. As a result, some may demonstrate racist and offensive views that do not reflect the values of UK Libraries.

A. B. "Happy" Chandler: Desegregation of Major League Baseball Oral History Project; [https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7nzs2k9c74](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7nzs2k9c74__;!!Db6frn15oIvDD3UI!m9WnRJx8Q8qCWeDUXeTm_WhDeBjl8vH5gZlQLIMYLXrt9AQPgvtILUE-pAEL1cq9BOWXMwxzrxUmr_97dqwOWc1VwIs$)

Interview with Albert Benjamin "Happy" Chandler, September 3, 1980

[https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7t4b2x5f8t](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7t4b2x5f8t__;!!Db6frn15oIvDD3UI!m9WnRJx8Q8qCWeDUXeTm_WhDeBjl8vH5gZlQLIMYLXrt9AQPgvtILUE-pAEL1cq9BOWXMwxzrxUmr_97dqwOvcDP5-M$)

\*Begin at the 23:27 time stamp.

Interview with Donald Newcombe, May 4, 1976

[https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7v6w968t85](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7v6w968t85__;!!Db6frn15oIvDD3UI!m9WnRJx8Q8qCWeDUXeTm_WhDeBjl8vH5gZlQLIMYLXrt9AQPgvtILUE-pAEL1cq9BOWXMwxzrxUmr_97dqwOrimubRo$)

**Articles:**

**Article 1:**

Russ, Pythias. National Baseball Hall of Fame. (December 1, 2022). Retrieved from:

https://collection.baseballhall.org/people/33593/russ-pythias-19041930

Pythias Russ, Negro League Baseball star from Harrison County.

Pythias Russ was a shortstop, catcher, and first baseman in the Negro Leagues for five years. He made his debut with the Memphis Red Sox in 1925.

Memphis Red Sox. Major League Baseball: The Negro Leagues. (2022). Retrieved from: https://www.mlb.com/history/negro-leagues/teams/memphis-red-sox

There is no official record of Negro League Baseball game results. The above was compiled using various sources including the Negro Leagues Database at seamheads.com after consultation with John Thorn, the Official Historian for MLB, and other Negro Leagues experts.

Notable Alumni: Dan Bankhead, Jehoise Heard, Marshall Bridges, Neil Robinson, Carl Glass and Bob Boyd

There weren’t many Negro League teams that were able to span over 30 years of operation, but the Memphis Red Sox were one of them. Owned by two brothers/dentists, Dr. J.B. Martin and Dr. B.B. Martin, the Red Sox weren’t goliaths of the Negro Leagues, but they did have their high points.

In 1937, the Memphis Red Sox were one of eight founding members of the Negro American League, and the following year they were on the cusp of achieving the franchise’s first league title. They had secured the Negro American League first-half championship with a record of 21-4, and were scheduled to play a series against the Atlanta Black Crackers, the second-half champions, to determine who would take home the title of league champion. The Red Sox won their first two games against the Black Crackers, but unfortunately for Memphis, the two teams would not play again, as a clash between Red Sox and Black Crackers management prevented them from finishing the series.

Though the Red Sox were never known for fielding titans of the game, they did send four players to the Major Leagues, including pitchers Dan Bankhead, Jehosie Heard and Marshall Bridges, who played for the Dodgers, Orioles and Cardinals, respectively, and first baseman Bob Boyd, who played for the White Sox and Orioles. Other Memphis Red Sox who were said to have Major League potential included Verdell Mathis, Marlin Carter, Joe Scott, Frank Pearson and Charley Pride, who would achieve fame as a country western singer.

The Memphis Red Sox were never the most heralded bunch, but three decades of Negro League baseball was still a major victory that very few teams could claim.

Pythias Russ. Society for American Baseball Research. (2022). Retrieved from: https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/pythias-russ/

**Article 2:**

Lion Tamers (Newport, KY, baseball team)

“Lion Tamers (Newport, KY, baseball team),” *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, accessed December 2, 2022, https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/2241.

The Lion Tamers baseball team, of Newport, KY, were the champions of the Northern Kentucky Semi-pro Negro Baseball League, and the team was in high demand. In August 1936, the team was matched in an exhibition game against the J C Penny's Baseball Club in Lindenwald, OH, on Kellogg Field. The Lion Tamers were considered a very good team, so several new players had been added to the Penny's team to help give them a better chance at winning.

**Article 3:**

Lynch Demons (Lynch, KY, baseball team)

In 1935, the Lynch Demons baseball team was considered the best Colored baseball team in Kentucky. On October 1, they were scheduled to play the Kingsport Tigers on their home field; the Tigers were a Colored baseball team from Tennessee with a record of 19-5. The Lynch Demons had a record of 34 wins and one loss.  
  
For more see "Tigers to battle Lynch on Sunday," *Kingsport Times*, 8/29/1934, p. 2. The city of Lynch also had a Colored baseball team in 1924; for more about that team, see "Middlesboro colored team[s] plays Lynch," *Middlesboro Daily News*, 7/07/1924, p. 4.

**Article 4:**

Louisville baseball legend Felton Snow honored with new memorial grave marker. By Breya Jones. (September 2, 2022). Louisville Public Media. Retrieved from: https://www.lpm.org/news/2022-09-02/louisville-baseball-legend-felton-snow-honored-with-new-memorial-grave-marker

Felton Snow’s gravesite in Eastern Cemetery was unmarked for nearly 50 years.

Now, it has a memorial detailing his impact on the game of baseball and the city of Louisville.

Snow played in the Negro Leagues, the all-Black baseball league created before the sport integrated. He was a member of several teams, including Louisville’s Black Caps and White Sox.

“He made two all-star teams in 1935 and ‘36, and he played with Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, Cool Papa Bell, Buck Leonard. He played with all the greats, you cannot take it away from him,” said Larry Lester, co-founder of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

Lester said Snow was one of the best third baseman in the league, placing him in the top three players. His career spanned 21 years.

He played 15 of those with Columbus Elite Giants, working as both manager and player on the team as it moved from city to city. During his time working double duty, Snow led the team, then known as the Baltimore Elite Giants, to their first and only Negro Leagues pennant win.

“Not only was he a professional baseball player, but he was also a professional man,” said his nephew Billy Snow. “Even when he was playing, he brought so much pride to our family, and even today we all have so much pride for Uncle Snow.”

Billy Snow can’t remember hearing anything bad about his uncle growing up. From anecdotal stories told by those who spent time with him, Felton Snow stayed the “professional man,” as his nephew described him, when he returned to Louisville after retiring.

After his baseball career, Snow worked at a barber shop in St. Matthews, where several people remember speaking with him about baseball and getting their haircuts.

Bats Baseball CEO Greg Galiette and his dad were some of Snow's clients. Galiette’s dad was sick in the last few years of his life, and Snow would come over to cut Galiette’s hair.

“He’d take me out back and play catch with me, take my older sister and myself around the neighbor when the ice cream would come around and walk us back, put me on his lap and tell me some interesting stories,” Galiette said.

Galiette credits Snow for igniting his love of baseball, leading to where he is today.

Even in retirement, Snow continued to love baseball and shared that passion with those around him.

When children would come into the barber shop wearing their uniforms, Snow was there to give advice. Pee Wee Reese Chapter member Ken Draut was one of the many children who learned from Snow.

“He would give us tips on how to bunt, how to hold the bat. He would tell us how to field a ball, how to catch with a glove, sometimes he’d even bring a bat to show us,” Draut said. “He also loved to see our uniforms dirty, because that meant we had put in the extra effort that day.”

Though Snow’s impact on the sport has been known to some, and his personal impact on the community was remembered by those who encountered him, his grave did not reflect this status.

“Just think about, these players play in anonymity, and even today they died and were buried in anonymity,” Lester said. “For 50 years, this man has been in an unmarked grave. That’s unacceptable.”

Lester said the dream of placing a marker on Snow’s grave has been fulfilled and he can now rest.

**Article 5:**

2 Kentuckians Played Parts in Robinson Story. By Billy Reed. (February 5, 1999). *Lexington Herald-Leader.* Retrieved from the NewsBank database.

To commemorate national Black History Month, Billy Reed is devoting most of his February columns to black Kentucky sports heroes. Tuesday: Isaac Murphy.

When the Brooklyn Dodgers broke major-league baseball's color barrier with Jackie Robinson in 1947, segregation was the de facto law of the land. In many areas, blacks weren't allowed to sit at lunch counters with whites. They had separate drinking fountains and restrooms. They were expected to sit in the back of the bus.

But then here came Robinson, proving he could hold his own with the best white players in a game that was far and away the nation's most popular. Immediately he became a hero with black Americans, even bigger than heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, and he also began forcing right-thinking whites to understand that the time had come for America to change its attitude about race.

To their ever-lasting credit, a couple of white Kentuckians - baseball commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler and Dodgers shortstop Pee Wee Reese - stood up for Robinson at a time when that was an unpopular, even dangerous, thing to do.

"In Jackie's case, well, he gave me a lot of credit for helping him and I appreciated that," Reese said in a 1984 interview. "It's nice to be remembered that way."

When America entered World War II after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor, many major-league baseball stars went into the service. One of them was Reese, the graduate of Louisville Manual High who had replaced Leo Durocher as the Dodgers' shortstop in 1940.

While Reese was in the Navy (1943-45), the Dodgers filled his job with all sorts of pretenders. However, none seemed a serious threat until Branch Rickey, then the Dodgers' president, signed Robinson to a minor-league contract.

Reese heard the news aboard a troop carrier that was bringing him home from Guam. He fully understood the prejudices that existed not only in baseball, but every part of American life, and he rejected them.

"I got asked a lot of questions about how I felt about a colored player taking my job," Reese once said. "My feeling was that if he was good enough, so be it. But race wouldn't be an issue."

Under Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner, the big leagues had remained lily white, denying opportunity to such famed Negro League stars as Josh Gibson, Buck Leonard, Cool Papa Bell and Satchel Paige. But in 1945, Landis was replaced by Chandler, who gave up his seat as a U.S. Senator.

By the winter of 1946-47, the Dodgers were ready to bring Robinson to Brooklyn, only to be confounded by the big-league owners. Meeting secretly at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the owners voted 15-1 against letting Robinson play for the Dodgers.

Soon after that meeting, Rickey went to Chandler's home in Versailles to ask the commissioner to back him. The two met behind Chandler's home in the cabin where, Chandler once said, "I made my important decisions in this life."

After two hours, Chandler told Rickey he would approve the transfer of Robinson's contract from Montreal, then a member of the Class AAA International League, to Brooklyn.

"I figured that someday I'd have to meet my maker," Chandler said in a 1984 interview, "and he'd ask me why I didn't let that boy play. I was afraid that if I told him it was because he was black, that wouldn't have been sufficient. I told Rickey to bring him on."

The anticipated competition between Robinson and Reese was eliminated when it was decided to move Jackie to second base.

Nevertheless, Robinson wasn't exactly greeted with open arms - even on his own team. In spring training, six Dodgers signed a petition stating they would refuse to play if Robinson was kept on the roster.

Since Reese was from what was considered a Southern state, the protesters were confident of getting his support. But they grossly underestimated the character of the shortstop who wore No. 1 on his uniform and was on his way to becoming team captain.

"I can't sign this thing," Reese said. "I don't know about you guys, but this is my living. I've got a wife and child. I have to play baseball."

Instead of shunning Robinson, Reese went out of his way to befriend him. Some of the things he did might, in retrospect, seem rather trivial. But in the segregated society of the 1940s, they were important, courageous gestures.

Once, when Robinson was being jeered at Cincinnati's Crosley Field, Reese simply walked over and draped an arm around his shoulder. He invited Robinson to participate in clubhouse card games. Mostly, he listened when Robinson wanted to talk about the abuse, the threats, the balls rival pitchers aimed at his head.

As writer Roger Kahn put in in his book The Boys of Summer, "Anyone who resented Robinson for his color - or, more common, for the combination of color and aggressiveness, found himself contending not only with Jack, but with Reese.

"Aware, but unselfconscious, Reese and Robinson came to personify integration. If a man didn't like what they personified, why, he had better not play for the Dodgers."

After Robinson, the Dodgers added other black stars such as Roy Campanella, Jim Gilliam and Don Newcombe. They also had Carl Furillo, an Italian-American, and Sandy Amoros, a Cuban, and white players from both cities and the heartland.

It was this cultural mix that led them to become so popular that, when they finally won the World Series in 1955 over the lordly New York Yankees, the rejoicing was hardly confined to Brooklyn.

In 1997, the 50th anniversary of Robinson's debut with the Dodgers, ceremonies honoring his memory were held in every major-league stadium.

Unfortunately, not enough attention was paid to Chandler and Reese, the Kentuckians who played major roles in what might be the century's most significant sports story.

**Article 6:**

Pee Wee (Harold Henry) Reese. National Baseball Hall of Fame. (2022). Retrieved from: https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/reese-pee-wee

Pee Wee Reese was the heart and soul of the Dodgers, playing shortstop from 1940-57 (he served in the Navy from 1943-45) in Brooklyn, and for one season in Los Angeles.

With Reese, numbers don’t tell the whole story. The Dodgers captain was the leader of of a dynasty that produced seven National League pennants and one World Series win.

Reese was a 10 time All-Star who finished in the Top 10 of the NL Most Valuable Player Award voting eight times. His nickname came not from stature (he stood 5-foot-10), but from his childhood days as a marbles champion in Louisville. He broke in with the Dodgers in 1940 and became a regular the following year. In 1942, Reese led all NL shortstops in putouts, assists and double plays.

He was a versatile ballplayer, and his contributions to the team were varied: He led the NL in walks (104) in 1947, runs (132) in 1949 and stolen bases (30) in 1952. Defensively, he led the league four times in putouts, twice in double plays and once each in fielding percentage and assists.

But his most important action on a baseball field may have been prior to a game. In 1947, the Dodgers were visiting Cincinnati, and fans and opposing players were jeering rookie Jackie Robinson. Reports of the game state that Reese calmly walked over to Robinson, put his arm around his teammate’s shoulder, and chatted. The gesture is remembered as an important moment in both Robinson’s career and the acceptance of African Americans in baseball – and American society.

Earlier, Reese had refused to sign a petition circulating among Dodger teammates concerning Robinson’s participation on the team. Jackie’s widow, Rachel Robinson, said: “I thought it was a very supportive gesture, and very instinctive on Pee Wee’s part. You shouldn’t forget that Pee Wee was the captain, and he led the way. Pee Wee was more than a friend. Pee Wee was a good man.”

Reese was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1984. He passed away on Aug. 14, 1999.

**Article 7:**

Jamail, Milton. "Pee Wee Reese". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 10 Aug. 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pee-Wee-Reese. Accessed 2 December 2022.

Pee Wee Reese, byname of Harold Henry Reese, (born July 23, 1918, Ekron, Kentucky, U.S.—died August 14, 1999, Louisville, Kentucky), American professional baseball player and broadcaster who was the captain of the famous “Boys of Summer” Brooklyn Dodgers teams of the 1950s.

Reese, a shortstop, played his entire 16-year career (1940–58) with the Dodgers, the first 15 in Brooklyn, before he moved with the team to Los Angeles. He missed three seasons (1943–45) as a result of military service. A 10-time All-Star, Reese had a career batting average of only .269, but he often walked and when on base was a threat to steal. Reese was an outstanding defensive player who led the National League in putouts four times, in double plays twice, and in fielding percentage and assists once each.

Reese, who grew up in the segregated South, is also remembered for the close friendship he formed with Dodgers teammate Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in the major leagues in the 20th century. After his retirement, Reese worked as a play-by-play announcer with Dizzy Dean on telecasts of major league baseball games. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, in 1984.

**Article 8:**

After 22 years, Lexington Legends have a new nickname. By Caroline Makauskas. (March 7, 2023). The Lexington Herald-Leader. Retrieved from the NewsBank database.

Legends no more.

On Monday morning, Lexington's minor league baseball team - which was known as the Lexington Legends for 22 years - announced a complete rebranding ahead of the new season.

The Lexington Counter Clocks, who will sport red and blue, pay homage to Kentucky's influence on horse racing.

In the announcement video released by the organization, the decision to shift the direction in which horses race around a track from clockwise to counterclockwise is cited as the inspiration for the new name.

"There was a time when England was known for horse racing," the narrator explains. "Before we declared our independence, their horses raced on the grass. Running clockwise."

Before landing on Counter Clocks as the nickname, new team owner Nathan Lyons said the organization held meetings throughout the community for several weeks to gather feedback.

"Obviously, in Kentucky, in Lexington, the horse racing industry is significant," Lyons said. "And our goal was to pay homage to that. But if you also think about baseball, we run the bases counterclockwise on dirt. And so it really started to come together and I think what our team has done on the branding side, the colors, the logos, we feel will be loved by many."

Along with the name change come two new mascots by the names of "Hoss" and "Dinger." According to the organization, Hoss and Dinger are representative of the fun and energetic nature of this new brand.

"Hoss the horse races to the left, charging toward home base with a Big L-inspired ballplayer on his back," the organization said in a press release. "Meanwhile, for Dinger the clock, it's game time all the time. His hands hold tight to a bat, ready for action and clocking home run after home run."

The rebrand to Counter Clocks is the latest in a series of changes to Lexington's minor league team.

Since the end of October, the organization has completely changed its front office, with Lyons and his wife Keri's acquisition of the team and all related assets, and the hiring of former major league catcher Barry Lyons, Nathan's uncle, as manager and Justin Ferrarella as president and general manager.

As one might expect after a complete rebranding, and the departure of a Legends nickname with decades of history attached, the team's announcement on Twitter was met with reaction that ranged from the extremely negative - "You know what else runs counterclockwise? Toilets" - to the extremely positive - "I need a Dinger the Clock shirt ASAP."

"The rebrand is just going to do great things for the organization as a whole," Ferrarella said. "With the new ownership you really just needed a clean slate, you know, with all the improvements going on to the stadium. It just made sense, and it's a team name that we're gonna have a lot of fun with, but at the same time people of Lexington and Kentucky are going to be proud of."

The Lexington Counter Clocks will begin their season April 28 with a three-game home stand against the York Revolution. Tickets and new merchandise are available on the Counter Clocks' website now.

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**Article 9:**

Return of the Legends (February 15, 2024) https://www.lexingtonlegends.com/blogs/news/return-of-the-legends

Lexington’s Professional Baseball Team to restore Legends name with new imagery

(LEXINGTON, KY) – The worst kept secret in town is out: The Lexington Legends are back. The new ownership group, Temerity Baseball, previewed an impending name change last month with owner Andy Sandler suggesting it would be “legendary,” and Legends founder Alan Stein celebrating his return to ownership by breaking out his closet full of blue and green duds.

Today the ball club revealed its restored identity to a packed room of fans at the Red Mile, sharing not just the much celebrated and much-loved name, but also a series of images and marks that create a complete style package for the Atlantic League team. For 20 years, Lexington’s Baseball team was known as the Lexington Legends, and a return of the iconic name was overwhelmingly requested by fans in a series of focus groups, surveys and social media posts.

The new face of the Legends is Mighty Lex, a debonair old school ballplayer with a handlebar mustache, mischievous smirk, and knowing wink. A contemporary of Mighty Casey from a legendary bygone era, the Legends can promise joy in Lexington when Mighty Lex is in town.

Other imagery features the famed Legends mustache once worn proudly by Big L and now by Mighty Lex. Also back, the “Kentucky L,” an “L” made with the outline of the great state of Kentucky, and the stacked LEX text. Home and road jerseys feature new, custom “Legends” and “Lexington” cursive word marks, an homage to the scripts that have adorned classic baseball jerseys for generations.

“Being able to create this new brand identity for the Lexington Legends was particularly meaningful to me, as Kentucky has been my home for the past 20+ years. I am very excited to see this new identity being worn by the players and enjoyed by the fans at Lexington’s stadium, a ballpark that will always hold a special place in my heart, as my son and his teammates won the Kentucky state high school baseball championship there,” said designer Dan Simon of Studio Simon. Simon designed the full suite of Lexington marks.

Owner Andy Sandler, “When we first visited Lexington, we felt that legendary vibe, driving past iconic horse farms and sipping bourbon while admiring the classic Legends Lane ballpark and imagining the enhancements to come to the ballpark and its surrounding property in the heart of Lexington. We cherish the opportunity to bring back to the community the team’s name and restore the baseball experience so cherished by generations of Lexington families.”

The team revealed their new identity and its marks with a celebration for over 300 fans at Red Mile. Merchandise is available now at LexingtonLegends.com and at the team store at 207.

**Article 10:**

New Lexington Minor League Baseball Team to Be Named ‘Wild Health Genomes.’ By Zach Koons. (February 8, 2022). *Sports Illustrated.* Retrieved from: https://www.si.com/extra-mustard/2022/02/08/new-lexington-minor-league-baseball-team-named-genomes-gnomies

Minor League Baseball teams have become well-known for their unique, or often ridiculous, nicknames. A new club based out of Lexington, KY, appears to be following that traditional mold.

Starting in 2022, the Lexington Legends of the Atlantic League of Professional Baseball will be joined by the “Kentucky Wild Health Genomes,” as first reported by Lee K. Howard of CBS Lexington.

For those wondering, a genome is defined as “the haploid set of chromosomes in a gamete or microorganism, or in each cell of a multicellular organism.” It's more commonly known as an organism’s complete set of genes.

The “Wild Health” part of the team's new name comes from a Lexington-based medical clinic that will has acquired the naming rights of the club's home field. Wild Health field will host both Legends and Genomes games beginning this spring.

The team confirmed the new nickname on Twitter shortly after and shared an appropriate new tagline: “Baseball in our DNA,“ as well as a nickname, the “gnomies.”

The Genomes also announced the signing of their first player on Tuesday, former MLB infielder Jimmy Paredes.

The inaugural first pitch for the Genomes is set to be thrown in Lexington when the team hosts the High Point Rockers on April 21.

**Article 11**

Kentuckian had role in recognizing Negro League baseball players. By Mark Maynard. (July 3, 2019). *Kentucky Today.* Retrieved from: https://www.kentuckytoday.com/kentucky-sports/kentuckian-had-role-in-recognizing-negro-league-baseball-players/article\_813b36da-0a53-5f49-aa9f-605a02ca93dc.html

ASHLAND, Ky. (KT) - Of the many things that Kentuckian Tom Stultz has accomplished in his life, one of his most treasured came 40 years ago this week.

It was in July the summer of 1979 when the first Negro League Baseball Reunion took place in Ashland.

Stultz, a native of Greenup who is president of JMI Sports, was at the forefront of the event that was the springboard to the Negro League Baseball Hall of Fame in Kansas City that has served to honor some of the greatest players to ever live.

Much has been done since that time to bring recognition to some of those great players and teams, but Stultz’s idea is what started it all.

It started out because a friend of Stultz’s grandfather, Phil Leslie, had a family friend named Horace “Choppy” Thomas who liked to talk a little baseball.

“Choppy and Bea (his wife) were at every family event we had,” Stultz said. “Dave (Stultz) and I played a lot of ball and talked a lot of ball. Choppy was telling us about his brother Clint, who he said ‘played a little ball.’”

Tom Stultz sometime later read an article from a Charleston, W.Va., newspaper about a man named Clint Thomas from Greenup who played in the Negro Leagues and was called “the black Joe DiMaggio.”

Thomas’ nickname was “The Hawk” and further research from Stultz revealed what an amazing player Clint Thomas was in the old Negro Leagues. He did a story on him in the Greenup Sentinel, a paper Stultz owned that later became today’s Greenup News.

“Of the people I called — people like Satchel Paige, Cool Papa Bell, Monte Irvin — they all knew about Clint,” he said. “He was kind of a big deal.”

So it was Stultz’s idea to have some of the old players come in for an 83rd birthday party for Thomas and that blossomed into a full-fledged Negro League Reunion. He merged the celebration with the Tri-State Fair and Regatta to give it more exposure and from there it exploded.

“At the banquet we had several hundred show up,” he said. “We had a press conference on a boat. Fourteen or 15 players came in for the birthday party to honor Clint Thomas.”

Stultz and his wife, Pat, moved from the area before the second reunion took place but Ashland Oil took the idea and ran with it and it was celebrated for two more years here.

Ernie Banks, Buck O’Neil, Monte Irvin, Jake Stevens, Turkey Stearns, Buck Leonard, Ray Dandridge, Judy Johnson, Ted Page, Eugene Benson and Leon Day came the first year. In later years, Banks, Paige, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Bob Feller and Happy Chandler were among the guests.

“Most of those guys are in the Hall of Fame,” Stultz said. “Clint still isn’t, but he should be. They started a wing (for the Negro League players) in Cooperstown.”

Stultz said many of the players stayed at his home in Greenup and talked about the old days for hours. He was mesmerized with all the stories.

“It started as an idea to honor Clint,” he said. “If I could have videotaped the stories. The mood just changed. Of course, I cry at the Smurfs, but when they got up and saw several hundred people turned out, those guys instead of getting up and joking were all choked up.”

The national media came to Ashland, including Sports Illustrated and NBC. It suddenly went from being a big birthday party to a time of honoring players who were incredibly talented but never received proper recognition. The stories that came from the memories of these men would make you laugh one second and cry the next.

“Having Ernie Banks and Monte Irvin at your house, as a baseball fan, it doesn’t get any better than that,” Stultz said. “They were telling stories about Luis Tiant Sr. when he was in the Cuban League. It was an incredible blessing to be involved in that.”

It also scored national points for the Ashland-Greenup area, who treated the Negro League players like the heroes they were. Stultz said he still gets goose bumps remembering the moments.

“To see the acceptance of that in Greenup, my hometown, and to get a thank you card signed by just about every African American in Greenup is one of my treasured possessions. I have it framed in my office at home.”

The Negro League Hall of Fame had a short life here, a couple of years at the old Jean Thomas Museum, before a movement was started to bring it to Kansas City, home of the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League era.

Buck O’Neil, who died about 11 years ago, was instrumental in getting the Negro League Hall of Fame in Kansas City, where it receives thousands of visitors a year. O’Neil did more to further the Negro League cause than anybody else but he sadly never made it into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Tom Stultz’s name probably isn’t in that Negro League Hall of Fame although maybe it should be. The recognition that the old league enjoys today started right here in northeastern Kentucky, when a big birthday bash for “the black Joe DiMaggio” became a movement to rightfully honor some of baseball’s all-time greats.

**Article 12:**

Ex-Mine Inspector, Ballplayer Dies. By Jennifer Hewlett. (August 25, 2000). *Lexington Herald-Leader.* Retrieved from the NewsBank database.

As a state mining inspector and later as district supervisor of the Martin district of the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals, he was an ally to coal miners and coal companies alike in coal-dependent Eastern Kentucky. He was sought out by politicians at election time. To many other people he was simply a treasured friend who loved to cook and took special interest in his great-grandsons.  
  
A lot of people who knew Mr. Watts are just now finding out that he also was a man who had achieved a certain degree of fame as a left-handed baseball pitcher in the old Negro American League.  
  
Mr. Watts died of cancer Tuesday at his home in Wheelwright. He was 73.  
  
The Maben, Ala., native moved to Wheelwright in the 1940s to "play baseball and get a job," he once said. He came from a family of coal miners.  
  
Before moving to Kentucky, he had served a stint in the Army during World War II and had been a player for the Birmingham Black Barons of the old Negro American League.  
  
"I played with Willie Mays. I played with Don Newcombe. I've played against Jackie Robinson," Mr. Watts said in a narrative about himself that was recorded by his daughter, Devondrea Watts.  
  
"I played with all the greats. Yes, we were good friends. We don't keep in touch like we should, but when I go to New York and different places, I do meet up with them," he said.  
  
"He was in that time period just before Jackie Robinson broke the color line," said Prestonsburg lawyer Ned Pillersdorf, a friend.  
  
Mr. Watts left the team "because of me," said his wife, Annie Laura Dixon Watts.  
  
"Everytime I'd turn around there was a bunch of groupies around him. I didn't like those women following him," she said.  
  
Mr. Watts went on to play for his Kentucky coal company's baseball team.  
  
"Richard Watts was very well known and extremely well liked in Floyd County," Pillersdorf said.  
  
"He was a fixture. Whenever there was a mining disaster, Richard was always the spokesman. In times of crises he was a voice of credibility," he said.  
  
Mr. Watts worked about 21 years at the Department of Mines and Minerals, retiring in 1995.  
  
"He would always call here and ask to speak to his 'darlings,' " said Rita Slone, an assistant at First Guaranty Bank of Martin.  
  
"He would call us every morning and say 'good morning.' Every day everybody would say 'Has Richard called today?' " she said.  
  
Mr. Watts invited Slone to his office's annual picnics and Christmas dinners.  
  
"He did all the cooking. He would do roast beef. The first spaghetti salad I ever ate he made," Slone said.  
  
"He was so proud of his food."  
  
In addition to his wife, Mr. Watts is survived by two sons, Richard Watts Jr. of Wheelwright and Larry D. Watts of Louisville; three daughters, Wanda Lou Gibbs of Detroit, Ruth Yvonne Watts of Wheelwright and Devondrea Watts of Cincinnati; four brothers; two sisters; six grandchidren; and 11 great-grandchildren.  
  
Services will be at 1 p.m. Sunday at Light House Temple in Wheelwright. Visitation will be after 3 p.m. today at Nelson-Frazier Funeral Home in Martin and after 5 p.m. Saturday at the church.

**Article 13:**

Why Daddy Sold Old Betsy. By Ralph Hall. (February 28, 2005). *The Floyd County Times*. Retrieved from the NewsBank database.

They were burning coal for heat in England in the year 1602. In the early 1900's, hundreds of companies came to the hills of eastern Kentucky to buy coal. The land owners didn't know the value of the coal, so they sold their rights to the coal and other minerals on their lands for as little as fifty cents an acre. In 1907, my grandfather Elder Hiram Hall owned the Hall Coal and Land Company in the village of Melvin. On September 6, 1907, he tried to lease some of his coal to the Northern Coal and Coke Company, in Ashland. But, the deal didn't go through at that time.  
  
In the 1930's, coal was becoming very important to our nation and many companies came to our area to mine coal. Steel mills in northern cities needed coal to process the steel. In eastern Kentucky, coal was being mined on a very small scale before the large companies came in. The small mines used ponies to haul the coal out of the mines. The coal they mined was used to heat people's houses. My daddy used to work for one of these small mines. These mines were more like "village type" operations that were run as small businesses. Now, I don't intend to try to write a history on coal or mining, I am only telling a story as I remember hearing it told.  
  
Anyway, in the 1930's, companies bought the coal in Jenkins, Wayland, Betsy Layne, Wheelwright, Weeksbury, Fed, Ligon, and other local villages. The coal camp I am going to talk about is the one that was at Weeksbury. It was bought out by Koppers Coal Company. Koppers moved in and made a very nice community in Weeksbury. They built nice company houses for the miners and their families to live in. They put in stores, a bank, a movie house, and a club house for folks to rent when they came to town to visit. A club house was like a hotel. "Club house" is just what people called them back then, instead of "hotel."  
  
Much of my young days were spent in the coal camp. I spent four years of my life going to school in the camp. My daddy worked there on the gin gang. When a person worked for the coal camp, they could buy anything at any of the stores and it would be taken out of the miners' payday. They all gave out company money which they called "script." Script could be used in the camp in place of money. The coal camp was a world where you could live and have everything you needed by working for the mining company.  
  
My favorite place to go was the soda fountain. At the soda fountain you could buy ice cream, a soda, or a hot dog. Me, I always went for the ice cream. It would always be the milk shakes or the malts for me. I could never get my fill. One summer, I drank so many milk shakes my mother had to take me to see the company doctor. He had me pee in a cup and told Mother to bring me back next week. I thought to myself, "What kind of doctor is he, anyway? Didn't give me any castor oil. Just wanted me to go in that old cup." Anytime before that I had gotten sick, Daddy just gave me two table spoons full of castor oil and said, "Ralph, you'll be okay tomorrow." Most times, Daddy was very wrong about that. Seems like the next day I would be so weak I couldn't get out of bed. Not many of us kids in the village ever got sick very often. The cure was worse than the sickness for us. I get sick all over again today if I even look at a bottle of castor oil. If we ever run across a kid going on and moaning in the outhouse, saying "Oh, God, help me!," we knew what the problem was - two table spoons of castor oil the night before! So, the village had very few sick children, if you know what I mean.  
  
Well, the next week, Mother took me back to the doctor's office. He called us in and told me, "Ralph, you have 4-plus sugar in your urine." I asked, "What's that mean, Doctor?"  
  
"It means you have to stay away from sugar for awhile." I said, "Is that all?" and he said, "That's all."  
  
I was so happy that I had something that castor wouldn't cure, but I will admit, it was awful hard to give up those good old milkshakes.  
  
They had lots of things going on in the coal camps. Every camp had a baseball team that would go away to training camp. They would go off to Tennessee or Virginia, almost any place to find a good baseball player to hire to work in the coal camp and play on the camp baseball team. One of these families brought in were the Skyles. The Skyles' were great ball players. I loved to go to the games on Friday nights or on Sunday afternoons. They had this one big man, I can remember, they called "Big Jess." Big Jess would put on a show almost every game. I have never seen a person hit a ball as far as Big Jess could. He could hit it right out of the park and into the trees on the hillside!  
  
My daddy was the manager of the team at Melvin. He had this old flat-bottom truck that he hauled his team around in. All the players would load up and pull me upon the truck with them. Then, off Daddy would go - driving us to Wayland, Betsy Layne, Boldman or one of the other camps for a game. My life was filled with fun hills to climb, a water hole to swim and catch fish in, movies to see, a skate rink to skate in, and Daddy's ball team. It was a great time for a kid. Off we would go in that old truck for an afternoon of baseball. I had no time be sad when I was a kid because my world was filled with adventure. What a life! We had very little money, but we had a world full of fun. I have memories that will last me a lifetime. Daddy and Mother saw to it that my world was full of both work and fun - the only things that make a child's life complete.  
  
Not only was that old truck used for ballgames, but other times Daddy would say, "Let's go on a picnic!" and us kids would cry out, "Oh, boy! We're ready! We're ready!" Now when old Daddy went on a picnic, he would gather up all of my aunts and uncles to join us. All of us would get in the back of that old flatbed truck and head out. Someone would bring along a guitar and we would ride down that road in the back of that old truck on a hot July day singing "I Traced Her Little Foot Prints in the Snow" or some other hit song of the day.  
  
Sometimes those trips would take us to the breaks of the mountains, other times down on the creek bank at the Old Mill Dam. There will never be another person like my Daddy. No one was like Daddy - he just loved kids and they loved him right back. There was never a kid anywhere that Daddy wouldn't rub his head or hand him a pocket knife and a piece of wood and say, "Let's whittle for awhile." Boy, those sure were the days!  
  
Well, mining coal soon became a way of life for those in Melvin and Weeksbury. Those who once made a living off a hillside farm now went to work in or around the coal mines. They mined lots of coal and it was a busy camp - something going on all the time. The houses were all lined up neat in a row, all painted white. It was a nice place to live.  
  
Koppers Coal Company had changed the lives of all the people who had lived up in the hollers all their lives. They helped the coal camp to become melting pots in our hills for they moved people in from all over the world who wanted to make a living mining coal. For a few years of my young life, Weeksbury was just the place to be.  
  
The unions came eventually to the coalfields and changed coal mining forever by making the mines safer and cleaner and giving people shorter work hours and better pay. Sometimes when workers would go on a strike, life would become hard. I have heard stories of families going hungry, of some people having only potatoes to eat and of daddies and mommies eating the peeling off the potatoes so their kids could have the insides.  
  
Well, it never got that bad at our house because we always raised a garden and Mother canned food for the winter months. But I can remember when we only had "taters," meal gravy and cornbread to eat. Some people may have called this "hard times," but I loved those days when we had cornbread and meal gravy. It wouldn't be long, though, until the strike would get settled and the people would go back to work. The old coal train would be moving up and down the tracks as coal was shipped to places far away. Things would get back to normal and the miners would all be buying things from the stores and shops again and getting gas at the company station. Daddy could fill up his old car with the rumble seat and the old flat-bottomed truck, too.  
  
The movie house would fill up with people and I could take the script that Mother gave me every morning in the summertime and walk up to the soda fountain and sit down on a stool and say, "A chocolate milk shake, please." I got to where I could have my fill again and they never seemed to bother anymore and I never had to go back to the doctor and pee in a cup for the rest of my childhood.  
  
Well, one day, just as quickly as they all had come, they all up and left out. They had only come for a reason, after all, and once they got all the coal they wanted, they sold the buildings and moved their companies back to West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Illinois or wherever they had first come from. Some of the towns left behind were able to continue on and survive, but others became only rundown old coal camps with nothing much going on. Weeksbury is still around, but the only building still standing in the main area of town is the old office building which once served as the Beaver Valley Bank.  
  
The coal company moved out, but many of the people who came to work are still here. The poet James Still said, "I shall never leave these hills" and the writer, Tim Salisbury, said, "It's not money that keeps me from going to New York City, it is my heart." So it is for some of us - we only remember the good times and the coal camps gave us many good days. When I think back on those days, I think of all the friends I made as a child when I went to school in a coal camp in a place called Weeksbury. Thank you, you wonderful old place, you made my life rich. For I, too, had the good fortune to share with you your days of glory when you outshone even the sun to me.  
  
What Will the Poor Miners Do?  
  
by Ralph Hall  
  
As I sit here looking at the hillside,  
  
The trees are as bare as they can be,  
  
The hillsides so rocky,  
  
The soil so poor,  
  
No one can make a living here anymore.  
  
At the foot of the hill,  
  
A railroad goes by,  
  
Buy the train doesn't run anymore,  
  
There was once a coal mine,  
  
Just up the road,  
  
They used the train to haul coal,  
  
But it's been many years,  
  
Since the train has gone by,  
  
And it looks as if the town has died.  
  
Over six hundred men worked at the mine,  
  
They loaded may tons of coal,  
  
Now the mine is gone,  
  
And there's no work to do,  
  
If it wasn't for the food stamps,  
  
And the black lung checks,  
  
What would the poor miners do?