In an unflattering editorial, the English-born baseball sage Henry Chadwick criticized...
Irish ballplayers. "The glorious inconsistency of objectivity to a gentlemanly colored man on a team, while making no objection to the presence of so many white Irish 'toughs,' 'roughs' and drunkards, who have been allowed for years to bring disgrace on this fraternity, are one of the absurdities of the existing condition of things in the baseball world." (36)

Those black ballplayers who aspired to play in the white leagues found a hostile workplace where they were frequently mistreated, sometimes cruelly, by other players. However, the fact that professional baseball was dominated by Irish-Americans did not mean that every Irishman was a racist. Many German, Scots and English players shared the concerns of their Irish teammates. But was it not just a coincidence that some of the most publicized anti-black behavior came from Irish players and their teams?

Common to the Emerald Age, Native American players were called “Chief,” and dark compected ballplayers with curly hair were labeled “Nig.” In one incident, Baltimore right fielder George Treadway was accused by Sam McKee of the Louisville Courier Journal of having “negro blood in his veins.” The Orioles, a team made up of many Irish players, was wary of their new teammate. Eventually, Baltimore’s Irish manager, Ned Hanlon, interrogated Treadway and investigated the matter before clearing him to play on his team. A year later, Treadway found himself playing for Brooklyn. (37) Jimmy Ryan, a fine outfielder with eighteen years of major league experience, had a black dog with a white pin spot on its head. Its name was “Nigger.” The dog accompanied Ryan about town and to the ball park. (38)
When black pitcher Robert Higgins of the Syracuse Stars of the International League sat for a team picture in 1887, a number of his Irish teammates, led by Doug Crothers, refused to show up. Crothers and his unnamed associates were fined and suspended, but a month later the league’s directors agreed not to allow any more contracts with “colored men.” (39) In September 1887, the St. Louis Browns, the American Association champions, were scheduled to play an exhibition against the renowned black team the Cuban Giants of New York. On the morning of the game, the Browns announced that they had too many injuries to keep their commitment. Actually, all but two of the eleven players had signed a letter the night before the game, refusing “to play against the negroes … [but would] cheerfully play against white people any time.” Of the nine signees, seven were Irish. Their playing-manager, an Irishman, Charlie Comiskey was not one of the protesting players, but he condoned their actions when he said that his ballplayers needed a day off. (40) Charlie’s later actions would verify his prejudice. Actually, Comiskey’s mentor, Ted Sullivan, an Irish-born manager and baseball entrepreneur, often belittled black teams by breaking watermelons in front of their bench. Once he staked down fried chickens to mark the foul lines. Ted even told a crowd of black spectators, upset that they were not protected by a wire-mesh screen, that he had given his first baseman a larger glove to catch balls before they went into the crowd. (41)

These incidents were nothing compared to the severity of on-field play. Black batters were brushed back, hit by pitches and a few were beaned. On occasion, black pitchers saw their fielders, often Irishmen, deliberately misplay balls and overthrow putouts. Fleetwood Walker was the “colored” battery-mate of the great pitcher from county Cork, Tony “The Count” Mullane, when they played for Toledo. The hard-living Mullane tolerated Walker, but rarely gave him the pitch that was signaled. Walker, who caught bare-handed, had more than usual split and bleeding fingers. (42) The worst documented case of abuse and intimidation was the experience of the talented black second baseman Frank Grant of the Buffalo Bisons in the Irish dominated International League. A leading batman and extraordinary fielder, Grant was a target for “haughty...
League. A leading batsman and extraordinary fielder, Grant was a target for "haughty Caucasians... willing to permit darkies to carry water ... or guard a bat bag, but it made them sore to have the name of one on the batting list." (43) A target of this "cabal," Grant would muff balls in order to avoid deliberate collisions at second base. In one incident, Ed Crane of Milwaukee slid into Grant, and "The son of Ham went up in the air and when he came down looked as if he had been in a threshing machine. They took him home on a stretcher, and he didn't recover for three weeks." (44) Eventually, he left the infield to play right field. Bud Fowler, another black second baseman, was not as nimble or as fortunate. He started wearing wooden slats from nail-kegs as shin splints under his trousers to protect himself from the sharpened spikes of base runners. On more than one occasion, he left the field with shattered splints and bloody pants. One player reminisced that spike-high hook slides were favored by the aggressive Mike Kelly. (45)

More insidious were the attitudes and everyday treatment of blacks. The ballplayers of the era had a full range of what the players called "hoodoos," an adapted black term for superstitions. Among the good "hoodoos" were large curly-haired or hunchback blacks. Players believed that rubbing their heads or shoulders would bring them luck or a base hit. Bad luck also came from "cross-eyed negroes" or from "colored newsboys" who came on their omnibus or streetcar. If paper-selling boys appeared the player tried to
prevent the youngster from stepping on the pavement before him. (46) In one such experience, the heavily Irish Brooklyn Bridegrooms, playing in Philadelphia, succumbed to a streak of bad “hoodoo.” Before the first two games a “cross-eyed negro” jumped on the steps of the omnibus and the team lost both games. On the third day, they threw equipment at him and again the team went down to defeat. The last day, only Con Murphy dared to look at the youngster. Con broke his ankle in the game and was out for two months. (47)

In a counter move, Arlie “Juice” Latham of St. Louis convinced his Irish teammates if you met a negro on the way to the ball park you had to make him laugh or your would lose the game. (48) In another incident, Mike Kelly of Chicago, together with his Irish teammates, was impressed when George Gore traded a pair of his baseball shoes to a negro voodoo doctor in Savannah, Georgia “for the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit.” The doctor swore that if Gore wore the rabbit foot inside of his shirt on a sky-blue ribbon, he would never get caught stealing a base. (49) On another occasion Brooklyn secured the services in 1896 of a 6’ 2”, 110 pound black kid from North Carolina, Isaiah McClain, nicknamed “Snowball.” But when the ballclub began to lose, he was demoted to entertaining the fans with clowning gags. Later Brooklyn and a predominately Irish New York Giants team competed for the services of Fred Boldt. Led by Jim “The Orator” O’Rourke, Boldt, the mascot, was bathed and clothed in order to prepare him for favorable “hoodoos.” (50)

Normally mascots did not enjoy longevity. They carried bats and made themselves useful at the ballpark. Boldt hung around for about two years, until he was caught stealing chickens from the neighborhood. (51) There were even incidents where fights broke out on omnibus rides to the ballpark because players and managers disagreed over a new black mascot. Comiskey’s Browns and the Irish-laden Phillies had a number of recorded run-ins of this kind. (52) When the Philadelphia teams went south for spring training they entertained themselves often by playing mean-spirited pranks on the local blacks who attended their exhibitions. (53) In one incident, Jimmy Fogarty, on an uneventful train trip to Georgia, “simulated the frenzy of a dangerous lunatic” and frightened a lone negro passenger. Fogarty entertained his teammates until the “son of Africa” drew out a screw driver and threatened the abdomen of the Phillies’ center fielder. (54)

![Image](https://example.com/chicago-world-tourists-1888-with-clarence-duval.jpg)
The most infamous mascot was associated with Anson’s Irish White Stockings. He was the diminutive stage actor, Clarence Duval. Described as a “little darky,” Duval actually sat in on the team’s 1888 photograph. Later that year he accompanied Anson’s ball club and a group of largely Irish all-stars on a world baseball tour. (55) On the international excursion, Duval suffered continual indignities at the hands of largely Irish touring players. In Hawaii, Clarence was required to entertain dinner guests at a luau with “plantation dances.” He was accompanied by hand clapping Jimmy Ryan, Jimmy Fogarty and Fred Pfeffer. (56) On the long Indian Ocean voyage to Ceylon, a large shark was seen following the boat. In an effort to amuse the bored travelers, a hook and line was set up to catch the predator. “Cap” Anson, with the enthusiastic support of his Irish players, suggested their “ebony-hued mascot” as bait. Frequently as a prank on dull sailing days, Fogarty and his teammates would chase down Duval and give him a humiliating bath. (57) Having overcome these humiliations, Duval was put to work operating the “pumka rope” that kept the ceiling fan operating during meals. (58) In Egypt, Jimmy Ryan dressed Duval up in a scarlet drum major’s suit, put a rope around his waist and a catcher’s mask over his face and paraded him around like an organ-grinder on the train platform. The locals took the “waddling and chattering” Duval for a gigantic ape. It was said that a good time was had by all the ballplayers. (59)

Another pitiful mascot episode involved a young black drifter, L. Marshal Williams, and Ed Delahanty’s Phillies. Williams met up with the Phillies in St. Louis. For the next month, “Lucky,” as he was now known, was taken in by a group of Irish players. During this time he traveled about 1800 miles with the team, riding on top, or beneath their Pullman car. Delahanty and his Irish teammates dressed him in an assortment of old uniform parts and bathed him in local rivers after his soot-filled train journeys. He ate food scraps, carried out menial chores and was treated like a human pet. Eventually, the pressures from fans, opposing teams and his alleged benefactors became too much for him and he began to drink and neglect his duties. The Phillies gave him notice by stranding him on a train platform. “Lucky” Williams became a discarded talisman bereft of his “hoodoo” powers. (60)
For the Irish, “negroes” were more than competitors. They saw blacks as ominous conjurers of magic and superstition. But their “hoodoo” could be defused by demeaning the charm weaver and subordinating his power to the benefit and pleasure of the ballplayer. (61) It was akin to the “black-faced” minstrel entertainer, belittling Africa-Americans that accentuated differences and empowered the white performer. “Jim Crow” was the stereotypical blackface character that portrayed negroes as singing, dancing and grinning fools. They became the popular on-stage “sambos, coons and darkies.” Clarence Duval’s experience on the world tour embodied such prejudice. It was just another side of the ongoing struggle between the races. Both held each other in contempt, but the white Irish chose their position and extolled the advantages and privileges of their complexion. (62)

Black ballplayers had few alternatives and did what they could to strike back at the Irish. (63) They set up black-only teams and started leagues of their own, an alternative that would survive until the 1960s. But if blacks could do little against the professional color line, they did express their disdain for their tormentors. Blacks mimicked Irish behavior and told jokes about provincial “paddies.” In this way, blacks followed a nativist lead and, therefore, could feel superior and take revenge on a disrespectful ethnic community “who learned to hate negroes so quickly and efficiently.” In these cases the Irish became popular “surrogates for all the other whites against whom it could be dangerous to speak openly.” (64)
Another tactic utilized by black ballplayers was “racial masquerade,” whereby a “colored player” would try to pass himself off as a Latin-Spanish ball player or, if features permitted, an American Indian. The most commonly used identity, even for dark complected players, was to pose as a Caribbean native. Players latinized their names, learned Spanish and tried to pass for what the newspapers called a Spaniard or Castilian. (65) The Irish and most whites generally were not taken in by such ploys. At an 1886 Cuban Giants game in Williamsburg, New York, a large Sunday crowd became upset and rioted when they realized that the Giants were black, not Cubans. The National Police Gazette reported that “The tough mob which attended the Sunday grounds … are the wrong kind of hairpins to try to fake business with, for those flannel-mouth Micks would rather fight than eat.” (66)

Adopting what some managers called “racial masquerade,” some teams, desperate for talent, tried to bypass the “colored line.” In 1901, John McGraw, in an attempt to assemble his new American League Baltimore Orioles, signed the light-skin black second baseman Charlie Grant. McGraw tried to pass Grant off as a Cherokee Indian, Charlie Tokohama. But Chicago’s manager, Charlie Comiskey, the son of an Irish alderman, challenged McGraw by declaring that Grant was “fixed up with war paint and a bunch of horse feathers.” If Baltimore stood by this ruse, Comiskey threatened to find a “Chinese third baseman, or a whitewashed colored player.” (67) McGraw was not deterred and tried on other occasions to sign a “Cuban” type of player. McGraw’s behavior, however, was disingenuous and contradictory. He organized money-making exhibition games in Cuba, but he and Frank Bancroft of Cincinnati worked out a contract “that no American colored player should be permitted to play on any Cuban team which played an American team.” (68) Privately McGraw might admire talented black ballplayers, but in a 1933 New York Daily News poll the Giants’ manager said he was not in favor of allowing blacks into major league baseball. (69)
Ironically, despite Irish acceptance and support for baseball’s “color line,” Irish-Americans were continually depicted negatively by mainstream late nineteenth-century society. Drawings from the 1890s render similar uncomplimentary caricatures and images of Irish and black ballplayers. (70) Irish baseballists hoped their actions would separate them from such comparisons, but Irish “whiteness” could not bleach out ethnoracist attitudes of a half century.

In summary, there was no articulated covert Irish policy or conspiracy against blacks. My thesis is based on the economic competition between the two groups, one that was infected by the legacy of slavery and color bias. Irish Catholic Americans competed...
infected by the legacy of slavery and color bias. Irish Catholic Americans combated antebellum nativism with a fanaticism for whiteness. They deplored occupational conditions that identified them with blacks. To escape this disparaging association, they worked to demean and exclude blacks from the Irish workplace. Baseball was just one of many employments the Irish hoped to expunge. With their numerical dominance of the national pastime, the Irish were in a position to foster and tolerate the exclusion of blacks. Baseball was to be an Irishman’s vehicle and badge of assimilation. Their behavior and actions testified to their prejudice. Regrettably their attitudes tainted the national game and perpetuated the very ethno-racism that Daniel O’Connell deplored.

ENDNOTES

(36) Ibid, 26 July 1890.


(39) The Sporting News, 11 June 1887; Bowman and Zoss, Diamonds, p. 140; Malloy, “Out at Home,” National Pastime, p. 23; Peterson, Only the Ball, p.28.


(44) Ibid, 11 Apr. 1891.

(45) Ibid, 24 Oct. 1891; Sporting News, 23 Mar, 1889; 20 April 1889; Bowman & Zoss, Diamonds, pp. 141–2; Malloy, “Out at Home,” National Pastime, p. 18; Peterson, Only the Ball, p. 43; Seymour, Game, p. 551.


(47) The Sporting Life, 21 Apr. 1886.


(49) Ibid, 23 Jan. 1897.


(53) Augusta Chronicle, 17–18 Mar. 1897; Philadelphia Evening Item, 13 Mar. 1897; 17
(54) The Sporting Life, 23 Mar. 1887.

(55) Chicago Tribune, 8 June 1888. A. Anson, A Ball Player's Career, Chicago, 1900, p. 148; Fleitz, Anson, p. 165.


(58) Lamster, Tour, p. 156; Anson, Career, pp. 219–20; Palmer, Sports, p. 286.


(64) Levine, Black Culture, pp. 301–2; p. 307.

(65) Burgos, “Latinos,” p.2; p.11; p. 34; p.54.


(67) The Sporting Life, 23 Mar. 1901; Bowman and Zoss, Diamonds, p. 142.


(69) Bowman & Zoss, Diamonds, p.143

Assimilation results in the appearance of new phonemic variants. Each case of assimilation must be analysed from the following view points: From the point of view of its direction it can be PROGRESSIVE, REGRESSIVE, RECIPROCAL, or DOUBLE. From the point of view of its degree it can be COMPLETE, PARTIAL, INTERMEDIATE. Directions of Assimilation. Considering its direction it is possible to distinguish 3 types of assimilation These Jim Crow Laws followed the 1800–1866 Black Codes, which had previously restricted the civil rights and civil liberties of African Americans with no pretense of equality. State-sponsored school segregation was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1954 in Brown v.