

Negro Leagues Stamp to be Issued July 15

The USPS has changed the date for release of the Negro Leagues Baseball stamp from June 4 to July 15. The stamp ceremony will be held at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Mo.

The Negro Leagues se-tenant stamps pay tribute to the all-black professional baseball leagues that operated from 1920 to about 1960. Drawing some of the most remarkable athletes ever to play the sport, the Negro leagues galvanized African-American communities across the country, challenged racist notions of athletic superiority, and ultimately sparked the integration of American sports.

One of the stamps pictures a generic scene of a player sliding safely into home plate as the catcher awaits the ball.

The other is a portrait of Andrew “Rube” Foster, a player, manager, and pioneer executive in the Negro Leagues who organized the Negro National League—the first long-lasting professional league for African-American ballplayers, which operated from 1920 to 1931—and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981.

Foster was considered by some baseball historians to have been one of the best African-American pitchers of his era, and like other Negro Leagues athletes, it is believed that he would have excelled in the segregated “Major Leagues” if he had been given the chance. This has been borne out by players who started in the Negro Leagues and were able to make it in the Majors as the segregation barriers were taken down.



The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum is a privately funded non-profit institution. On their website, www.nlbm.com, we are informed that “African-Americans began to play baseball in the late 1800s on military teams, college teams, and company teams. They eventually

found their way to professional teams with white players. Moses Fleetwood Walker and Bud Fowler were among the first to participate. However, racism and ‘Jim Crow’ laws would force them from these teams by 1900. Thus, black players formed their own units, ‘barnstorming’ around the country to play anyone who would challenge them.

“In 1920, an organized league structure was formed under the guidance of Andrew ‘Rube’ Foster...Foster and a few other Midwestern team owners joined to form the Negro National League. Soon, rival leagues formed in Eastern and Southern states....The Leagues maintained a high level of professional skill and became centerpieces for economic development in many black communities.

“In 1945, Major League Baseball’s Brooklyn Dodgers recruited Jackie Robinson from the Kansas City Monarchs....While this historic event was a key moment in baseball and civil rights history, it prompted the decline of the Negro Leagues....The last Negro Leagues teams folded in the early 1960s....”

For FDCs, the usual rules apply. Send your covers with stamps affixed in an outer envelope to Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, 1616 East 18th Street, Kansas City, MO 64108-1610. The FDC deadline date is September 13.