ABSTRACT
Wendell Smith was a sportswriter who fought for African-American civil rights and is most remembered for his role in Jackie Robinson’s breaking of the major league baseball color barrier. This exhibit and archive presents collections related to Wendell Smith from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum collection, including the Wendell Smith Papers and parts of three other collections.

Josh Howard
Middle Tennessee State University
Exhibit Script

The following exhibit script is divided into two main sections: exhibit text and photographs. Exhibit text is the verbatim script for every page on the website with interpretive text. The photographs section contains the digital location, caption, and physical location of all images used on the website. The hope is that if someone were given this script, then they could replicate the Wendell Smith Papers web exhibit and archive on a different web platform.

To build this exhibit, I spent about seven months (March through October 2014) working for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. The first three months were spent researching, planning, and waiting for the web tools to be developed. I lived and worked in Cooperstown at the Hall of Fame for June and July, working directly with the collections. This time was primarily spent researching in the Hall of Fame library and archives, along with the lengthy process of scanning documents. I returned to Tennessee in August, and August and September were spent editing the final product.

The web exhibit and archive launched with the overall Hall of Fame website on September 29, 2014. As of this writing, it is still linked on the front page.

URL for the Wendell Smith Papers: http://baseballhall.org/node/373
A. **Exhibit Text**

The Wendell Smith Papers web exhibit and archive contains sixteen webpages containing interpretive text. These pages are divided into four categories: homepage, exhibit, info, and archive. The homepage serves as the welcome page with minimal interpretation; exhibit pages provide interpretation using the primary sources in these collections; info pages provide more general information and resources without extensive interpretation; and archive pages serve as brief introductions to each of the four archives presented here.

1. Homepage
2. Exhibit 1
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9. About Wendell [info 1]
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Major League Baseball is perpetuating the very things thousands of Americans are overseas fighting to end, namely, racial discrimination and segregation.
--Wendell Smith, on Major League Baseball in 1942

Wendell Smith is the long unsung figure in the struggle for racial integration. Smith played a key role in the Jackie Robinson story, as portrayed in the film 42, but Smith's role in American life extended far beyond Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodgers. While writing thousands of newspaper columns from 1938 to 1972, Smith became the first African-American member of the Baseball Writers Association of America, the first African-American honoree of the J.G. Taylor Spink Award, and the first African-American sportswriter to work for a white newspaper.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame holds a number of collections related to Wendell Smith and his contribution to American life, including the Wendell Smith Papers, donated by his widow Wyonella Smith. Several of these collections are made available here, so others may learn of Smith's life and legacy.
Black sportswriters played a major role in the desegregation of professional baseball. Between 1938 and 1942, Wendell Smith published many articles based on his interviews with dozens of National League players and coaches, most of who expressed that they would welcome an African-American teammate. With tactics such as these interviews, by late 1942, Smith, other black sportswriters, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* finally placed enough pressure on white baseball owners to open discussion of the sport’s color line. Owners could no longer fall back on their most common excuse for their exclusionary policies: a potential player revolt. The bosses of minor league baseball were the first to crack. Wilbur Tuttle, President of the Pacific Coast League, told black newspapermen that he could not do anything about integration until major league baseball club owners did something themselves. Minor Leagues president William G. Bramham responded to Tuttle's comments in a harsh letter, chastising Tuttle for bringing unwanted attention to the office of Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis.

As part of a strategic assault on the color line, both black and white sportswriters targeted Commissioner Landis. By November 1943, black sportswriter Sam Lacy successfully campaigned for Landis to allow an African-American delegation to speak about the color line at the annual Joint Major League meetings. The delegation selected football and Broadway star Paul Robeson to be the primary presenter of their case to eliminate the color line. Smith was present at the meeting, although he did not speak. After the presentation, no major league team representative responded with any interest, and white media outlets largely ignored the presence of the black
delegation. Many years later, Smith recalled that only one white meeting attendee--Branch Rickey--seemed to pay the delegation any mind at all. From the meeting transcript, it seems Smith's intuition was correct. Rickey revived the discussion about the color line toward the end of the meeting, long after the black delegation had departed. His questions were quickly dismissed by Landis.
"They did what they said they would, but I was disappointed in the reaction."

--Wendell Smith, reflecting on the 1945 Red Sox tryout in a 1971 interview

At least four major league teams scheduled tryouts for Negro leagues players before Jackie Robinson signed with the Dodgers. All of these tryouts occurred because of newspaper activism. For example, due to pressure from the *Daily Worker*, the Pittsburgh Pirates announced a tryout in July 1942 with candidates to be selected by Wendell Smith. By the end of August, the Pirates quietly abandoned this pursuit. Sportswriter Joe Bostic surprised the Dodgers at a spring training practice in early April 1945 by demanding a tryout for two Negro leagues players. The Dodgers held the tryout, but did not sign either man.

Also in April 1945, Smith arranged tryouts for black ballplayers with the Boston Braves and Boston Red Sox. Smith orchestrated an alliance with Isadore Muchnick, a Boston politician running for re-election in a predominantly black district. Muchnick threatened a Sunday baseball ban over the Boston clubs unless they held tryouts before the 1945 season. Eddie Collins, Red Sox General Manager, begrudgingly agreed to the tryout, as did the Braves. Although both clubs set dates and invited Smith to help organize, they both consistently delayed the tryout dates, citing a multitude of excuses.

The Braves never actually held their tryout, but the Red Sox eventually did. On April 16, 1945, shortstop Jackie Robinson, second baseman Marvin Williams, and outfielder Sam Jethroe all took the field at Fenway Park. Smith and Isadore Muchnick observed the tryout from the stands, and if Eddie Collins observed, he did so away from the field or stands. Smith was not surprised
that no signings emerged from this tryout. Neither Boston club extended the courtesy of notifying these young black players of their decision, with Jethroe remarking to Smith “We’ll hear from the Red Sox like we’ll hear from Adolf Hitler.” Smith had to write the Red Sox to discover the outcome. Collins responded that the Red Sox would not be signing Robinson, Williams, or Jethroe, citing an injury to manager Joe Cronin and concerns over Negro League contracts.
"It is, of course, interesting to note that you still have a very deep interest in following up on the history-making initiative which you undertook last fall. I am most happy to feel that you are relying on my newspaper and me, personally, for cooperation in trying to accomplish this great move for practical Democracy in the most amiable and diplomatic manner possible."

--Wendell Smith, in letter to Branch Rickey dated January 14, 1946

Sportswriters' initial failure to convince major league clubs to sign an African-American ballplayer led to a working relationship between Wendell Smith and Brooklyn General Manager Branch Rickey. Before they met in person, Smith wrote a few articles critical of Rickey, who was then with the St. Louis Cardinals. Once the two met in person, Smith became convinced that Rickey genuinely wanted to desegregate baseball, producing an alliance that crossed skin color and professions. By fall of 1945, Smith believed Rickey was the only unquestionable ally black society had in a position of power within professional baseball. Smith and Rickey gained another potential ally when Happy Chandler stepped in as Commissioner to replace the recently deceased Kenesaw Landis.

Sensing an opportunity to test the new Commissioner's position on the color line, Smith and Rickey began the search for black baseball prospects. Smith offered names of black ballplayers to Rickey, and Jackie Robinson became the player they discussed most often. Jackie was not the best Negro leagues player at the time, but he was the player Smith believed would be the most likely to succeed at the monumental task of baseball desegregation. Following up on Smith's suggestion, Rickey had Robinson scouted and interviewed him
personally. Satisfied by the results, Rickey signed Jackie to a contract after the 1945 season ended, announcing his assignment to the minor league Montreal Royals on October 23. To ease Jackie’s transition, Rickey hired Smith to travel with Robinson throughout the 1946 season. Smith’s first tasks were to secure housing and help Jackie navigate the injustices of Jim Crow Florida during spring training. Throughout the rest of Rickey’s tenure with the Dodgers, Smith effectively served as a Dodgers public relations agent. He praised Rickey often, even in 1951 after his official employment with the Dodgers when he called for Rickey to run for MLB commissioner.
"No player in history has tried harder to become a big leaguer...if Robinson fails to make the grade, it will be many years before a Negro makes the grade. This is IT!"
--Wendell Smith, *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 12, 1947

Wendell Smith became invaluable to the Dodgers organization during 1946 and 1947. Branch Rickey knew there would be logistical challenges to signing Jackie Robinson beyond dugout and board room politics, but Rickey and the Dodgers likely underestimated the daily challenges facing all African-American people, especially in the South. Smith booked rooms for all black Dodgers and staff, connected with local black communities, and served as a friend and mentor to all African-American ballplayers in the Dodgers organization during these years. Smith used his writing skills to ease Robinson’s transition in two major ways: with Pittsburgh Courier columns tracking Robinson’s daily life and by ghost-writing both Robinson’s first autobiography and his newspaper column “Jackie Says...” Smith used these writings to present a public image of Robinson as a black man of high moral character, strong family values, and a fully capable ballplayer that easily won over white crowds wherever he went. By portraying Robinson in this way, Smith essentially told the story of overcoming, proving that black Americans could change history if they pushed for a chance to do so.

In *My Own Story*, Robinson's 1948 autobiography, Smith immortalized Robinson as an athlete and not as an activist. For example, in the above photo, Smith is introducing Jackie Robinson to Duke Slater and Ralph Metcalfe. The caption refers to Slater as "Iowa's All-American tackle" and Metcalfe as a "famous Marquette sprinter." Beyond these athletic achievements, Slater by this point was well known as a pioneer in the integration of both collegiate and
professional football and was the only black player in the NFL in 1929. Metcalfe was a two-time Olympic medalist, famously winning silver in the 100 meter dash at the 1936 games in Nazi Germany, the same event in which Jesse Owens won gold. Both Slater and Metcalfe were also examples of athletes turned educated leaders in the black community. Slater earned his law degree and was the first black member of the Chicago Superior Court. Metcalfe taught at Xavier University before being elected to the House of Representatives and co-founding the Congressional Black Caucus. With this subtle caption, Smith’s omission of these impressive accomplishments implied that positive social change could come through popular acceptance of physically talented men. After the public acceptance of men such as Slater and Metcalfe, Smith argued that Jackie Robinson was among the next generation to be accepted by white society.
6. WENDELL SMITH AND THE BIG BASEBALL STARS [exhibit 5]

"[Roy] Partlow, it appears, needs to sit down and think about the significance of his position. He needs to think about those 14 million Negroes from coast to coast who are pulling for him to make good in white organized baseball. He should think more about them, and less about himself!"
—Wendell Smith, *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 1946

"If you were Satchel Paige, would you represent your people admirably or would you remain Satchel Paige? [Paige] should not be allowed to jeopardize men like Larry Doby, Jackie Robinson, and Roy Campanella, all of whom have acquitted themselves as gentlemen on and off the field."
—Wendell Smith, *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 20, 1948

Friends and colleagues described Wendell Smith as a reserved, soft-spoken man. As a newspaper journalist however, Smith was a forceful critic of baseball and its larger social significance. Smith was most critical of white sports figures for relying on racial stereotypes to exclude black ballplayers, best evidenced by his consistent opposition to Commissioner Landis. But Smith also did not hesitate to chastise African-Americans and Negro leagues sports figures when he thought the situation demanded it. Public acceptance of black players depended upon a carefully maintained image, and Smith was quick to comment when black players behaved unprofessionally, both on and the field. A large number of prominent sports figures received newspaper lashings from Smith, with the most prominent in this collection being Satchel Paige, Jackie Robinson, Eddie Gottlieb, Roy Partlow, and Rogers Hornsby.
"Beneath the apparently tranquil surface of baseball there is a growing feeling of resentment among Negro major leaguers who still experience embarrassment, humiliation, and even indignities during spring training in the south. The Negro player who is accepted as a first class citizen in the regular season is tired of being a second class citizen in spring training."

--Wendell Smith, Chicago's American, January 23, 1961

More than a decade after Jackie Robinson made his Dodgers debut, life at baseball spring training camps in Florida still adhered to southern Jim Crow segregation. In cooperation with the NAACP, Wendell Smith, Chicago's American, and a few black newspapers officially launched a campaign in January 1961 to end spring training segregation. Black players had protested their treatment in Florida for years, but teams deferred to local custom and were slow to change. Only the Dodgers offered fully integrated Florida spring training by 1960.

During the Chicago's American campaign, Smith highlighted the voices of black baseball stars of the past and present, most notably Hank Aaron, Larry Doby, Elston Howard, Ernie Banks, and Minnie Minoso. The campaign met its first major success in March 1961 when then White Sox owner Bill Veeck cancelled hotel reservations once he discovered the hotel would not house black players. By the end of June, the Players’ Association endorsed the campaign. Despite the pressure, the governor of Florida refused to intervene and maintained that he had no legal authority to force private hotels to accept black guests.
In November, the Chicago White Sox purchased a Florida hotel to for the sole purpose of integrating spring training lodging. Shortly thereafter, all Florida spring training sites desegregated, although some Florida towns were resistant to wider desegregation efforts.
Legacy is important in baseball. Every year, fans anxiously await the results of the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) voting to learn which individuals will be next to take their position among the game's immortals. To be voted into the Hall of Fame by the BBWAA, an individual had to play in the major leagues for at least ten years, an impossible standard for Negro leaguers so long the victims of the baseball color line. A few sportswriters protested that this standard was impossible, but the rules remained unchanged.

Unexpectedly, the first major public voice for these concerns came from Ted Williams at his own Hall of Fame induction in 1966. During his speech Williams stated "I hope that someday the names of Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson can be added as a symbol of the great Negro players [who] are not here because they were not given a chance." Williams' speech provided the momentum for a new generation of sportswriters to address the omission of Negro leaguers from the Hall of Fame. When Bowie Kuhn became MLB Commissioner in 1969, he made it a priority to correct this omission.

Kuhn successfully convinced the Hall of Fame to establish a committee that would select former Negro Leagues to be honored. The committee included five men with Negro leagues playing experience (Monte Irvin, Roy Campanella, Bill Yancey, Frank Forbes, Judy Johnson), two former Negro leagues team owners (Alex Pompez, Eddie Gottlieb), a former Major league player and former president of the NCAA (Eppie Barnes), and two journalists (Wendell Smith, Sam Lacy). Kuhn appointed Monte Irvin as chair. Joe
Reichler of the Commissioner's office and Dick Young (sportswriter for the *New York Daily News*) served as non-voting committee members.

The committee first met in January 1971 and unanimously selected Satchel Paige as their first honoree. Initially, the committee and Hall of Fame intended to honor Paige and future honorees in a separate area of the Hall of Fame removed from the traditional plaque gallery. This decision was met with massive public outcry targeted at Commissioner Kuhn and Hall president Paul Kerr. Even Paige, who was not known for openly speaking as a civil rights activist, succinctly stated "I was just as good as the white boys, I ain't going in the back door to the Hall of Fame." The Hall relented, announcing in July that Paige would be honored as a full Hall of Fame inductee.

The same committee again met in January 1972, this time electing Negro leagues stars Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard. The Hall of Fame enshrined both in the plaque gallery without question. Though 1972 would mark the end of Smith’s contributions, the committee continued its electoral process through 1977, electing another six former Negro league ballplayers.
"It was then that I made the vow that I would dedicate myself and do something on behalf of the Negro ballplayers."

--Wendell Smith, reflecting on his Detroit childhood in an interview with Jerome Holtzman in 1971

**MOTIVATION: FORD AND EGAN**

By his own account, Wendell Smith grew up largely away from prejudice in Detroit. He was the son of John Smith, a personal chef for automobile magnate Henry Ford. John and the family were often invited to the Ford home for social gatherings, and Smith remembered that he often played baseball with the Ford children. Once as he played, Smith overheard a conversation between his father and Ford. Ford said "He's a fine looking boy, John. What does he want to be when he grows up?" Smith recalled this frustration because the career he wanted—a major league baseball player—was simply not available to him.

Wendell Smith developed into a quality young pitcher on his way to professional ball until a fateful day in 1933. At nineteen years old, Smith pitched a shutout for his integrated American Legion team. After the game, he was approached by Detroit Tigers scout Wish Egan. Egan told Smith that he wished he could sign him to a Tigers contract, but he did not have the authority to sign a black man. Soon thereafter, Smith decided to pursue a career as a sportswriter, hoping he could someday help remove the barriers keeping black ballplayers from making the big leagues.
NATIONAL NEWSPAPERMAN AND ACTIVIST

Immediately upon Smith’s graduation from West Virginia State College in 1938, the *Pittsburgh Courier* hired him. The Courier was the largest national black newspaper at the time and would come to be best known for launching the World War II Double V Campaign (a media campaign aimed at the African American community which sought victory at home against racism and victory abroad against the Axis powers). The Courier encouraged its writers to pursue Civil Rights topics. After less than a year on the job, Smith put a sportswriter’s spin on Civil Rights by interrogating baseball’s color line. Smith’s first big story emerged during his first year of work when he interviewed over fifty white National League players and managers about their thoughts on segregation in baseball. Over 75% stated they had no problem with blacks in the major leagues. Smith used this data to put pressure on major league club owners who claimed players would never tolerate a black teammate. By 1945 Smith helped organize tryouts for black players with the Pittsburgh Pirates, Boston Braves, and Boston Red Sox, but each time ownership refused to sign anyone.

Late in 1945, Smith and Brooklyn Dodgers General Manager Branch Rickey discussed the possibility of signing a black player. It was Smith who first suggested Jackie Robinson to Rickey. At Smith’s recommendation and after extensive Dodgers scouting and face-to-face meetings, Rickey signed Jackie and assigned him to the Montreal Royals, a Class AAA minor league club. Rickey then hired Smith to travel with Jackie throughout the 1946 and 1947 seasons to offer support and counsel. All the while, Smith continued to write his regular columns for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. 
TO CHICAGO

In 1948 Smith accepted a job with the Chicago Herald-American (which would later change its name to Chicago’s American), becoming the first black sportswriter at a white newspaper. That same year he became the first black member of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America. It was during this time that Smith drifted away from events in Brooklyn, no longer feeling the need to become personally involved in Jackie’s or the Dodgers’ daily affairs. Over the next ten years, Smith and Jackie drifted apart. Their relationship completely soured by the end of Jackie's professional career in 1956, most likely because Smith disagreed with Jackie’s support for the Republican Party. In the early 1960s, Smith spearheaded the successful Chicago’s American campaign to integrate Florida spring training facilities. In 1964, Smith accepted a job at WGN, Chicago's premier television station. He worked as a sportscaster and often appeared on WGN’s long-running People to People news program. In later years, Smith claimed his first love was newspaper work and that he became a newscaster because WGN offered to double his salary.

RECOGNITION

In 1971, Smith was one of ten men selected to be a voting member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s Special Committee on the Negro Leagues. He and Sam Lacy were the only two committee members who were not directly involved in baseball as either an owner or player. Both served on the committee in 1971 and 1972.

In 1972, Jackie Robinson passed away. Smith wrote the obituary, and it would be the last article he ever penned. A few months later, Smith's health faded as well. He died at the age of fifty-eight, succumbing to a battle with cancer.
Since Smith’s death, numerous organizations have recognized his importance within the realms of sport, journalism, and civil rights. In 1993, Smith became the first African-American recipient of the J.G. Taylor Spink Award for meritorious contributions to baseball writing, accepted by his widow Wyonella. In 2013, Andre Holland portrayed Smith in the Jackie Robinson biopic film *42* showing Smith’s contributions to a wide audience. Also in 2013, the Shirley Povich Center for Sports Journalism at the University of Maryland’s Philip Merrill College of Journalism created the Sam Lacy-Wendell Smith Award to be awarded to a sports journalist or broadcaster who has made significant contributions to racial and gender equality in sports. In 2014, the memory of Smith’s life saw more attention when the Associated Press Sports Editors posthumously awarded Smith the Red Smith Award.
The majority of these works used collections available at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. All are available for viewing on site in Cooperstown.

The Hall of Fame would also like to thank the Carnegie Museum of Art for the rights to use images of Wendell Smith appearing on this website. These photographs can be found in the Teenie Harris Archive.

**SELECT JOURNAL ARTICLES**


• Lamb, Chris. “‘What’s Wrong With Baseball’: The Pittsburgh Courier and the Beginning of its Campaign to Integrate the National Pastime.” The Western Journal of Black Studies 26 (2002): 189-203.


SELECT BOOKS

• Boston, Talmage. 1939: Baseball's Pivotal Year, from the Golden Age to the Modern Era. Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994.


JACKIE ROBINSON’S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES


This chronology is largely focused on Wendell's professional life as it related to baseball journalism and civil rights activism. The chronology also includes the dates of some key social and historical events of the period to provide context.

MARCH 23, 1914
Born in Detroit

1933
Wish Egan of the Detroit Tigers does not sign Wendell to a contract because of Wendell's race

1937
Graduated from West Virginia State College, began work at the *Pittsburgh Courier*

MAY 14, 1938
First article directly attacking baseball color line published

SUMMER 1938
Polls National League managers and players about opinions of baseball integration, finds over 75% approve

1939
Proposes an organization to help black athletes modeled on the NAACP

APRIL 24 & MAY 8, 1943
Publicly challenged President Roosevelt to adopt a "Fair Employment Practice Policy" for professional baseball similar to the one instituted in war industries and governmental agencies

DECEMBER 3, 1943
Attends joint Major League meetings with Paul Robeson, John Sengstacke, Ira Lewis, and others

MAY 6, 1944

Article interviewing black baseball player Willie Wells published where Wells famously stated "Here in Mexico, I am a man."

DECEMBER 12, 1944

Article about Commissioner Kenesaw Landis after the Commissioner's death, denounces Landis's record on integration

APRIL 16, 1945

Arranged the Boston Red Sox tryout for African-American ballplayers (Jackie Robinson, Sam Jethroe, and Marvin Williams)

JANUARY 14, 1946

Agrees to join the Brooklyn Dodgers' payroll to serve as Jackie Robinson's mentor and arrange for lodging and travel during spring training in Florida. Wendell would travel with Robinson throughout spring training and during the season in Montreal.

1947

Traveled again with Jackie Robinson during parts of spring training and the Brooklyn season

OCTOBER 13, 1947

Applies for membership in the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Rejected on October 14.

1947 (AFTER BASEBALL SEASON CLOSED)

Joined the white-owned Chicago Herald-American (later known as Chicago's American) newspaper, becoming first black columnist at a white newspaper
1948
Accepted by the Chicago Chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Covered the 1948 Summer Olympics in London. Jackie Robinson’s first autobiography *My Own Story* published, ghost-written by Wendell.

**JANUARY 1961**
Instigates campaign to end segregation at spring training sites in Florida

**DECEMBER 1961**
Chicago White Sox purchase Florida hotel to avoid segregation, most other teams desegregate housing by the end of the month

1964
Joins television station WGN and the *Chicago Sun-Times*

**JANUARY 25, 1971**
Met in Commissioner Bowie Kuhn’s office as member of the Special Committee on the Negro Leagues for the Baseball Hall of Fame. **On February 9th, Commissioner Kuhn announced the Committee's decision** to honor Satchel Paige in a separate Negro Leagues area of the Hall of Fame. **On July 7th** and after **significant public outrage**, Commissioner Kuhn announced that Paige would be inducted into the Hall of Fame as a full member.

**FEBRUARY 8, 1972**
Special Committee on the Negro Leagues elects Josh Gibson and Buck Leonard to the Hall of Fame

**OCTOBER 1972**
Wrote Jackie Robinson's obituary

**NOVEMBER 6, 1972**
Wendell Smith passes away after a battle with pancreatic cancer
1993
Wendell Smith selected as the 1994 recipient of the J.G. Taylor Spink Award. *Wendell's widow Wyonella Smith receives the award on his behalf on July 31, 1994.*

**FEBRUARY 5, 1997**
The National Baseball Hall of Fame officially announces the Wendell Smith Papers collection, donated by Wyonella Smith the previous year.

**APRIL 12, 2013**
The film *42* is released in theaters. The film focused primarily on Jackie Robinson's first two professional years and his relationship with Wendell Smith.
The National Baseball Hall of Fame Library archive collections contain a variety of material, including the papers of individuals, records of organizations, scrapbooks, consciously assembled collections of unique material, along with Hall of Fame created ephemera collections. These collections range in size from a few documents to hundreds of boxes.

This online exhibit is meant to highlight one collection in particular, The Wendell Smith Papers. The Hall of Fame also houses several collections related to the work of Wendell Smith. These four collections are presented here in digital format. Collections could not be presented in full at this point, but all materials related to Wendell Smith are presented in full.

**The Wendell Smith Papers (BA MSS 1)**

**Integration Files (BA MSS 67)**

**Joint Major League Meetings, 1943 (BA MSS 105)**

**Negro League Committee Collection (BL-175.2003)**
13. WENDELL SMITH PAPERS (BA MSS 1) [archive 1]

The Wendell Smith Papers were donated to the Hall of Fame in 1996 and 1997 by Wendell's widow, Wyonella. The collection is only partially presented here in digital format. The entirety of folders three and four and majority of folder five contain of copyrighted newspaper articles and are not digitally displayed here. The newspaper clippings of Wendell Smith's articles with the Pittsburgh Courier and Chicago's American in this collection are available for viewing on site at the Hall of Fame Library.

[Link to this collection's Finding Aid]
Below are documents from the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library’s collection Integration Files (BA MSS 67). This collection contains a variety of documents related to the integration of Major League Baseball dating from the early 1940s until the late 1950s. A significant portion of the collection is correspondences between Commissioner Landis and other baseball executives and fans. The last few folders of the collection relate to the Boston Red Sox, the last major league team to field an African-American ballplayer (Pumpsie Green, 1959).

The collection has only been partially digitized and does not have a finding aid. All folders related to Wendell Smith are represented here.
The documents presented here represent but a single folder of BA MSS 105 (Joint Major League Minutes), a collection of meeting minutes from meetings between the American, National and Minor leagues. This folder contains the transcript of the joint major league meeting from December 3, 1943--when major league owners hosted a delegation of African-American leaders who appealed for the integration of professional baseball. All other folders of this collection are available at the Hall of Fame. Note there exists a 65-year release restriction as set by the Office of the Commissioner.

Link to this collection's finding aid
Below are the first two years of archival material for collection BL-175.2003, the Records of the Negro Leagues Committee. Wendell Smith served on the committee in its first two years of existence, 1971 and 1972. The documents from these two years are presented in their entirety except for fan correspondences to the Hall of Fame in 1971. Only a sample of these fan correspondences are presented here due to privacy concerns.
B. Photographs

Photographs are listed in order they appear in the Wendell Smith Papers exhibit and archive. Note that “hero images” is the terminology used for header images, “inline” refers to images placed within the text, and “sidebar” refers to images within the built-in right vertical sidebar. Note that all hero images also appear in their page’s sidebar so that a caption could be included.

Below all images is Location (the image’s location on the web exhibit and archive), Caption (as it appears on the webpage), and Archive Location (where the item is physically and digitally located, if applicable).
1. Homepage

**Location**: Homepage, hero

Location: Homepage, inline

Caption: Robinson, Smith, Duke Slater, and Ralph Metcalfe (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
2. Exhibit 1

Location: exhibit 1, hero

Caption: Kenesaw Mountain Landis, commissioner of baseball. BL-238-69 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Commissioner Landis Finally Speaks Out After 21 Years

It took dynamic “Leo the Lip” Durocher to “smoke out” Judge Landis on the question of Negro players in the major leagues. Ever since he “took over” twenty-one years ago as the monarch supreme of the majors, the commissioner has been as mum as a sphinx and as evasive as a mustang on a western prairie when approached on this matter.

But “Leo the Lip” put him on the spot last week when he said that Landis was against using Negro players in organized baseball. No one was surprised over the frank statement Durocher of the “Dazzling Dodgers” made, because that had been generally understood all along. But some of us were surprised when the Judge retaliated and declared that “one or twenty-five” would be acceptable to him and that it was all up to the owners.

Personally, I don’t believe that Landis is sincere. However, he has gone on record, and that is of more importance than anything else. We are grateful to Kenesaw for putting himself on record because after all he is “Mr. Big” in the big leagues. When the commissioner put his little piece in, he automatically put sixteen owners of major league teams on the spot. And, it seems to me, that it will be easier now than ever before to stick a pin where it will do the most good. The owners are on the spot as never before. The final blow to be struck in this long-waged war for Negroes in the majors remains to be struck by the fans. Nothing else can do the trick. An army of baseball fans from coast to coast must rise and fire the final shot by demanding that the owners hire Negro players.
Actor Robeson Makes Plea for Negro Players

PAUL ROBESON, singer and actor, waits outside the joint major league meeting room to present a plea that Negro players be allowed to enter Organized Ball. Robeson is currently appearing on Broadway in “Othello.” From left, Stanley Frank of the New York Post, Jimmy Conzelman, assistant to the president of the St. Louis Browns, Robeson, and Wendell Smith, sports editor of the Pittsburgh Courier.

Location: exhibit 1, inline

Caption: The Sporting News, December 9, 1943. (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Los Angeles, Calif.
October 15, 1943.

Judge H. C. Bramham, President
National Baseball Association,
Durham, North Carolina.

Dear Judge,

The Pittsburgh Courier and the Los Angeles Times, both major publications, together with their affiliates, are preparing a fight into winter to force organized baseball to take colored players.

They have notified my office that they are sending a delegation at our Annual Meeting in Oakland, November 1st. They have also notified me that they will have delegations at the Major and Minor League Meeting in New York, December 1st. to lobby for their demands.

I have told them plainly that I am not going to sign the contract before the Winter Meetings. I am not prepared to give in to the issue with the Minor Leagues that was brought to my attention. The owners recognize and understand that colored players are human beings, just as they are, and that until they are treated justly and fairly, the Minor Leagues will not sign this contract.

I hope that all the major leagues are facing a race situation, but I am not able to see how far they will go. Last season the sent so far’s to effect one of our players, but they were recalled in a hurry crowd, which was not friendly. At any rate we may expect their delegations in New York, and I think we will to think the situation over ahead of time.

Sincerely yours,

W. C. Tuttle

C. Shuman
George Frederick
3. Exhibit 2

**Location:** exhibit 2, hero

**Caption:** Eddie Collins in 1930 - BL-1473-68 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Location: exhibit 2, inline

Caption: Eddie Collins, shown as a member of the Chicago White Sox - BL-10390-94 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
27 April 1945

Mr. Richard Guillen,
General Manager,
Major League Baseball Club,
59 Fenway Park,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Mr. Guillen:

This letter is to thank you for permitting the three Negro ball players whom I brought to Boston to work out at Fenway Park. They were extremely pleased with your courtesy and cooperation and I am sure they will hold that day as one of the most special in their lives.

I sincerely hope that we did not inconvenience you in any way and that our contacts with your club will continue to be friendly and amicable.

I will appreciate it if you will let us have your thoughts and advice concerning the Negroes in the major leagues. We wish to work with you and the other Negro players to make baseball as great for them as it is for whites. We are grateful to you again for your hospitality and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. F. Harral,
Sports Writer
THE BOSTON GLOBE

Location: exhibit 2, sidebar

Caption: WG Bramham to Commissioner Kenesaw Landis, October 20, 1943

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 5, Corr_1945_04_27
May 11, 1945

Mr. Wendell Smith, Sports Editor
The Pittsburgh Courier
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Mr. Smith,

This will acknowledge your communication of recent date. I was glad to have the opportunity to talk with you when you were in Boston.

I am sorry I cannot give you any definite information now, because - to be perfectly frank with you - shortly after the time you were here, Joe Cronin broke his leg and this accident threw everything out of gear as far as our plans were concerned. He has not been back with the ball club and will not return here until the end of May. Meanwhile, no action can be taken until then.

I was interested to read of the league that has just been formed around New York. The one thing I fear that the American and National Leagues have not to be mindful of is that the players who may be not have been under contract in several of the Negro leagues. I do not favor the eligibility of players in those circuits, but we would want to be careful not to tamper with anyone else's property.

Thank you for writing me.

Eddie Collins

President
4. Exhibit 3

**Location:** exhibit 3, hero

**Caption:** Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey, BL_1529_68WTA_Rickey_NBL (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
December 19, 1945

Mr. Branch Rickey,
O/A Brooklyn Dodgers Baseball Club,
Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Sir:

I am writing relative to the spring training situation which we discussed in your office and over the telephone. I am making definite plans to go to Santa Monica to keep the training camp session of the Montreal Royals.

I would like to know when they start training at Santa Monica and what, if any, provisions have been made with respect to where Jackie Robinson will stay.

Incidentally, if you are still considering another Negro team mate for Robinson, I am suggesting that you consider very seriously the possibility of Negro Huntington, who was Jackie's team-mate at UCLA. I understand that he is a much better ball player than Robinson and that he plays in the outfield and infield. He is a very intelligent person and, I understand, has a colorful personality. He has been playing baseball and football on the West Coast and is free to be signed without encountering contract difficulties with the Negro leagues.

Looking to hear from you in the near future and wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I am

Sincerely yours,

Wendell Smith, Sports Editor
THE PITTSBURGH CONEER

Location: exhibit 3, sidebar

Caption: Wendell Smith to Branch Rickey, December 19, 1945 (Wendell Smith Papers, folder 2) (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 2, Corr_1945_12_19
Dear Wendell:

The Montreal Club will begin its training season at
Daytona Beach on the first of March. There will be two colored boys on
the Montreal Club, Robinson one of them, and the other yet to be
selected, probably Johnson Birty. I hope very much that you can
arrange to be in Daytona Beach ahead of time to see if it that
satisfactory living accommodations are arranged for these boys.
It is my understanding that you will be able to stay in Daytona Beach
during the training period of about four weeks.

This whole program was new or rated suggestively,
as you will recall, and I think it not good point because much have
would come if either of these boys, who to do or say something or
other out of turn. You might be able to make his arrangement
without going down, but in a certain I don't want to find ourselves
embarrassed on the lat because of Robinson's not having a place to
stay.

I am going to run an early crop at Sanford. Really, I
would give a good deal if both of these boys could come in there
February lat for the preliminary work's men, -- before spring, report
at Daytona Beach. We have a pretty hard time getting accommodations
for our players at Sanford, and particularly at Daytona Beach. However,
I believe we would experience no more difficulty in finding accommodations
for Robinson in Sanford than we would here in Daytona Beach. But Floss
is going down to Sanford to make preliminary arrangements for the February lat
and maybe bring him back from the Robinson end of it if at Sanford in
case we decide to have his report to that end.

I will be glad to hear from you and learn of your place.

Yours truly,

Branch Rickey, President

Drafted by Mr. Riddle
but signed in his absence.
5. Exhibit 4

Location: exhibit 4, hero

Caption: Photo from Jackie Robinson's first autobiography, *My Own Story*. Caption reads: 'Here are some of my closest pals in the Negro sports world. On my left are Wendell Smith, sportswriter for the *Chicago Herald-American* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*; Duke Slater, Iowa's All-American tackle; Ralph Metcalfe, famous Marquette sprinter.'
Bea Wendel,

Just read the column you wrote very well (smile). The one article by that fellow interested me very much because it was written more about my hitting than about my catching. What I like about catching is the fact that I was so good, that he gave me a couple of times and he is a very good pitcher, and when I beat him, he is one of the best if not the best pitchers in major league ball. I feel confident that if it is left to my hitting and defense it will be alright. The few times I faced him, he has made me confident that the pitching I have faced in the Negro American League was no tough as any I will have to face if I stick with Montreal. That is one thing I would like to have made clean, just what does Dickier mean when he says I have 'football shoulders'?

I want to thank you and the paper for all you have done and are doing in my
As you know I am not worried about what the white press or people think, so long as I continue to get the best results of my people. I am leaving it up to your discretion as to what you will print or anything out of this letter. I can only do my best when the time comes, and I cannot personally discuss whether I can make the grade or not. As I said before I will always be out there doing my best.

Give my regards to Mr. Mann and all the others that I had the pleasure of meeting.

Sincerely yours,

Jack
6. Exhibit 5

**Location:** exhibit 5, hero

**Caption:** Roy Partlow, 7584.71_FL_PD (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
**Location:** exhibit 5, inline

**Caption:** Satchel Paige, Kansas City Monarchs, in Detroit's Briggs Stadium - BL-177-79 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Location: exhibit 5, sidebar

Caption: Headline from Wendell Smith article in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 26, 1943

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 3, Newspaper_1943_6_26
The “Strange Case” of “Brother” Gottlieb . . .

Not too many years ago, a character by the name of Eddie Gottlieb was sauntering around the streets of Philadelphia, posing as a promoter. He had his office in his hip pocket and nothing in his head but some ideas about exploiting Negroes in sports. In those days he was a very humble character, and the sports mob chased him as a liberal, and a man free of prejudice. That’s the way it usually is with guys who see a chance to “move in” and “take over” in such cases. They establish themselves as liberals first. The rest of it is rather easy. People trust them and help them in their quest for financial security. That’s the way it was with “Brother Eddie.” He was the Negro’s friend. He was an understanding guy. He knew how tough it was to get along, because other people had been booting his people around for thousands of years, too. In fact, they ran his people out of Palestine.

So “Brother Eddie” got in good. He became a fixture in Negro baseball. He made piles and piles of dough as an owner of the Philadelphia Stars. During the winter months he operated the Philadelphia Sphas, a professional basketball team representing the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association. Things were going great for “Brother Eddie,” and he was going around the country telling people that Negroes deserved a chance to make good in any field.

Then somebody organized the Basketball Association of America, a big league of the pro court world. “Brother Eddie”—our friend—was named the coach and manager of the Philadelphia Warriors, an entry in this new league. That’s where he showed his true colors, however. “Brother Eddie” is running that team now, but has forgotten his old friends. He refuses to give the streets of Philadelphia, posing as a liberal. Today he’s a prejudiced, biased man. He’s a traitor of a sort, in the world of sports. He will have nothing to do with Negro basketball players in the winter months. When baseball season starts, however, “Brother Eddie” will be back with us. He’ll be operating his Philadelphia Stars and raking in the dough of Negro baseball fans.

That’s the strange case of “Brother Eddie” Gottlieb!

Location: exhibit 5, sidebar

Caption: Excerpt from Wendell Smith article in the Pittsburgh Courier, February 8, 1947

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 3, Newspaper_1947_2_8
We point out this particular situation because it merely substantiates the latest incident. Mr. Robinson is called on the carpet and in defending himself once again attempts to imply that the press has been unjust and unfair to him.

This, it seems, is time for some one to remind Mr. Robinson that the press has been especially fair to him throughout his career. Not only since he made his debut in organized baseball but all the time he was in college. If it had not been for the press, Mr. Robinson would have been just another athlete insofar as the public is concerned. If it had not been for the press, Mr. Robinson would not have been in the majors today. If it had not been for the press—the sympathetic press—Mr. Robinson would have probably still been tamping around the country with Negro teams, living under what he has called “intolerable conditions.”

We do not know whether he was right or wrong in the conflict with Chris Van Cuyk. We hope he was justified in saying the things he is reported to have said.

We do know, however, that Mr. Robinson’s memory, it seems, is getting shorter and shorter. That is especially true in the case of the many newspapermen who have befriended him throughout his career.

* * *

**Location:** exhibit 5, sidebar

**Caption:** Excerpt from Wendell Smith article, *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 19, 1949

**Archive Location:** BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1949_3_19
Location: exhibit 5, linked

Caption: Eddie Gottlieb (Philadelphia Stars), Connie Mack (Philadelphia Athletics), Louis Schwarts (Member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Philadelphia district) & Gerald Nugent (Philadelphia Phillies). The four men met in 1933 to discuss a bill introduced by Schwarts that allowed local jurisdictions to vote on whether Sunday sports would be legalized in their area. The bill passed shortly after this meeting. Philadelphia voted to allow Sunday sporting events shortly thereafter, although many other parts of Pennsylvania resisted such change. BL_4789_72 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
7. Exhibit 6

![Image of newspaper clippings]

**Location:** exhibit 6, hero

No caption. Collage of three newspaper clippings.

1. “Players Take Up Color Bar Issue.” BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1961_7_31
3. “Negro Stars Find Themselves ‘Caged’.” BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1961_4_4b
AN EXAMPLE of problem facing Negro ballplayers during spring training is shown here as Vada Pinson of Cincinnati takes drink from “colored only” drinking fountain in Tampa, Fla., the Reds’ camp.

**Location:** exhibit 6, inline

**Caption:** *Chicago's American*, February 6, 1961 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

**Archive Location:** BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1961_2_6a
Negro Ball Players Want Rights in South

BY WENDELL SMITH

Beneath the apparently tranquil surface of baseball there is a growing feeling of resentment among Negro major leaguers who still experience embarrassment, humiliation, and even indignities during spring training in the South.

The Negro player who is accepted as a first class citizen in the regular season is tired of being a second class citizen in spring training. With spring training only 4 weeks away, this problem looms large on the baseball horizon. It may not explode into a national controversy this year, but soon it is going to be a major issue if steps are not taken to bring about a solution.

Negro players have made plans to take the following steps:

1. Meeting with their respective club owners and discussing the issue.
2. Placing the problem in the hands of their player representatives.
3. Selecting a spokesman, preferably a former Negro player, to explain their position to baseball's top executives.

Since Jackie Robinson became the first of his race to crash the majors 14 years ago, Negro players have become outstanding. Such players as Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, and Minnie Minoso have distinguished themselves as brilliant performers.

Caption: Excerpt from Chicago's American, January 23, 1961

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1961_1_23
ILYN HAS IN MIND FOR SOX
His Views After 60 Days

Allyn, who was in partnership with him, bought Bill's stock as well as Greenberg's, and thus acquired as yet one of the team. The other 40 percent is still held by Charles Comiskey.

Allyn, who directs his sprawling firm's operations from its imposing headquarters at 122 E. La Salle, purchased the club not only because he is an acute business mind, but also because he suddenly found out that it is a most fascinating business. It is stimulating and exciting, I discovered that I like it."

What does Allyn have in mind for the Sox, who seem to be coming apart at the seams? He says:

"First, I want to emphasize the fact that I am a novice in this business. Therefore, I am working slowly, trying to leave all I can and placing a great deal of responsibility on such experienced and capable executives as Greenberg, Lopez and Ed Short, the club secretary."

"I will say, however, that I want to do everything possible to strengthen the team for next season. I hope that can be done."

"It would be foolish to hold any particular person or group of persons connected with the club responsible for its present plight. The success or failure of the team has nothing to do with those."

"But games are won or lost on the playing field. All they can do is try to get the best out of the material that is made available."

Allyn has heard the reports that both Greenberg and Lopez may leave the organization at the end of the present season. He said:

"I hope those reports are not true. Both Greenberg and Lopez are highly competent men."

He adds, however, that the possibility of such a development compels him to prepare for it. He explained:

"I would say that their replacements will come from within the organization. I have found, in the operation of the A. C. Allyn & Co., that it is always good for morale to have within the organization capable personnel."

"In that way, you give incentive to younger employees and also develop good executives. I think a baseball organization can be developed the same way. I think that is one reason the Yankees are so successful. They build from the ground up, both in the front office and on the playing field."

The wealthy business man also has ideas about banana and farm systems. He says:

"I think it is good business to invest millions of dollars in 'boon babies.' Sure there will be 10 more when you have..."

(Continued on Page 38)

Location: exhibit 6, sidebar

Caption: Excerpt from Chicago's American, August 10, 1961

Archive Location: BA MSS 1, Folder 4, Newspaper_1961_8_10
8. Exhibit 7

Location: exhibit 7, hero

**Location:** exhibit 7, inline

**Caption:** Buck Leonard, Hall of Fame Class of 1972, with Commissioner Bowie Kuhn (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Location: exhibit 7, sidebar

Caption: Satchel Paige presenting his induction speech, Cooperstown, NY, August 9, 1971 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
The Director,
The Hall of Fame,
Cooperstown, New York

Dear Sir:

I have been a life long supporter of baseball, and since I was a youngster, my greatest thrill was watching major league baseball and playing the game myself. I was raised on stories of the baseball greats of the past, and while still young, my father took me to see the Hall of Fame. I was taught that baseball was the American game and reflected many of the values of our society.

But your latest decision to admit the great black players of the past into the Hall on a 'separate but equal' 'back-of-the-bus' only, token basis is a slur on baseball and on the integrity of the Hall of Fame. I am horriﬁed to fear that the Hall does indeed reﬂect some of the values of our society, our vicious racism and insulting ‘black boy’ mentality. Have you people been? This is 1971 not the set-a-bellum south. These black players should be admitted to the Hall of Fame with full standing, not in a special section ‘at the back of the bus’. It was not their fault that their major league skills were marred by a racist society. If you are sincere in wanting to right the wrong done to them, then you should admit them in full standing because you accredit them for who they were, major leaguers who were excluded from the major leagues.

I am enclosing a column that appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Sunday, February 15. It expresses in a very pointed manner the outrage that I and many other baseball fans feel over this slur. We have had enough tokenism! The time has come for proper action.

Sincerely yours,

[Signatures]
9. Info 1

Location: info 1, hero

Location: info 1, inline

Caption: Wish Egan, Detroit Tigers scout - BL-9970-95 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Location: info 1, inline

Caption: Scene from 42 (Courtesy of Legendary Pictures and Warner Bros. Pictures)
Location: info 1, sidebar

Caption: Wendell Smith, portrait for 1994 J.G. Taylor Spink Award (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
**Location:** info 1, sidebar

**Caption:** Jackie R. Robinson, BL_2739_89 (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)
Note: Video of length 3:33, linked on NBHOF youtube page:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXymMi-9tcg

Location: info 1, sidebar

Caption: J.G. Taylor Spink Award Presentation to Wendell Smith, received by Wyonella Smith (Wendell Smith’s widow) at the 1994 induction ceremony