



Sol White's History of Colored Baseball with Other Documents on the Early Black Game, 1886- 1936

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America and baseball are rediscovering the game played by African Americans before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1947. We now know a great deal about the Negro Leagues of 1920 on, and their great stars—Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and their contemporaries.

But what of the pre-1920 black game? From the onset in the 1880s of the “gentleman’s agreement” that barred blacks from playing in white leagues, that game is nearly invisible. Financially shaky, with sporadic media coverage even in black newspapers and completely overlooked by the mainstream, Negro teams of this era played on for love of the game and in hopes that their skills would receive their due.

In 1907, Sol White, a remarkable African-American ballplayer, successful manager, and baseball loyalist, wrote a small volume on the history of the black game. Part fund-raising effort, advertising brochure, team hype, celebration of black baseball, and throughout an implicit and explicit challenge to racism, *Sol White’s History of Colored Base Ball* is the source of much of what we know of the events in the organized black game of that time.

The original was poorly printed, and copies are exceedingly rare (known and rumored copies number only four). This edition republishes the full 1907 edition (with the even rarer supplement), completely reset for legibility, and reproduces all the original’s illustrations, including the advertisements that speak volumes on the social world of the day. Fifteen additional documents from 1886 to 1936 augment the picture of the black game and our record of Sol White himself.

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Peggy Hardman:

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