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SLAVES IN THE AMERICAN MARITIME ECONOMY, 1638 - 1865

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ROLES

By Brendan Foley

July 28, 1741 — Aboard the Privateer Revenge,
Latitude 31° 59' N Longitude 73° 6' W

About 5 a.m. spied a sail under our lee bow, bore down on her, and when in gunshot fired one of our bow chasers. She immediately lowered all her sails.... We sent our lieutenant aboard, who reported that she was loaded with Pork, Beans, Live Hogs, &c., and a horse, & had on board 2 Englishmen; the Master, who is a Frenchman born, but turned Spaniard; 3 [mulatto] Spanish slaves, & one negro.¹

African slavery in the Americas is a much studied subject, but a clear picture of many of its facets has yet to come into view. American and Caribbean slaves often have been portrayed merely as unskilled agricultural field hands and domestic servants. However, as Stanley Engerman and Robert Fogel point out, "the common belief that all slaves were menial laborers is false;" similar to slaves in other eras and cultures, bound laborers in the colonies and early United States worked at a multitude of semi-skilled and skilled professions.² In some trades, enslaved blacks worked side-by-side with white wage workers. This was especially true in the maritime economy, where slaves labored as boatmen, lightermen, shipwrights, caulkers, riggers, sailmakers, coopers, mariners, and pilots. Ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass worked as a caulker in a Baltimore shipyard in the 1830s and commented on this curious fact: "Until a very little while after I went there [to the shipyard], white and black ship-carpenters worked side-by-side, and no one seemed to see any impropriety in it. All hands seemed to be very well satisfied. Many of the black carpenters were free men. Things seemed to be going on very well."³

Maritime employment for slaves was more than just an economic opportunity for them, it was an economic necessity for the colonies. Without slave boatmen plying the creeks, rivers, and bays of the South, the transportation network would have completely broken down. More importantly for the growth of a distinct black American culture, maritime employment offered

a chance for black empowerment in a racist society. Maritime work for slaves was often skilled work, conducted away from the watchful eyes of the master. It brought bonded black laborers in close contact with free white and black workers, and facilitated transmission of information among the slaves — and later abolitionists — in different geographical regions. These factors



Frederick Douglass was one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement, which fought to end slavery within the United States in the decades prior to the Civil War. A brilliant speaker, he won world fame when his autobiography was published in 1845. Two years later he began publishing an antislavery paper called the *North Star*.

must have sparked feelings of self-worth and self-reliance in the black men working in shipyards and on watercraft. When those empowered slaves reached their emotional breaking points, they escaped or led insurrections in far greater proportions than unskilled agricultural slaves.

Like Douglass, many slaves preferred maritime work to other types of labor foisted upon them. In 1794 Virginia governor Richard Henry Lee looked to hire slaves around Norfolk for public works projects, but discovered that "laborers cannot be got by the Publick Agents" because the slaves believed that "working on board ships and about the wharves is more agreeable and less onerous."⁴ Among the many paradoxes of American slavery was the fact that some owners allowed their slaves a high degree of autonomy to pursue these maritime careers, even granting them leave to sail to foreign ports.

More than half a century ago, Eric Williams argued that slavery and the slave trade played crucial roles in financing the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Since *Capitalism and Slavery* was published, economists and historians have debated the accuracy of his assessment. Most academic attention has focused on slave production of staple crops such as sugar, cotton and tobacco. Although the maritime slaves were far outnumbered by agricultural and domestic slaves, the economic contribution of maritime slaves largely has been overlooked. The reasons for the lack of scholarly attention to these men are not difficult to fathom. They have been doubly ignored: first because American historical examinations of blacks were seldom written before the 1960s; and second, because with few exceptions the study of sailors and shipyard workers has been an even more recent phenomenon. Gary Nash noted that *white* merchant mariners "are perhaps the most elusive social group in early American history because they moved from port to port with greater frequency than other urban dwellers, shifted occupations, died young, and, as the poorest members of the free white community, least often left behind traces of their lives on the tax lists or probate records."⁵ Black sailors are also difficult to trace but they are extremely important figures in American

Afro-Americans--N45
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history, not least because they were economic and cultural role models in the black communities of urban colonial seaports.⁶

Due to their past invisibility to historians, several questions regarding enslaved maritime laborers have not been closely examined. How dependent was the Atlantic economy upon the labor of maritime slaves? How important were maritime trades to the economy of the slaves? Were slave laborers in shipyards allowed to climb from unskilled to semi-skilled and even skilled trades? Were skilled workers able to pass their knowledge on to the next generation of slave shipbuilders? What status did these skilled and often well-traveled slaves hold among the leaders of black communities? Did economic opportunities for slaves vary among the colonies? How widely did white attitudes vary over time and place to affect the opportunities available to these men? Why did racism develop even in the North's maritime workplaces in the nineteenth century? If Southern whites feared black sailors for their ability to spread information and antislavery propaganda, why did they allow slaves to remain employed in maritime trades? How many slaves escaped bondage by stowing away on ships or posing as free black sailors? And why did slave-owners along the coast continue to allow their chattel access to these routes to freedom? Definitive answers to many of these questions will not be reached without more research, but answers to some may be distilled from the works already published by economists, historians, and sociologists.

The Importance of Maritime Slaves

The rare maritime history works composed before the 1960s invariably neglect black sailors, and more recent histories typically give scant credit to their endeavors. Arthur Pierce Middleton details the remarkable quantity and variety of inshore craft used in the Chesapeake Bay colonies, but dismisses their crews by quoting Maryland's Governor Gooch: those crews "can't properly be termed seamen, being the most part planters with negroes." Marcus Rediker fails to mention black mariners, free or slave, in his social study of eighteenth century blue-water merchant sailors, but of merchant seamen in general he remarks, "They were an absolutely indispensable part of the rise and growth of the North Atlantic economy." Studies of slavery are equally guilty of ignoring enslaved maritime workers. Eugene Genovese writes only one line regarding black watermen in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*: "On the eastern seaboard and the Mississippi River slaves continued to excel in making, manning, and piloting boats and ships...." In *Without Consent or Contract*, Robert Fogel discusses the occupational patterns of New World slaves without once mentioning their involvement in maritime industries.⁷

Although maritime slaves were far outnumbered by bound agricultural workers, as skilled and informed men they might have had a disproportionate influence on their communities. While never specifically addressing maritime slaves, Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman do highlight the position of the skilled slave elites in their communities:

While slavery clearly limited the opportunities of bondsmen to acquire skills, the fact remains that over 25 percent were managers, professionals, craftsmen, and semi-skilled workers....It was out of this class of skilled workers that many of the leaders of the slave community arose....This upper occupational stratum



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SLAVES IN THE AMERICAN MARITIME ECONOMY (Continued from page 5)

may have provided, as a number of historians have argued, a disproportionately large share of the leaders of protests, desertions, insurrections and rebellions.⁸

Two scholars have recently stressed the centrality of eighteenth and antebellum nineteenth century black sailors — many of them slaves or former slaves — to the formation of distinct black cultures in the Atlantic world. Sociologist Paul Gilroy wrote about the duality of Anglo-African consciousness:

The contemporary black English, like the Anglo-Africans of earlier generations, and perhaps, like all blacks in the West, stand between (at least) two great cultural assemblages, both of which have mutated through the course of the modern world that formed them and assumed new configurations....It is particularly significant for the direction of my overall argument that [two of the black historical figures studied by Gilroy] had been sailors, moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity. Their relationship to the sea may turn out to be especially important for both the early politics and poetics of the black Atlantic world that I wish to counterpose against the narrow nationalism of so much English historiography.⁹

Historian W. Jeffrey Bolster believes that black merchant marines were the key to shaping a distinct Afro-American society and that they contributed greatly to the antislavery movement. He points out that seamen wrote the first six English-language autobiographies of blacks before 1800, demonstrating a strong sense of personal and cultural identity. In addition, Bolster spotlights the vital part black men played in the maritime trades of the Atlantic economy: "...free and enslaved black sailors established a visible presence in every North American seaport and plantation roadstead between 1740 and 1865...[and]...black sailors worked in virtually every aspect of the colonial maritime trades...."¹⁰



African-American whaling men in Japan, c. 1845. Illustration from a Japanese watercolor scroll. Courtesy of Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum; New Bedford, Massachusetts.



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Black sailors also played a part in fomenting the American Revolution, as Jesse Lemisch muses about the Boston Massacre: "What John Adams described as 'a motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes and mulattoes, Irish teagues and out landish jack tarrs,' including twenty or thirty of the latter, armed with sticks and clubs, did battle with the soldiers. Their leader was Crispus Attacks, a mulatto seaman; he was shot to death in front of the Custom House."¹¹ Though Attacks was not a slave, the resistance to force he exhibited was a characteristic also evident among enslaved mariners.

Editor's Note: The conclusion of this article will be published in the Spring 2001 issue of The Dolphin.

About the Author: Brendan Foley is PhD candidate in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His research interests encompass a wide variety of maritime topics, including the use of slave labor in maritime industries and the role of the post Civil War U.S. Navy in fostering new technology and national economic development. He holds a Master of Science degree in Maritime Archaeology and is active in nurturing a new scientific field, deep water archaeology. He has participated in several telerobotic investigations of ancient shipwrecks in the deep sea, using Remotely Operated Vehicles and the US Navy's nuclear powered deep research submarine NR-1.

Endnotes:

¹ Peter Veizan, "Journal of a Privateersman, Begun June the 5th, 1741," *Atlantic Monthly* (Sept.- Oct. 1861), p. 357. A prize crew of master, mate, and four hands was put aboard the captured vessel. A crew of five or six would have been necessary to man such a craft; the mulatto slaves were no doubt part of this company.

² Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1974), p. 40.

³ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* Edited with an Introduction by David W. Blight (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 91.

⁴ Julius S. Scott, "Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network: The Case of Newport Bowers," in Colin Howell and Richard Twomey (eds.), *Jack Tar in History; Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1991), p. 41.

⁵ Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 16.

⁶ For an excellent discussion of the role of free black sailors as well as the neglect of historians to address their role, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, "'To Feel Like a Man': Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990), pp. 1173-1200.

⁷ Arthur Pierce Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Originally published in Newport News by the Mariner's Museum, 1953. Reprinted Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 242, 289; Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 290; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 390.

⁸ Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, p. 40.

⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 1, 12.

¹⁰ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African-American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 4, 17, 20, 27, 37. Lois E. Horton and James Oliver Horton comment on the importance of black sailors to the black economy: "...a substantial

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number of black businesses were sustained by black sponsorship or patronage, and if they were not always the most financially stable, from the standpoint of black community needs, they were often the most significant. The most common black business enterprises were clothing dealerships selling new and used clothing to a largely seafaring clientele, boardinghouse keeping, many also serving seamen, and barber and hairdressing shops." Lois E Horton and James Oliver Horton, "Power and Social Responsibility: Entrepreneurs and the Black Community in Antebellum Boston," unpublished conference paper presented at "Entrepreneurs: The Boston Business Community, 1750-1850," May 21, 1994, Boston (Mass. Historical Society), p. 7.

¹¹ Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (1968), p. 399.

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Glossary of Maritime Terms Used in the Text

Sources:

The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976);
Sailor's Word Book: A Dictionary of Nautical Terms (First printed 1867 - current edition London: Conway Maritime Press, 1991)

- *blue-water* — trans-oceanic or deep-water. A colloquial term derived from the fact that in certain waters several miles from shore the ocean appears to be a deep blue color rather than green.
- *boatman* — a semi-skilled operator of a small boat, such as a canoe, skiff, barge, or lighter.
- *brigantine* — a two-masted vessel, square-rigged on the foremast and fore-and-aft rigged on the mainmast.
- *capital ship* — a term used in navies to denote the most important type of warship in the national fleet.
- *caulker* — a semi-skilled shipyard worker responsible for driving oakum or rope into the seams of a wooden ship's decks or sides in order to render them impervious to water.
- *coasting* — voyages conducted within close range of shore, though not necessarily within sight of land. In the American context, a vessel plying routes from New England to the Chesapeake, lower South, and even the Caribbean islands is considered to be engaged in coasting trades
- *fo'c'sle* — forecastle, the space beneath the short raised forward deck of a ship. It is used as the generic term to indicate the living space of the crew aboard ship.
- *inshore* — the connected waterways consisting of creeks, rivers, and bays which lead to the ocean
- *lighterman* — a semi-skilled worker who mans a lighter, which is a barge or similar vessel used for the conveyance of cargo from ship to shore, or vice-versa.
- *merchantman* — a generic term used to describe a trading vessel
- *pettiauger* — colloquial term, probably derived from *periaqua*, used to describe a canoe formed from the trunk of a large tree.
- *privateer* — a privately owned vessel armed with guns which operated in time of war against the trade of an enemy.
- *rigger* — a semi-skilled worker employed on board ships or in shipyards to fit or dismantle the standing and running rigging of ships.
- *ropewalker* — a semi-skilled worker employed in the manufacture of rope.
- *shipwright* — a skilled ship carpenter or ship builder. 



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by Phil Dixon

Cool Papa Bell, it was said, was so fast he could turn out the light and be in bed before the room got dark. As a young pitcher, Satchel Paige was considered unhittable; he continued to fool batsmen well into his 50s. Smokey Joe Williams once struck out 27 Kansas City Monarchs in a 10 inning game. And Jackie Robinson's pure athleticism led blacks into a new chapter of sports and social history.

The exploits of these men — and hundreds of other, lesser-known stars — are covered in **The Negro Baseball Leagues: A Photographic History**. Author Phil Dixon, the leading authority on black baseball, spent seven years researching this book, gathering photographs and conducting over 1500 interviews with players and their families.

The result is a riveting chronicle of the evolution of both baseball and American society. From Simpson Younger's participation on the first "mixed" college team in 1867, to Jackie Robinson's breaking the major leagues' color barrier after World War II to the final decline of the Negro Leagues in the 1950s, this book offers a fascinating portrait of a little-known slice of our history.

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Phil Dixon enjoys a growing reputation as the authority on black baseball history. From a bequest of 15 photos from Carroll Ray Motell, former player for the KC Monarchs, Dixon's collection of Negro League photos has grown to over 8,000. He has traveled all over the country conducting interviews with former Negro League players and their families, has been a frequent guest on television and radio talk shows, and frequently writes articles on black baseball for various publications.

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Satchel Paige in the middle
1930s. Dizzy Dean called
him the best pitcher alive. In
1948, as a 42-year-old
rookie, he was 6-1 with the
champion Indians. In 1953,
at 47, he pitched in 57
games for the Browns. Of
his own remarkable face,
Paige said, "We seen some



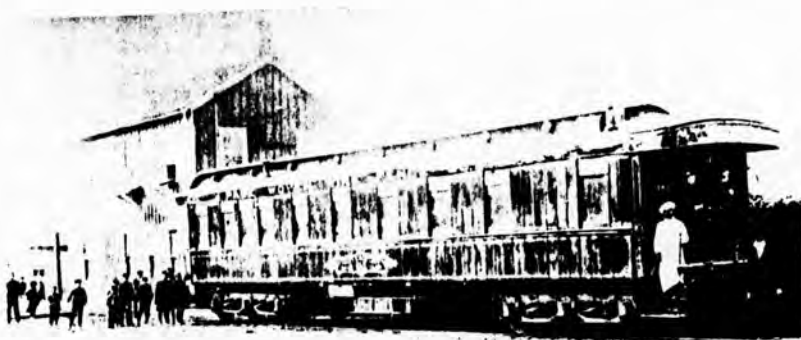
ARGYLE PARK

THE NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUES

A Photographic History



Jack Roosevelt Robinson "Jackie"



outstanding players of the Negro Baseball Leagues



George Franklin Gill

*More than
just
Sports History*

VILLAGE OF BABYLON

INCORPORATED 1893
153 WEST MAIN STREET
BABYLON, NEW YORK 11702

STEWART M. ALDRICH
Village Historian



By Debbie Douglas Sauer

PAIGE MEMORIAL: A monument at Hall of Famer Satchel Paige's gravesite in Kansas City will be dedicated.

Negro League players to be honored at K.C.

Hall of Famer Leroy "Satchel" Paige and other former Negro League baseball legends will be honored Saturday during the Equitable Old-Timers Series at Kansas City's Royal Stadium.

All-time home run king Henry Aaron, who made his Negro league debut in Kansas City, will manage the NL squad. Larry Doby, who went from the Newark Eagles to become the first black player in the American League, leads the AL team.

A monument also will be dedicated to Paige at his K.C. gravesite.

"This is great exposure because the majority of Ameri-

cans know about 10 players from the Negro League," says Phil Dixon, Kansas City Royals public relations assistant and Negro League historian. "Paige is the first player they put in the (Hall of Fame), but there are of minimum of 20 guys eligible for the Hall of Fame."

Former Negro League stars expected to participate: Buck O'Neil, first black coach in the majors, Gene Baker, Connie Johnson, Ray Noble, Lyman Bostock Sr., Jimmy Crutchfield, Piper Davis, George Giles, Gabby Kemp, Jim LaMarque, Verdell Mathis, Chico Renfroe, and Jessie Williams.

—Valerie Lynn Dorsey

7-28-89

USA TODAY

'The Greatest Day'

BASEBALL from Page 3

Through the reunion weekend, the men had talked about things like that, but in a way that not once had minimized their attachment to the game or the fun they'd created, despite the troubled times. "We loved playing baseball, loved it. And the way we figure it," said Willie J. (Stretch) O'Kelly, 70, who played for the Atlanta Black Crackers, "every one of us could have made the major leagues — every one. Because everything the white man done we could have done, too, or better."

"It was just how things were, and so I tell the fellows," he added with a sad chuckle, "that, hey, we were just born too early."

Even Bill White, president of the National League and the first black in the job, had made note of this long road to recognition and marveled during an honorary luncheon Sunday that the men had become legends, "without the benefit of radio, television or even bubble gum cards."

For that moment Monday in the Braves' ballpark, though, the bitter past had been dispatched. "This," said 70-year-old Willie Pope, standing in the dugout, about to be presented for the first time to a major league audience, "is for me the greatest evening of baseball — ever." And the men lined up around him, nodded and said he couldn't be telling more truth. "The greatest day," said Wilbur Griggs, smiling and shaking his head as if in disbelief. "The greatest."

They had come here by bus, like in the old days, starting out in Memphis, home of the most popular Negro League teams, the Memphis Red Sox.

Instead of hot, rickety schoolbuses, they whiled away the road hours in cool, plush Greyhounds with TV monitors, stereo sound systems and seats that reclined, compliments of Southern Bell and the Atlanta Braves, who put together the weekend. Even some of the wives came along. And when they got to Atlanta, they stayed in a hotel so immaculate it defied comparison to experiences gone by.

"I'll tell you straight, it was pretty rough for many of us out there," said Ted (Double Duty) Radcliffe, who played for a number of teams, including the New York Black Yankees, and who everywhere had a reputation as a "terror" as pitcher and catcher. "Sometimes we couldn't get baths for three or four days — we'd sleep in the bus because we couldn't get rooms. One time we were on our way to Montgomery and we stopped in a grocery store and the manager said, 'Tell them niggers to go around the back.' Well I told the fellows, 'We ain't buying nothing here,' so we went to another place and got right what we wanted."

Radcliffe, who was declared honorary chairman of the reunion owing to his age (86), had plenty of other tales, but then it was a rare player who didn't. Buck O'Neil, 77, and his Kansas City Monarch teammate Richard Phillips remembered passing through Sikeston, Mo., once and seeing a group of whites "dragging, just dragging a Negro down the street." The players learned to pass around places like that, O'Neil said, "to avoid the humiliation."

Newcombe remembered staying up until 3 in the morning spraying bed bugs in teammates' rooms at one roach-infested Baltimore hotel. "It seemed hilarious at the time," he said, "because many of us didn't know of anything better." Clinton Jones, 71, remembered his team, the

Memphis Red Sox, routinely traveling 500 miles through the night by bus, stopping only "to pick up some bologna and crackers" before arriving to play a game and turning right around to travel 500 miles in another direction to play another. Marlin Carter, 67, remembered how the Chicago American Giants, like almost all the other 51 league teams, had to rent out uneven, unmown ballparks and, separately, rent the lights.

Almost everybody remembered the paltry \$125-a-month salary that was typical, how rarely their names appeared in the white press and how, mostly, they longed to strut their stuff not only before the black fans who revered them, but before the world. "We were representing our race, and we wanted to excel and show the world we were as good or better than anybody and under any condition," said Clyde McNeil, 60, of the Chicago American Giants.

Yet for all the wishing, the men were quick to add, being in the big leagues hardly consumed them. The game itself, they said, was too much fun, too preoccupying, for that.

Besides, said Buck O'Neil, one of the few men who has remained in baseball all these years — as a scout and an infield coach for the Chicago Cubs, and now as a member of the baseball veterans hall of fame committee — "you were playing with and against the best athletes in the world. You were meeting some of the best people in the world, too. I met [black educator and historian] Dr. Benjamin Mays through baseball. I met [activist] Mary McLeod Bethune through baseball. I met Martin Luther King Jr. through baseball." And while road travel was sometimes not the greatest, he said, he still managed to stay "in some of the best black hotels in the world and eat some of the best food you ever wanted to taste."

Even Hank Aaron, who shattered Babe Ruth's home-run record in 1974, acknowledged that while the Negro Leagues were born because of "shameful" segregation, they had left him impressed and grateful. "A lot of people say if you played in the Negro Leagues for one month, you could have all the spring training you'd ever need to go to the big league," he said. He played for only three months for the Indianapolis Clowns, he said, but "I'll tell you I had the greatest experience I've ever had in my life."

It was no wonder, then, that as the men worked their way through luncheons and receptions and a baseball clinic for high school players, there was considerable time spent trading baseball stories about themselves and buddies like Jackie Robinson and Satchel Paige, stretching truths and yes, even ribbing the baseball players of today.

"You have these half-million-dollar ballplayers that can't hit a ball from the bench to this table," said Clyde McNeil, sitting over coffee one morning with friends. "When they got one scratch on their finger, and they're out for a month . . . And another thing — I don't understand when they talk about home field advantage. WHAT home field?" By now the men are slapping their knees, which gets Clinton Jones really revved up. "They play on pool tables now and they're still losing the ball!" he hollered.

Then, boldly, 66-year-old Arthur Pennington of the American Giants declared: "I could pick any one of our teams who could have wiped any of these teams today off the map, right off. Any one of them."

And at this, all the fellows nodded proudly, a silence fell, and that was the end of that. ■

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ARGYLE HOTEL

STEWART M. ALDRICH
Village Historian

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The Beacon 19 February, 1987

Black Baseball History In Babylon Village Over A Hundred Years Ago

Stewart M. Aldrich
Babylon Village Historian

Most people believe the first black professional baseball player was Jackie Robinson. While he was the first in this century, there were paid black baseball players and organized black teams at least 75 years earlier.

One of the first teams of paid black baseball players was composed of members of the staff at the Argyle Hotel in Babylon Village. The team was organized in the 1880s by Frank Thompson the Hotel's headwaiter. Calling themselves the Athletics they played many games against white Long Island teams with considerable success. Encouraged by their successes they went on tour under the name Cuban Giants. Two members of the team were: Shep Trust, top black pitcher of the 1880s, and Sol White, a tremendous long-ball hitter. They were considered to be among the best players of that time.

Art Rust, Jr. in his history of black men in baseball wrote: "...In their first professional year, a year that saw them paid wages equivalent to those to be had by the help in a first-class hotel, they beat Bridgeport, the Eastern League champions. This established them as a strong attraction. They beat Cincinnati and Indianapolis in the International League in 1887, and threw a scare into many other white major-league clubs they played...Some of the ballplayers were better than those playing white baseball...."

The Argyle Hotel was a large summer resort hotel in the late 1800s. It was located at the northwest corner of Argyle Lake. The Village of Babylon Historical & Preservation Society has photos and other information on the hotel on display in their Museum at 117 West Main Street in Babylon Village. The Museum is open 2 to 4 PM on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

two to one.

The new Babylon Town House was inaugurated on October 18, 1958, with a three-hour dedication parade with an estimated 35,000 people in attendance. A flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol was sent as the personal gift of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and presented by U.S. Congressman Kenneth B. Keating. During his brief remarks, Congressman Keating declared the Town of Babylon and Suffolk County the fastest growing Town and County in the United States.

Cuban Giants

The Cuban Giants, the first professional African-American baseball team, was formed in 1885 at Babylon's Argyle Hotel. Reportedly, the team originally consisted of waiters and employees of the hotel. The Cuban Giants triumphed in the league for decades, winning back-to-back "World Colored Championships," in 1887 and 1888.

Contrary to the name, there were no Cubans on the team. Promoters selected the name in an attempt to disguise the racial identity of the team members, in an era when it was believed that many people would rather support a team of foreign players instead of African-Americans.

The Argyle Hotel was built in 1882 by Austin Corbin, President of the Long Island Rail Road, and the Duke of Argyll of Scotland, for whom the hotel was named. The luxurious hotel sat on 15-acres near the northwest corner of Argyle Lake. The expansive property included stables, a large mill pond, a casino, 14 cottages, and a mansion where Mr. Corbin resided. The Argyle Hotel was demolished in 1904. In 1921, the present Argyle Park was donated to Babylon Village by J. Stanley Foster.

On April 18, 2010, a memorial to the legendary Cuban Giants was dedicated in Argyle Park, by the Village of Babylon, near the area where the baseball team is believed to have played.



"Mile-A-Minute" Murphy

On June 30, 1899, Charles Minthorn Murphy made history by riding a bicycle a distance of one mile in less than one minute - earning the nickname "*Mile-A-Minute" Murphy*. Murphy made his record-breaking ride behind a specially-equipped Long Island Rail Road train on the branch from Maywood (East Farmingdale) toward Babylon. After several years of trying to convince people that he could beat the best "iron horse" under his own power, the Long Island Rail Road agreed to put

Murphy's challenge to the test - an achievement that has never been duplicated.

Murphy continued to make history and headlines throughout the rest of his life - first, on the vaudeville circuit, where he raced fellow cyclists on stationary roller tracks, and later as a New York City Police Officer. Ever the innovator, Murphy became New York's first motorcycle police officer, as well as the first police officer to fly an airplane.

During his 16 years on the force, Murphy garnered as many headlines as a police officer as he did for cycling, receiving four commendations and five citations for excellence. Charles M. Murphy was



" Get that Nigger off the field!"- a sparkling, informal history of the black man in baseball. - Art Rust, Jr. 796.3570922 RUST - Bab. Library

"...One of the original black clubs that the participants found to be more fun than money was the Cuban Giants. The group was led by a hotel headwaiter by the name of Frank Thompson. The club consisted of members of the staff of the Argyle Hotel in Babylon, Long Island. The Cuban Giants' monicker was misleading, because there wasn't a Cuban to be found in the bunch. The Cuban Giants had two of the best ballplayers active at the time: Shep Trusty, top black pitcher of the 1880s, and Sol White, a tremendous long-ball hitter. In their first professional year (1881), a year that saw them paid wages equivalent to those to be had by the help in a first-class hotel, they beat Bridgeport, the Eastern League champions. This established them as a strong attraction. They beat Cincinnati and Indianapolis in the International League in 1887, and threw a scare into many other white major-league clubs they played. Stimulated by the success of the Giants, "Cuban" and "Giant" teams of all sorts came into existence, almost all of them managed and organized by white promoters attempting to take advantage of the success of the Cuban Giant team. There were the Elite Giants, the Mohawk Giants, the Cuban X Giants, the Genuine Cuban Giants, the Leland Giants, the Lincoln Giants of Lincoln, Nebraska, and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. In order to make more than a meager living out of the game, the black players had to play all year round in Central and South America, in Cuba, in Mexico, and in other places where black pigmentation did not mark a man as second class. It was in these locations that the black population would turn out in large numbers and pack the ballpark. Some of the ballplayers were better than those playing white baseball."

" Official Encyclopedia of Baseball "
1951 Edition (A.S.Barnes & Co., N.Y.)

ARGYLE HOTEL

" The first team of paid Negro players was a group of fellow waiters Frank Thompson recruited in 1885 at the Argyle Hotel, Babylon, Long Island. They played 10 games that summer against white teams on Long Island, then went on tour billed as the Cuban Giants. Thompson hoped to ease the social barriers by passing his team off as Cubans, and a few players furthered the illusion by chattering in a rapid Spanish - sounding gibberish on the field. Thompson added the nickname Giants because it was a popular team in the majors at that time. It remained a good tag, and later Negro teams were known as the Lincoln Giants, Chicago American Giants, Bacharach Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants, etc.."

Stewart M. Aldrich
3 Feb. 1986

By Mark Herrmann
Local History

sponsorship for a pit roof ballpark next to "Selling the naming one of the ways to do But he wouldn't con- or unlikely. "It's w process," he said.

It appears a fait a Francisco. Candlest become 3Com Stadi for a \$1-million fee firm. That was chill Franciscans, who to their park as "I through chattering stadium's arctic bri ballpark was name- chosen) location on Candlestick Point, named for the tree: candlesticks.

Putting corporat arenas doesn't do i but it isn't so bad i taxpayers' share of If it saves New Yo it TWA Fumes Fie

Some advice, the San Francisco: ign calling it Candlest last time you hear Meadowlands as " Arena"? At a Rut outside says "Lou Center," but even it Rutgers Athleti often do you hear names of the Nok the Federal Expri

The real shame 49ers fans isn't th with "Candlestie! It's that they're i Candlestick Park

Tee time is d2

Imagine the ge work a week fro "Man, I shot 49; how in heck tha replies, "I misse

Nah. Those fo too tired to go t playing in the A Foundation's 10 18 at the Hamk

Twenty-five g up and solicited rounds — and c official schedul start at dawn a dark to see the Simington of th Island chapter.

Participants about their chu 600. For purpo event's rules st woods stay in t drop a new bal carry on."

Best Yet to Come With BB Playoffs

Yeah, but could Bucky Dent have done it two days in a row? Someone might get the chance this season; the chance to hit a once-in-a-lifetime shot on a Monday, and again on a Tuesday. It could happen, given baseball's tiebreaking rules and the cluster of .500-caliber teams scrambling for wild-card spots.

Give baseball credit for this much: It watered down the postseason but kept the best part. It will hold a one-game playoff if two teams are tied for a wild-card position. And if three are tied — entirely possible, given the way clubs have been spinning their wheels — it will hold back-to-back one-game playoffs.

Wild and wilder. Any tiebreaker has it all over a World Series, which happens every year (except when there's a strike). Bobby Thomson's resounding 1951 home run ("The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!") came in a special best-of-three series. Dent is famous because he hit a go-ahead homer in a winner-takes-all game against the Red Sox in 1978.

That kind of drama could be only weeks away. If two teams are tied, they'll meet the day after the regular season ends at a site determined by a coin flip. (The only exception will be if the clubs are tied for both a division title and the wild-card spot. Then they'll skip the game, award first place to the team with the better head-to-head record, and declare the other a wild-card entry.)

As catcher Ray Fosse said (after his Pete Rose collision): "Well, that's football."

Well, not quite. Football did inspire the wild-card format, but it doesn't have time to settle wild-card ties on the field.

Football never could approximate what will happen if three baseball contenders are tied Oct. 1. Teams A and B will play Oct. 2, and the winner will host Team C Oct. 3 in the first Wild Card Tournament Final. Teams would be seeded by their records against each other.

Here's the twist: The top seed gets a choice of whether it wants to be A, B or C. Do you take the bye and play on the road, or do you play at home Monday and try to win two in a row? You'd have to be crazy to pass up the bye, but these are baseball owners we're talking about.

Just remember, if it happens, we



The Cuban Giants, first all-Black pro team, won titles in 1887 and 1888

Babylon, Where It Really Began

Real baseball began right here. It was in Babylon, at the lavish Argyle Hotel, that the sport started to become (to borrow from baseball's vocabulary) a complete game.

The first all-black professional team, the Cuban Giants, was established at the Long Island resort in 1885, according to several sources, including a new book, "A Complete History of the Negro Leagues," by Mark Ribowsky (Birch Lane Press).

The team consisted of waiters and other employees of the hotel and was employed "as a summertime divertissement for white vacationers," Ribowsky wrote. His book and other historical references credit the Giants for clearing the way for the Negro Leagues, which led to Jackie Robinson's big-league entry, which took the moral asterisk off the game's "National Pastime" claim.

Frank Thompson, the head waiter at the Argyle, is said to have formed the team that was first called the Athletics. He and his teammates worked at a 350-room getaway that sat on Argyle Lake, just off the Long Island Rail Road tracks. It was built as a convenient oasis for New Yorkers by a consortium led by LIRR owner Austin Corbin and backed by the son of Britain's Duke of Argyll.

Local competition was no match for the Athletics — the Aug. 22, 1885 edition of The South Side Signal reported a 29-1

thrrottling of the National Club of Farmingdale. After tourist season ended, the club went on the road. "They were victorious in every game, and, encouraged by their success, on Monday played the celebrated [New York] Metropolitan Team, and were badly beaten," the Signal reported on Oct. 10, 1885. "The score was 11-3 in favor of the 'Mets.' Several Babylon people attended the game."

The team really took off, Ribowsky wrote, when Trenton businessman Walter Cook started promoting them. Figuring that white crowds wouldn't respond to black American players, he renamed the team the Cubans and instructed them to "chirp pidgeon Espanol and cackle loudly." Despite that farce, the club thrived.

Which is not to say the players got rich. Phil Dixon and Patrick J. Hannigan, in their 1992 book "The Negro Leagues, A Photographic History" (Amereon House, 329 pages), reported pitchers and catchers were paid \$18 a week, infielders \$15 and outfielders \$12. (On the other hand, the toney Argyle charged only \$5 a night. No wonder it was razed in 1904).

Still, it just proves that those players were born a century too early. Particularly since the site of their old home park is less than a mile from a symbol of today's big-league opulence: Bret Saberhagen's mansion.

won't forget it.

Who says mediocrity isn't exciting?

'Rheingold Polo Grounds?'

Consider: the Diet Pepsi Dome or

the FAN Dome. Try this on for size: Macy's Stadium. It might be closer than you think.

"It is something we're considering," Mets vice president

Newsday, Sept 10 1995

LI'S FIRST BLACK POET WAS THE NATION'S, TOO

By Leslie Hanscom

For generations after she died in 1764, it was supposed that Phillis Wheatley was the first black American poet. She was an astonishing woman who was kidnapped and enslaved as a child in Africa, but grew up to be a star of literary salons in Boston and in Samuel Johnson's London. Her fame can be diminished in only one detail. She wasn't the first black poet. That honor goes to Jupiter Hammon.

Jupiter who? The question is inevitable because nobody but antiquarians ever heard of him. Hammon was born a slave somewhere around 1720 and died a slave some 70 years later. He was owned by three generations of the Lloyd family of Lloyd's Neck.

Here is a stanza which is a fair specimen of Hammon's verse: "Believe me now my Christian friends / Believe your friend called Hammon / You cannot to your God attend / And serve the God of Mammon." That should suggest the reason why he doesn't appear in the anthologies. He was, if facts must

be faced, a terrible poet, but he was no more so than numberless versifying clergymen of the time who enjoyed high reputations for writing the same kind of stuff. Moreover, he was meeting a standard as high as theirs without their advantages of education.

Hammon's distinction is that he was the first of his race to get into print as an author of verse and therefore was the precursor of splendors to come. In 1915, Oscar Wegelin, an antiquarian who thought Hammon had been slighted of the credit due him as a pioneer, compiled a bibliography of his work and showed by comparing dates that he had preceded the debut of Phillis Wheatley by about 10 years.

None of the histories of the proud Lloyd family mentioned his name, but Wegelin did get hold of a letter which indicated that his owners were aware he was among them even when he was a child. They were slaveholders of the benevolent sort, and it was a worry to the head of the house that the boy, Jupiter, was afflicted with pains in his legs "ascending to his bowels."

The letter is the only document which reveals anything about Hammon's place in the family. We don't know what his duties were or what leisure he had to woo his poetic muse. Judging from his poetry, he must have been a preacher among his people, because that's what he does as a poet.

Hammon's poems were published individually as broadsheets in the 18th Century manner. The author names himself as the publisher in association with friends. The friends must have been the Lloyds, who probably believed that Hammon's torrential piety was a good example to other slaves.

The biggest success of Hammon's literary career was a work in prose called "An Address to the Negroes in the State of New York." It went into three editions, one of them published by an Abolitionist society in Philadelphia. Alone among the writings which survive, this sermonizing but thoughtful essay gives a hint of what the man was like. The poems could have been cranked out by an automaton, but in this statement, he reveals himself as a

man of mild disposition with a lot of common sense about his station in life.

The Philadelphia Abolitionists took it as anti-slavery propaganda, but Hammon was no militant. In counseling patience to fellow slaves, he uses the render-unto-Caesar argument. Hammon indicates that he believes slavery contradicts the laws of Heaven, but his attitude is that, since it is the law down here, slaves will save themselves grief if they don't irritate the master who provides bed and board.

Hammon was writing as an old man in the wake of the Revolutionary War. For himself, he says, he doesn't want freedom. He has had a better life than many white people, and if emancipated now, wouldn't know how to take care of himself. What he would like, he says, is to see the young Negroes free. Then he makes a poignant reflection on the late war in which the patriots have spilled blood to defend their own freedom. "I must say," he writes, "that I hoped God would open their eyes, who were so much engaged for liberty, to think of the poor slaves."

Newspaper - Heritage 6/19/83

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LONG ISLAND

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Though not too much is said about slavery on Long Island, it did exist in these parts. Indeed, the first published black poet in America was a Long Island slave: Jupiter Hammon, who was born in 1711 and served four generations of Lloyds of Huntington. Today, to mark Black History Month, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities pays tribute to Hammon in a program at the Joseph Lloyd Manor in Lloyd Harbor. At 1 P.M. there'll be children's workshops and tours of the house, featuring the rooms that research indicates were Hammon's slave quarters; and at 2 P.M. the Be-One Storytellers, a professional company from Manhattan, will perform Afro-American tales, music and dance. Tickets are \$2, or \$1.50 for children, and for information call 271-7760.

Speaking of Huntington and Black History Month, at noon today at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 109 Browns Road, the present takes precedence over the past in a panel discussion of "Racism in Huntington."

Other events this week follow a more cultural route. For example, Tuesday in Baldwin, at the Public Library, 2385 Grand Avenue, at 8 P.M. in its "Meet Your Neighbor" series, Labiba Abdur Rahman talks about African heritage with an emphasis on her own Ashanti tribe. Wednesday, there's a lecture on black literature by Amiri Baraka at 11 A.M. in the Babylon Student Center on the Selden campus of Suffolk Community College; and at 7 P.M. at the Fine Arts Center of the State University at Stony Brook, Jim Anderson, composer, backed by his jazz quartet, does a performance-lecture stint. All these programs are free.

11/11
1971
10/10
1971

Long before Jackie

Black pro baseball players can trace roots to a hotel team in Babylon

BY JOHN JEANSONNE

john.jeansonne@newsday.com

Walking back the story of black baseball to its precise origin is no easy chore after more than a century of mostly oral history and sometimes conflicting bits of written record. But today, Babylon Village officials will mark the approximate spot where members of a long-gone resort hotel staff are believed to have formed the first all-black professional team in 1885.

The players were said to be waiters, bellhops and porters employed by the Argyle Hotel, built in 1882 but a white elephant most of its 22-year existence near the end of Babylon's summer-tourist era. During 1 p.m. ceremonies today, a plaque will be unveiled on the north-west edge of Argyle Lake, formerly a large mill pond on the old hotel's sprawling property.

Somewhere near that plaque was the site of home games for the Cuban Giants, whose name possibly was based on the racial realities of the day — that white crowds would sooner pay to see Latinos than blacks play ball. Or maybe the result of the sporting press, known at the time to euphemistically refer to blacks as Cuban, Spanish or Arabian. Or perhaps because the team's manager, Stanislaus Kostka Govern, was a native of the Caribbean.

There are even some accounts that the non-Cuban Cubans barnstormed in Cuba in the winter after their creation. At a time when base ball (it was two words then) had moved beyond a recreational activity to become America's No. 1 spectator sport, the Cuban Giants were a powerhouse, winning all 10 of their games against white competition in 1885 and proclaimed the "world colored champions" of 1887 and 1888.

The Cuban Giants rapidly "attained a level of notoriety that gave them the right to pick and choose which white teams they would play," Mark Ribowsky wrote in his 1995 "Complete History of the Negro Leagues." By 1888, the black Indianapolis Free-



COURTESY OF BABYLON HISTORICAL AND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

man newspaper reported: "The Cuban Giants, that famous base ball club, have defeated the New Yorks, four games out of five, and are now virtually champions of the world. The St. Louis Browns, Detroit and Chicagos, afflicted with Negro phobia and unable to bear the odium of being beaten by colored men, refused to accept the challenge."

A sort of early baseball version of the Harlem Globetrotters, the Cuban Giants, by the 1890s, periodically counted among their roster players Frank Grant, considered by baseball historian Robert Peterson to be "the best black player" of his

era; Sol White, called by black sports historian Art Rust Jr. the best long-ball hitter of the time; and Bud Fowler, memorialized in Cooperstown as the first black man to be paid by a white baseball team — about 70 years before Jackie Robinson broke the major-league color line.

Fowler, first employed by a white team in Chelsea, Mass., in 1878, included the Cuban Giants, in the late 1880s, among the teams he represented in 22 states and Canada.

White, who not only was a player and manager but wrote the first history of black baseball, is considered the source of

many Cuban Giants details — though he joined the team several years after its creation. The team was formed, sources agree, by Argyle headwaiter Frank Thompson, though it is not clear whether Thompson's players came to be paid — \$18 a week for pitchers, \$15 for infielders, \$12 for outfielders — to provide baseball entertainment for hotel guests after hours, or in fact had baseball as their primary jobs.

The 2005 book edited by Bill Kirwin, "Out of the Shadows, African-American Baseball from the Cuban Giants to Jackie Robinson," said Thompson recruited semi-pros from Washington

A SORT OF EARLY BASEBALL VERSION OF THE HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS, THE CUBAN GIANTS COUNTED AMONG THEIR ROSTER PLAYERS FRANK GRANT, SOL WHITE, AND BUD FOWLER, MEMORIALIZED IN COOPERSTOWN AS THE FIRST BLACK MAN IN HISTORY TO BE PAID BY A WHITE BASEBALL TEAM.

and Philadelphia teams to form his Argyle Hotel club.

Either way, according to Jules Tygiel, a historian of black baseball, the Cuban Giants toured the East in a private railroad car, consistently drawing sellout crowds, and were so financially and artistically successful that they spawned a handful of imitators: the Lincoln Giants from Nebraska, the Page Fence Giants from Michigan (another of Bud Fowler's teams), and the Cuban X Giants of New York.

At the time of the Cuban Giants' emergence, Babylon was just past its peak as a booming resort destination that had been triggered by the arrival of the Long Island Rail Road in 1867. First as the gateway to Fire Island's hotels and beaches — the words "Fire Island" were written as large as "Babylon" at the original Babylon station — the village accommodated a stream of summer visitors from New York City with the construction of more than a dozen hotels.

The Argyle was the last of those hotels, funded by a syndicate headed by LIRR president Austin Corbin and built on the former estate of railroad magnate Electus B. Litchfield. The hotel was so named because its investors included the son of the Duke of Argyll, but it never was more than one-third occupied, fell into disrepair by the 1890s and was razed in 1904.

Before it went, though, it gave the country its first black professional baseball team. And given that the hotel's lumber still exists in several of the homes built on the former resort's grounds, today's plaque in Argyle Park figuratively will keep alive the Cuban Giants.



Photo Credit: Baseball Hall of Fame Cooperstown, N.Y.



Change in time for July 4 Youth Pageant! "March of the Mayors" begins at Noon at Argyle Gazebo. "Birth of a Village" begins at 12:30 at Conklin House.

"The first team of paid Negro players was a group of fellow waiters Frank Thompson recruited in 1885 at the Argyle Hotel, Babylon, Long Island. They played 10 games that summer against white teams on Long Island, then went on tour billed as the Cuban Giants. Thompson hoped to ease the social barriers by passing his team off as Cubans, and a few players furthered the illusion by chattering in a rapid Spanish-sounding gibberish on the field. Thompson added the nickname Giants because it was a popular team in the majors at that time. It remained a good tag, and later Negro teams were known as the Lincoln Giants, Chicago American Giants, Bacharach Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants, etc.."

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Cool Papa Bell, it was said, was so fast he could turn out the light and be in bed before the room got dark. As a young pitcher, Satchel Paige was considered unhittable, he continued to fool batsmen well into his 50s. Smokey Joe Williams once struck out 27 Kansas City Monarchs in a 10 inning game. And Jackie Robinson's pure athleticism led blacks into a new chapter of sports and social history.

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About the Authors

Phil Dixon enjoys a growing reputation as *the* authority on black baseball history. From a bequest of 15 photos from Carroll Ray (Dink) Mothell, former player for the KC Monarchs, Dixon's collection of Negro League photos has grown to over 8,000. He has traveled all over the country conducting interviews with former Negro League players and their families, has been a frequent guest on television and radio talk shows, and frequently writes articles on black baseball for various publications.

Patrick J. Hannigan is the Night Sports Editor for the *New York Post* where he has been employed since 1978.

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Satchel Paige in the middle 1930s. Dizzy Dean called him the best pitcher alive; in 1948, as a 42-year-old rookie, he was 6-1 with the champion Indians; in 1953, at 47, he pitched in 57 games for the Browns. Of his own remarkable face, Paige said, "We seen some sights, it and I."

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