

AFRICAN AMERICAN VISSITUDES

Stanley K. Arnold
Le Moyne College

Everyone was Interested, Always Well-Attended: Black Baseball, Professionalism and Community in Philadelphia, 1860-1910

In recent years, many scholars have focused on the history of the Negro Leagues. These studies have concentrated on the contributions of individual players, managers and teams. Although they have shed light on this American phenomenon, there has been relatively little scholarship on the pivotal period before the Negro Leagues. How and why did blacks become interested in baseball in the early 1850s and 1860s? What was the relationship between black players and their communities? How did the transition from amateurism to professionalism reflect the internal dynamics of the Philadelphia's black community?

This paper traces the development of black baseball in Philadelphia from 1850 to 1910. One of the most important cities in black baseball, Philadelphia, was home to one of the nation's most successful early black teams, the Pythians. In the early twentieth century, the Philadelphia Giants, a team of seasoned professionals, would challenge both white racism and black bourgeois sensibilities.
