

## **Professional Baseball in Baltimore**

**By Jimmy Keenan**

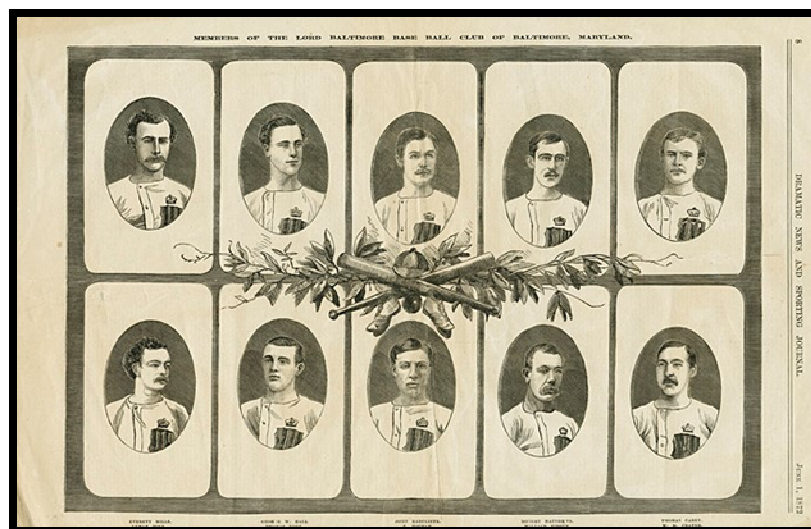
In 2014 Baltimore baseball fans celebrated the 60th anniversary of the current Oriole team's relocation from St. Louis to Baltimore. In reality, this is the fourth major-league franchise in Baltimore that was named the Orioles.



Professional baseball in Baltimore goes back to the spring of 1872. That year a team representing the city played in the National Association of Professional Baseball Players [NAPBBP]. This loop was the first baseball league composed entirely of professional players, hence the name. However, whether or not the circuit deserves major-league status is still up for debate. Charges of

gambling, uneven scheduling, questionable umpiring, and minimal press coverage have caused some to question the status of the league.

The NAPBBP operated from 1871-75. Baltimore's first entry in the NAPBBP was called the Lord Baltimores. They were also known as the Canaries and Yellow Stockings because of the color of their uniforms. This franchise competed in the NAPBBP from 1872-74. Hall of Fame pitcher Candy Cummings, one of the inventors of the curveball, was a 28-game winner for the Canaries in 1873. At one point during the 1873 campaign another Baltimore nine, the Marylands, joined the NAPBBP. This aggregation folded after only six games due to a lack of fan support.



**1872 Lord Baltimores**

After the Canaries disbanded in 1874 Baltimore didn't have another professional baseball team until 1882. That season a new major league, the American Association [AA] began play. The AA had been organized as a direct rival to the National League, which had been founded in 1876. The AA was known as the Beer and Whiskey League because alcohol was sold during games. In addition, the AA also offered cheaper tickets and Sunday baseball, which the National League did not.

Baltimore was a charter member of the AA in 1882. This ballclub was generally referred to as the Baltimores during the loop's inaugural season. The following year the team began using the name Orioles at the behest of their manager Billy Barnie. The Oriole moniker was derived from the state bird of Maryland as well as a prominent social club in Baltimore.

Barring a few months in 1890, the Orioles played in the American Association from 1882-1891. The 1890 hiatus occurred after a disagreement between the Orioles front office and league officials led to Baltimore management pulling out of the loop. Baltimore then entered a team in the Atlantic Association, which was a high-caliber minor loop. The Orioles stayed in the Atlantic Association until August of 1890 when they rejoined the major American Association. The Birds remained in this league through the 1891

campaign. **The author's great-grandfather John Lyston pitched for the Hartford Nutmegs in the Atlantic Association in 1890. He pitched in Baltimore against the Birds on three different occasions that summer. John would later pitch two major-league games. In 1891 he played with Columbus in the American Association. In 1894 he pitched for the National League Cleveland Spiders.**

There was another major league called the Union Association that operated for one season in 1884. Baltimore put a team in this circuit as well. That same year, the Baltimore Monumentals were members of the Eastern League (minor league). Unfortunately, they suffered financial difficulties, disbanding after 13 games. So for a brief period in 1884, Baltimore had three professional baseball teams playing at the same time, two major-league clubs and one minor-league nine.

The American Association Orioles (1882-1891) never captured a pennant. However, they were generally well-received by local baseball fans. There were several outstanding players on these Orioles teams.

One of those standouts was pitcher Matt Kilroy. The hard-throwing Orioles southpaw set the all-time MLB strikeout record in 1886

when he fanned 513 batters. Kilroy broke the old mark that had previously been set by Baltimorean Hugh Daily.

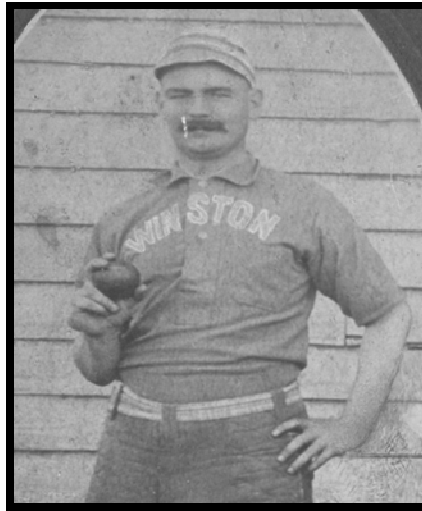


**Matt Kilroy**

Daily struck out 483 batters that year while splitting time between two different Union Association franchises, Chicago/Pittsburg and Washington in 1884.

Kilroy's 46 wins in 1887 are the most wins by a left-handed pitcher in MLB history.

**The author's great-grandfather John M. Lyston agreed in principle to a contract with the American Association Baltimore Orioles in September of 1887. At the time, three different Baltimore newspapers announced the signing.**



**John M. Lyston**

**The *Baltimore Sun*, September 10, 1887, wrote, “The Baltimore Baseball club will try out new pitcher, John Lyston. He is a clerk in the city post office and has been pitching for the Post Office Browns. Of eleven games he has lost but one. That was with the Pastimes who beat the Browns 11 to 0. The Pastimes did not have over a dozen hits but the Browns had 22 errors. Lyston is a young man, well built and about 5 feet 9 inches tall.”**

**The *Baltimore American*, September 10, 1887, “Manager  
Barnie last night engaged a young amateur named Lyston and  
will put him in the box against the Louisvilles today, with  
Daniels catching him. Lyston at present is one of the night  
employees of the post office and has had considerable  
experience as an amateur. He is well put up and judging from  
what the Baltimore boys say of him he is a good amateur.”**

**The *Baltimore Morning Herald*, September 10, 1887, “John  
Lyston, Post Office employee who has pitched for the Post  
Office Browns this year, will pitch for Baltimore today. He has  
been practicing out at the Huntington Avenue grounds for a  
long time past, and Mr. Barnie had consented to give him a  
trial.”**

**As it turned out John Lyston was replaced as the Orioles  
starting pitcher right before game time. At the last minute  
Barnie decided to go with John “Phenomenal” Smith (25-30  
3.79 ERA). Smith was coming back from an injury and had  
become available sooner than expected.**

**John Lyston chose to remain at the Baltimore City Post Office  
instead of joining the Orioles full time. Consequently he did**

**not appear in other regular season games for the Baltimore Orioles in 1887.**

**Nonetheless, John and his brother Bill were the battery for Billy Barnie's Orioles' Reserve team in 1887-88. This ballclub was the equivalent of a modern MLB farm team.**



**Bill Lyston was John's older sibling. The following is an excerpt from the August 1, 1885, *Wilmington Morning Star* noting that Bill had signed with the Wilmington Seaside in the Independent North Carolina League. "The management of the Seaside Club has secured the services of Messrs. McCaffrey**



**and Lyston as a battery to play with them the rest of the season. Lyston has caught for the Lancasters and has faced some of the hardest pitchers in the American Association. He is considered a hard hitter and is credited with hitting the longest ball ever knocked on the Baltimore Mutual grounds. He made five hits in one game off one of the best pitchers in the country.”**

In 1892 the Baltimore Orioles joined the National League. These Birds competed in the senior circuit through the 1899 season. The National League Orioles would evolve into one of the greatest major-league franchises of the nineteenth century. These iconic Baltimore ballclubs captured three straight National League pennants from 1894-96. They followed that up with consecutive second-place finishes in 1897 and 1898. From 1894 through 1897 the first and second-place teams in the National League played each other at the end of the regular season. This post-season matchup was known as the Temple Cup. The Orioles played in this series four times, winning the coveted hardware twice.

Seven members of the National League Orioles are enshrined at the National Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown. They include manager Ned Hanlon along with players Wilbert Robinson, John McGraw, Willie Keeler, Joe Kelley, Hughie Jennings, and Dan

Brouthers. Four of these icons of our national pastime, McGraw, Robinson, Kelley, and Hanlon are buried at New Cathedral Cemetery in West Baltimore



**1894 National League Champion Baltimore Orioles**

Individual milestones set by the National League Orioles include Wilbert Robinson's seven-for-seven game in 1892 as well as Bill Hawke's first no-hitter at the modern-day pitching distance in 1893.

In 1901 the Orioles returned to the majors as members of the newly formed American League. They played in this fledgling circuit for the next two years, dropping out of the loop after the 1902 season. In addition to Joe Kelley, John McGraw, and Wilbert Robinson, Hall of Famers Roger Bresnahan and Joe McGinnity played on these Oriole teams.

**The author's great-uncle Marty Lyston was a former professional baseball player. Marty was the younger brother of Bill and John. He was responsible for supervising the layout and construction of Baltimore's new American League ballpark, Oriole Park (V) in 1901. Additionally, Marty worked as the groundskeeper for the 1901-1902 Baltimore Orioles.**



**Marty Lyston**

**The *Baltimore Sun* of March 19, 1901, described Marty Lyston's work at the new ballpark: "AT AMERICAN LEAGUE PARK - Lystons good work on Diamond – Double fences, boys; The ball field of American League park on the York Road is now beginning to look like the level green that is expected of an athletic ground. Expert Martin Lyston has had more than a dozen men working assiduously for over a week and he expects to have the diamond in excellent shape in about two more weeks.**

**He found the grounds formerly used by circuses gullied with ruts from the heavy wagons, while stakes driven far into the ground made the plot difficult to level off.**

**Lyston has the reputation as a landscape gardener especially at Patterson Park where one of the prettiest diamonds in Baltimore was made and kept by him.**

**The fence at the new ballpark is practically finished as are the bleachers. The grandstand is going up rapidly and the water pipes are being laid."**

**The following is an excerpt from Marty Lyston's obituary from the *Baltimore Sun*, October 30, 1907.**

**“When McGraw and Robinson secured for the American League, the present site of what is termed the New Oriole Park they looked around to find someone who would be capable of placing the grounds in the best possible condition.”**

**“Marty” was secured, with the result that the present grounds which were laid out by him, are considered by expert judges to be the equal of any in the country.”**

**“Before he went to the park, he was employed at Patterson Park, and resigned that position to accept the one offered by McGraw and Robinson.”**

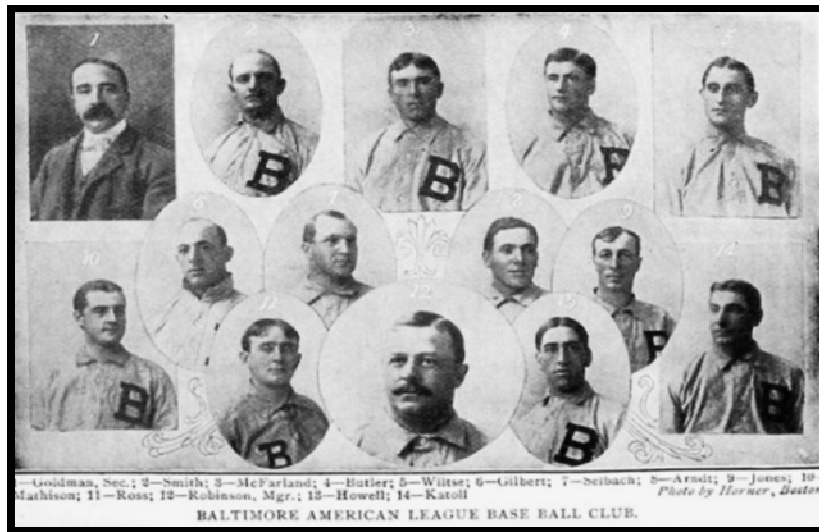
**“In his youth, “Marty” was something of a ballplayer himself and his familiarity with the game stood him in good need when he took up the task of laying out the diamond of Oriole Park.”**

**With respect to Marty’s baseball career the following is an game account from the September 2, 1891, *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*. “Lyston of the visitors pitched big ball, striking out seventeen men. Lyston, McGann at short, and Keeley at first base played the best game in the field for the visitors. Lyston and Bennett made a double play and, Kelley, unassisted, made one. In the former case, Abbott had reached first after being struck by a pitched ball and third after a beautiful hit by Boyd.**

**Hotter struck out and Horizon came to bat. He hit to short and Abbott started for home.”**

**“Lyston by a great effort caught the ball in his left hand and by quick delivery shut Abbott off from third, thereby making the neatest play of the game.”**

Due to his constant feuding with American League president Ban Johnson, player-manager-owner John McGraw sold his interests in the Orioles in July of 1902. At that point, he further removed himself from the situation by resigning from the Baltimore club as a player. Soon after, McGraw signed with the National League New York Giants, taking on the role of the team’s new manager.



### **1902 Baltimore Orioles**

The Orioles’ new majority owner Sonny Mahon immediately sold his shares of the ballclub to John Brush and Andrew Freedman,

owners of the Cincinnati Reds and New York Giants respectively. In short order the two shrewd magnates signed many of Baltimore's star players, decimating the roster. McGraw's strongly disliked American League president Ban Johnson and his umpires. Moreover, McGraw wanted a chance to manage in New York City. These two factors alone contributed heavily to McGraw's decision to switch over to the rival National League.

The mass exodus from the Baltimore roster hit hard. A depleted Orioles ballclub had to forfeit a game against the St. Louis Browns on July 17 in Baltimore due to lack of players. Ban Johnson, acting quickly, gathered up several men from clubs around the league so the Orioles could finish the season.

At the end of the 1902 campaign, Johnson, using his powers as American League president, assumed control of the Baltimore franchise. From there he transferred the ballclub to New York City. He made this move over the protestations of the Oriole's minority owners who wanted the team to remain in Baltimore. The transplanted Baltimore club started in New York using the name Highlanders. There is a bit of gray area as to when the team officially became the Yankees but it is believed to have been somewhere around 1913.

When the American League Orioles left Baltimore it did not take long for the city to rejoin the ranks of professional baseball. This time it would be as members of the Class A Eastern League, a high-level minor circuit in 1903. Jack Dunn signed on as player-manager of these Orioles in 1907, winning his first championship in Baltimore the following year. The Eastern League eventually became the Class AA International League [IL] in 1912. Today, the loops are two separate entities. In 1914 the Federal League (a third major league) was formed as competition to the American and National Leagues. The circuit would last two seasons before folding.

Baltimore's Federal League entry was named the Terrapins. The Terrapins' ballpark was located across the street from Dunn's Oriole Park IV. Offering major-league caliber ball the Federals began outdrawing Dunn's Orioles at the box office. This led to Dunn selling off his star players, including a nineteen-year-old rookie pitcher named Babe Ruth, to help offset his losses at the gate.

After the 1914 season Dunn, who had become the owner-manager of the Orioles in 1909, moved his franchise to Richmond. As it turned out the Terrapins along with the entire Federal League folded at the end of the 1915 campaign. At that time, Dunn sold



the Richmond franchise to local investors. From there he purchased Jersey City's International League team, moving it to Baltimore for the start of the 1916 season. Dunn then acquired the former Terrapin Park (Oriole Park V) as the grounds for his new ballclub. From 1919 through 1925, Dunn's Orioles captured seven straight International League championships, a feat that hasn't been equaled by any other professional baseball team.

**The author's grandfather Jimmy Lyston signed a two-year contract for \$2,600 a season with Jack Dunn's Baltimore Orioles in early January of 1921. Jimmy was seventeen-years-old at the time. Dunn had signed George Herman "Babe" Ruth to his first professional contract back in 1914.**



Baseball Hall of Famer Ned Hanlon went to the train station in the spring of 1921 when the Birds left Baltimore for their spring training site in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

**The *Baltimore Sun*, March 11, 1921, wrote, “Ned Hanlon was on hand to see the Birds off. It’s been years since he owned the Orioles and managed the greatest collection of players ever assembled under one tent. That was back in the middle nineties. ‘The best aggregation Dunn ever led out of Baltimore’ was the way Ned expressed himself. Fourteen players boarded a special car. They were; Egan, Boley, Sullivan, Groves, Fileshifter, Ogden, Bober, Krumanacker, Farrell, Larian, Lyston, Thomas, Bishop, and Roman. Wade Lefler, Jack Bentley and Merwin Jacobson will join the squad this morning when the first practice will be held. Fewster tucked six dozen balls into the traveling trunk and said five dozen balls would be expressed tomorrow.”**

**Jimmy Lyston, now eighteen, was farmed out to the Waynesboro Villagers in the Class D Blue Ridge League at the end of spring training in 1921. A broken finger in Waynesboro a few weeks later sent him back to Baltimore. Due to a rash of injuries among the Orioles regulars’ Jimmy was activated to**

**the Birds' active roster in late June of 1921. He ended up appearing in 33 games for the 1921 Baltimore Orioles before an injury ended his season. He played every position on the diamond for Dunn's Orioles', except pitcher, catcher, and first base.**

**In early August Jimmy was hit in the elbow by pitcher Joe Finneran at Newark. Not knowing his arm was broken Jimmy continued playing for nearly three more weeks before finally telling Orioles manager-owner Jack Dunn that he was hurt.**

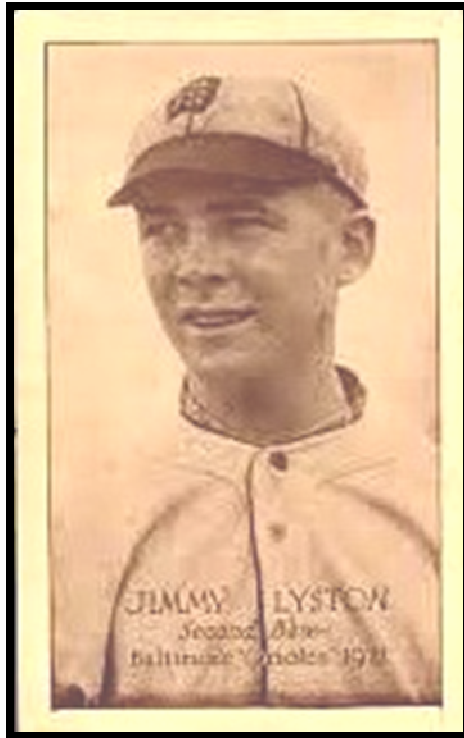
The following are a sample of the articles that appeared in the local newspapers during Jimmy Lyston's time with the Baltimore Orioles.

**The *Baltimore News*, June 28, 1921, stated, "There is something romantic about Jimmy Lyston playing as a regular on the Orioles. Here is a boy just 18 years of age-a member of a team that is the talk of the baseball world. It's real baseball romance to think that less than two years ago Jimmy was a so-called Red Cap around Oriole Park retrieving balls that went over the fence. Whenever he had an opportunity he was out in the field playing and he always looked like a natural ball player. No one figured he would be of International League caliber when he was taken south and it was expected when he was**

farmed to Waynesboro. Jimmy injured his finger and as the limits are low in the Blue Ridge League he was returned to Dunnie. Jack figured that the experience he would gain around here would be more beneficial than playing in the Blue Ridge League where he might pick up some bad baseball habits. Dunnie did not figure that the opportunity to use Lyston would come so soon.

When Lyston was announced to play in Saturdays game, kids around Oriole Park who sell peanuts and drinks or who go after balls over the fence were tickled immensely; “Say, Jimmy’s in de game”, “Jimmy’s taking Bill Holden’s place”, ‘Gee aint it great to see Jimmy playing with the Regs’- these and other similar expressions came from the kids, his buddies of only a year back.”

“Lyston may not be the best player that Dunnie has ever dug up, but he looks to have natural ability and Dunnie is willing to wait. Max Bishop was a diamond in the rough. When Dunnie saw his possibilities, he held on to the youngster when many said that Max would never make a real player. We’ll let the actual facts speak for Dunnie’s vindication.”



**Jimmy Lyston's 1921 Baltimore Orioles Tip-Top Bread Card**

**The *Baltimore Sun* of July 5, 1921, stated, “Lyston who filled in for Lawry at left made two hits and accepted 2 chances without an error. He earned a round of applause in the second by going back to the fence for Goebels fly.”**

**The *Baltimore Sun* of July 6, 1921, stated, “Until the club is strengthened much depends on the showing of Jimmy Lyston, outfielder and Ducky Davis catcher. Both of these youngsters are just 18 and had no previous professional experience before joining the Birds. Their play was confined to the sandlots of**

**the city and they have a great chance to come through and help Dunn out of his trouble. They both have acquitted themselves well in their last contests and the fans are rooting that they will play in form on the long road trip of the champions.”**

***Baltimore Sun*, July 12, 1921, “Jimmy Lyston Looms Up As Valuable Utility Player. Recruit Oriole infielder who is filling Lawry’s shoes shows up well in Rochester. Two-bagger proves helpful. Buffalo July 11- Jimmy Lyston the recruit infielder who has been playing the outfield now and then since the injury to Otis Lawry is looming large as a valuable utility man Jimmy showed well in Rochester, but it was his two base hit in the opening game of the series with Buffalo that made the going easy for the Orioles.”**

**“Up until the seventh inning Rogers had allowed only four hits. In that frame Jimmy came thru with the blow that settled Rogers for the day. At the time the Orioles had a lead of two runs, but were fighting hard for more.”**

**“Max Bishop had opened the seventh with a hit back of second. On the hit and run Boley hit right at Rogers who held the ball when nobody was at second for a force play. Manning’s attempted sacrifice resulted in Bishop being forced at third**

base. Lyston then caught one that sailed over McCarren's head and went far enough for Boley and Manning to cross the plate without even a play being made for them. Rogers yielded five more hits and four runs during the remainder of the game."

### **Jimmy Now Has Confidence Both In Outfield And At The Plate—Captures Jacobs Long Drive.**

In the outfield Jimmy also had a busy day. He backed all the way up to the scoreboard to bring down Jacobs drive in the seventh. Again in the eighth he made a sensational catch of Dowd's long fly in left center."

The 1921 Orioles compiled the second-highest win total (119) in the history of professional baseball. At one point during the season they won 27 straight games, tying the professional record at that time. Dunn's Birds also won three minor-league World Series titles.



John C. Lyston, Jimmy's older brother, had brief stint in professional baseball with the 1923 Frederick Hustlers in the Class D Blue Ridge League.



**John C. Lyston**

**The *Frederick News* of February 14, 1923, noted, “Norman McNeil the new manager of the Hustlers Tuesday signed John Lyston, a right-handed twirler, for service with the locals this season. Lyston is the elder brother of Jimmy Lyston who formerly played with the Baltimore Orioles and who is now an infielder of the Waynesboro Villagers. John Lyston tossed “em” over for the Fallston club last season and made a credible showing. He is nearly six feet tall and he is believed to be a comer. It is understood that the Hanover club was after Lyston but McNeil beat the Raider outfit to it.”**



Baltimore Orioles owner-manager Jack Dunn managed to keep his players exempt from the major-league draft for most of his tenure with the Orioles. This allowed Dunn to sell his stars to major-league owners for whatever price he deemed fair. In one highly publicized transaction, Dunn sold pitcher Lefty Grove to Philadelphia Athletics owner Connie Mack for the princely sum of \$100,600 on October 2, 1924. This was the highest price paid for a minor-league player up to that point in baseball history.

In addition to baseball luminaries Babe Ruth and Lefty Grove, Hall of Fame pitchers Rube Marquard and Chief Bender saw time with Dunn's Orioles. There were also a number stars who had stints with Dunn's Birds. During the early 1920's Dunn's Orioles payroll was usually around \$60,000. That lofty figure was higher than what some major-league teams were doling out at this time. Four of Dunn's former Orioles, Joe Boley, Max Bishop, Lefty Grove, and George Earnshaw went on to play key roles on Connie Mack's 1929-30 World Champion Philadelphia Athletics.

Dunn died in 1928 yet the IL Orioles rolled on. The Birds slipped in the standings but players like Joe Hauser, 63 home runs in 1930, along with Buzz Arlett, 54 round-trippers in 1932, kept fans coming out to the ballpark.

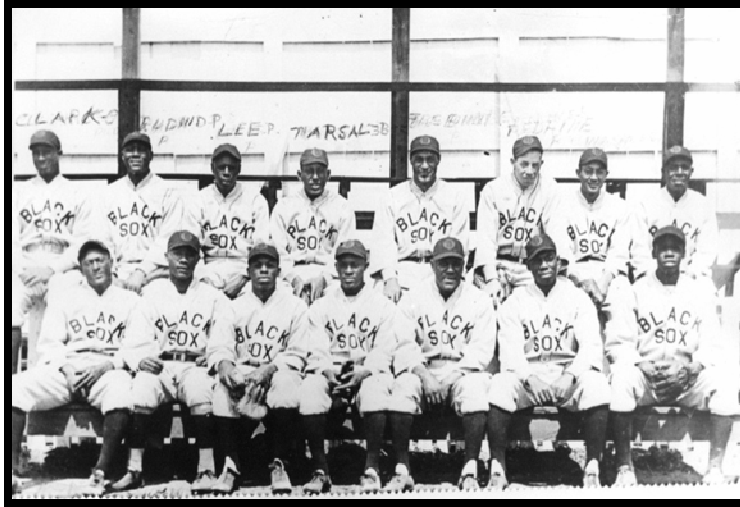
The IL Orioles won their last regular season championship in 1944. That season their home field, Oriole Park, [the fifth ballpark with that name in Baltimore], burned down on the night of July 3-4, 1944. The Birds had to move their home games to Municipal Stadium on 33rd Street, which later became Memorial Stadium. The Orioles went on to win the International League in 1944 by mere percentage points. From there they went on to capture the Governors Cup, which was a playoff series between the top four teams in the IL at the end of the regular season.

The Orioles then defeated the American Association champion Louisville Cardinals in the minor-league World Series. One home game at Municipal Stadium on October 9 in Baltimore (52,833) outdrew the St. Louis Browns vs. the St. Louis Cardinals World Series game (31,630) that was played on the same day. This large turnout helped convince people around the country that Baltimore was ready to support a major league team. The IL Orioles won the Governor's Cup again in 1950 but lost to Columbus in the minor-league fall classic. From 1903 through 1953 the minor-league Orioles were Baltimore's professional baseball team.



In 1954 the St. Louis Browns transferred their American League franchise to Baltimore. The International League Orioles franchise was sold to business interests in Richmond to make room for Baltimore's new major-league team. The current Oriole franchise, the fourth major-league ballclub in Baltimore to use that name, has been in existence since the 1954 season.

Negro League baseball also has a storied history in Baltimore. In 1887 Baltimore entered a team in the first all-African American professional baseball league. The loop held its first organizational meeting at the Douglass Institute, which was located at 11 East Lexington Street in Baltimore. Unfortunately, the circuit didn't fare well financially, folding after only a few weeks. Charm City's nine was known as the Lord Baltimores. This pioneering ballclub would be the forerunner of great Negro League teams like the Black Sox and Elite Giants that graced the local diamonds of Baltimore in the years that followed.



### **1929 Baltimore Black Sox**

There are several Hall of Famers who played on those teams. They include Roy Campanella, Satchel Paige, Mule Suttles, Jud Wilson, Oscar Charleston, Leon Day, Ben Taylor, Biz Mackey and Pete Hill.

In addition to the aforementioned immortals of the game, there are more players from these clubs that merit induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. John Beckwith, Dick Lundy, Rap Dixon, Laymon Yokely, and Henry Kimbro are some, but not all, of the superstars from these teams who deserve to be enshrined in the hallowed halls of Cooperstown.

The city of Baltimore has a long association with our national pastime, dating back to the sport's earliest days. It is only fitting that we honor the 60th Anniversary of the Orioles' return to the

American League. However, we shouldn't forget the teams and players from the past that laid the foundation for the great game of baseball in Baltimore.