

NAT C. STRONG, JOSE MENDEZ AND THE CUBAN STARS
BALLCLUB IN THE U.S., 1908-1912

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Cuban baseball players have become internationally renowned for their skill at the American game. In major league baseball, players such as Orlando Hernandez, "El Duque," who defected from Cuba in 1997, [now age 41 and part of the Mets 2007 collapse] and Jose Contreras, a 2002 defector [now age 35 with White Sox], both became pitchers for the New York Yankees. Earlier, Camilo Pascual and Tony Oliva were vital contributors to the success of the Minnesota Twins in the 1960s. Talented Cuban ballplayers have played on major league teams principally since 1911, when Armando Marsans and Rafael Almeida joined the roster of the Cincinnati Reds.¹

Marsans and Almeida were both white Cubans and they were able to play professional baseball in organized leagues because of their talent and because they had light-colored skin, but the color line barred black Cubans from playing in baseball's minor leagues and major leagues from 1887 until 1947. The story of other Cuban ballplayers in the U.S. has become an object of deeper study as baseball has tried to partially ameliorate the past by admitting more black players to the Hall of Fame in 2006. This paper will examine the history of baseball in Cuba (briefly), the career of Jose Mendez---who was selected for the Hall of Fame in 2006, and the story of the Cuban Stars, a barnstorming team that employed Mendez as a pitcher from 1908 through 1912. Much attention will also be given to the role of Nat C. Strong, a baseball impresario from Brooklyn, New York.

Baseball came to Cuba not long after it became America's game. Cuban immigrants to the U.S. picked up the sport as early as the 1860s and young Cuban-Americans began to play on school and college and semi-pro and professional teams as they gained skills. To adopt the American game was a way to protest the pervasive sway of Spanish culture and Spanish rule and was a way to work towards independence for Cuba. Esteban Bellan (1850-1932) became noted as the first Cuban professional ballplayer when he joined the Troy, N.Y., Haymakers for the 1869 through 1872 seasons, after having played at Fordham University from 1863-1868. The Troy ballclub joined the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players in 1871.² Known as Steve Bellan, he played for the New York Mutuals of the National Association in 1873, and then returned to Cuba as a player in the first organized baseball game on the island in 1874 and later became a manager.³

Professional baseball in Cuba began with the establishment of the Cuban League in 1878, just two years after the founding of the National League in the U.S. In 1879, professional ballplayers from the United States first traveled to Cuba to enjoy the tropical warmth of the island. Frank "Banny" Bancroft toured Cuba with the Rochester, New York, Hop Bitters ballclub and his team won both of its games there against the "strongest picked nine out of four Havana clubs."⁴ Starting in 1891, the first barnstorming major league players from the U.S. journeyed to the island to play games against Cuban teams. Included in this group of American players was John McGraw, who

later became the manager of the New York Giants and who had a long association with Cuba and Cubans.⁵

Baseball in Cuba was popular among all classes of people but it was not a fully-integrated game for blacks and whites. The professional game was supposed to be reserved for light-skinned Cubans only, although black Cubans grew up playing the game. The Cuban League had an official policy of segregation, allowing only light-skinned Cubans to play, but this policy had not been fully-enforced because the most-talented black players found roster spots because they contributed to winning teams. The official policies changed in 1900 when the league allowed full access to mulatto and black Cubans who had the best available baseball skills.⁶

The Spanish-American War of 1898 was a major turning point in the history of baseball in Cuba. The U.S. intervention there not only ended the reign of Spain, it also brought more American influences to the island, especially in regard to baseball. The U.S. military government banned bullfighting in Cuba, but greatly encouraged baseball as a sport. Officers at U.S. Army posts organized ballgames among the soldiers and organized games between the soldiers and nearby Cuban teams. A game played in February, 1899, featuring the sailors of the Yankton, anchored in Santiago, against the Santiago Athletic Association team was just one of a multitude of Cuban and American ballgames just after the war. "At the commencement of the American occupation," wrote one observer, "the Cubans went crazy over" baseball and due to a "remarkable natural talent for the game," a "great many very good amateur players were promptly developed."⁷ Another source of information stated that the "influx of the American army officers and soldiers did much to help the Cubans improve in baseball."⁸

During the occupation of Cuba, a new wave of U.S. ballclubs journeyed to the island. Abner Powell, a New Orleans baseball figure, organized a team, called the All American Baseball Club, some of whom were major leaguers, for a barnstorming tour in December and January of 1900. They sailed from New Orleans in late December and played against the Havana Reds and other ballclubs upon their arrival.⁹

In November of 1900, a more prominent group ventured to the island. Led by Thomas C. Simpson, secretary of the Brooklyn National League team, who arranged the trip, the Brooklyn and New York National League ballclubs played a series of games against each other in Cuba. Hughie Jennings played first base and managed the trip for the Brooklyn team while George Davis managed the New York team and played shortstop. The tour was in jeopardy shortly after the arrival of the U.S. teams, when Abel Linares, the Havana newspaperman who had offered the Americans \$5,000 for the tour, did not live up to the contract in making arrangements for games and game sites. The Cuban players were engaged in a labor dispute with their local team owners and did not initially support the tour. The Americans were ready to leave, but a payment of "\$2,000 in American gold" to Simpson kept the tour going. The \$5,000 total never materialized and the Americans decided to split the receipts with their Cuban hosts and the tour ended with the U.S. team losing about \$500. Ten of the touring team returned home early, disappointed with the experience. But those who stayed found the Cubans to be enthusiastic about seeing the top American professional players. The Americans also played some games against the best Cuban teams and at least two games against the U.S. troops still stationed on the island (at Camp Columbia and "the Second Artillery at Vadedo.")¹⁰

This tour had a major impact on Cuban baseball, for a veteran American catcher named Billy Earle, said to be one of the last catchers who used the fingered glove rather than the padded catcher's mitt, came to Cuba to umpire some of the games and to play for the Cubans in others. Earle had become known as the "Globe Trotter" for his participation in Albert Spalding's world tour of 1888-1889, when the ambassadors for baseball visited London, Rome, Egypt, Hawaii and other locales.¹¹

The Cubans liked what they saw of Billy Earle's baseball skills and knowledge and the Almendares club hired him to manage the team. Earle was said to have been "crippled" by catching without "modern protection," but he reportedly found a "second lease of life" in Cuba, showing "how good a player he was" in the barnstorming tour of 1900.¹²

Cuban players had some natural talent, but, as Tommy Simpson observed, "they know the rudiments of the game, but do not know anything about the inside workings of base ball. They can field splendidly and are good runners but as for team work, batting and pitching they have lots to learn." But, he observed, "they are apt scholars," and the "visit of the league players did them considerable good."¹³

The Cubans learned a whole lot about inside baseball from Billy Earle. "There is no man in base ball so much talked about in the island," observed Cuban baseball enthusiast J.E. Bernal, "as Billy Earle." Bernal praised Earle as a "superior ball player," and exclaimed that Billy Earle had "done more in two weeks" as manager "than the Cuban managers did in one year." The buzz over Earle arose after "the bunt was successfully tried in Cuba for the first time," according to a Brooklyn Eagle newspaper article, with the result that the "players of the opposite side were so much puzzled that they did not know where they were at." Earle showed the Cubans such basics as having the catcher back up first base on a grounder to the infield so that he threw the runner out when the crowd expected the runner to "get two more bases." For this, Earle received the hurrahs of the fans and he collected a "considerable amount of ready cash" as they called him before the grandstand for a curtain call. He taught his catcher how to block home plate "in a way that nobody could get in." Earle's skill as a "coacher" of Almendares brought the team up from the bottom of the league to a "close second" in the Cuban League to the Habana team. The team's board of directors gave Earle a banquet and a gold watch in May of 1901 as a token of appreciation for his great success.¹⁴

The year 1900 also marked the beginnings of access to Cuba for visiting black American ballplayers. When organized baseball teams drew the color line in 1887, black athletes had to turn in other directions. They could play on semi-professional teams, white or black, or form new all-black teams. The first professional black team, founded in 1885 in Babylon, New York, on Long Island, by a group of waiters at the Argyle Hotel, gained the name of Cuban Giants when a white businessman named John F. Lang took ownership of the team. Even though none of the players was a Cuban, Lang hoped to attract more attention to the team with a connection to exotic Cuba by having team members speak nonsense words on the field to appear to be speaking Spanish (or Cuban).¹⁵ This team, in various incarnations, lasted through the year 1899. The exotic connotations of the word "Cuban" was a key element for these American teams and it was played up for promotion of the team's schedule. One Cuban Giant, a catcher named John Garcia, was an American and black and from New York City, but it was said that "he was so dark that he easily passed for a Cuban, whether he was or not."¹⁶

Players who had left the Cuban Giants team joined a team managed by E. B. Lamar, Jr., called the Cuban X-Giants, but none of them were Cubans, either. This team existed from 1895 to 1906.¹⁷ To distinguish between the false Cubans on the Cuban Giants and the false Cubans on the X-Giants, the earlier version of the club called itself the “Genuine Cuban Giants,” but none of them were actually Cubans.¹⁸

In 1900 the American team called the Cuban X-Giants first visited Cuba and played against the Cuban League teams---Habana, Almendares, San Francisco and Cuba. This established a relationship between the black American teams and the mixed teams from Cuba.¹⁹

The combined effects of the various factors, the 1898 war, the touring teams and the elimination of Spanish sports, led to a resurgence of Cuban baseball. In 1901, the Cuban League teams beat the bushes for talent, bringing more black players into the league, and bringing higher salaries for the best ballplayers. Publicity for Cuban baseball was augmented by the organization of a barnstorming team from Cuba that traveled to the U.S. in 1899.²⁰

The first acknowledged barnstorming team from Cuba was called the “All Cuban Base Ball Team” or, simply the “All Cubans.” The main man behind the team was manager Abel Linares, and W.W. Laidlaw was also associated with the management of the ballclub. Newspaper reports outlined the team’s itinerary to be “a series of games in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. Abel Linares expected his team “to make a good showing,” and went further to state that the All Cubans would “astonish the Americans” with their ability to play baseball, which he said had “long been the favorite game with the Cubans.” Although it is difficult to track all of the games of the All Cuban team, it began its tour with a game at Weehauken, N.Y, versus the West New York Field Club. The team experienced “mixed results” on the field, according to historian Adrian Burgos, Jr.²¹

Cuban teams returned to the U.S. for barnstorming tours every summer after the initial 1899 venture, led by Abel Linares. By 1905, the All Cuban players were well-versed in strategy and skills and the following assessment sums up the status of the Cuban ballplayers: “They are, with very few exceptions, good hitters, very fast fielders and swift base runners. As throwers their ability is certainly wonderful. It is a common feat with them to nail runners at the plate by long throws from the outfield. Let me tell you, these Cuban teams of to-day are a very hard nut to crack.”²²

The Cuban touring teams eventually played against the top black teams in America during their summer tours. By 1906, the publicity materials for the Cubans boasted that they were “the greatest traveling club in the county, having defeated both the Philadelphia Giants and the Brooklyn Giants in a series of games.”²³ The Cubans had learned the lessons of “inside baseball” by this time, as a newspaper writer reported that the Stars depended upon the “squeeze-play” until a local team adjusted to their bunts. The best player on the team was Bustamente, the shortstop.²⁴

Cuban baseball talent impacted the Cuban X-Giants by 1905 when the team’s roster included “Valdez and Munoz, both of whom are genuine Cubans, from Havana.”²⁵

The year 1906 marked the official entrance of baseball entrepreneur Nat C. Strong into the realm of Cuban baseball as Cuban barnstormers played in the U.S. This was also the first year that the team was called the Cuban Stars, officially incorporated as the “Cuban Stars, Brooklyn,” by Manuel Camps, George Vandehooven and M.A. Cadiz.”²⁶

Nat Strong was a major force in baseball on the East Coast below the major league level. Born in January, 1874, in New York City, he reportedly began his baseball career at age 16, about the year 1890, as “manager of a team in Manhattan.”²⁷ In 1903, Nat Strong managed the Murray Hills baseball club, located in Harlem, during the regular season, and he also managed an indoor baseball team made up of New York Giants players.²⁸ Strong found profits in baseball and explored the avenues of money-making in a number of directions. He scheduled some games against the Philadelphia Colored Giants and the Brooklyn Royal Giants, both talented black teams, and he occasionally arranged exhibition baseball games for his Murray Hills team against major league teams. Significantly, Nat Strong’s team played against the All-Cubans in 1904.²⁹

In 1906, Nat Strong, realizing that profits could be made by staging games of white teams against black teams, worked together with H. Walter Schlichter, owner of the black Philadelphia Giants, to organize the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba. The two men had a goal to “place colored baseball on a solid business basis” by reducing salaries to players and preventing players from jumping from team to team. All of the owners of the colored ball clubs had “lost money due to the exorbitant salaries paid to the players” in the 1906 season. Strong would serve as secretary and he purposed to protect the club owners from game cancellations by “unreliable managers of independent clubs” who would arrange a game and then “unceremoniously cancel the dates at the last moment if so inclined.” The league would “cut out” the unreliable ballclubs from playing against the colored teams. The teams involved included the Cuban Stars of Havana, Cuba; the Philadelphia Giants; the Cuban X-Giants and the Cuban Giants, both from New York; and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. The owners of the teams became the officers of the league---J.W. Connor of the Royal Giants was the vice president; J.M. Bright of the Cuban Giants was the treasurer; Manuel Camps of the Cuban Stars and B. Lamar, Jr., of the X-Giants were on the Board of Trustees; and Nat Strong served as the secretary of the league. This organization controlled the booking of games for the Cuban Stars under Strong’s control.³⁰

Nat Strong then ventured further into the affairs of semi-professional baseball in New York City and its environs in 1907. An organization known as the Inter-City Association had been “established for the purpose of protecting and elevating the interests” of semi-professional and amateur ballclubs in 1906 and Strong stepped in to better organize its efforts. With 170 teams in its membership within a fifty-mile radius of New York City, the “new baseball league” gave Nat Strong plenty of clout in arranging semi-pro games. Strong became the president of the group and he also appointed the committees that wrote the constitution and by-laws for the organization, which included the prominent ballclubs from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Long Island and New Jersey. One major announced goal of the organization was to legalize Sunday games in all parts of the greater New York City area.³¹

Strong profited from offering baseball games on Sundays in New York City, even though baseball was officially outlawed on the Sabbath day. The fact that the major league teams could not play on the Lord’s Day opened up opportunities for semi-professional teams to make some serious money. Strong and other promoters of Sunday ball had to avoid any semblance of selling tickets, so they sold scorecards instead. At some games, the promoters passed a hat to collect donations.³² At other ballparks, fans had to buy a candy bar in order to gain a seat in the grandstand. There were hazards in

these schemes, however, for law officers arrested Manager Strong in 1905, in a crack-down against Sunday baseball. Strong simply posted the \$500 bail money and got released from jail, and, oddly enough, the ball game between his Murray Hills team and the Paterson, New Jersey, team of the Hudson River League was played as scheduled.³³

By 1907, Nat Strong led a movement by the Inter-City Baseball Association to approach New York City mayor George B. McClellan to get legal approval for Sunday baseball games in the city, and the group appointed a committee, with Strong listed among its members.³⁴ The Sunday baseball issue was not definitively settled until 1919, when Sunday games became legal in the state of New York, and the Yankees, Dodgers and Giants began to play regularly-scheduled games on the Sabbath. Strong, however, was the man who booked games on Sundays from roughly 1903 through 1919 as a part of his business enterprises.³⁵

Nat Strong became a prominent booking agent known as the “King of the Bush Leaguers” by expanding his reach beyond the Murray Hills team to turn the Inter-City Association into the “big league of bush baseball.” Strong would conduct meetings of the Inter-City Association every Tuesday night during the season and arrange the Saturday and Sunday schedules of semi-pro teams in “New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and other cities.” Strong’s group would collect “ten per cent of the gate receipts” as its fee for setting the schedule. This might appear to be small change, but each game could bring in “\$500 to \$200,” and Strong’s organization controlled the game of “5,000 ball players,” so the collection of ten per cent of the gate of hundreds of games amounted to a large sum. The Sunday games were Strong’s greatest strength, even though “no admission charge” was permitted. Strong “circumvented” the laws by “selling scoreboards [score cards] at twenty-five and fifty cents” apiece.³⁶

Strong would also hire major league players to participate in the Sunday games, “with the consent of their managers,” paying stars from “\$150 to \$200” a game, and paying players like “Ty Cobb and Joe Jackson and other headliners” from “\$200 to \$250” per game. The salaries of the semi-professional players, by contrast, ranged from \$7 to \$50 a week.³⁷

The black teams and the Cuban teams, acknowledged Strong, drew “big gates in the east.” It was Nat Strong who worked to schedule games and to promote the skills of the black teams of the East Coast and the talents of the Cuban players who barnstormed there, as well. He was listed as the booking agent for the Cuban Stars in 1907.³⁸

Nat Strong both observed and assisted with the sensational debut of Cuban pitcher Jose Mendez in 1908. Mendez proved to be a major force in Cuban baseball and in American baseball.

Jose De La Caridad Mendez Baez (his full name) was born in Cuba in 1887 and his coming of age came just at the time of the resurgence of baseball on the island during the Spanish-American War’s aftermath. In his youth, his talent was recognized by other Cuban players who found his fastball very hard to hit. At age 21, Mendez began his professional career with the prominent Almendares team in 1908, according to the written histories of Cuban baseball.³⁹

Mendez also played with the All Havanas barnstorming team in the U.S. in the summer of 1908 in Chicago and later in the state of New York. He lost to the Chicago Leland Giants (a black team) on May 29 by a score of 11 to 6, giving up eleven hits. In June, Mendez played shortstop and then came in as a relief pitcher in a game against the

Riverviews, a white semi-pro team in Chicago, in a 7-4 loss. Mendez later pitched a five-hitter as the All Havanas beat the West Ends of Chicago, 2 to 1, and he struck out nine batters. Mendez then lost a 2-1 ballgame to the Leland Giants with Mendez playing right field. In a morning game on the same day, June 14, Mendez pitched the All Havanas team to a 9-1 victory over the Alamos, another white team in Illinois.⁴⁰

In July, the Mendez and his team traveled to Cortland, New York, where the ballclub easily defeated the local team by a final score of 5 to 1. The local newspaper referred to the team as the Cuban Stars. Mendez played third base in this game.⁴¹

The Cuban Stars played against the Brooklyn Royal Giants in Newport, RI, in mid-September, with Mendez at second base, with the black Royal Giants winning 5-2.⁴² [1908 news articles on Mendez and his team are scarce in the newspapers that are currently searchable on-line.]

In November of 1908, Mendez made a name for himself when a major league team traveled to Cuba, to play winter baseball against the prominent teams on the island. Thirteen Cincinnati Reds traveled to Cuba, and Mendez was on the mound for the Cuban team in the first game. Mendez showed his ability by shutting out the National League team, allowing only one hit and striking out nine batters in a 1-0 victory.⁴³ The Reds lost seven and won six games against the Cuban ballclubs on that trip.⁴⁴

Nat Strong began to promote the skills of Jose Mendez in December of 1908, writing a special report for the Washington Post, in which he told of Mendez's recent exploits. Strong referred to him as the "Black Diamond," and stated that he was "the most wonderful pitcher ever produced in Cuba" and was "the equal of any of the big stars of American or National League teams." Mendez had "pitched the last five games, or 43 innings, without allowing a run to be made off him." Strong proclaimed that "this record was not made against scrub teams, he having shut out the Cincinnati National Leaguers in each of the three games he twirled against them, and twice blanked the strong Key West (Fla.) team, with Hagerman, drafted by the Chicago Nationals, in the box against him." Strong reported that "in the three games Mendez pitched against Cincinnati not a man reached third base, and in his first game against the big leaguers, he shut them out without a hit." This was an exaggeration, for the Reds had gotten one hit in that game.⁴⁵

Strong praised Mendez as the "best all-around player in Cuba," and he believed that only "his color, black as coal," was "the only thing that keeps him from being a star in one of the major leagues." He also mentioned that Mendez was "the main asset of the Cuban Stars, which team is made up of the stars of the National League of Cuba," but he did not mention that he was the agent who arranged the games of the Cuban Stars in the United States.⁴⁶

Journalists of the time were amazed that Mendez could pitch so well despite his stature, standing just 5' 10" and weighing 152 pounds. Mendez could throw his fastball to the plate at a terrific velocity because he had long arms and an easy motion, using his leg muscles to his best advantage. His extremely long fingers allowed him to put spin on the ball for "tremendous speed" on both his fast ball and his sharp curve ball.⁴⁷

Mendez and the Cuban Stars shone in the 1909 season. Playing against the Chicago City League teams in June, July, and August, Mendez proved that his success against the Reds was not a fluke. Mendez matched skills with Rube Foster and Big Bill Gatewood, the great black pitchers of the Leland Giants, in several memorable games that summer. In the opening game between the two ballclubs, on June 28, Mendez struck

out eight batters in an 8-2 victory, outduelling Gatewood.⁴⁸ The classic confrontation between the Foster and Mendez came on July 1, when the Leland Giants won by a score of 1 to 0. Mendez had eight strikeouts to Foster's 4; each pitcher allowed just five hits; but Mendez allowed an unearned run in the second inning. It was, reported the Chicago Tribune, the first loss sustained by Mendez in the U.S. in his career.⁴⁹ Mendez did not show much in his next start against the Leland Giants when he started the game but had to give up after one inning "on account of a bad thumb," and Mendez did not pitch much against the Leland Giants in the remainder of their series, instead playing left field, right field, or at third base.⁵⁰ A newspaper source, supplied with information from Nat Strong's publicity machine, claimed that Mendez, in his first seventy starts in the U.S., "against strong semipro teams or ranking minor leagues, the Cuban finished with the record of 68 victories and two defeats." That "record came before he developed a lame whip and fell back a few strides."⁵¹

Mendez had tremendous success against the white Chicago City League teams in the summer of 1909. He struck out seventeen batters in a 5-1 win over the Logan Squares in which he was "the whole show himself." If he did not strike out a batter, then the Logan Squares merely hit groundballs to the infield and the first baseman Parpetti recorded the other ten putouts. The outfielders had little work due to the fact that only two fly balls made it out of the infield---and both of those should have been caught.⁵² Mendez threw an eleven-strikeout shutout of the Gunthers, the candymakers team, winning 7 to 0.⁵³ Mendez also blanked the Arions team, 8-0, and struck out thirteen.⁵⁴ After Mendez recovered from his injured thumb, he pitched a ten-inning no-hitter against the Rogers Park team on July 24 in a 3-0 victory.⁵⁵ He beat the River Forest ballclub on August 8 by a 3 to 0 score and he was "in remarkable form, striking out thirteen men" and allowing just two hits.⁵⁶

The Cuban Stars also played the Philadelphia Giants, a well-known black team, in Chicago in August, and Mendez pitched two games, winning both. In one contest he struck out thirteen batters in an 11-inning, 2-0, shutout.⁵⁷

By late August, the Cuban Stars "with Mendez, [Luis] Padron, [Luis] Bustamente, [A.] Parpetti, Hernandez, Garcia, Munoz, and other crack ball players" went east to "invade New York. They reportedly played the Bronx Athletics, the Atlantic City team, and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. They also played several more games against the Philadelphia Giants. In September, the Cuban Stars clobbered the Newport, Rhode Island, team 11-0. The Cubans returned home after games on September 25. One newspaper report claimed that Mendez had lost only one game in the U.S. in all of that season.⁵⁸

There was another Cuban Stars team barnstorming in the U.S. that summer of 1909 and it played in Texas. Newspaper stories stated that this version of the Cuban Stars was a "team from Vera Cruz."⁵⁹

In the winter of 1909, the Detroit Tigers toured Cuba and the Cuban fans were said to be "baseball crazy" with excitement. 20,000 spectators, including the president of Cuba Gomez, watched the first game against Jose Mendez and his Almendares ballclub. The Tigers won 9 to 3, getting twelve hits off Mendez and stealing bases at will against catcher Gonzales.⁶⁰ The second outing for Mendez against the Tigers, on November 14, was closer, but Mendez lost a 4-0 decision.⁶¹

The Tigers team, which was without Ty Cobb for this venture, did not fare so well in another game against Almendares, when the Cuban pitcher Pedroso threw a no-hitter in an eleven-inning, 2 to 1 game. The only run for the Tigers came when the Cuban second baseman fielded a grounder but “chucked the ball over a low fence back of first base” and the runner “went all the way around” to score. Almendares ended up winning the series against the Tigers, four games to two. The Detroit barnstormers also lost a series to the Habana ballclub, again four games to two. The Tigers, however, defeated Matanzas in a single game. Overall, the Americans won five games and lost eight. Bustamente led all hitters in these games, batting .411, and the Cubans Parpetti and C. Moran hit .380, with Cuba’s H. Hidalgo batting .363; the best batting average for the Tigers was M. McIntyre’s .352.⁶²

Another team of major league players from various teams, under the leadership of A.M. McAllister (of Chicago), journeyed to Cuba to play a series of twelve games in December of 1909, but the tour fell apart when the players rebelled against McAllister’s “unfair treatment” and sailed off to Key West and home. Artie Hofman helped bring about an “abrupt end” of the tour when he was overcome by an “overwhelming desire to see [his infant] daughter Mary Jane on Christmas Day.”⁶³

The fact that the Tigers, champions of the American League in 1909, could lose the Cuban series “brought to the attention of fans in this country with startling clearness,” wrote a sportswriter in the Washington Herald, that Cuba was “indeed on the baseball map.”⁶⁴ Perspective on the difficulties of playing in Cuba came from Charley Carr who brought his Indianapolis ballclub to Cuba in 1909. His team won its series there and he said that “no team of all-stars from America can go down there for a little vacation trip, play indifferent baseball, and win a majority of the games” because the Cubans, even though they lacked knowledge of “inside baseball” still played a “mechanical game that is up to the standard of the American game.”⁶⁵

Promoter Nat Strong had helped put the Cubans on the baseball map and, by 1910, Nat Strong served as the booking agent for the Cuban Stars. A January, 1910, newspaper article from Ft. Wayne, Indiana, listed Strong as the “American representative” of the team, with his office located in the “World Building, New York City,” otherwise known as the Pulitzer Building.⁶⁶ Abel Linares was the Cuban responsible for bringing the team to the U.S. for Strong.⁶⁷

Nat Strong’s team had to compete with another Cuban barnstorming ballclub, a team that A.M. McAllister had recruited after his American touring team flopped in Cuba. Jose Mendez was with this team, called the Stars of Cuba, a title that was almost identical to that of the Cuban Stars. The Stars of Cuba were a good team, but were not as talented as the Cuban Stars.⁶⁸

The two Cuban teams played against the Chicago City League teams from May until July, when the two teams played each other in a four-game series. In a key game, the Cuban Stars’ ace Pedroso outpitched Jose Mendez in a 3-2 game, even though Mendez struck out five to Pedroso’s one. At that time, the “Chicago baseball league” decided that having two Cuban teams in the city was not good for baseball there. A July 19 edict “prohibited games between its members and out of town colored ball clubs,” which included the two Cuban teams. “The only reason assigned” for the move, according to newspaper accounts, was “that Cuban teams have been overrunning local territory for the last two years and the bars are put up principally against them.” The rule

put a real “hardship on the Stars of Cuba,” because that team had not yet played the “Chicago league circuit,” being scheduled to play those teams “after the Cuban Stars finish their present series.”⁶⁹ Despite the ban, the Cuban Stars still played some games against the city league teams, defeating the Gunthers candy company team 3-2 on July 23, and losing to the Gunthers on July 30, 2 to 1.⁷⁰

The Stars of Cuba had reportedly arrived in Chicago on May 8, coming from Tampa, Florida.⁷¹ They played a multitude of games in the city, but the team ran into trouble with promoter A.M. McAllister in early August when “former manager” McAllister got a judge to issue a restraining order against the team after he had lost control of the ballclub. The order stated that the club could not play “except under A.M. McAllister’s management.” Unfortunately, the interpreter quit and McAllister could not communicate his order to desist upon the Cubans.⁷²

The Cuban Stars played against the Chicago City League teams after they had made barnstorming forays into Minnesota and Wisconsin in 1910. The ballclub had started their tour in New Orleans and had reportedly won 19 of 20 games by the time that they arrived in the Upper Midwest.⁷³ The first recorded instance of the Cuban Stars playing in Minnesota occurred on May 5 and 6, a Thursday and a Friday, in Winona. The Winona Pirates lost the first game in a close match-up, 2 to 1. The Stars’ pitcher, Padron, struck out six in that game. On Friday, the two teams battled to a 9-9 tie, with Pedrosa hurling for the Cuban ballclub. It was a sloppy game with numerous batsmen hit by pitched balls and the teams tried to keep warm in the early May weather, even though a local newspaper wrote that “the cold weather didn’t seem to bother the Cubans in the least.” The Cuban Stars team stayed in the Merchant’s Hotel in the river city, which is significant, in that the black Cubans were allowed to stay there and did not have to seek out quarters in a boarding house. The team had to leave by train for Wausau, where the Stars defeated the Wisconsin team twice, both games went to extra innings (the score was 5 to 3 on May 7 and 4 to 3 on May 8).⁷⁴

These games in Minnesota coincided with the arrival of Halley’s Comet, which could be viewed clearly during the early morning hours when the air was “clear and cold.” The Stars seemed to outshine the comet on this stretch of the team’s tour.⁷⁵

The Cubans also defeated the LaCrosse, WI, Crabbers ballclub 16 to 11 on May 9. The three opponents for the Stars—Winona, Wausau, and LaCrosse--- were all Minnesota-Wisconsin League teams.⁷⁶

The management of the Cuban Stars had arranged for another game in Minnesota, against the Caledonia team on May 15, but the Cubans cancelled the engagement. A local newspaperman reported that the Stars had gotten “cold feet,” and they had written to the Caledonia manager to explain that “the climate of Minnesota was too rigorous at present to continue their trip through the Northwest.” So the cold weather did seem to bother the islanders after all.⁷⁷

The Stars of Cuba ballclub, with Mendez, also did some touring away from Chicago in June, meeting the Kenosha, WI, team, and beating them 6 to 2.⁷⁸

Mendez had some success in Chicago in 1910. His Stars of Cuba ballclub was slated to play fifteen games against the Leland Giants and Mendez defeated the Leland Giants in July by a final count of 15 to 7, besting Rube Foster in that contest. But in a game in later July, Foster pitched the Leland Giants to a 3-1 win over Mendez. Mendez

had nine strikeouts to Foster's seven in that game. The two pitchers matched off again on July 28, and the game ended in a 4-4 tie, called on account of darkness.⁷⁹

In August and September of 1910, the Stars of Cuba ballclub played games in Kansas City, in which the Kansas City Giants, a black team, beat the Stars of Cuba in an eight-game series and then they played each other in a three-game series.⁸⁰

The remainder of the schedule for the two teams in the U.S. in 1910 is difficult to track.

Upon their return to Cuba in the fall of 1910, the very best Cuban ballplayers faced a major challenge from barnstorming U.S. major leaguers. The Detroit Tigers played a series of games in November and then the Philadelphia Athletics, the American League champions and World Series champs featuring pitchers Jack Coombs and Chief Bender, arriving later in November. The promoter and sponsor of the series was Eugenio Jimenez, who came from "one of the first families in Cuba."⁸¹

The Tigers won seven games against the Cuban teams and lost four, with one game ending in a tie (in which Mendez "held Detroit to three hits in ten innings").⁸² Four of the contests were decided by a single run and three games went into extra innings. The Tigers got a boost when Ty Cobb arrived in the middle of the series of games. The Cubans were thrilled to see Cobb, for the "Georgia Peach came heralded as the greatest player of his time." Cobb lived up to expectations, especially in the first game he played, cracking a home run in his first at-bat and then getting two more hits in that game.⁸³

The Cuban pitchers, according to U.S. umpire Billy Evans, "had been working their very best against Cobb," and the Cuban fans "appealed to the native twirlers to strike him out." In his last at-bat in the last game in Cuba, Jose Mendez threw three strikes past the swinging American star and, even though the Cubans lost the game, the "fans went home that night in a happy mood."⁸⁴

The reputation of Jose Mendez became more firmly established that year by striking out Cobb and he also beat the Philadelphia Athletics and Hall of Famer Eddie Plank by a score of 5-2 on Dec. 13.⁸⁵ The Cuban teams beat the A's in six of the ten games there.⁸⁶

American baseball writers had to get into a damage-control mode after the Athletics lost in Cuba, stating that the American teams had never gone to Cuba in full-strength numbers and that the heat would deleteriously affect the major leaguers until they became acclimated to it. One news article proclaimed: "Climate Is Too Hot For Star Players In Cuba; Americans Grow Languid From Its Effects." It appeared that many U.S. players became "soft" with a lay-off after the end of the regular season before journeying to Cuba.⁸⁷ One writer attributed the American players' failure to hit the ball well or to "solve the delivery of the native hurlers" to poor-quality Cuban baseballs that lacked liveliness or to the "exceedingly bright" sunshine in the Caribbean.⁸⁸

In the 1911 season, two squads of Cubans, the Stars and the All-Cubans, toured in the U.S. The team that had Jose Mendez fared well and Mendez established a tremendous record, reportedly winning 41 games and losing only one game (by August 19). In August, the Cuban Stars played a series against the New York Lincoln Giants (owned by Rod McMahon) and the highlight of the series was a pitching match-up between Mendez and the young Cannonball Dick Redding, who had "won seventeen straight games."⁸⁹ It turned out to be a big win for Mendez when the Cuban Stars knocked Redding out of the game in the third inning, winning 14 to 8.⁹⁰

The winter baseball season in Cuba for 1911 featured the Philadelphia Phillies on tour to Havana. The Almendares ballclub defeated the Phillies in the first game, 3 to 1, with Mendez on the mound. "The Phillies," wrote an observer, "simply could not hit Mendez."⁹¹ Mendez also threw a four-hit shutout against Philadelphia, winning 4 to 0. In a third game, the Phillies buffeted Mendez with thirteen hits after a fourth-inning rainstorm "made the ball so slippery that Mendez could not control his great speed or work his fast curve." The Philadelphia ballclub also defeated Almendares in a November 9 game, 3-2.⁹²

The New York Giants, managed by John McGraw, followed the Phillies to Cuba in 1911. McGraw, "mindful of the fate the Detroit and Athletic teams met in Cuba when each of them was decisively defeated by the Cuban teams," had "made it plain to the players" that he wanted "them to play their best in Cuba."⁹³

The Giants heeded the call of McGraw and won the Cuban series, nine games to three. Still, Mendez's fame became more wide-spread after he won a pitching duel against Christy Mathewson. Mendez threw four innings of scoreless relief in the December 14 game, won by Almendares 7 to 4. Mendez allowed just two hits in his relief stint, and appeared to live up to the newspaper billing in Cuba as the "Black Mathewson." This was an honor, but it reflected the sad truth that this dark-skinned Cuban would never be allowed to play major league baseball due to the color line.⁹⁴

The "white Mathewson" commented on the talents of the so-called "Black Mathewson" in a news report:

"This fellow Mendez is a great pitcher. It's too bad he is a negro, as his color bars him from the big leagues up in the States. If he was a white man or an Indian he'd be the star of the leagues up there in no time."⁹⁵

John McGraw said that Mendez was "a fine pitcher, sure enough, with as fast a ball as you'd see anywhere. He burns it over like a rifle ball and depends entirely upon his great speed."⁹⁶

Mendez and Mathewson had squared off in an earlier contest, as well, and Mathewson had won the battle---the game score was 4-0 in favor of the Giants over the Almendares team. Matty had allowed just three hits, surrendered no walks and struck out eleven. The Giants had garnered five hits off Mendez, and the Cuban had walked two batters and struck out four. The Almendares team committed three errors in the contest.⁹⁷

The overall impact of the pitching performances of Jose Mendez from 1908 through December of 1911 brought him considerable attention in the sporting press in the U.S. His reputation was such that the Washington Post published a lengthy article on the career of Mendez as a "pitching marvel" in January of 1912, headlining him as the "Black Mathewson," which only added to his renown as Cuba's "Black Diamond." No other black player from his era got that much space in a newspaper of national stature. Additionally, the newswire services distributed follow-up articles entitled "Cuba's Great Hurler," in which "Pepe" Conte, "the Cuban baseball scribe," opined that "American baseball fans can talk all they want about their Benders, Mathewsons, Walshes and Browns, but down in our country we have a pitcher that none of the best batters in the country can touch. This is the famous black tornado. Mendez. Talk about speed. Why, when he cuts loose at his hardest clip the ball bounces out of the catcher's mitt. No one has been found who can hold him when he really extends himself. . . . Mendes has more curves than any pitcher in America, and if some inventive genius could invent a

whitening process whereby we could get the fellow into the big leagues he could win a pennant for either tail-end team in either league. . . . [and] To make things better, Mendez can bat like a Cobb. He has won his own games on various occasions with smashes over the fences for home runs. . . . [even though] he weighs about 154 pounds and is a little fellow.” Ira Thomas, a veteran Philadelphia A’s catcher, echoed Conte’s words when he wrote about Mendez in a 1914 article in Baseball Magazine: “It is not alone my opinion but the opinion of many others who have seen Mendez pitch that he ranks with the best in the game. I do not think that he is Walter Johnson’s equal, but his is not far behind. He has terrific speed, great control and uses excellent judgment.”⁹⁸

For Mendez in 1912, as in other seasons, he toured in the U.S. with the Cuban Stars (sometimes referred to in newspapers as just the “Cubans”) but the effects of pitching so many innings for so many months of a year began to take its toll on his arm. Scarce articles from that year about the Cuban Stars reveal fewer highlights for the Cuban pitcher. The pre-eminent game for Mendez came in August when he pitched in “one of the greatest baseball struggles in the history of semi-pro ball” against Rube Foster and the Chicago American Giants in the Windy City. After twelve innings the game score stood in a 2-2 tie, a classic game that only darkness could end. “It was a great game,” wrote a Chicago Defender reporter, with “Foster and Mendez twirling great ball,” in a game that was “full of thrills.” Foster struck out seven Cubans while Mendez fanned five American Giants.” The Chicago Tribune called it a “great duel” and a “great pitchers’ battle.” Little did those writers know at the time that both hurlers would later be granted status as Hall of Famers.⁹⁹

The Cuban Stars played in New York in May, then played in Chicago in mid-summer, and then returned to New York in later August before returning to the home island. But the performances of Mendez began to fall off from his previous peaks, and in the 1913 season, he was no longer with the Cuban Stars. Major leaguer Ira Thomas opined that Mendez was “still great” in 1913, but it “seemed” to Thomas that “he had slowed up a little since the first time I became acquainted with his fast, straight ones,” due to the fact that Mendez had “seen years of service,” and had “worked uncommonly hard and no doubt the effect of it all has begun to tell.” Mendez would be “missed,” wrote the Chicago Defender, “but the greatest black twirler that ever held the sphere will probably pitch no more.” One source believed that “the wonderful black [pitcher] went to pieces” back in 1911, and “it was thought that he would never be able to pitch again,” but that source was inaccurate in its time frame, but was correct in its assessment that “it appears that he has come back” by the end of the 1913 season. It turned out that Mendez would not pitch for the Cuban Stars, but Mendez did continue his career, joining the barnstorming All Nations team, becoming its Cuban representative in tours of the Midwest and to other fields of play across the face of the U.S. for the next six years. This was the team of J.L. Wilkinson, a baseball genius who had a talent for finding and signing great ballplayers, and black pitcher John Donaldson, who had an abundance of baseball skills that he employed throughout a long career of barnstorming, culminating in a Negro Leagues stint in the 1920s.¹⁰⁰

Why did the richly-talented Mendez and Donaldson play for a touring team like the All Nations? The most likely reason was spelled out in a 1912 black newspaper: “The woods are filled with good colored players, but they are fated to eke out a tolerable existence only, under the ban of displeasure of the racial gods, whoever they may be.”

None would ever get properly compensated for their remarkable skills as long as the color line in baseball held sway.¹⁰¹

But Mendez, when interviewed for the Chicago Defender newspaper in 1914, gave several more reasons. The key point was that J.L. Wilkinson took good care of his players and paid them well. Mendez declared “that manager Wilkinson is the best American living, knows the game from A to Z, and that he treats all men fairly.” After the season of touring was over, Mendez went to Cuba to play winter baseball and to see his mother. He brought presents for his mother and “his usual gift of \$150 in gold.” Mendez alluded to the messy nature of black baseball in all eras when he spoke of the golden character of Wilkinson, for baseball in Chicago and New York was fraught with feuding between the owners and ballplayers jumping from city to city and contract to contract.¹⁰² [As a side note, Buck O’Neil (quoted much later) agreed with Mendez’s assessment of Wilkinson, said that Wilkinson was “only the second man I had ever known who was not prejudiced,” the first one was O’Neil’s own father.]¹⁰³

Mendez pitched for the All Nations team in 1913, 1914, 1916, 1917.¹⁰⁴

While Mendez went away from the Cuban Stars, Nat Strong forged stronger ties with the ballclub. In 1911, Nat Strong was still identified in newspaper articles as the “American representative for the Cuban Stars baseball team.” By 1913, Strong was the “manager of the [Cuban] Stars” the agent who arranged games for their barnstorming tours. He was a part owner of the ballclub, according to baseball history sources.¹⁰⁵

Nat Strong profited from other international enterprises, including making the travel arrangements and game schedules for the Chinese baseball club of the University of Hawaii in 1912. In 1914, Strong served as the “New York representative of Keio University,” when the Japanese university’s baseball team toured in the U.S. Additionally, he was mentioned in connection with a barnstorming “All Chinese team” in 1914.¹⁰⁶

Nat Strong solidified his ties with the Brooklyn Royal Giants, the black ballclub, by gaining ownership of the team from John Connor just prior to the U.S. entrance into World War I in 1917, according to baseball historian James A. Riley (or by 1911, according to baseball historian Mark Ribowski). In that decade from 1910 to 1920, he also became a part owner of the Brooklyn Bushwicks (likely in 1917) and the Bay Parkways, two white semi-professional teams.¹⁰⁷

The key to Strong’s success was his ironclad contracts with the teams that played in his zone. All games booked for the region’s ballparks came into the realm of Strong, who collected ten per cent of the gate receipts. This may not sound like much, but its cumulative effect made him a rich man and a powerful one.¹⁰⁸

After Sunday baseball became legalized in the state of New York in 1919, Strong ventured further into black baseball. He was the czar of the Eastern Colored League and he “engaged in a terrific battle with the late Rube Foster for the control” of black baseball in the 1920s. Foster had established the Negro National League in 1920 and wanted black ownership of black teams. Foster, wrote black sportswriter Al Monroe, felt that “Strong’s policy was one of take all and give nothing” in a competition for “baseball monarchy and monopoly” by both men. Gus Greenlee, a black baseball club owner, described Strong as a “powerful baseball man” who could be an “unusually good friend” to those who acceded to his wishes but “a most vindictive enemy” to his enemies.”¹⁰⁹ Strong would have had an absolute monopoly over black baseball after 1920, according

to prominent baseball historian Jerry Malloy, except for the fact that Rube Foster had fought “Nat Strong to a standstill” by means of “Foster’s mastery at booking” games in the Midwest, forcing Strong to accept control over only the eastern half of black baseball in the 1920s.¹¹⁰

Sol White, a black ballplayer and manager who wrote about colored baseball as an insider with deep insights, rated Nat Strong as one of the “greatest figures in colored baseball history” as a “promoter” of the game.¹¹¹

Strong had an alliance with major league club owners and players and exhibitions held at his Bushwicks’ home field, Dexter Park, could attract multitudes of fans. For instance, in October of 1928, Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth’s All-Stars began their barnstorming tour by playing the Bushwicks. 22,000 fans witnessed the surprising victory by the Bushwicks and a homer by Gehrig. Strong likely got more than 10% of the gate totals.¹¹²

Additionally, Strong, as the man who controlled the Inter-City Baseball Association, required the teams in the organization to purchase Spalding uniforms, baseballs, bases, catcher’s equipment and other baseball goods through his Spalding sporting goods distributorship.¹¹³

Nat Strong died in 1935 at age 61. He had “devoted the greater part of his life to baseball,” having started his career as “manager of a team in Manhattan.”¹¹⁴ At his prime before World War I, he likely “controlled more baseball teams than any [other] man in the country,” by his monopoly over “independent, semi-pro or sand lot baseball.” When he died “he was a decidedly wealthy man,” and that he had “more than a million dollars” in his estate for his wife and four daughters. Although he had “never played a game of big league baseball in his life,” his name was “known from one end of the United States to the other.” For “small town baseball fan” he was among the twenty most “prominent men in the game” because of all the games he had booked for black teams, Cuban teams and barnstorming teams. Despite this past name recognition, he does not yet have a news clippings file in the Baseball Hall of Fame Library.¹¹⁵

Strong was so prominent that he used Spalding baseballs marked with a stamp on the side that read “Made Especially for Nat C. Strong.”¹¹⁶ Even after Strong died, his “Nat Strong Booking Agency” had Bill Leuschner as its representative on the board of directors of the Negro National League as late as 1940.¹¹⁷

Jose Mendez had an outstanding career in baseball. During World War I, Rube Foster issued a call to Mendez to fill in at shortstop for the Chicago American Giants after the regular shortstop Bobby Williams was drafted into the Army.¹¹⁸

Mendez continued to play in his homeland of Cuba at times throughout his career, which spanned from 1908 to 1926.¹¹⁹ When the Negro League was founded by Rube Foster in 1920, he joined the Kansas City Monarchs as a player/manager.¹²⁰ The owner of the Monarchs was the same J. L. Wilkinson who hired Mendez for the All Nations team. Mendez made his mark forever in 1924, when the Negro Leagues began its World Series and he managed his Monarchs to the first Black World Series title and won two of the games on the mound.¹²¹ By this time, he was a wily veteran who got batters out by outfoxing them with an assortment of pitches. The Monarchs became known as the most successful Negro League franchise ever, winning 17 league pennants and two Colored World Series titles. The Monarchs later supplied more players, including Jackie Robinson and Ernie Banks, to the major leagues than any other Negro League team.

Sadly, Mendez got ill after the 1926 season and went home to try to recuperate, but he died, most likely from tuberculosis, in 1928.¹²² He had some renown while he lived, but it would take 78 years before he gained a place beside the greats of baseball in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown in 2006. His plaque there honored Mendez for his career as the “first internationally-known Cuban baseball star.”¹²³

The Cuban Stars franchise was a continuous part of the black baseball in the U.S. from 1899, in various incarnations in the East and the West, until the dissolution of the leagues, one in 1929 and the other in 1930. Alex Pompez had come to the U.S. from Cuba in 1910, establishing an acquaintance with Nat Strong, building up to Pompez’s establishing a Cuban Stars team in 1916. Pompez competed with Abel Linares, with Pompez operating the East Cuban Stars and Linares operating the West Cuban Stars ballclub (in Chicago). Alex Pompez later kept the franchise name alive with his New York Cubans ballclub, 1935 to 1950. Pompez was awarded posthumous entry into the Hall of Fame in 2006, along with Mendez and J.L. Wilkinson.¹²⁴

Some baseball historians have understood the importance of Nat C. Strong as a force within baseball from the period of 1905 to 1935, and others have put a focus on other individuals, leagues, and players. The magnitude of his reach goes beyond the scope of many studies and Strong is a shadowy figure, working behind the scenes, making collections of his ten-percent cut as a part of the underside of baseball economics. But Nat Strong heavily impacted black baseball and, with his financial schemes and Sunday games, also put his imprint on white baseball.

Further investigations of Nat Strong could be pursued but his trail is hard to follow---still more could be learned by examining the real estate records in his home county and some of his relatives might well have some letters or papers that he left to the family. Similarly the history of the Cuban Stars has been recorded in various guides to black baseball and in several recent books about Cuban baseball and it appears that the newspaper trail of the barnstorming ballclub could be followed by means of a network of dedicated researchers similar to the John Donaldson network (which has documented over 5,000 strikeouts for this great black pitcher.

The legacy of Jose Mendez is secured forever by means of his admittance to Cooperstown, but no researcher or historian even knows if the man was ever married or had any children, as of this writing.

AFTERWORD:

The reason that I looked at the history of this Cuban Stars team was because I wanted to find out how many games the team had played in Minnesota. My interest has been in finding the stories of the barnstorming teams that have played in MN and this Cuban Stars story is only a part of the bigger picture of the St. Paul Colored Gophers, the Minneapolis Keystones, and the All Nations team. So I have been tracking Bobby Marshall of the Keystones and Colored Gophers and then tracking John Donaldson of the All Nations team and the next step was to document the career of Jose Mendez for the games he played in MN. Jose Mendez was selected for the Hall of Fame in 2006 but historians did not even know very much about his career but knew much of his legendary status. The connections between Mendez and Nat Strong, who had his hands in many money-making enterprises turned out to be the best story in this research. I was

disappointed that I could not track the Cuban Stars any better than I could, the problem is that the game accounts are spread about in Illinois and in New York and other places and my newspaper search engines only bring in a certain amount of information, the other parts of the story would have to be gathered by a team of researchers in a number of states with access to the state historical society newspaper archives in those various states. My paper is an attempt to give the outline of the story and some structure to future efforts in documenting the history of the Cuban Stars team.

I will be posting this paper on my black baseball in Minnesota web page so that researchers may find it on the web and find more game accounts and box scores.

I had used PROQUEST HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS and NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE.COM to get as far as I did. I then looked into the MN newspapers at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Also, there was a black baseball team in Duluth in 1909, organized and managed by a black boxer named Walter Whitehead. The newspapers in Duluth told of games that were to be played but did not give news accounts of the games. The team was called "Walter Whitehead's Colored Giants" and they were to have played against Cloquet in early August 1909, but I cannot find a record of the game. Further investigation is needed.

¹ Liván Hernández came to the U.S. in 1996 and is in the playoffs with the Arizona Diamondbacks this fall, 2007.

² Bellan listed at 3B in "Baseball," New York Times, April 26, 1871, p. 2; "Base Ball," Daily Kennebec [ME] Journal, May 18, 1871, p. 3.

³ Louis Perez, Jr., "Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898," Journal of American History 81, no. 2, (September, 1994): 499-500; "Cuban Baseball: Estabán Bellan," Fordham University Library, http://www.library.fordham.edu/cubanbaseball/E_Bellan.html, accessed on June 19, 2007; "Steve Bellan," Baseball Reference.com, <http://www.baseball-reference.com/b/bellast01.shtml>, accessed on June 19, 2007.

⁴ "Base Ball in Cuba," Galveston Daily News, December 23, 1879, p. 1; and Wellsboro [PA] Agitator, December 30, 1879, p. 2; Bancroft had managed the Worcester, Massachusetts, ball club in the 1879 season according to "Reds To Visit Cuba," Washington Post, October 26, 1908, p. 8, and Fitchburg [MA] Daily Sentinel, June 3, 1879, p. 3; American catchers were in Cuba from 1879 onward, according to Roberto González Echevarría, The Pride of Havana: A History of Cuban Baseball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 100 [he wrote that the trip was in 1878]; Adrian Burgos, Jr., Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 31-32.

⁵ Peter C. Bjarkman, A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 423-424;

⁶ Peter C. Bjarkman, A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 84; David C. Skinner, "Twice Champions: The 1923-1924 Santa Clara Leopards," www.sabr.org/cmsFiles/Files/Skinner-RT.pdf, accessed on June 15, 2006, p. 59.

⁷ "Base Ball Attracts a Crowd at Santiago," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 24, 1899, p. 12; Louis Perez, Jr., "Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898," Journal of American History 81, no. 2, (September, 1994): 515-516; quote in "Amusements of the Cubans," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 23, 1901, p. 41.

⁸ Salt Lake Herald [Salt Lake City, UT], November 11, 1900, p. 4.

⁹ “Baseball In Cuba; Team of American Professional Players Will Go To the Island,” New York Times, December 24, 1899, p. 13; “Base Ball Notes,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, January 21, 1900, p. 12; “Ball Players Go To Cuba,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 28, 1899, p. 2; the team included Harry Steinfeldt of the Cincinnati team and Pearce Chiles of the Philadelphia (National League) team. Powell in “Sidelines: Odd Weather Stirs Memory of Baseball Rain Check Inventor,” Nashville Banner, June 12, 1997, p. C1; obituary, “Abner Powell,” New York Times, August 8, 1953, p. 11; “Baseball’s Abner Powell is Dead,” Beckley [West Virginia] Post-Herald, August 8, 1953, p. 6; Louis Perez, Jr., “Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898,” Journal of American History 81, no. 2, (September, 1994): 516.

¹⁰ “League Players in Cuba,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 2, 1900, p. 11; “First Games in Cuba Attract Big Crowds,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 10, 1900, p. 12; “Trip Almost Disastrous,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 9, 1900, p. 2; “Players Off For Cuba,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, October 29, 1900, p. 10; “Brooklyns and New Yorks Arrange a Trip to Cuba After the League Season,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 9, 1900, p. 10; “Baseball In Cuba,” Syracuse [NY] Post-Standard, October 31, 1900, p. 4; “Ball Players Return From Cuba Broke,” Syracuse [NY] Post-Standard, November 18, 1900, p. 3; games against military in “Third Game in Cuba Won By the New Yorks,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 14, 1900, p. 14.

¹¹ “League Players in Cuba,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 2, 1900, p. 11; “Base Ball News,” Mansfield [OH] News, November 3, 1900, p. 3; “Albert Spalding,” Baseball.Libary.com, http://www.baseballlibrary.com/ballplayers/player.php?name=Albert_Spalding_1850, accessed on June 29, 2007;.

¹² “Base Ball In Cuba is on the Boom,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 11, 1901, p. 8; “Brief Sporting Items,” New Castle [PA] News, December 26, 1900, p. 12; “Base Ball,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 25, 1900, p. 12; “crippled” in “Billy Earle,” New York Times, June 1, 1946, p. 12; injuries in “McGraw’s Good Deed,” Trenton [NJ] Evening Times, August 16, 1898, p. 8; “Notes of the Players,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, March 11, 1900, p. 9; “Base Ball Notes,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 6, 1896, p. 5; knowledge in “Base Ball Notes,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 27, 1896, p. 8 (he applied to be manager in Detroit); “Brooklyns Home Again,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 28, 1896, p. 4.

¹³ “League Players in Cuba,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 2, 1900, p. 11.

¹⁴ “Manager Hanlon Talks,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 2, 1901, p. 14; “Base Ball in Cuba in on the Boom,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 11, 1901, p. 8; “Ball Row in Cuba; President Resigns,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, May 13, 1901, p. 7; Earle went from managing Almendares to managing the Fe ballclub, according to “Base Ball in Cuba is Very Profitable,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 6, 1901, p. 13.

¹⁵ John Holway, The Complete Book of Baseball’s Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History (Fern Park, FL: Hastings House Publishers, 2001), p. 18-19; James A. Riley, The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 202-203. The Cuban Giants were based in Trenton, NJ, by 1886, “Victory for the Newark,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 27, 1886, p. 16; “Cuban Giants Vs. Long Island Athletics,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 13, 1886, p. 4;

¹⁶ “Caught the Ball and Died,” New York Times, October 2, 1904, p. 1.

¹⁷ John Holway, The Complete Book of Baseball’s Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History (Fern Park, FL: Hastings House Publishers, 2001), p 31-50; James A. Riley, The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 203-204;

¹⁸ “Nationals 15; Genuine Cuban Giants, 13,” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, October 18, 1897, p. 3.

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- ¹⁹ Peter C. Bjarkman, A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 85-86.
- ²⁰ "Manager Hanlon Talks," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 2, 1901, p. 14.
- ²¹ "Hits From the Diamond," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 25, 1899, p. 7; "Hits From the Diamond," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 29, 1899, p. 7; Laidlaw in Fresno [CA] Morning Republican, July 28, 1899, p. 3; there was a game against North Adams, Massachusetts, according to "Joe Wall Home Again," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 14, 1899, p. 13; list of states in "Cuban Ball Players Coming," Fitchburg [MA] Sentinel, July 22, 1899, p. 8. Adrian Burgos, Jr., Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 81.
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¹¹⁵ “Nat Strong Is Dead: Prominent In Sports,” New York Times, January 11, 1935, p. 23; millionaire in “All That’s Sport,” Syracuse [NY] Herald, January 20, 1935, p. 13, Section 1; and in a letter of H. Walter Schlichter wrote to Sol White in 1935, in Sol White, Sol White’s History of Colored Baseball, With Other Documents on the Early Black Game 1886-1936 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 157, Schlichter wrote: “It is true that I might have ‘made a million’ or less had I stuck to colored baseball but I doubt it. Outside of Nat Strong I know of no one who has. And, at that, I am better off than he is right now. I am still living and have my health and Nat didn’t take his wealth with him. There is no pocket in a shroud, you know.”

¹¹⁶ “Current Live Auction: Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig autographed baseball,” Hunt Auctions, http://www.huntauctions.com/online/imageviewer.cfm?auction_num=10&lot_num=913&lot_qual=a, accessed on June 8, 2007.

¹¹⁷ “National, American League in Joint Meeting,” Chicago Defender March 2, 1940, p. 24; the Detroit Clowns basketball team was handled by Nat C. Strong, Inc., of World Building, New York City, see “Clowns Booking Games,” Daily Courier [Connellsville, PA], January 31, 1939, p. 7; it handled table tennis exhibitions, in “Bits Here And There,” Daily Courier [Connellsville, PA], November 24, 1939, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ “Williams Drafted; Mendez Shortstop,” Chicago Defender, July 13, 1918, p. 9; “American Giants Blank The Joliet,” Chicago Defender, August 24, 1918, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ “Mendez Still a Pitcher,” Chicago Defender, January 22, 1921, p. 6.

¹²⁰ “Lyons’ Homer Beats Monarchs,” Chicago Defender, August 21, 1920, p. 6; “Donaldson Masters Detroit,” Chicago Defender, August 21, 1920, p. 6; “When League Was Formed In 1920,” Chicago Defender, December 17, 1938, p. 9.

¹²¹ “Monarchs Win Negro Title,” Chicago Defender, October 21, 1924, p. 20; “Kansas City Wins Championship,” Chicago Defender, October 25, 1924, p. 1; “Nip Winters And Joe Mendez,” Chicago Defender, November 1, 1924, p. 9; “Fay Says; Mendez,” Chicago Defender, September 19, 1925, p. 9; “Kansas City Won First World Series In 1924,” Chicago Defender, September 5, 1942, p. 24.

¹²² “Mendez, Ball Star Of Past Is Buried,” Los Angeles Times, November 3, 1928, p. 9; “Joe Mendez Dies,” Chicago Daily Tribune, November 2, 1928, p. 29; “From The Defender Files,” Chicago Defender, November 19, 1938, p. 16.

¹²³ “Jose Mendez,” National Baseball Hall of Fame, <http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers/detail.jsp?playerId=506634>, accessed on September 4, 2007.

¹²⁴ James A. Riley, The Biographical Encyclopedia Of The Negro Baseball Leagues (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 203, 580; Adrian Burgos, Jr., Playing America’s Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 115-117, 123.