

The Courier

A Publication of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"

Editor, Larry Lester

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In the News

King Solomon is Crowned!

by Ralph Carhart

History and the present came together on Saturday, May 10th, at **Frederick Douglass Memorial Park** in Staten Island, NY. The

Negro Leagues Baseball Grave Marker Project

dedicated its 30th marker by recognizing the legacy of black baseball pioneer, **Sol White**. A crowd of roughly 75 onlookers and participants celebrated the accomplishments of the great player, manager, executive and writer with song, prayer and stories about White and his times. Speakers included local SABR members as well as official MLB historian **John Thorn** and NLBGMP Founder, **Dr. Jeremy Krock**.

The celebrants followed a procession led by the **St. Philip's Baptist Church Drum Corp** to the location of White's grave, graced for the event with a large portrait of him from the early 1900s, provided with the aid of **Tom Shieber** from the Baseball Hall of Fame. Friends of Frederick Douglass CEO **Patricia Willis** played host to the proceedings, beginning with a prayer by **Reverend Dr. Tony Baker** of St. Philip's. He was followed by a stirring *a capella* performance by **Brandon Stratford**.

State Senator **Andrew Lanza** and City Councilwoman **Debi Rose** also spoke. The event was particularly poignant for Rose, whose four grandparents, both parents and sister are also buried in the sacred ground of Frederick Douglass. She referred to the troubled cemetery as Frederick Douglass "Historical" Park, mentioning that

legendary vaudeville singer, dancer, and pianist **Mamie Smith** was buried just a few yards away.

An animated performance by children's musician **Lloyd Miller** taught the youth from the **Staten Island Little League** that were in attendance a little bit about **Cool Papa Bell** and

Satchel Paige. A technical malfunction did not stop the earnest singer as he quickly switched from electric guitar to ukulele and had some in the crowd singing along.

Dr. Krock then stepped forward to let the crowd know about the Negro Leagues Baseball Grave Marker Project. In

his words, "We keep focus on keeping the memory of Negro Leagues baseball and their great players alive." He also pointed out that in addition to White, the NLBGMP has placed stones at the graves of two other members of the Baseball Hall of

Fame - **Frank Grant** in Clifton, NJ, and **Pete Hill** in Alsip, IL, just outside of Chicago. Next on the radar of the NLBGMP is **Elias "Country Brown" Bryant**, also buried in an unmarked grave at Frederick Douglass.

Staten Island resident and SABR member **Ralph Carhart**, who read a biography of White prepared by himself and 19th Century Committee Chair, **Peter Mancuso**, followed Krock. White had an unlikely entry into organized ball; his local team needed an extra player after an injury and the 14-year-old White was

conscripted into duty. He never looked back, forging a trailblazing career as a player on integrated as well as colored teams, as manager and executive of the **Philadelphia Giants** and

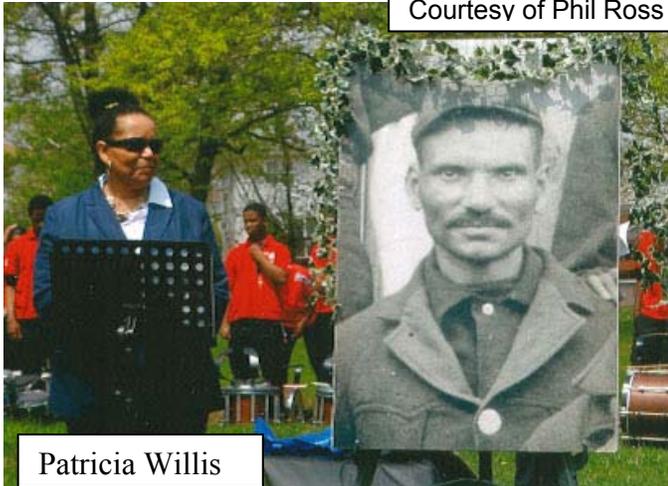


Courtesy of Ralph Carhart



Courtesy of Phil Ross

composing his legacy-making publication in 1907 of *“The Colored Base Ball Guide.”* White’s own prescient words were quoted, “Base ball... should be taken seriously by the colored player, as honest efforts with his great ability will open an avenue in the near future wherein he may walk hand-in-hand with the opposite race in the greatest of all American games.”



Courtesy of Phil Ross

Patricia Willis

SABR member **Jim Drury** then followed with a reading of a resolution celebrating Sol White, the NLBGMP and Frederick Douglass composed by the Baseball Hall of Fame. Drury, who was instrumental in the installation of the marker, quoted Hall President **Jeff Idelson**, stating that White’s induction into the Hall in 2006 was a result “of his role in the history and development of baseball as our great National Pastime.” Idelson also recognized the important efforts of both groups at preserving the memory of White.



Courtesy of Ralph Carhart

John Thorn

John Thorn served as the final guest speaker, representing Commissioner **Bud Selig**. Noting the important role history plays in baseball like no other game, “Sol White had seemed to be on the outside looking in. A faintly recalled figure of such antiquity, that his footprints were no longer visible on baseball’s long road.” The NLBGMP has

helped change that. You can read the full text of Thorn’s speech, as well as Sol’s bio at: <http://ourgame.mlblogs.com/author/johnthornmlb/>

Willis and Krock concluded the ceremony by removing the covering from White’s grave, revealing the polished black granite stone, emblazoned with an image of White from his Philadelphia Giants days. Local musician Justin Tinker played a somber tenor saxophone version of *“Take Me Out To The Ballgame,”* as the guests, young and old, filed by the grave and left a carnation - a modest gift in appreciation of all that White left behind. The first 50 guests also appreciated a unique baseball card of White that was handmade by artist **Jesse Loving** of **Ars Longa Art Cards** specially for the event.

Anyone interested in helping with the effort to place a marker for “Country Brown” Bryant should go to the SABR donation page at <https://sabr.site-ym.com/donations/donate.asp?id=6148>. If you’d like to make a donation to the struggling Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, use the following address; Friends of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Inc.; P.O. Box 140827; Staten Island, New York 10314; Attn. Patricia Willis CEO.

Editor's note: This excellent article by Carhart, along with others by Jay Hurd, Ryan Whirly, John Thorn, and Joe Palladino can be found at a webpage devoted exclusively to the Sol White dedication in Staten Island, New York. <http://www.larrylester42.com/sol-white-dedication.html> Also check here for other photos.

Now batting for the Krock Watchers -

Elias "Country Brown" Bryant

Famously known for his comic routines, Bryant played 3b, 2b, and outfield for many of the top Eastern based teams, (1918 to 1934) like the **Bacharach Giants**, **Brooklyn Royal Giants**, **Washington** and **Wilmington Potomacs**, the **Lincoln Giants** and the great winter league team: the **Breakers Hotel** of Florida. Famously known for his clowning antics, Brown once grabbed a shovel to dig a grave for a blind umpire.

According to researcher **Bob Bailey**, Bryant may have been born in March of 1899, in Georgia. Sadly, on Christmas day in 1937, he got into an altercation with his brother-in-law, subsequently receiving a fatal blow to the head. Dead at the age of 39, researcher **Philip Ross** discovered that Bryant is also buried at the **Frederick Douglass Memorial Park**, in an unmarked grave.