

Historic Baseball Photos, Artifacts to be Featured in Upcoming Exhibit

March 18, 2024 By [Rich Mueller](#)

Original historic baseball photographs and memorabilia from a private collection are the center piece of an upcoming exhibit that aims to tell the story of baseball's journey toward integration.

Jackie Robinson and the Color Line is set to open Monday, April 15 at the [Gitterman Gallery in New York](#), coinciding with Major League Baseball's Jackie Robinson Day. It will run through May 24.

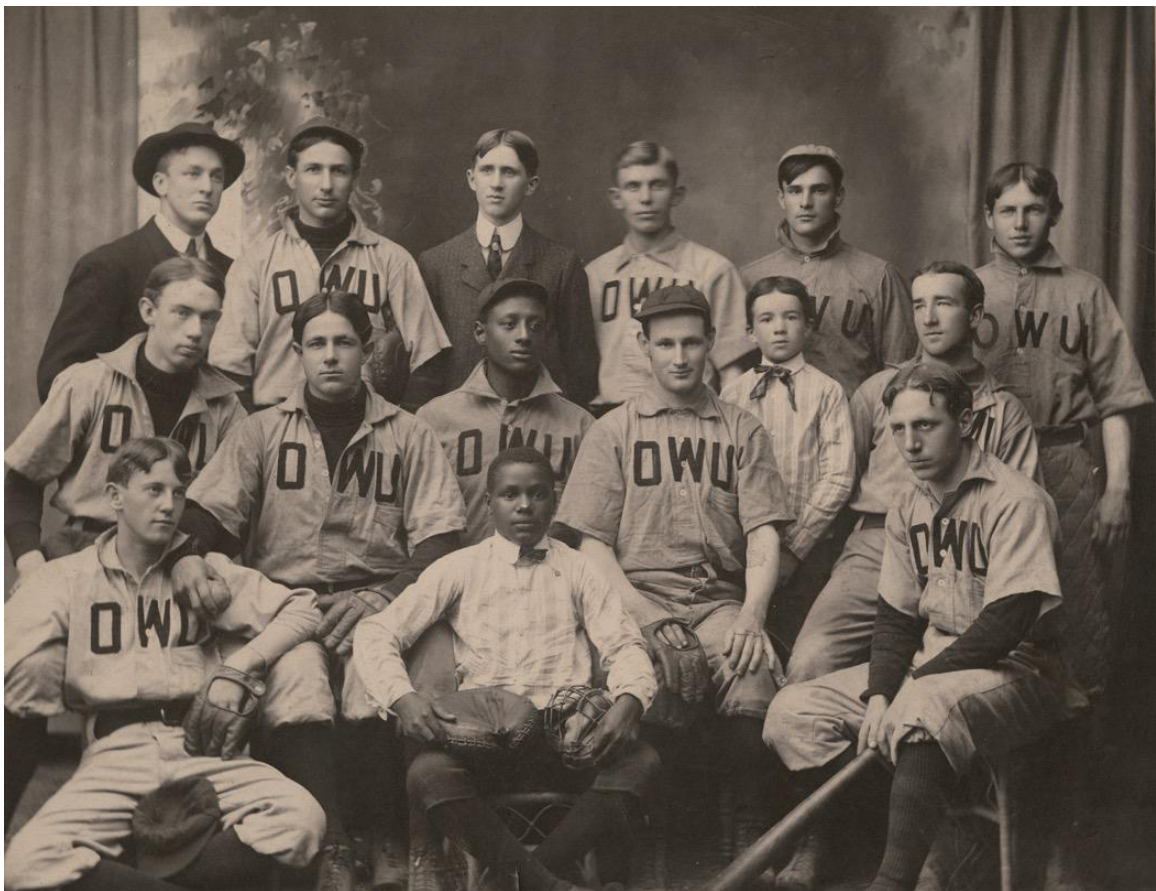
Items provided by long time collector Paul Reiferson are the centerpiece.



Jackie Robinson's first Major League home run, April 18, 1947. Vintage gelatin silver print.

Illustrated in Daily News, April 19, 1947. Jackie Robinson hit his first home run for the Dodgers on April 18, 1947. Tommy Tatum, the next batter, is seen shaking Robinson's his hand as he touches home. This iconic image, its symbolism obvious to all, ran on the Daily News' back cover the next day.

The exhibition frames Robinson's odyssey within a larger one that had begun 60 years earlier, when men like Fleet and Weldy Walker, Sol White, Robert Higgins, and Javan Emory played for integrated teams in the late 19th century.



Ohio Wesleyan Baseball Team [Branch Rickey and Charles Thomas], 1903. Vintage gelatin silver print. In 1903, Charles Thomas (second row, third from left) faced an act of discrimination so searing that it haunted Branch Rickey (top row, left), then the baseball coach at Ohio Wesleyan, and inspired him to be instrumental in dismantling the color line in Major League Baseball.

Photos complemented by historic artifacts will illustrate the decades long journey as baseball moved from segregation to integration.

Reiferson says he is driven by a passion for preserving American stories.

"I saw that the color line transcended baseball, that it was about America struggling to solve a terrible problem, and that the stories of the people in that fight were extraordinary," Reiferson explained.

Numerous vintage photographs of seminal events in Robinson's career, including his first home runs with Montreal and Brooklyn, his first game in Brooklyn, and the only known image of Robinson suffering on-field abuse will be part of the exhibition.



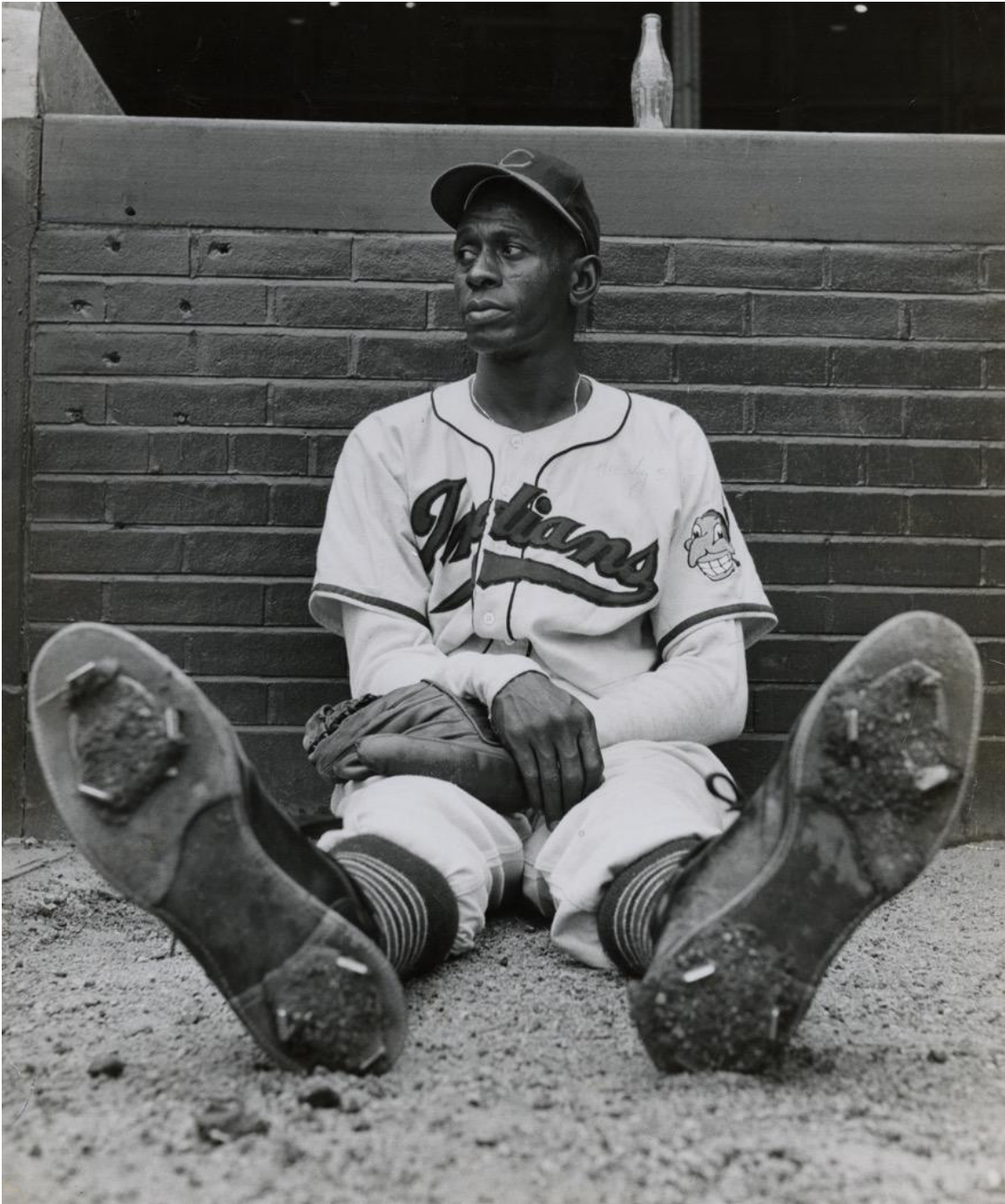
Jackie Robinson signs his Dodgers contract, January 24, 1950. Vintage gelatin silver print.

This photograph, taken during a contract signing three years after he first signed with Brooklyn, exemplifies Branch Rickey's deliberate use of images and powerful symbolism in shaping the narrative for Jackie Robinson's integration into Major League Baseball. For this photo opportunity, Rickey removed all the other photographs on the walls except for the Lincoln portrait.



Phillies dugout taunting Robinson, April 22, 1947. Vintage gelatin silver print This recently discovered photograph is the only known example of any image capturing the verbal abuse Robinson suffered on the field during his rookie year. Robinson would later write that this specific experience nearly broke him.

Among the items that will be on display are the telegrams that established the first contact between the Brooklyn Dodgers and Robinson that led to the historic meeting with Dodgers' general manager Branch Rickey, original photographs of Robinson and Satchel Paige that were used to produce the iconic images seen LIFE magazine as they broke baseball's color barrier and others that tell the story of Robinson's triumphs and challenges.



Satchel Paige, 1948. Vintage gelatin silver print by George Silk.

There are also photos and memorabilia related to other pioneers, including Johnny Wright, Roy Partlow, Larry Doby, Don Newcombe, Roy Campanella, Willard Brown, and Hank Thompson. Newcombe's first major league contract will also be on display.

An expert on vintage photography, Reiferson has gifted or promised nearly 500 prints from his extensive collection of Charles M. Conlon photos to the Metropolitan Museum

of Art. Many others have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum of the Arts, American Folk Art Museum, and Tampa Museum of Art, among others.

He discussed collecting baseball photography and history in a recent *My Baseball History* podcast: <https://shoelesspodcast.libsyn.com/episode-0305-paul-reiferson>