

“Where We Played: A Legacy of Black Baseball and Softball at Liberty Park”

Written by Tim Jackman

June 2, 2025

Baseball

Preface

The Black color barrier in Major League Baseball was broken April 15, 1947, by Jackie Robinson. Robinson made history by debuting with the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first African American to play in Major League Baseball in the modern era.

Before Robinson, Black players were excluded from Major League teams due to racial segregation. They played in the Negro Leagues instead. Jackie Robinson’s courage and talent helped pave the way for the integration of professional sports in America and marked a major milestone in the civil rights movement.

Three all-Black baseball teams in Fayette were the Fayette Eagles, Fayette Athletics and one unnamed team in the 1960’s. The teams existed as part of the vibrant tradition of independent and barnstorming Black baseball teams in Missouri during that time. These teams often played in local leagues or organized games independently, contributing to the rich tapestry of African American baseball history. While the initial park was known as “Liberty Park,” it was known in the Fayette community as “Negro city park.”

In August 2022, local artist Charles Broadus completed a Mural painting at Robert E. Paige Liberty Memorial Park. The painting (shown on the subsequent page) depicted a historical time when Liberty Park (which is what it was called prior to 1988, when the name was changed to honor Robert E. Paige, first Fayette citizen killed in the Vietnam war at age of 20), was vibrant and full of entertainment, especially on Sundays if not the entire weekend.

Roper-Gates Post 336, known to many as the American Legion Hall and a vital part of the African American community in Fayette, its origin from those military men that served this country was issued a temporary charter in 1944, under the name of John Williams Roper post 336. On September 4, 1946, the members made application to American Legion National headquarters for a permanent charter. It is believed the establishment of Roper-Gates Post 336 may have had an influence on the beginning of Liberty Park (across the street from Roper-Gates on Railroad Street).



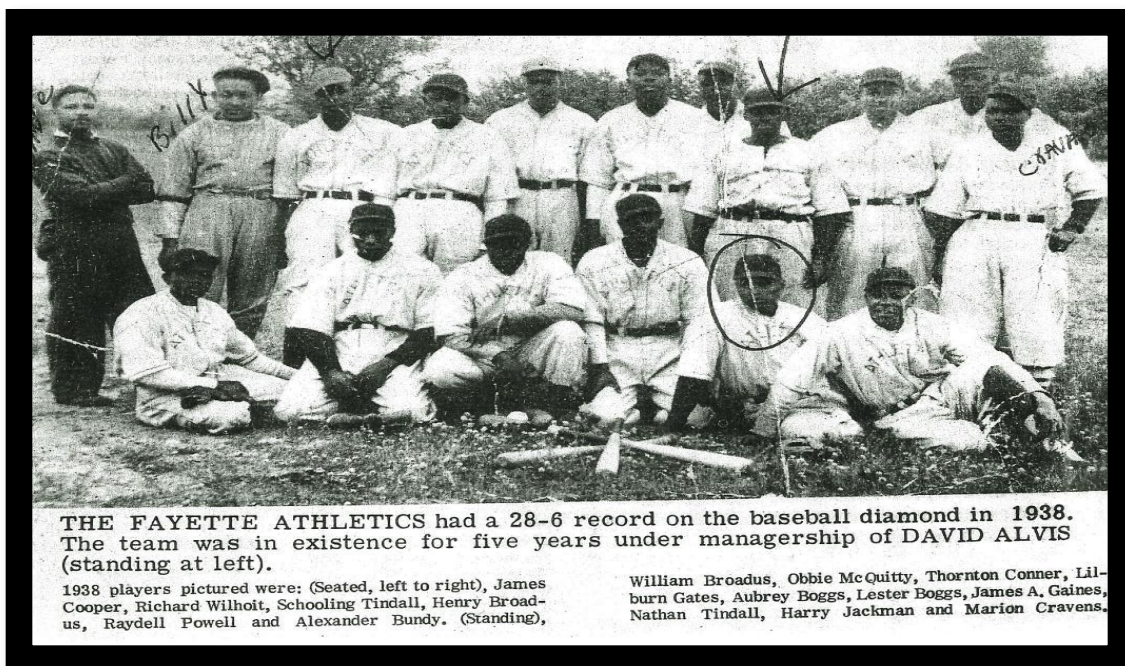
The above mural gives an image of good times back in the day. To give the mural a bit more meaning, especially to those who may not remember the park “back in those days,” I wanted to add more color by sharing stories of the baseball and softball games during that era. While I regret not all the “good times” can be shared, hopefully the articles below give a glimpse back into the past.

The 1938 Fayette Athletics

The Fayette Athletics were an African American baseball team that played in the mid to late 1930's. A photo from 1938 (see on the next page), highlights they had a record of 28-6 on the baseball diamond. The team was in existence for five years under the managership of David Alvis. Many felt Raydell Powell Sr. could have made it to the major leagues, but the “color barrier” was not broken until a decade later.

Lester Boggs was one of the pitchers for the team. He could not only throw a pitch with speed but also threw a lot of “junk” that simply had batters swinging in the air. Harry Jackmon was tall and known to be a great athlete. Then there were Marion Cravens and Henry “Tutt” Broadus, both small in stature but known for their speed. The team completed in a league consisting of teams from Armstrong, Mexico, Boonville, Fulton and the Dalton Black Dots. Games were played mostly on Sundays, before a stand full of spectators. Before Liberty Park was open, games were played at Fairgrounds Park. Stories were told that Satchel Paige, a Kansas City Monarchs player, accompanied his team to Fayette, but did not play.

Some of the players were into baseball so much, they later became umpires in the 1950s and 60s. They included William “Billy” Broadus, Cordell Broadus, Raydell Powell Sr., and George “Buster” Dickerson. Later, William Broadus along with Powell, Alvis, Walter “Chicken Bill” Williams, and Roy “Muchie” Turner were coaches for the Little League teams at Liberty Park.



The Fayette Eagles

The "Eagle" mascot was a well-known name by several area baseball teams. Of course, there was Central College (*now Central Methodist University*), Armstrong Eagles and Fayette Eagles. The major difference was the Fayette Eagles were a local Black baseball team that played in the late 1940's and into the early 1950's. While many of the names are not recognizable by those of us today, they were obviously an important part of the African American community. As the saying goes, a "picture says a thousand words." Unfortunately, we do not have access to any pictures. However, the following newspaper articles from the Fayette Advertiser (Wirt Mitchell, Editor), gives us wonderful insights into these men. In most cases, only last names were listed.

One amusing story was when all the players played in various positions. The catcher sat in a rocking chair to catch the ball from behind the plate. Before going to the articles, here are insights into a few of the players, and priceless memories.

William L. Fisher

William L. Fisher was the father William "Dee" Fisher, Jr., who was the first Black mayor in Fayette. The elder Fisher was considered one heck of a catcher. He was so good that during at least one game in August 1939, Fisher caught from a rocking chair.

Raydell Powell Sr.

Powell also played with the Fayette Athletics in the 1930's. He was such a great athlete he could have played at the major league level but for segregation. Powell served as an instructor to many of the younger, up and coming players. He went on to become a local umpire at Liberty Park.

John Kenneth “Buck” Robinson

“Buck” or “Bucky” as he was sometimes called played third base. He was a talented, gifted athlete. Robinson had rather large hands and could put steam on the ball when throwing to first base. According to Frank Petty, Robinson had such a strong arm that when the ball hit the glove of the first baseman it sounded like “a shotgun went off.” Sylvia Robinson Bracks, the daughter of “Buck” Robinson recalled that her father (J.K. “Buck”) played alongside the famed Jackie Robinson, Buck O’Neal, and Jim Lamark in the Kansas City Monarchs Negro League. He also played with the Fayette Eagles until he was 62 and umpired baseball until he was 70.”

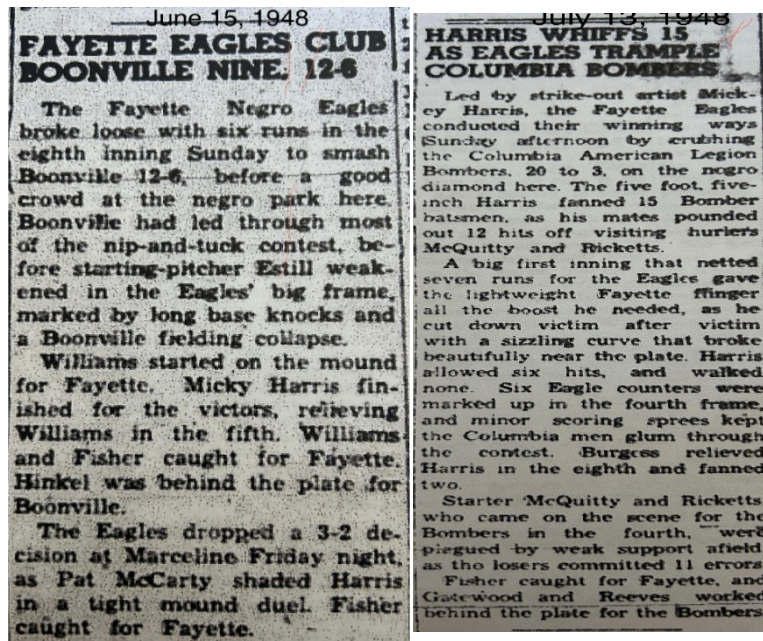
Jesse Smith

A gifted businessman/entrepreneur (owned a local “juke joint on South Church Street and on Highway 5 North) was the one who scheduled their games and purchased uniforms, etc. The team traveled on a small bus. However, no wives, significant others and friends were allowed to travel with the players. Smith was strict about that. The players were responsible to “ready” the field for play.

E.W. Tolson, Micky Harris and Leonard Graves

These are three other names mentioned as players.

‘Fayette Advertiser’ – The 1948 Season for the Fayette Eagles



July 20, 1948

EAGLES TO PLAY MOBERLY

The Fayette Eagles will meet the Moberly Veterans at Moberly Wednesday night. On Sunday the Eagles will meet the Vandalia Merchants on the local diamond. The Negro squad has a record of seven wins and one loss in eight games played.

July 27, 1948

EAGLES TAKE TWO OVER WEEKEND

The Fayette Eagles thumped Vandalia Sunday, 19-4, at the negro park here. The Eagles led all the way, as Mickey Harris blanked the visitors until the sixth. Harris was relieved by Williams in the seventh. Harris fanned nine.

Fayette's run parade was featured by tremendous eighth-inning home run by Burgess, with two men on, and Smith, with one on. Fisher and Hinkle shared the catching duties for the home squad.

Saturday the Eagles shaded Bosworth, 6-5, at Bosworth, with Harris and Burgess teaming up on the hill. Hinkle was the catcher.

Sporting a record of nine victories and one loss, the Eagles will go to Moberly to meet the powerful white Moberly Vets team under the lights at Moberly Wednesday night, August 4.

August 10, 1948

FAYETTE EAGLES TROUNCE LEXINGTON IN 14 TO 4 WALTZ

The Fayette Eagles smashed out a 14-4 win over the Lexington Tigers at the negro park here Sunday afternoon, breaking up what began as a tight pitchers' duel. Fayette led 1-0 at the end of three innings, pushed across three runs in the fourth, and five in the sixth.

Mickey Harris hurled the first seven innings for Fayette, and Burgess finished on the mound. Harris fanned eight, retiring from the hill with the score 12-1 in favor of the Eagles. Fisher caught for Fayette.

August 17, 1948

EAGLES SHADE MEXICO WITH RALLY IN NINTH

Second-baseman Powell's triple with two down in the ninth brought in three runs to pull a thriller out of the fire for the Fayette Eagles Sunday afternoon, as the local negro squad brushed by Mexico, 6-4, on the Mexico diamond.

An Eagle triple play in the first started the visitors in the right direction, but the Mexico men stayed in front until the ninth. Fayette's fielding gem was manufactured on a hard drive that was snagged by pitcher Mickey Harris, and lightning throws that picked runners off second and third.

The Eagles reached hurler King for seven hits. Harris gave up a like number, and fanned six. King fanned seven.

September 14, 1948

Eagles Win 5-2 From Louisiana

The Fayette Eagles defeated Louisiana 5-2 Sunday afternoon in a baseball game here. Harris, on the mound for the Eagles, gave up seven hits and fanned 10. The star of the game was Powell, Eagle second baseman, who banged out a triple, a double and a single in four times at bat and starred in the field as well. Fischer was the Fayette catcher.

Weir, Louisiana pitcher, also fanned 10, but gave up 10 hits. Fayette trailed 2-1 until the fourth, when one run tied the score. The Eagles then picked up the three winning runs in the seventh.

September 28, 1948

Eagles Shut Out Dalton on 6 Hits

The Fayette Eagles, Negro baseball team, shut out Dalton here Sunday afternoon 5-0 behind the pitching of "Dub" King, who gave up only six hits. He struck out 10 of the Dalton batters.

Robinson broke a scoreless in the third when he tripled with the bags loaded to bring home three runs for Fayette. Eagles pushed across another the sixth and their final tally the seventh.

Fisher was behind the plate for Fayette. Hall and Pettigrew were the battery for Dalton. Hall gave up 10 hits and struck out eight.

'Fayette Advertiser' - The 1949 Season for the Fayette Eagles

May 3, 1949
Wasn't Football—
Tho' Eagles Won
By 30-5 Score

It wasn't spring football at all here Sunday afternoon, although the score seemed to indicate it. The Fayette Eagles swamped the Paris Browns 30-5 in a baseball game, for their second win of the young season.

The Fayette Negro team ran up 25 hits, including six extra-base blows, off the twirling of the Paris Troys, father and son. The locals scored in all but the sixth inning.

In another unusual feature of the free-hitting game, Harris for the Eagles struck out 22 opposing Paris batters—and had a no-hit game until the eighth. The Browns then touched him for five hits.

Errors were aplenty, the Eagles committing five and the Browns contributing eight. Extra-base hits by the Eagles included doubles by Harris and Robinson, three-baggers by Burgess and Smith and home runs by Robinson and Powell. The Fayette hits were good for a total of 37 bases.

Fisher caught for the Eagles and Long was the Paris catcher.

June 3, 1949
EAGLES WIN A PAIR,
BUT LOSE TO FORMER
BIG LEAGUE PITCHER

Vanquished only by a former major-league pitcher, the Fayette Eagles wound up a three-game Memorial weekend schedule Monday afternoon with a 9-7 victory over the Columbia Bombers in a baseball game at the Negro city park here.

On Friday night, the local Negro nine rumped to a 12-0 victory over Marshall in a game at Har-ley Park at Boonville. Mickey Harris, star Eagle pitcher, struck out 12 men and allowed only two hits. In the fifth and sixth, he retired all six men to face him via the strikeout route.

At Mendon Sunday night, the Eagles ran up against the pitching of Vern Kennedy, former big leaguer, and were beaten 7-4. Harris again did the pitching for Fayette.

Vandiver was the winning twir-ler for Fayette in the game here Memorial Day. Fisher was the catcher in all three games.

June 7, 1949
FAYETTE TEAM BEATS
BALTON 15-3 SUNDAY
 Behind the five-hit pitching of Vandiever, the Fayette Eagles trounced the Dalton Black Dots 15-3 in a baseball game here Sun-day afternoon. Miles started on the hill for Dalton, but was re-placed by Hall in the third after the Eagles had built up an 8-1 lead.

The Eagles' 14 hits included a pair of triples. Defensively, they made four double plays to offset three errors. Dalton made seven fielding miscues.

June 14, 1949
EAGLES DRIVE 110
MILES BETWEEN TWO
GAMES, WIN BOTH

The Fayette Eagles didn't let a matter of driving 110 miles be-tween games stop them from winning a baseball doubleheader Sunday. Nor was the presence of three former major-leaguers in the opposing lineup any handi-cap in their second appearance of the day.

The local Negro nine defeated the Marshall Blue Sox 4-2 in a game here Sunday afternoon, with Vandiever allowing only five hits and striking out 12. The Eagles got seven hits.

Following the home game, the Fayette team went to Trenton for a 10-4 victory. Appearing against the Eagles were Whitney, former-ly of the Athletics, Ed Costello, one-time Pirate, and John Ross, who was with the Cardinals last spring. But Harris handcuffed Trenton on six hits and 12 strike-outs. The Eagles' 14 hits included Powell's two doubles and two singles in five trips to the plate.

The local park has been im-proved with the building of a roofed pavillion behind home plate and screens down the first and third baselines. A public address system is atop the pavillion.

June 21, 1949

EAGLES TAKE NINTH WIN OF 11 STARTS

The Fayette Eagles copped their ninth baseball victory in 11 starts here Sunday afternoon by downing a Moberly American Legion team 6-3. Vandiever, on the mound for the local Negro nine, gave up only six hits and struck out nine of the opposing batters. Fisher was behind the plate.

The Eagles made seven hits off Dameron, who pitched for Moberly for eight innings, and added two more off Williams. One of the nine safeties was a home run by Robinson with no one on base.

July 12, 1949

EAGLES DROP THREE FOR .000 PERCENTAGE

The Fayette Eagles were in low gear in three baseball games played away from home in the past five days.

On Thursday night, Mgr. Jesse Smith fielded a makeshift nine at Holden when part of the players lost their way enroute and didn't arrive until after 9 o'clock. The Eagles were shut out 3-0.

Sunday afternoon, the Eagles dropped one to Marshall 3-2. And Sunday night at Boonville, they were trimmed by the Mohawks 8-1 on a night when they couldn't seem to do anything right.

July 8, 1949

Eagles Win Pair, And Lose One in Holiday Contests

In three Fourth of July weekend games, the Fayette Eagles ran up two victories but were defeated once. A fourth road trip game scheduled for Monday night was called off because of rain.

Before a crowd of 250 here Sunday afternoon, the local Negro team conquered the Boonville Mohawks 9-4 behind the five-hit pitching of Vandiever. Vandiever had a shutout until, with two men out in the top of the ninth, the Mohawks scored all four of their tallies on a pair of scratch hits, a passed ball, an error and a clean single.

Bucky Robinson was the offensive star for the Eagles. In addition to whacking a home run, he stole four bases, including home.

Vandiever struck out 12 men. His teammates got eight hits off the twirling of Estill and Lewis, who went in in the seventh.

The Eagles made their first appearance in their new uniforms.

Sunday night at Brookfield, Fayette lost a close 3-2 decision in a tightly-played game. Al Clickner, on the mound for Brookfield, was opposed by Harris for the Eagles. Each yielded only four hits. Clickner struck out 15 and Harris struck out 14.

Monday afternoon at Unionville, Iowa, Eagle Manager Jesse Smith took the mound and allowed only five hits as Fayette won 6-2. Floyd Smith was his catcher. Fisher, the regular Eagle catcher, was out of the game with a stiff neck.

July 15, 1949

EAGLES WILL MEET JEFF CITY SUNDAY

The Fayette Eagles are scheduled for a baseball game here on Sunday afternoon at 2:30 against the Jefferson City Eagles. According to Fayette Manager Jesse Smith, the capital city team has been a star club of Missouri for the past three years and the game should be a good one.

July 19, 1949

Eagles Break Out With 7-Run Eighth To Win 7-1 Sunday

Stymied on three hits and trailing 1-0 until the last of the eighth inning, the Fayette Eagles broke loose Sunday afternoon for seven runs to clinch a victory over the Jefferson City Eagles 7-1 in what was described as one of the best baseball games of the season on the local diamond.

Jefferson City scored the single tally in the fourth inning and it looked like a big one as Fayette missed scoring opportunities and the game reached the late innings with Vandiever and Thompson hooked up in a pitcher's duel. Twice, Fayette had two men in scoring position with none out and failed to score.

But Vandiever led off in the eighth with a double, his second of the afternoon, and before the frame had ended, Fayette runners had crossed the plate seven times on five hits, an error and a walk. Vandiever had a total of three hits in four trips to the plate.

Until the eighth, the home nine had gotten only three hits off Thompson, whose home is in St. Louis and who played with the Monarchs last year. Vandiever yielded six hits while striking out nine. Eight Fayette men whiffed.

Tolson at first base was the fielding star for Fayette. Powell, regular left fielder, was pressed into service behind the plate to replace Fisher, the regular catcher, who has a back injury.

The Jefferson City team is one of the best in the state and is playing this week in the state semi-pro tournament at Jefferson City.

July 26, 1949

EAGLES LOSE 8-7 AT MARCELINE SUNDAY

The Fayette Eagles were defeated in a close game, 8-7, at Marceline Sunday night.

The Eagles had been scheduled to play at home Sunday afternoon but the opposing team failed to put in an appearance.

August 2, 1949

EAGLES SHUT OUT MENDON SUNDAY 4-0

The Fayette Eagles chalked up another baseball victory Sunday, winning at Mendon 4-0. Vandiever was in shut-out form on the hill for the local Negro nine, with Powell behind the plate.

August 16, 1949

EAGLES WIN TWO, LOSE ONE IN GAMES OVER THE WEEKEND

The Fayette Eagles won two of their three weekend baseball games, all played away from home.

Friday night at Trenton, the local colored team was shut out 1-0 by Carl Miles, pitcher who is on contract with the Philadelphia Athletics. Vandiever of the Eagles pitched one of his best games of the year, allowing Trenton only five scattered hits.

Sunday afternoon the Eagles won at Lineville, Iowa, 9-4. "Rabbit" Williams pitched for Fayette. Bucky Robinson of the Eagles hit a home run with one on base, and Chiles of the Eagles also got a timely triple.

Sunday night the Eagles were victorious at Princeton, Mo., by a 9-6 score. Micky Harris pitched the first eight innings, with Vandiever finishing the game. Chiles of the Eagles hit two home runs, while "Red" Smith starred defensively in the outfield. Holliday was the local catcher.

August 23, 1949
EAGLES CLOWN AFTER
12-0 VICTORY HERE

After building up a 12-0 margin Sunday afternoon, the Fayette Eagles put on a clowning exhibition in the ninth inning of their baseball game against the St. Joseph Local 58 All-Stars.

Some 300 fans were treated to the spectacle of a catcher performing his chores from a rocking chair behind the plate, while the right fielder fanned him with a glove. For the final inning, all the players swapped positions, and the outfielders were called in. Most of the nine took a turn on the hill during the inning, too.

Vandiever was the winning pitcher for the Eagles, turning in a masterful three-hitter.

August 26, 1949
EAGLES WIN 20-8 TUESDAY

The Fayette Eagles trounced a Salisbury team at Salisbury on Tuesday night 20-8 behind the pitching of Brown. The Eagles accumulated several extra-base hits, including home runs by Williams and Robinson.

August 30, 1949
EAGLES WIN PAIR
FROM MOBERLY AND
LEXINGTON TIGERS

The Fayette Eagles won two easy baseball victories during the weekend, trimming the Roblee Blues at Moberly Friday night 8-4 and trouncing the Lexington Tigers 13-4 here Sunday afternoon.

At Moberly the game was called after seven innings because the supply of balls was exhausted when they were belted out of the park and lost. Vandiever, the winning twirler, hit a two-run homer for the Eagles, one of two four-baggers for his team. The Moberly club was composed mainly of former Ban Johnson stars.

Sunday afternoon, the Eagles clouted the ball freely, their hits including four doubles and three triples. In addition there were other crowd-pleasing performances, such as Robinson's stealing second and then home plate for one of the tallies.

Harris started for the Eagles and allowed six hits in six innings before retiring because of illness. Vandiever then went in and struck out the first five men to oppose him. He yielded only one hit in three frames. Fisher was the catcher.

September 27, 1949
EAGLES WIN LAST
GAME OF SEASON

The Fayette Eagles defeated the Armstrong Giants last Sunday, 8-2, in the last game of the season for the Fayette squad. The contest was played at the local city park.

Vandiever, Fayette pitcher, fanned 16 Armstrong batters. Jake Holliday and Sunny Damon of Fayette, each hit triples. The Singleton brothers formed the Armstrong battery.

'Fayette Advertiser' - The 1950 Season for the Fayette Eagles

There were fewer articles located in the Fayette Advertiser during this season. While rain out games seem to have been a factor, there is the possibility games played were not reported to the Advertiser.

April 28, 1950
Eagles to Open Baseball Season

The Fayette Eagles will open their baseball season here Sunday afternoon, playing against the Boonville Mohawks at the Negro city park.

The local nine will also be starting the Heart of Missouri Baseball League season. Eight teams are in the recently-formed loop and the Eagles, managed by Jesse Smith, hope to be in the top division.

Sunday's game will start at 2:30 o'clock.

June 6, 1950
Eagles in First After Win Sunday

The Fayette Eagles took over first place in the Heart of Missouri baseball league Sunday by defeating Moberly 9-6 at Moberly. The Eagles came out on top after the game had been tied three times, running up 10 hits and taking advantage of two Moberly errors. Two Fayette pitchers, Fisher and Vandiver, gave up 11 hits and their teammates committed three errors.

Robert Williams played his first game for the local Negro nine, drove in two runs and scored twice with a double and a single.

After the score was tied at 5-all, Vandiver relieved on the mound and held Moberly to four hits and one run.

Jefferson City, only previously undefeated team in the league, lost to Marshall 4-3 in 11 innings.

May 9, 1950
EAGLES OPEN WITH 11-6 VICTORY OVER COLUMBIA ON SUNDAY

The Fayette Eagles opened their season in the new Heart of Missouri baseball league Sunday with a smashing 11-6 victory over the Columbia Braves at Columbia. The Eagles collected 10 hits, including a home run by Robinson in the first with two on which cleared the wall with plenty to spare.

Hitting honors were shared by Powell and Moss who had three hits each, including the two doubles of the day. Vandiver was on the mound for Fayette and in six innings gave up only three hits and two runs. Brown allowed four hits and four runs in the final three innings.

The starting lineup for the Eagles: Holliday, 2b; Powell, 1f; Childs, ss; Robinson, 3b; Fisher, c; Moss, 1b; Tolson, rf; Dickerson, cf; Vandiver, p.

The summary: Fayette 10 hits, 11 runs, 5 errors; Columbia 7 hits, 6 runs, 6 errors. Batteries for Columbia: Robinson and Rolson, p; Williams, c.

The Eagles will meet Marshall at Fayette next Sunday and a big turnout for the first home game is expected. In other league games Sunday, Fulton defeated Marshall 11-9, Moberly won from Armstrong 6-4 in 10 innings, and Jefferson City swamped Boonville 20-3.

Tuesday, May 16, 1950
EAGLES RAINED OUT AT MARSHALL SUNDAY

The Fayette Eagles were rained out in their second start in the Heart of Missouri League at Marshall Sunday. The game was called after only three men had come to bat in the first inning. Patrick, Eagle leadoff man, had struck out. Powell, next up, got a clean single and stole second, and Childs was batting when the rain began.

June 13, 1950
**Fulton Trounces
 Makeshift Team
 Of Eagles 20-3**

The Fayette Eagles, able to put only six regulars on the diamond, made the Fulton Buffaloes look good Sunday afternoon as the Buffs handed the Eagles their first league loss with a 20-3 trouncing. Eight errors paved the way for the Fulton runs.

In the first, the Buffaloes had three triples and two homers to get off to a 6-0 lead. In spite of the poor team showing, there were some good plays by the Fayette regulars. Powell made three of the team's six hits and Robinson hit a 400-foot homer.

The Fayette battery was Vandiever, Childs and Fisher.

June 20, 1950

**Eagles Blow Lead
 But Rally for 8-7
 Victory in Ninth**

After blowing an early lead, the Fayette Eagles had to come from behind in the last inning after two were out to win their league baseball game from the Boonville Mohawks 8-7 at Boonville's Harley Park Sunday afternoon.

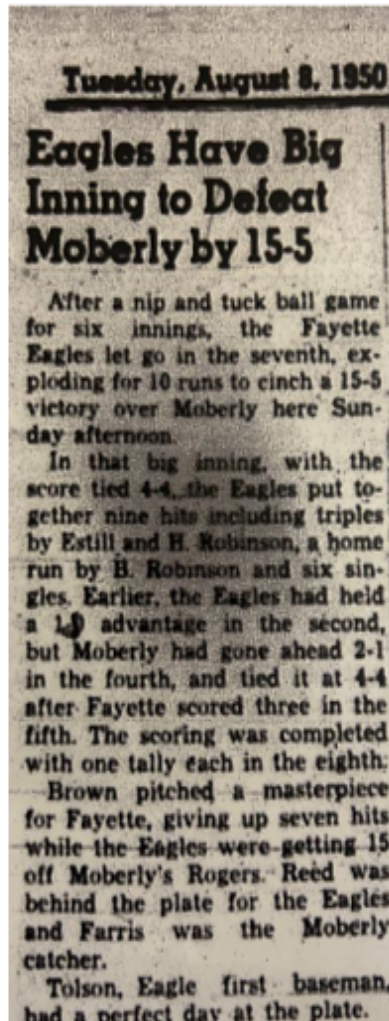
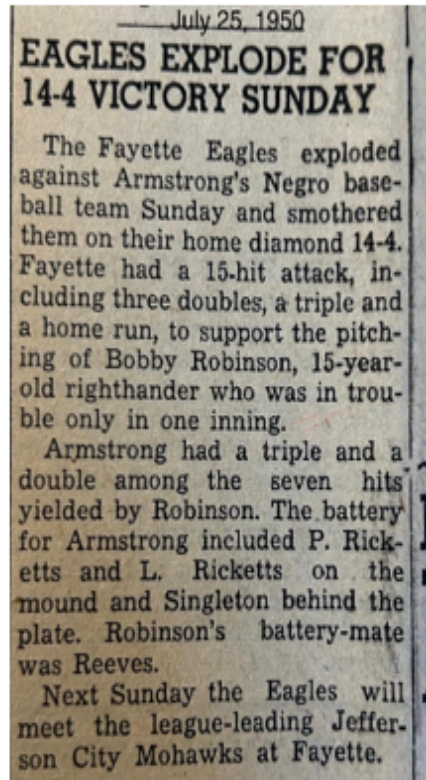
The Eagles wasted no time in getting started, piling up four runs on four hits in the first, sending one Mohawk pitcher to the showers, and then adding two more in the third. But the Mohawks kept pecking at that lead and finally went ahead 7-6 in the eighth.

The Eagles made their two winning runs on a walk, a fielder's choice, a Boonville error, a hit and a stolen base. Brown, who came to Vandiever's rescue in the eighth, then set the Mohawks down to cinch the victory.

Powell was the main Eagle threat at bat, hitting three four four.

June 27, 1950
**EAGLES IN LOSS TO
 JEFFERSON CITY 10-6**

The Fayette Eagles lost to the Jefferson City Mohawks in a game played in Jefferson City Sunday afternoon by a final score of 10 to 6. The Eagles were limited to five hits. Vandiever pitched for the Eagles, and Fisher was the catcher.



1960's Team

While details are lacking about the 1960's baseball team that played at Liberty Park, there were at least two teams that played during the 1960's era. Several players played on both teams.

Coached by William "Billy" Broadus

Albert Turner recalls being a bat boy for two years for one of the Fayette teams that played in 1962 or 1963. He was in the eighth or ninth grade at Lincoln Public School. The team had no official name or mascot. Billy Broadus was the head coach, and all their home and away games were played on a Sunday. Albert shared that on away games some "players rode with Mr. Billy in his station wagon. The equipment was in the back of the cargo area." Albert himself had to ride in this section of the car and remembers it being quite dusty with all the equipment, etc.

Albert looked forward to the games at Liberty Park. He remembers the concession area with good old strawberry “pop” in ice cold water. For whatever reason, he was not allowed to work in the concession box. He remembers a few ladies about his age that helped with concessions.

Players on that team included Tommy Stemmons, who was fast and led off in the starting lineup. Richard “Bunk” Harvey was the cleanup man and batted fourth.” While Harvey struck out a lot, when he connected with the ball it traveled a long way. The other teammates included Johnny “Bob” Harvey, William “Nini “ Jackmon, Nathaniel Graves, who was a pitcher, Monte Ralph, left-handed first baseman on defense, Jacob Miller, Melvin (Cravens) Baskett, described as a heck of a shortstop, Harry Wright, William “Dee” Fisher, Lawrence “Sonny“ Estes, catcher, and a Simmons from Columbia, who played at Hickman High School. Also, Wallace Jackmon played that season and was known to be quite comical.

In terms of the field condition at Liberty Park, if you were playing in right field, it was hard to see the ball coming with the sun in your eyes. Players had to make adjustments. Albert recalls no home run fence at the park. It was open territory with a sloping outfield. There was always a tall light pole in dead center field.

The team played against Boonville, Centralia, Fulton, Mexico, and Slater. All games were played when the weather was extremely hot. After the games, whether the team was home or on the road, they would always go to a local Black club or tavern for a few drinks with the opposing team. There were no fights, and everyone got along together in the spirit of friendly competition. The teams would normally hang together until seven or eight in the evening. Due to his age, Albert would wait outside, although the team bought him soda or a popsicle.

Coached by William “Dee” Fisher, Jr.

It is believed this team followed the one coached by Billy Brodus. The team was managed by skipper, William L. “Dee” Fisher, Jr. Let me acknowledge many of the players. They included Lawrence “Sonny” Estes, Raymond “Mike” Eubanks, Johnny “Bob” Harvey, Richard (“Bunk” or “Big Twister”) Harvey, Jacob Miller, Butch Tolson, Fisher “Big Timber” Warren, Al West, and Harry Wright. Also, other players were “Night Rider,” and the Tatum’s from the Keytesville area.

On one occasion two former locals, Dewey “Dub” Eubanks and Donald “Jam-up” Jackman from Kansas City played on the team in a game against Boonville inmates at the penitentiary. “Big Timber” Warren was known to hit the ball over the top of Second Baptist Church when playing on the schoolyard at Lincoln Public School.

Women’s Softball

Ladies and Their History at Liberty Park

The young African American ladies in the community played on a softball team. Their first coach was Monte Ralph, who was hard on the ladies but made them a good team. This was in

the late 1960s. The team had no specific name. Monte coached the team for a couple of years and later William “Billy” Broadus, a faithful bystander and umpire became their coach. Billy coached the team for years. The team played Black teams from Boonville and Salisbury. They played all their home games on Sunday afternoon at Liberty Park (now called Robert E. Paige-Liberty Park) or away at the other teams’ site. The players described these times as the “good ole days. “

They never played Columbia except for one occasion where the team remembers Helen Margaret Jackman running to first and accidentally ran into the opposing team’s first base player, Betty Van Buren. Knowing this was going to create drama with the Columbia team, Coach Ralph told all the players to stay in the dugout but “hold their ground”. The players believed that each team was afraid of one another. No fight broke out and this ended the game. A number of the Fayette ladies worked in Columbia. But when they went to work on Monday everything was normal.

Some of the players on the team included Laurene “Boogie” Gibson, described as a good catcher, and ran taking “little” steps. She was comical and fun to be around. Linda Turner, an exceptional athlete, was still in high school at the time and played on the team. She was a long ball hitter and played most any base, on defense. Then there was Sarah Cowans, a skillful pitcher who could likewise hit the ball long and far, many times out of the park. However, Sarah was not the swiftest runner. She generally made it only to second base. Sarah was a decent size woman and recalls one time when she rounded third base and fell. Everybody started hollering “earthquake, earthquake.”

Wilma “Allene” (Turner) Logan was a member of the team. Allene played third base when in the field. She was known to get dusty while fielding hit balls at the “hot corner.” Allene specifically recalled when she and Boogie were drinking beer prior to the game. When the game started, Boogie’s mother, Ella Mae Gibson told them to put the beer in the cooler and “nobody is going to bother it.”

Others included the Basket family – Rita Ann, Paula, and Regina. They were related to Coach Broadus.

The team won most of their games and beat Boonville and Salisbury. The team was “damn good” according to Sarah. They had talented players and all got along, even till this day.

Practices were held during the week. Some of the local gentlemen taught the ladies how to play including Coaches’ Ralph and Broadus, and David Alvis Jr. The team, on at least one occasion, played the older ladies. They included Lillie Mae Jackman, Lillian Broadus (she wore a dress while playing), Auida Smith, and Bertha Jackman. The teams were mixed up, so each team had a full group of players.

The team was named after C.B. Logan, Coach, former Columbia, MO native and husband to Wilma “Allene” (Turner) Logan. The team started playing after 1977. They played for several years under Coach Logan. They wore green shirts, yellow shorts, and some of the ladies even fitted themselves with yellow and black tennis shoes.

The Angels’ softball team consisted of:

- Wilma “Allene” (Turner) Logan
- Stella (Boone) Burnes
- Sara Cowans
- Marilyn Estes
- Mary Lee (Madison) Fisher
- Janet (Jackman) Ganaway
- Laurene “Boogie” Gibson
- Fonda Jackman
- Regina (Baskett) Powell
- Linda Turner

Sarah Cowans could not wait for Sundays to come. That is how much she enjoyed watching her former teammates and the amazing support from the Black community. The park was always full of spectators.

The C.B. Angels were not in a softball league but played teams from Salisbury and Slater. Once, when they played the Slater Soul Sisters at their park in Slater, they remembered the park being full. The team lost some games, but very few.

Linda Turner was a force to reckon with. She hit the ball far and never wanted a slow player on base in front of her. Linda could run and would be on their heels. She recalls a specific incident involving Gloria Jean (Madison/Chapman) Barnett, short in stature, who ran on her toes. Linda almost ran over her.

Allene had the most epic homerun. While at bat she hit the ball, and it went a few inches in front of home plate. Allene immediately fell and started laughing. The players and Coach Logan said “run, run.” She took off and at each base the other team over-threw the play/bases. Allene was starting to run out of gas rounding the bases and wanted to stop at third to rest. But once again, through the encouragement of her team, she ran home for a home run.

Mike Jackman was the umpire who called most of the games. He recalled a situation where an Angels’ player hit a ground ball, and the other team had a force play at second base. The opposing player stepped on the bag causing an automatic out. However, the opposing player preceded to tag the same Angels player sliding into second but missed. Umpire Jackman called the player out (due to the force-out). Coach Logan blew a gasket and went off. Eventually Umpire Jackman, through the encouragement and insistence of Allene, threw C.B.

out of the game. C.B. continued to raise ruckus throughout the game from behind the homeplate screen.

Coach Logan was extremely hard on Allene (his wife) and blamed her for all the team's mishaps. The team wanted to do good. They did not want to hear C.B.'s yelling. C.B. Logan was the only coach the team ever had.

The team recalls the faithful supporters that followed them to every game. They included Auida Smith and Helen Jackman.

The umpires included Cordell Broadus, Ernest Gaines, Billy Broadus, and Mike Jackman. Other activities taking place during the games were Ben Canada's barbecue and Mr. John A. Williams, who always walked around entertaining folks with his cigar tricks, etc. Then there were fish fries and other food sold by Bill Gaines, Billy Broadus, and David Alvis at the American Legion Hall.

Thanks to Wilma "Allene" (Turner) Logan, Sarah Cowans, Linda Turner, and Mike Jackman for contributing to this story.

Conclusion

We do not want to overlook one other important fact. Fayette was home to Johnnie Lee Vivens, a notable African American pitcher who played for the St. Louis Stars in the Negro leagues in 1929. Vivens was born in Fayette in 1896 and passed away in Columbia, Missouri, in 1958.

When you speak about baseball in this area, you have to mention another great Negro league player, John Donaldson. Donaldson was born in 1892, in nearby Glasgow. He was nominated into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame in 2017, and a recently created baseball field in Glasgow named in his honor. Here is a link to the Feb newsletter on the HCGS website: <https://jymiller.net/HCGSnews2025feb.pdf>

From a time when no African Americans or "people of color" played in the major leagues, on Opening Day 2025, there were 59 Black players on Major League Baseball (MLB) active and inactive rosters, representing approximately 6.2% of all MLB players. This marks a slight increase from 6.0% in 2024 and 6.2% in 2023, but it remains significantly lower than the peak of 18% recorded in 1991.

In addition to those on Opening Day rosters, there were 18 Black players in the Minor Leagues on MLB 40-man rosters at the start of the 2025 season, with some called up since then.

While current representation remains low, these developmental efforts suggest potential for increased Black participation in MLB in the coming years. As of the 2023 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, approximately 40% of players on Opening Day rosters were individuals

of color. This includes players who identify as Black, Hispanic, or Latino, Asian, or from other non-white racial or ethnic backgrounds.

It is amazing how far the race(s) have come in baseball. While there were struggles, it was through perseverance, courage, and faith we have come this far.

It was an awesome experience for me to research and collect the stories and memories. Those that contributed to these memories genuinely enjoyed sharing their stories. Special thanks to Danny Broadus, Mike Eubanks, Donald Hill, Mike Jackman, and Albert Turner for their contributions, and to Justin Addison, owner and editor, the Fayette Advertiser. And thanks to Charles Broadus, for bringing back memories through his artwork.