

Early Pioneers of the Negro Leagues

Nat Strong



by

Center for Negro League Baseball Research

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Brooklyn Royal Giants

Nat Strong took over control of the Brooklyn Royal Giants from John Connor prior to the start of the 1914 baseball season and still owned the team when he passed away in January of 1935.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants played most of their career as an independent team but also played in the Eastern Colored League from 1923-1928.



Brooklyn Royal Giants (1917)

(Back row left to right- **Nat Strong**, Franklin “Doc” Sykes and **Max Rosner**. Middle row left to right – Ernest Gatewood, Charles “Frank” Earle, Bill Kindle, Bill Handy and Johnny Pugh. Seated left to right – **Louis Santop**, Pearl Webster, A. Williams, Joe Hewitt and Frank “Lefty” Harvey)

Nathaniel Calvin “Nat” Strong was born in Manhattan, New York on January 4, 1874. After graduating from high school in New York City, Nat attended the City College of New York. Nat then went to work for the Spalding Sporting Goods Company as a salesman after college. Within a short period of time, Strong began transitioning from sporting goods salesman to sports promoter and booking agent.

During his career Strong was the most powerful sports promoter and booking agent in baseball in the East. He controlled black baseball with an iron fist and also was a major force to be reckoned with in white semiprofessional baseball. Anyone who wanted to do business with Nat Strong or have him book a game for their team needed to do so on his terms. Strong also had no problem black balling any owner or team that gave him problems.

Nat has often been described as being very shrewd and at times downright ruthless in his business dealings. He was also considered as being very cheap when it came to negotiating individual game booking contracts and player contracts for the teams he owned or controlled.



Nat Strong
1874-1935

In addition to his sports promotion and booking agency, he owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants who played an independent schedule and were one of the original teams in the Eastern Colored League. In addition early in his career, Nat owned the Murry Hills baseball team and the Ridgewoods. Both Murray Hills and the Ridgewoods were all-white teams. In 1913 Nat formed his own Philadelphia Giants team. Strong also was part owner, officer or at least controlled the Brooklyn Bushwicks, Bay Parkways (Brooklyn, NY), Cuban Stars and New York Black Yankees. Through his sports promotion business and baseball contacts he was able to keep his teams playing baseball somewhere just about every day. Strong’s focus was not always on fielding the best possible team but making money and he did an excellent job of that.

Besides serving as the booking agent for his own teams, Nat Strong also booked games for the Baltimore Black Sox, Harlem Stars, Harlem Black Bombers, Pittsburgh Crawfords and other top clubs on the East Coast.

With his dictatorial manner and strong-willed nature, Nat Strong was not very liked by his fellow owners or team managers. He always seemed to be at the forefront of controversy and on more than one occasion was accused of the exploitation of black baseball. A good example of how one of his colleagues perceived him can be seen by reviewing part of a letter that Walter Schlichter, who was the owner of the Philadelphia Giants, sent to Sol White in 1936.

“ It is true that I might have made a million or less had I stuck to colored baseball but I doubt it. Outside of Nat Strong I know of no one who has. And, at that, I am better off than he is right now. I am still living and have my health and Nat didn’t take his wealth with him. There is no pocket in a shroud you know.”

Nat Strong and Walter Schlichter were business partners and had what appeared to be a good working relationship in the early 1900’s but they didn’t end their business relationship on pleasant terms.

One thing that is certain is that Nat Strong was a larger than life character and had a significant impact on the development of Negro League baseball.

Early Baseball Career

By 1903 Nat Strong had become very involved in semi-professional baseball in New York City. He was the owner of the Murray Hills baseball team and the Ridgewoods. Both of these teams were two of the top semi-professional clubs in the New York City area. Murray Hills and the Ridgewoods played the top white teams in the area and were also regular opponents of the best black baseball clubs in the East. The Murray Hills squad represented the Murray neighborhood which was located in midtown Manhattan and played out of the Jasper Oval.

Nat Strong was also a member of the New York City Athletic Club which was very helpful in expanding his contacts in baseball in New York City.

Nat Strong and New York City Politics

To go from being the owner of a couple of semi-professional baseball teams and a small booking agency to controlling baseball in the East did not happen overnight or by accident. Nat Strong had a very detailed plan to build his sports empire. At the heart of his plan was developing strong political relationships.



Tammany Hall (Building)
Manhattan, NY

Nat Strong was very cognizant as to how politics worked in New York City. He knew that developing relationships with key politicians in the Tammany Hall political organization which controlled politics and anything that happened in local government was the first step. Tammany Hall was the Democratic political machine with offices on East 14th (between 3rd Avenue and Irving Place) in Manhattan. Fortunately for Nat one of his best friends was Andrew Freedman who owned the New York Giants baseball team from 1895 to 1901, was a powerful realtor in the city and was a high level member of the Tammany Hall organization. Strong was also a very close friend of Richard Croker who was the Tammany Hall political boss. Strong's alliance with Freedman and Croker put Nat in a position to control baseball in New York City.

To control baseball in New York City, Nat Strong needed to control as many ball parks as possible and his political friends gave him that control. For the next 28 years until his death in 1935 Strong would control baseball in New York City.

Strong Starts Booking Black Baseball Teams

Nat Strong got his first opportunity to gain a foothold in black baseball when Walter Schlichter (owner) and Sol White (player-manager) of Philadelphia Giants wanted to expand their base of operations outside the Philadelphia area. Another significant opportunity to book black baseball games came with the growing popularity of John Connors' Brooklyn Royal Giants. Combining Schlichter, White and Connors along with several Cuban teams making a strong presence in the

area, Nat Strong saw an excellent opportunity to make significant inroads in the business of black baseball.

When all was said and done Nat Strong developed a stranglehold on booking both black and white games. This gave him control of baseball in the New York City area.

Strong Becomes the President of the Intercity Association

The Intercity Association of New York City was formed in 1906 when approximately 100 amateur and semi-professional baseball clubs from New Jersey and New York came together to form one organization. Two of these teams that joined the Intercity Association were Nat Strong's Murray Hills club and the Ridgewoods. One of the things that all of the ball clubs that joined the Intercity Association agreed upon was that the booking of games was crucial to the survival of baseball in the New York City area. From the very start of the Intercity Association, Nat Strong was very involved with the organization and played a leadership role.

The Intercity Association had three principle objectives when they started:

1. Secure better ball parks and playing facilities.
2. Encourage City Park Commissioners to build more baseball fields in city parks.
3. Develop better relationships with police authorities, especially in relationship to Sunday baseball games which were the life blood of semi-professional baseball.

This was particularly important because of the blue laws in New Jersey and New York. The blue laws made it illegal to play semi-professional and professional baseball games on Sunday. To get around the blue laws, promoters let fans into the ball park for free as long as they procured a program for a modest donation. Interestingly enough the cost/donation for the program was usually equivalent to what the admission cost would have been. It wasn't until 1919 that blue laws in New Jersey and New York were abolished.

In March of 1907 Nat Strong succeeded F.D. Baldwin as the president of the Intercity Association. This put Strong in a perfect position to control baseball in the New York City area. When Nat Strong took over the Intercity Association, he quickly learned how much control and power a booking agent had over the game of baseball.

Under Nat Strong's leadership the Intercity Association controlled the booking of ball games, the ball parks, game dates and season schedules. For their part in all of this the Intercity Association got paid 10 % of the gate as their commission for the services they provided. In a short time Nat Strong now controlled baseball in the New York City area. He was also in a position where he could make or break area baseball teams.

Schlichter and Strong Form the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba

In late 1906 Walter Schlichter (owner of the Philadelphia Giants) and Nat Strong met in Brooklyn (NY) along with representatives of the other major Eastern black teams and founded the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC). The organization was formed on October 22, 1906 in the Bronx, New York. The original five teams that joined the "association" were the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Cuban Giants, Cuban Stars of Havana, Cuban X-Giants and Philadelphia Giants. Three of these five teams were also members of the International League of Professional Baseball Clubs of America and Cuba (ILBCAC). There was no apparent relationship between these two organizations.



Trenton Evening Times

10-29-06

The inaugural season for the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba was 1907. Walter Schlichter served as the president of the “association” from 1906 until 1909. The full listing of the officers of the organization was as follows:

National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba - Officers

	Position
H. Walter Schlichter	President
John Connor	Vice President
J. M. Bright	Treasurer
Nat Strong	Secretary and Business Manager
Manuel Camp	Board of Trustees
E.B. Lamar	Board of Trustees

In an article that appeared in The Trenton Evening Times on October 6, 1906 the stated goal of the “association” according to Schlichter and Strong was as follows:

“to place colored baseball on a solid business basis and to protect both players and managers and prevent jumping from one club to another, on the slightest pretext, as was done this last season. It is intended to protect the managers from unscrupulous and unreliable managers of independent clubs who engage the colored clubs and unceremoniously cancel the dates at the last moment if so inclined. It is intended to cut out all such clubs which treat any of the national agreement clubs in that manner.”

The newspaper article went on to say that the creation of the “association” became necessary for financial reasons when supposedly all of the “big” colored clubs in the East lost money during the 1906 season. The reasons given for the financial problems of black team owners were high player salaries, players jumping from one team to another and a lack of cooperation among the clubs.

The goals of the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC) were as follows:

1. Perpetuation of colored baseball.
2. Encourage a spirit of mutual cooperation between teams.
3. Foster public confidence in its integrity and methods while maintaining a high standard of skill and sportsmanship in its players.
4. Safeguard the property rights of those engaged in colored baseball as a business without sacrificing the spirit of completion in the conduct of the game.
5. Promote the welfare of the colored ball players as a class by perfecting them in their profession and enabling them to secure adequate compensation and expenses.
6. Hold teams accountable that engage in unethical practices.

FAST TEAMS WANT BOOKING.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants (colored champions season 1905) of Brooklyn, N. Y.; the Philadelphia Giants (colored champions seasons 1903-06-07); the famous Cuban Giants, the oldest colored organization in the United States, and the wonderful Cuban Stars of Havana, Cuba, the pick of the crack Cuban players from the National League of Cuba, are at present laying out their routes and arranging their schedules for the coming season and will be in your vicinity at different periods during the year. Should you desire to book any of these high-class attractions, apply immediately for dates and terms to Nat. C. Strong, World Bldg., New York City. Long distance telephones 3407 or 2475 Beckman.

Freeman
02-27-09

A primary focus of the NACBC in their inaugural season of operation was to develop a booking network and that played right into the hands of Nat Strong. He quickly saw the money that could be made controlling the booking of black baseball games like he had already done with white semiprofessional baseball. By booking both white and black teams, Nathaniel Strong now controlled the biggest baseball market in the country.

As the secretary and business manager for the association, Nat Strong was in charge of scheduling games, booking games and determining which non-association teams could play against association members. When it came to booking games, Nat had different booking fees for black and white teams. When he booked games for white teams, the gate receipts were divided as follows: 10% off the top went straight to him, 65 % went to the team owners and 25 % went to the players. When Strong booked black teams, he still got his 10 % off the top, the black team never got more than \$ 500 regardless of the size of the crowd and the park owner got 5 %. To combat this policy most black team owners tried to schedule a double header when ever possible.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CLUBS MEET.

At the annual meeting and election of officers of the National Association of Colored Professional Clubs held recently in New York, it was decided to extend the trips of the various clubs to Chicago, according to the arrangements made with Mr. James Callahan by Nat. C. Strong the coming season. In reference to the letter from Mr. Andrew Foster of the Leland Giants to Nat. C. Strong, which was read at the meeting, it was decided not to play the Leland Giants the coming season.

The officers of 1907 were re-elected for the coming season as follows: H. Walter Schlichter, president; J. W. Connor, vice president; John M. Bright, treasurer, and Nat. C. Strong, general secretary. The initiation fee was raised to the sum of \$150 and the opening of the championships will take place on the Polo Grounds, New York City, on May 30, when the Brooklyn Royal Giants and the famous Cuban Giants come together.

Freeman
03-21-08

According to an article that appeared in The Item newspaper, the NACBC was organized and operated along the same guidelines that were used by the American League and National League.

The organization tried to place black baseball on solid economic footing, get owners working with each other for the betterment of the game of black baseball and prevent players from jumping from one team to another for higher salaries. The National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba proved to be only marginally successful at best.

Even though this system was not fair to black team owners, they went along with it because they still made more money than they would have under other circumstances. For black teams that Strong booked it was very simple; if you wanted to play in territory controlled by him you had to go through him and follow his rules. When the Lincoln Giants owner tried to schedule games for his team without going through Strong, Nat had the Lincoln Giants thrown out of the association. Black teams that Strong booked on a regular basis were the All Cubans, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Cuban Giants, Cuban Stars and the Philadelphia Stars.

At the annual meeting of the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC) that was held in New York City in March of 1908, the organization decided to send teams to the Chicago area. Arrangements for the games were made between Nat Strong and James Callahan. Callahan was a former Major League ball player, owned the Logan Squares baseball team and was a major force in baseball in Chicago. These trips by teams from the East would cause significant problems for Rube Foster and would start a feud between Strong and himself that would last for years.



Freeman
12-18-09

On behalf of the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC), Nat Strong sent letters to the Freeman that were published on October 2nd and December 18th of 1909 supporting the Brooklyn Royal Giants as the real "World's Colored Champions." Strong took exception of the Leland Giants, Kansas City Giants and St. Paul Gophers claims to the championship title.

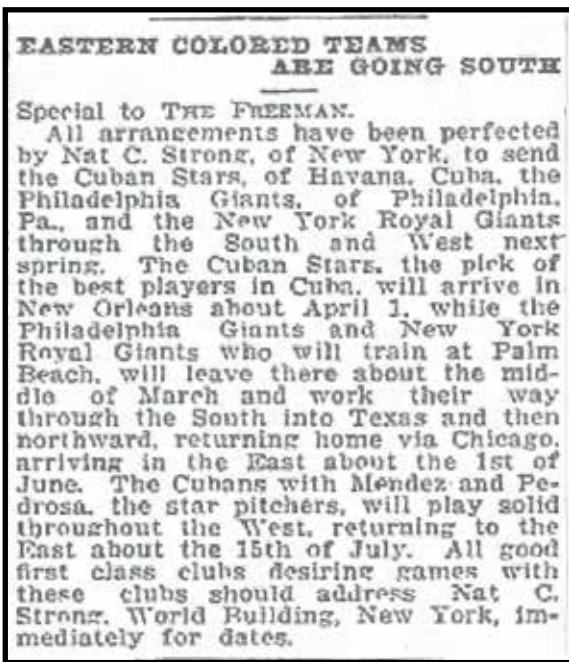
The National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC) lasted only three seasons (1907-1909). Coupled with internal conflicts within the NACBC, the decline of the Philadelphia Giants and Nat Strong's shift in interest to the teams he controlled playing more games against white semi-pro and town teams significantly impacted the demise of the NACBC. In addition Sol White had left the Philadelphia Giants and helped form the Quaker Giants and they were not part of the NACBC. White also went so far as to urge John Connors, Pop Watkins and J.M. Bright to break with the NACBC and form a new association. The net result was that the association split into two factions. Nat Strong, Walter Schlichter and E.B. Lamar were on one side. Their opposition was John Connors and J.M. Bright. Sol White and Pop Watkins supported Bright and Connors but they were not part of the association.

The National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC) lasted only three seasons (1907-1909) and ceased operation before the start of the 1910 season.

Strong Continues to Promote the Ridgewoods and Murray Hills

Even though Nat Strong now controlled black and white baseball, his primary interest appears to have been the Ridgewoods and Murray Hills team. One of the first things Nat did was to establish a relationship for the Ridgewoods where they consistently played at the same ball park and were able to build a solid fan base. Strong also refused to allow his teams to play in another team's ball park unless he got 35-40 % of the gate or a substantial guaranteed fee. Besides playing the top semi-professional teams in the East, the Ridgewoods and Murray Hills were a frequent opponent of black touring teams.

During the 1910 season Nat Strong's booking agency took a hit when J.M. Bright, the owner of the Cuban Giants, started booking his team's games.



Freeman
01-14-11

Nat Strong Extends Bookings to the South

On January 14, 1911 the Freeman newspaper announced that Nat Strong had arranged bookings for the Cuban Stars of Havana, Philadelphia Giants and New York Royal Giants to travel through the South and West.

The Cuban Stars started their barnstorming tour in New Orleans about the first part of April of 1911. Reportedly Nat Strong was a part owner of the Cuban Stars.

Nat also arranged for the Philadelphia Giants and the New York Royal Giants to conduct spring training in Palm Beach (FL) and then after spring training they headed west to Texas and then north to Chicago.

Nat Strong Controls the Cuban Stars

The Cuban Stars were promoted as the “finest” players from the island of Cuba. Manuel Camp was always listed as the owner of the Cuban Stars but reportedly Nat Strong had a financial interest in the team. Whether it was as a minority shareholder or some other role, Nat Strong for all practical purpose controlled the Cuban Stars when it came to whom and where they played.



Cuban Stars

The McMahon Brothers Take on Nat Strong

During the 1911 season Strong got competition for his sports promotion business in New York City from Roderick “Jess” and Ed McMahon. The McMahon brothers owned the Lincoln Giants and had leased Olympic Field to serve as their home ball park. To compete with Strong for bookings, the McMahon brothers did not charge a booking fee for games they promoted. They also paid good salaries to their players. The McMahon brothers started by organizing several boxing promotions but met with limited success in booking baseball games. By 1914 the McMahon brothers had lost control of the Lincoln Giants to sports promoter James Keenan and their lease on Olympic Field. The McMahon brothers tried to continue in black baseball by forming a new team they called the “Lincoln Stars.”

The Age reported on August 3rd that Nat Strong had worked out a formal agreement to represent the Cuban Stars and would promote a five game series between the Cuban Stars and the Lincoln Giants for the “Colored Championship of the World.”

Another of Nat Strong’s big bookings for the 1911 season was when Nat sent Rube Foster sixteen (16) round trip tickets from Chicago to New York City. Rube Foster owned the Chicago American Giants and they were considered one of the best black teams in the country.

Strong Puts His Own Team in Philadelphia

In an attempt to establish a foothold in Philadelphia, Nat Strong formed his own team in Philadelphia and called them the “Philadelphia Giants.” This Philadelphia Giants team had nothing to do with the Philadelphia Giants team that Walter Schlichter had owned. Nat’s team played in Darby (PA) and called Delaware County Athletic Field their home ball park. The Delaware County ball park was literally across the street from Hilldale Park. Strong’s Philadelphia Giants played from 1913-1916. Nat Strong’s motivation for fielding a team in Philadelphia was very simple: he wanted to establish a market in the Philadelphia area to book baseball games. Philadelphia was a huge baseball market that had been able to support two major black teams (Schlichter’s Philadelphia Giants and Ed Bolden’s Hilldale team) and two Major League (Athletics and Phillies) teams. When Nat could not work out an agreement with Bolden who owned and operated Hilldale, Nat decided to put his own team right in Bolden’s back yard.



Walter Schlichter
Philadelphia Giants

The 1913 Philadelphia Giants team included several quality players like Peter “Pop” Andrews (P/OF), Pete Booker (OF), Charlie Grant (2B) and Doc Sykes (P). For the most part, however, Nat Strong’s 1913 Philadelphia Giants were only a mediocre team.

An interesting twist to Nat Strong’s Philadelphia Giants team was that according to Michael Lomax’s book [Black Baseball Entrepreneurs:1902-1931](#), Strong enlisted Walter Schlichter to manage the team. It is unclear how long Walter Schlichter managed the team for Nat Strong.

The presence of the regeneration of the Philadelphia Giants had nothing to do with building a quality baseball club and bettering black baseball. It was strictly about business, booking as many games as possible and making money. The Philadelphia Giants teams from 1913 through 1916 were definitely not a top level team. They existed for only one reason: to book and play games regardless of the outcome. To Nat Strong winning was inconsequential as long as he was making money.

Nat Strong Takes Over the Brooklyn Royal Giants

Prior to the start of the 1914 baseball season, Nat Strong took over control of the Brooklyn Royal Giants from John Connors. The Brooklyn Royal Giants were organized in 1905 by John Connors who also owned the Brooklyn Royal Cafe. Under Connors leadership, the Royal Giants were considered the best team in the East in 1909 and 1910.



Brooklyn Royal Giants (1914)

With the purchase of the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Nat Strong was now both the premier sports booking agent in the East and he also owned one of the top black baseball teams in the country. Once Strong purchased the Brooklyn Royal Giants, he formed a business alliance with James Keenan who owned the Lincoln Giants. Keenan operated his Lincoln Giants out of Harlem in direct competition with the McMahon brothers. Keenan's business relationship with Strong forced the McMahon brothers out of baseball, gave control of black baseball in Harlem to Keenan and strengthened his position in baseball in New York City. Between Strong and Keenan they controlled the best ball parks in New York City and were able to sign the best ball players in the East. Nat Strong played his most important ball games at Ridgewood Park in Brooklyn and James Keenan played out of Olympic Field in Harlem. The business partnership between Nat Strong and James Keenan made it very difficult for other owners of black teams to operate in the New York City area.

Being the owner of the Brooklyn Royal Giants further reinforced Nat Strong's ability to schedule games against the best white semi-professional teams, black baseball teams, Major League squads and all-star teams. Nat also had exclusive booking rights to the Cuban Stars and Philadelphia Giants in the New York City area. In addition Nat Strong continued to serve as the president of the Intercity Association of New York.

When Nat Strong purchased the 1914 Brooklyn Royal Giants they were a solid team with a strong playing history. The Royal Giants were managed by Charles "Frank" Earle. They were an independent team and played many of their home games at the Ridgewood Grounds that was located in the Ridgewood area of Queens (NY).



Ridgewood Grounds

**Home Field
of
Brooklyn Royal Giants**

The Brooklyn Royal Giants had a strong starting line-up in 1914 that included:

Position	Player	Position	Player
1B	Phil Bradley	OF	Jules Thomas
2B	Bill Handy	OF	Charles Earle
SS	Morten Clark	OF	Jimmie Lyons
3B	Jesse Bragg		
C	Pearl Webster	P	Frank "Lefty" Harvey

The Royal Giants were led by the hitting of Charles Earle (.321), Bill Handy (.306) and Jules Thomas (.303). The pitching staff for the 1914 Brooklyn Royal Giants included Frank "Lefty" Harvey (8-4), Dizzy Dismukes (6-12), Doc Sykes (0-3) and Pop Andrews..

Thirty-three (33) regular season games have been located for the 1914 Royal Giants. Brooklyn had a record of 14-19 (.424) in these outings. They were considered the third best team in the East during the season.

After the regular season Nat Strong sent his Brooklyn Royal Giants team to Chicago to play a series with the Chicago American Giants for the "Colored World's Championship." The most interesting part of the series is that the Brooklyn Royal Giants were clearly not the best team in the East. What they did have, however, was Nat Strong as their owner and he was a booking wizard. According to the Chicago Defender in a story that appeared in their newspaper on September 12th, the Chicago American Giants made short work of their opponents from Brooklyn and took the championship series in five straight games by the scores on 3-0 (8/30), 7-0 (8/31), 7-6 (9/02), 3-1 (9/03) and 3-2 (9/04).



Chicago American Giants (1914)

The Brooklyn Royal Giants fielded a solid starting line-up in 1915 that included Charles Earle (CF), Bill Handy (2B), Joe Hewitt (SS), Bill Kindle (3B), Johnny Pugh (RF), Louis Santop (C/1B) and Pearl Webster (OF/C). Andrew “String Bean” Williams was the ace of the pitching staff. The Royal Giants were one of the top teams in the East during the 1915 season. Other top level teams in the East included the Cuban Stars, New York Giants and New York Lincoln Stars.

During the 1915 baseball season, Nat Strong became embroiled in a feud with Rube Foster of the Chicago American Giants. Foster’s issue with Nat was that he funded eastern teams to come to the Chicago area to play games. Foster viewed this as an invasion of his baseball territory. In an effort to protect his reputation, Nat Strong answered Foster’s charges with a letter to the Freeman newspaper on September 9, 1915 in which he made the following comment:

“never received a dollar for transportation from Foster never requested it, although, it was offered to us, and paid the entire expenses myself.”

Strong also added in the letter to the Freeman that when the Cuban Stars made their trip to the Midwest they never got reimbursed any of their expenses. The feud ended in a stalemate. Foster agreed to recognize and give Strong undisturbed control of black baseball in the East as long as Strong did not attempt to use his booking agency to infringe on Foster’s control of baseball in the Midwest.

In actuality the feud between Rube Foster and Nat Strong was about power and control of black baseball. Speculation was that if Foster had not stopped or at least significantly limited Strong from sending teams out west, then Nat Strong could have easily controlled all of black baseball across the entire country.

Brooklyn Royal Giants Continue to Play Solid Baseball

The Brooklyn Royal Giants were managed by Frank “Charles” Earle and played their home games at the Ridgewood Grounds in 1916.

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Ernest Gatewood	.195	OF	Charles Earle	.350
2B	Bill Handy	.337	OF	Johnny Pugh	.349
SS	Joe Hewitt	.271	OF	Denny Despert	.217
3B	Bill Kindle	.385			
C	Louis Santop	.436	P	Frank “Lefty” Harvey	
C	Pearl Webster	.309	P	Andrew Williams	

In the twenty-five (25) box scores that have been found for Brooklyn’s 1916 season, the Royal Giants had a .284 team batting average.

The pitching staff for the 1916 Royal Giants were: Andrew “String Bean” Williams (6-3), Frank “Lefty” Harvey (6-5), Doc Sykes (2-1) and Red Smith.

The highlight of the season for Brooklyn was playing the Lincoln Giants in a ten game series for the “Colored Championship of Greater New York.” Each team won four games and two games ended in a tie. It does not appear that a tie breaking games was ever played.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants were one of the top three teams in the East for the 1916 baseball season. They compiled a record of 15-10 (.600) in the twenty-five (25) box scores which currently have been located.

Strong Becomes Part Owner of the Brooklyn Bushwicks

In addition to owning the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Nat Strong became part owner of the Brooklyn Bushwicks and started handling their game bookings in about 1916.

The Brooklyn Bushwicks were reportedly founded in 1913 by Max Rosner who had made his money in the cigar industry. The Brooklyn Bushwicks were considered the premier white semi-professional team in the country. Bushwick was a working class neighborhood in the northern part of the borough of Brooklyn. Rosner's plan was to provide high quality baseball at a cheaper ticket price than the Major League teams charged. In addition if fans stayed in Bushwick they saved themselves a seventy-five (75) minute trip and four subway changes to the Polo Grounds or Yankee Stadium. Rosner's plan worked very effectively. His philosophy was "Big League Baseball at Workingman's Rates."



Brooklyn Bushwicks (1916)

(Nat Strong – standing first on right)

One of the things that made the Brooklyn Bushwicks so popular and good was that they hired former Major and Minor League players on a regular basis to don a Bushwicks jersey. Rosner also played his regular players very good salaries. Position players for the Bushwicks generally made \$ 30 to \$ 50 per Sunday which was about what a factory worker made for an entire week. The Brooklyn Bushwicks played an independent schedule primarily in the New York-New Jersey area. The Bushwicks were also a frequent opponent of black baseball teams.

The Brooklyn Bushwicks started playing their games at Dexter Park in the Queens (NY) neighborhood of Woodhaven in 1917. Dexter Park like the Bushwicks was owned by Max Rosner and Nat Strong who had paid \$ 200,000 for the popular ball park. Strong was a minority owner in his partnership with Rosner. Dexter Park was one of the premier independent baseball parks in the United States. It was not uncommon for the Brooklyn Bushwicks to draw 10,000 to 15,000 fans for a Sunday double header. The Brooklyn Bushwicks often drew more fans than some of the Major League teams like the Boston Braves, the Philadelphia Phillies or even the

Brooklyn Robins on occasions. Also located on Dexter Parks grounds were a hotel, dance hall, bowling alley, shooting galleries, carousel and playground.

In 1922 Nat Strong and Max Rosner bought Dexter Park and build new concrete and steel grandstands in 1923. They expanded seating in the stadium to 8,000 fans in 1924.



**Dexter Park
Home of the Brooklyn Bushwicks**

Strong Feuds with the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants

One of Nat Strong's biggest challenges in 1916 was a feud that was started with the newly formed Atlantic City Bacharach Giants. Strong did not welcome the idea of another top level black baseball team playing in New York City. Nat's plan was to do everything within his power to exclude the Bacharach Giants from playing in the East. Assisting Strong in his fight with the Atlantic City team was James Keenan. When the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants ownership group secured leases on ball parks in Harlem and Atlantic City, the Strong-Keenan alliance failed in their attempt to exclude the Bacharach Giants from the New York City area. John Connors further cut into Nat Strong's stranglehold on sports booking when he convinced Charles Ebbets to lease the Bacharach Giants Ebbets Field when the Brooklyn Robins were out of town.

Tragedy Strikes the Brooklyn Royal Giants

On August 19, 1916 tragedy struck the Brooklyn Royal Giants when they lost their starting left fielder, Denny Desperet. The incident occurred when Desperet was struck in the arm by an object thrown from a Washington, Philadelphia and Baltimore freight train. The heavy object did so much damage that Denny's arm had to be amputated. This unfortunate event ended Desperet's baseball career.

Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants Return to Play for the 1917 Season

Most of the starting line-up from the 1916 Brooklyn Royal Giants team returned for the 1917 season. Louis Santop (.393), Bill Handy (.376), Pearl Webster (.311), Charles Earle (.308) and Johnny Pugh (.291) were the leading hitters for Brooklyn during the season. The pitching staff for the Royal Giants included Frank "Lefty" Harvey, Andrew "String Bean" Williams, Maywood

Brown, Ad Lankford, Emerson Gray, Tom Brown and Red Smith. Charles Earle continued to manage the team for Nat Strong



Brooklyn Royal Giants (1917)

(Standing left to right – Franklin “Doc” Sykes, **Louis Santop**, Andrew “String Bean” Williams, Charles Earle, Pearl Webster, Ernest Gatewood, Bill Kindle, Joe Hewitt, Bill Handy, Frank Harvey and Johnny Pugh)

The highlight of the season for the Brooklyn Royal Giants was playing a ten game series against Smokey Joe Williams and the Lincoln Giants for the “Colored Championship of Greater New York.” The championship series began on May 7, 1917 and was supposed to have gone ten (10) games for the “Colored Championship of Greater New York.” The series lasted until mid-September and was extended to twelve (12) games. The majority of the games were played at Olympic Stadium in Harlem. The series featured the pitching of Andrew “String Bean” Williams for the Brooklyn Giants and Smokey Joe Williams for the Lincoln Giants. The Lincoln Giants won three of the first four games before the Royal Giants took a double header from the Lincoln Giants. Andrew “String Bean” Williams pitched a 6-0 shutout in the first game and Brooklyn took the second game by a score of 11-1. After ten games newspaper accounts report that the Brooklyn Giants held on to a slim lead with a 5-4-1 advantage. Scores for the final two games have not yet been found. Therefore, no definitive winner can be declared.

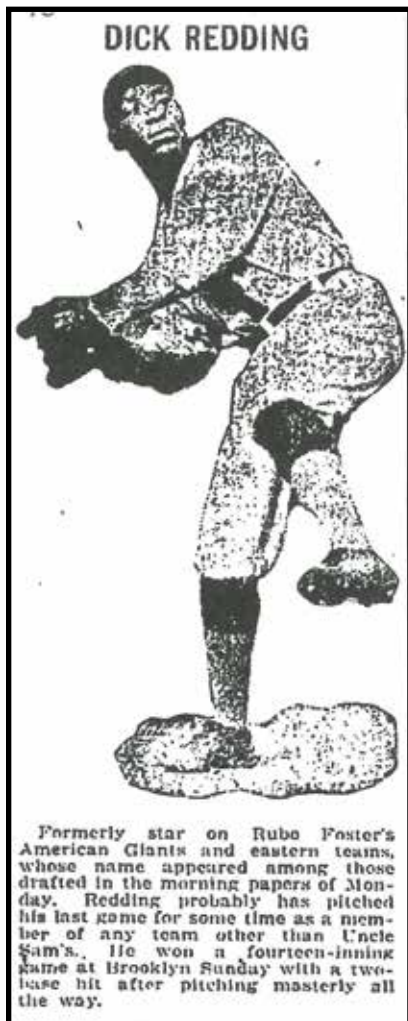
Researchers differ in the won-loss records for the 1917 Brooklyn Royal Giants. The Seamheads research group headed up by Gary Ashwill have uncovered twenty-nine (29) box scores for the team for the 1917 season. In these twenty-nine (29) box scores Seamheads credit the Brooklyn Royal Giants with a mediocre record of 13-15-1 (.464). They also consider the Royal Giants as the fourth best team in the East in 1917. However, research by the Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR), have uncovered newspaper accounts for thirty (30) games played by the Brooklyn Royal Giants in 1917. In the thirty (30) games found by the CNLBR, Brooklyn compiled a winning record of 17-12-1 (.586). The obvious difference in the findings of the two research groups is that each group found different games played by the Royal Giants during the 1917 season.

Dick "Cannonball" Redding and John Henry "Pop" Lloyd Join the Brooklyn Royal Giants

Turmoil struck the Brooklyn Giants early in 1918 when they lost five of their starters from their 1917 team. Gone from the team were Charles "Frank" Earle (CF and captain), Bill Handy (2B), Frank "Lefty" Harvey (P), Joe Hewitt (SS) and Pearl "Speck" Webster (C). All five of the players left the Brooklyn Royal Giants to play for the Grand Central Terminal Red Caps who were managed by James H. Williams. According to newspaper reports, player discontent led to the mass exodus of the Royal Giants starters to the Red Caps. The Grand Central Terminal baseball club or the Red Caps as they were more commonly known are considered by many Negro League baseball historians as the top team in the East for the 1918 baseball season. It appears that this version of a team representing the Grand Central Terminal in New York City lasted only one season.

As soon as James Williams had put his squad together he approached Nat Strong about booking games for the Red Caps. Seeing the Grand Central Terminal team as a threat, Nat refused. When Williams couldn't book any games through Strong, he sent out letters to all the white semi-professional clubs in the Greater New York City area in an attempt to book games himself. Williams got not one response. Williams' immediate reaction was that Nat Strong had black balled him in New York City and from this researcher's perspective he was probably right. This is just another example of how ruthless Nat Strong could be when it came to business.

With the loss of five key starting players, Nat Strong was going to need to rebuild his team. Two of the key players Nat went after to build a new roster around were John Henry "Pop" Lloyd (SS) and Dick "Cannonball" Redding (P) both of the Chicago American Giants.



Nat Strong was successful in signing both Redding and Lloyd. In March of 1918 before the start of the regular season, Dick "Cannonball" Redding pitched one game in Florida for the Chicago American Giants then he and John Henry "Pop" Lloyd returned to the East coast to play for Nat Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants. Nat also signed Bill Francis (3B) and Tom Williams (P) from Rube Foster's Chicago American Giants

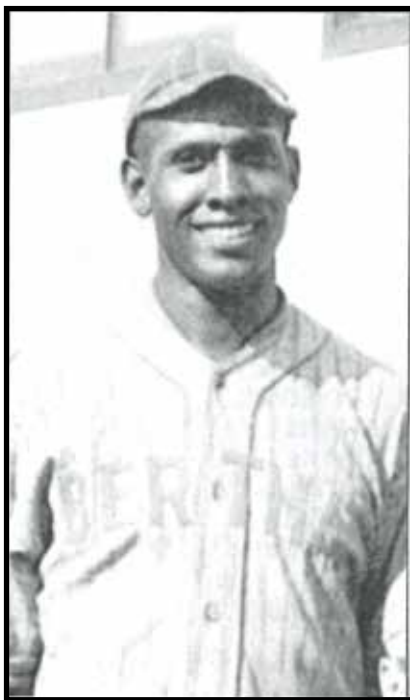
The 1918 Royal Giants played many of their home games at Dexter Park in Queens (NY) instead of at the Ridgewood Grounds. John Henry "Pop" Lloyd was named the manager of the team before the start of the regular season.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants started their season on April 21st with a game against the Brooklyn Bushwicks at Dexter Park in Queens.

John Henry "Pop" Lloyd (.352), Oliver "The Ghost" Marcelle, Bill Pettus, John Donaldson (.328) and Louis Santop (.360) were the team's top hitters. Redding was the ace of the pitching staff that also included Irvin Brooks, Phil Cockrell, John Donaldson, Shang Johnson, Gifford McDonald and Tom Williams.

Only a handful of box scores with Dick Redding pitching for the Brooklyn Royal Giants season have been uncovered for the 1918 season. Five games have been found in which Redding pitched for Brooklyn. Redding won all five of these games and posted a 1.50 ERA to go along with his perfect 5-0 won-loss record. His five victories included a 14 inning 4-2 win over the Brooklyn Bushwicks in which he delivered a two base hit to drive in the winning run. Cannonball also showed his durability when he pitched both ends of a double header against the Lincoln Giants and was credited with the win in each game. The double header was played at Olympic Field in New York City before approximately 15,000 fans. This was also Dick Redding's last documented game of the 1918 baseball season because he was drafted into the military.

Replacing Dick Redding was a tall order. After weeks of negotiation, Nat Strong was able to sign John Donaldson. When he signed with the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Donaldson became the highest paid player to ever wear a Brooklyn Royal Giants uniform. Upon his arrival in Brooklyn John Donaldson immediately became the ace of the pitching staff.



John Donaldson
Brooklyn Royal Giants
1918

pg. 9
CANNON BALL REDDING WHIPS LINCOLN GIANTS
Olympic Field, June 7.—With the thermometer hovering around the 90 degree mark, 15,000 baseball fans filled every available seat at Olympic Field last Sunday and saw Dick Redding, formerly with the Royal Giants, but now in reality a member of Camp Upton baseball team, wallop the famous Lincoln Giants in a double header. While Redding only pitched the last half of each game he was credited with both wins. The first game was a hummer, ending in a pitchers' battle between Smoky Joe Williams and Redding. Tom Fiales, a newcomer to the Royals, hit a Texas leaguer down the third base line, sending across the winning run. The second game was a slugging affair from beginning to end, the Royals knocking McLoughlin and Cockrell out of the box in the ninth inning, making six runs. The attraction tomorrow will be the Cuban Stars in a double header. The scores:

Royals	.....1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	—4
Lincolns	.....0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—3

Second game—

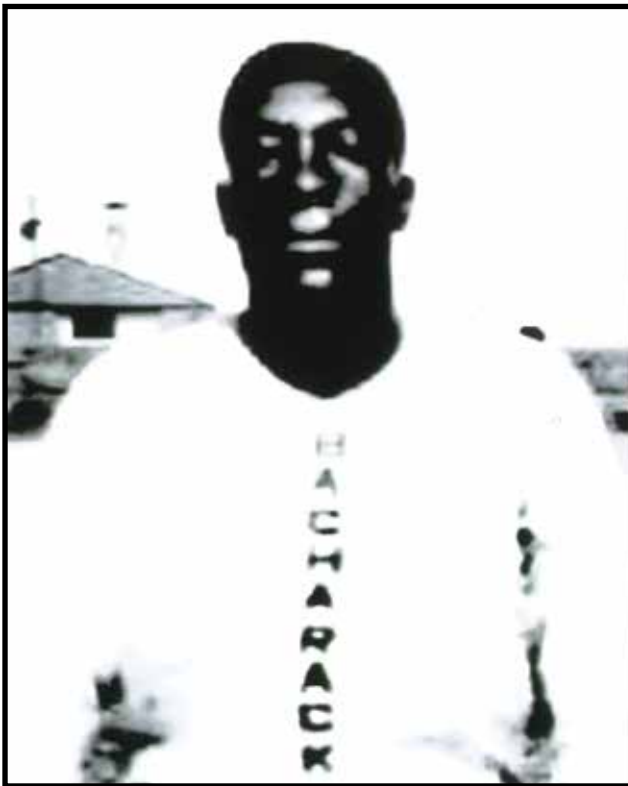
Royals	.....0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	—7	12	3
Lincolns	....0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	—3	7	4

Redding Wins Both Ends of Doubleheader

Chicago Defender
06-08-18

The highlight of the 1918 season for the Brooklyn Royal Giants was their championship series with the Lincoln Giants for the "Colored Championship of Greater New York." Like in years past the series started at the beginning of the season and continued on into September. The series was played at Olympic Field in Harlem and scheduled for six double headers. Brooklyn started strong by winning five of the first six games. The Lincoln Giants lone victory in the first double header was a 1-0 shutout over John Donaldson. In the last doubleheader that was played on September 2nd, the Lincoln Giants won both games by the scores of 3-2 and 4-2 to tie the series at six (6) games each.

According to newspaper accounts, Brooklyn was not one of the elite teams in the East in 1918. They started the season "red hot" but went into an awful slump at the end of the season. The Center for Negro League Baseball Research has found thirty (30) games played by the Brooklyn Royal Giants for the 1918 season. In these thirty games the Royal Giants had a record of 15-15 (.500). The top teams in the East during the 1918 season were the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, Baltimore Black Sox, Cuban Stars, Hilldale, Lincoln Giants, Grand Central Red Caps and the Pennsylvania Giants.



Dick "Cannonball" Redding

Black Ball Players Go to War

World War I had a dramatic impact on professional baseball in the United States. Both "black" and "white" teams lost players to military service. Nat Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants were not exempt from losing key players to the War effort. Strong's biggest losses were the services of Dick "Cannonball" Redding who was his ace pitcher and Louis Santop who was one of his best two hitters.

Several other black ball players missed all or most of the 1918 baseball season to serve in the military. Some of the other key black ball players who were lost to the war effort were Otto Briggs, Oscar Charleston, William "Dizzy" Dismukes, Jude Gans, Tom Johnson, Jess Kimbro, Dave Malarcher, Spottswood Poles, William "Specs" Webster and Frank "The Red Ant" Wickware.

Strong Continues to Feud with John Connors and the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants

From 1914 when he bought the Brooklyn Royal Giants to 1918 Nat Strong had not allowed other black teams especially from the Midwest to play in "his" city. Through his political clout Strong controlled the city's parks and most of the stadiums. Unfortunately for the citizens of New York City virtually no improvements had been made to New York City parks since Strong became involved in baseball in the city. Nat Strong and his political friends had seen the New York City park system as a means to generate income with only a minimal amount of expenditures.

In 1919 Thomas Jackson and Henry Tucker who owned the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants devised a plan to have their ball club play a significant number of games in New York City. In order to make this happen, they enlisted the support of John Connors and Baron Wilkens. Connors had owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants and was the owner of the Royal Cafe. Baron Wilkens had owned the New York Colored Giants, Little Savoy Cafe and several other successful eating establishments. Besides being a very successful night club owner and restaurant owner, Baron Wilkens also had a lot of political power in Harlem. Connors and Wilkens put up the money for Jackson and Tucker to bring the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants to New York City. Besides providing financial resources, Connors and Wilkens had significant contacts in Harlem. With their financial support of the Bacharach Giants and their network of contacts both Connors and Wilkens became part owners of the team. John Connors also became the secretary-treasurer of the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants.

In early May of 1919 John Connors and Baron Wilkins met with Nat Strong in his office at the World Building in New York City in an attempt to get Strong to book games for the Bacharach Giants in New



Baron Wilkins

York City for the upcoming season. Not only did Nat refuse to book games for the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants in New York City but he also refused to let the Brooklyn Royal Giants, Cuban Stars and Lincoln Giants play games in Atlantic City. Strong was able to do this because he controlled the bookings for all three of these teams. The black media perceived Nat Strong's position as totally preposterous and published the story under the headline "Slavery Still in Existence – Even in New York."

Everything came together for the Bacharach Giants when they were able to secure a lease on the Dyckman Oval in Harlem. The Atlantic City Bacharach Giants were able to operate right in Nat Strong's own backyard. This caused a major problem for the Nat Strong-James Keenan alliance because Connors would allow teams from the Midwest to book games in New York City. Strong and Keenan now had competition for controlling black baseball in New York City. Henry Tucker served as the booking agent for the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants and any other black teams who wanted to play at the Dyckman Oval.



Dyckman Oval

Harlem, NY

The Atlantic City Bacharach Giants playing out of Dyckman Oval may have impacted James Keenan even more than Nat Strong because Keenan's Lincoln Giants played out of Harlem. Now both the Lincoln Giants and Bacharach Giants were competing for the same fan base.

Brooklyn Royal Giants go from Bad to Worse

The Brooklyn Royal Giants had a disappointing season in 1918 but things got even worse in 1919. Nat Strong got both mediocre hitting and poor pitching during the season. In the fifteen (15) box scores that have been found for the 1919 season the top hitters for Brooklyn were Louis Santop (.323), Jesse Hubbard (.323), Irvin Brooks (.317), Oliver Marcelle (.310) and Bill Kindle (.300). Jesse Hubbard, Irvin Brooks, Merven "Red" Ryan and Harry Kenyon comprised the starting rotation for Nat Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants. In the fifteen games that have been located Brooklyn pitchers had a dismal 4.51 ERA.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants started the 1919 season with two games against the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants. The Royal Giants took both games by the scores of 8-5 and 12-0. Things unfortunately went down from there. Eighteen (18) box scores and line scores have been found for the 1919 season. The Brooklyn Royal Giants posted a dismal record of 6-12 (.333).

The biggest impact to the Brooklyn Royal Giants was when Dick Redding returned home from World War I. He returned home as a war hero and immediately returned to professional baseball with the Brooklyn Royal Giants for the 1919 season. On May 19th while with the Brooklyn Royal Giants Redding pitched in one of the best games of the entire season. The game was played at Olympic Park in Harlem. Redding faced off against Smokey Joe Williams of the Lincoln Giants. Redding pitched a two hitter but still lost 1-0 to Williams who countered with a no-hitter.



Brooklyn Royal Giants (1919)

(Standing left to right – Harry Kenyon, **Oliver Marcell**, Eddie Douglass, H.D. Harris, Chester Brooks, **Louis Santop** and **Mervyn “Red” Ryan**. Seated left to right – Irvin Brooks, Claude Johnson, D. “Dud” Johnson, Peter “Ed” Green and Robert Sloan.)

To make matters worse for Nat Strong, John Connors of the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants started signing players away from the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Lincoln Giants. The biggest loss for Nat Strong occurred in May when Dick “Cannonball” Redding and his battery mate Bill Gatewood signed with Atlantic City.

In an effort to try to keep the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants out of New York City, Nat Strong devised the following plan:

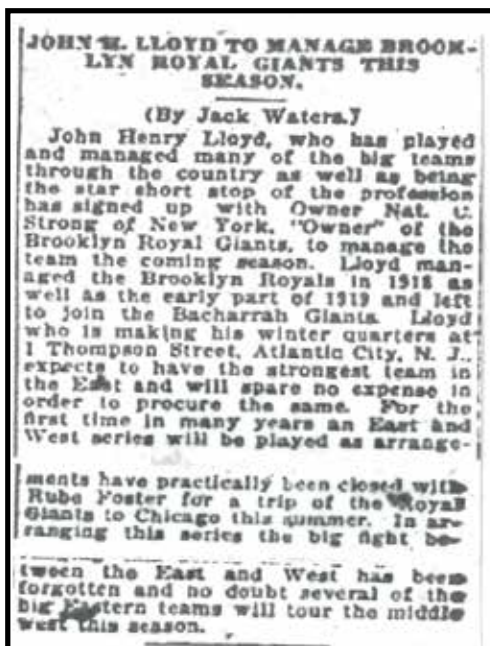
1. According to a story that appeared in the Chicago Defender Nat Strong reportedly held several secret meetings in New York City. The purpose of the meetings was to devise and implement a plan to exclude John Connors from playing in the New York market. Attending the meetings were Nat Strong, Charles Harvey (James Keenan’s partner), Joe Williams and John Henry “Pop” Lloyd.
2. In an effort to disrupt John Connors and the Bacharach Giants, Nat Strong refused to let the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Cuban Stars play any games in Atlantic City.
3. When all of his other efforts weren’t working, Nat Strong called on his contacts in white semiprofessional baseball to keep white owners from scheduling games with the Bacharach Giants.

When all was said and done Nat Strong was unable to eliminate John Connors and the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants from the New York City baseball market.

The 1919 season also produced a conflict between Nat Strong and Ed Bolden of Hilldale that forced Bolden to schedule his team to play in areas outside the New York and New Jersey area.

Brooklyn Prepares for a Championship Season

In February of 1920 Nat Strong announced that John Henry “Pop” Lloyd would be the Brooklyn Royal Giants manager for the upcoming season. Lloyd made bold promises in the media before the start of the season that he was putting together a championship team. The first order of business before the season started for Nat Strong was finding replacements for several key players that did not return to the Royal Giants. Strong’s primary losses were Louis Santop (C), Oliver “The Ghost” Marcelle (3B), Dick “Cannonball” Redding (P), Mervyn “Red” Ryan (P) and Bill Kindle (2B).



Lloyd to Manage Royal Giants

Freeman
02-14-20

The Royal Giants started the season strong by defeating the Lincoln Giants with Smokey Joe Williams in a double header. Brooklyn won the games by the scores of 5-2 and 5-4.

During the 1920 baseball season, there was no formal league in the East like the Negro National League in the West or the Negro Southern League in the South. When Rube Foster founded the Negro National League it created significant tensions between teams from the East and Midwest. Reportedly Nat Strong sent a letter to the Negro National League commending and supporting their efforts. In the letter Strong made the following statement:

“he was ready to do anything that would promote the best interests of baseball all over the country.”

The top teams in the East during the 1920 baseball season were the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, Baltimore Black Sox, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Cuban Stars, Hilldale and the New York Lincoln Giants.

Some of the new players that Nat Strong signed for the 1920 season were Kenneth “Ping” Gardner (P), Louis Miller (3B), Tom Fiall (OF), Bob Scott (OF), Clint Thomas (3B), Roy Roberts (P) and Juan Padron (P).

George Green (.357), John Henry “Pop” Lloyd (.305) and Eddie Douglas (.279) led the team in hitting during the season. The starting pitching rotation for Brooklyn in 1920 was comprised of Kenneth “Ping” Gardner, Harry Kenyon, Roy Roberts, Irvin Brooks and Juan Padron. While they had a weak hitting team, the Brooklyn Royal Giants more than made up for it with outstanding pitching. In twenty (20) games for which complete box scores have been found for the 1920 season, the Brooklyn Royal Giants pitching staff compiled an impressive team earned run average of 2.47.



John Henry “Pop” Lloyd
Brooklyn Royal Giants

Brooklyn Wins a Colored World's Championship

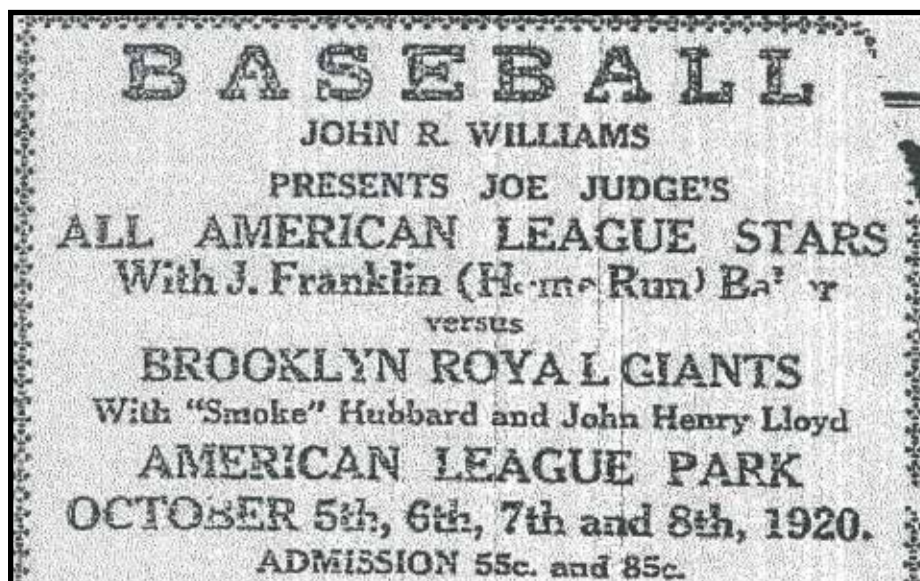
In late September of 1920 the Brooklyn Royal Giants played the Cuban Stars for the self-proclaimed title of the "Colored World's Champions." The three game series was played in Washington, D.C. at Griffith Stadium. The Royal Giants won two of the three games to claim the championship title.



Griffith Stadium

Washington, D.C.

After their championship series with the Cuban Stars, Nat Strong booked his Brooklyn Royal Giants with a four game series against Joe Judge's All American League Stars. Joe Judge's squad featured "Homerun" Baker. Jesse Hubbard and John Henry "Pop" Lloyd were the featured players of the Royal Giants. The four game series was played at American League Park in Washington, D.C. from October 5th through the 8th.



Brooklyn Royal Giants vs Joe Judge's All American League Stars

Griffith Stadium
Washington, D.C.

Afro-American
10-01-20

Brooklyn Plays Championship Series vs Hilldale

In October of 1920, the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Hilldale played a four game series in the Philadelphia area to name a "Colored Champion of the East." The Royal Giants were led by player-manager John Henry "Pop" Lloyd. Besides Lloyd, the team had Eddie Douglass (first base) and Beattie Brooks (second base) and Jess Hubbard (pitcher and utility) as their top hitters. Jess Hubbard, Juan Padrone and Roy "Big Boy" Roberts were the top pitchers of Lloyd's staff.

**TO BREAK
NAT. STRONG
IN BASEBALL**

Hebrew Said To Control One Hundred And Fifty Amusement Parks And Hundreds Of Colored Ball Players

Chicago, Ill, Feb. 9—Special: John Lloyd's jumping from the leadership of the Brooklyn Royal Giants to the managers berth on the Chicago Giants is regarded here as part of the effort of colored baseball leaders to break the hold of Nat Strong, white, on colored baseball players.

Lloyd is one of the best short stops in the country, black or white and is carrying with him to Chicago five of Brooklyn Royal players. All of them will get more money with Foster than they will get more money with Foster's Circuit than they were getting with Strong.

WHO IS STRONG

Nat Strong, white, is said to dominate the baseball activities among colored players in the East. With his hands on one hundred and fifty amusement places and parks he is said to be able to negotiate terms that block their advance and keep them in a state of stagnation.

This complete tie-up of the colored baseball men's hands, players say, enables the Hebrew to exact a heavy toll from every game played by any group operated in his territory.

Here is the way it is said the system works: ten percent of each club's receipts to the "boss" sixty-five percent to the club owners, and more than twenty-five per cent to the players. No matter how big the general receipts, the colored clubs are not given more than \$200 for any game.

One or two clubs that have attempted to operate independently of this system, of devastation, have been fought tooth and nail. By playing upon the weaklings of colored players, hard boiled schemers have been able to put many obstacles in the way of organized colored baseball. The National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs is providing positions for every colored player so handicapped.

Hilldale had a strong team that included Tom Allen, Jess Barbour, Otto Briggs, Chaney White, and Louis Santop. Brodie Francis, player-manager for Hilldale, also had an excellent pitching staff that included Phil Cockrell, Willis "Pud" Flourney, Connie Rector and Dick Whitworth.

Games one and two of the series were pitching duels between Jess Hubbard (Brooklyn) and Connie Rector (Hilldale) in game one and Jess Hubbard and Phil Cockrell in game two. Both games ended in a tie. The score in game one was 1-1 and game two ended in a 2-2 tie. Hilldale went into game three with five members of their starting lineup injured. In game three Hilldale was forced to use four pitchers in the field. Behind Louis Santop's three hits and a strong pitching performance by Connie Rector, Hilldale defeated Brooklyn in game three by a score of 6-3. Pud Flourney closed out the series by pitching Hilldale to a 3-1 victory over Brooklyn in game four of the series. The victory gave Hilldale the "Colored Championship of the East."

The Center for Negro League Baseball Research (CNLBR) has uncovered sixty-two (62) games that the Brooklyn Royal Giants played during the 1920 season. In these sixty-two (62) games the Royal Giants had a record of 34-26-2 (.567)

Royal Giants Go From a Championship Team to a Mediocre Team

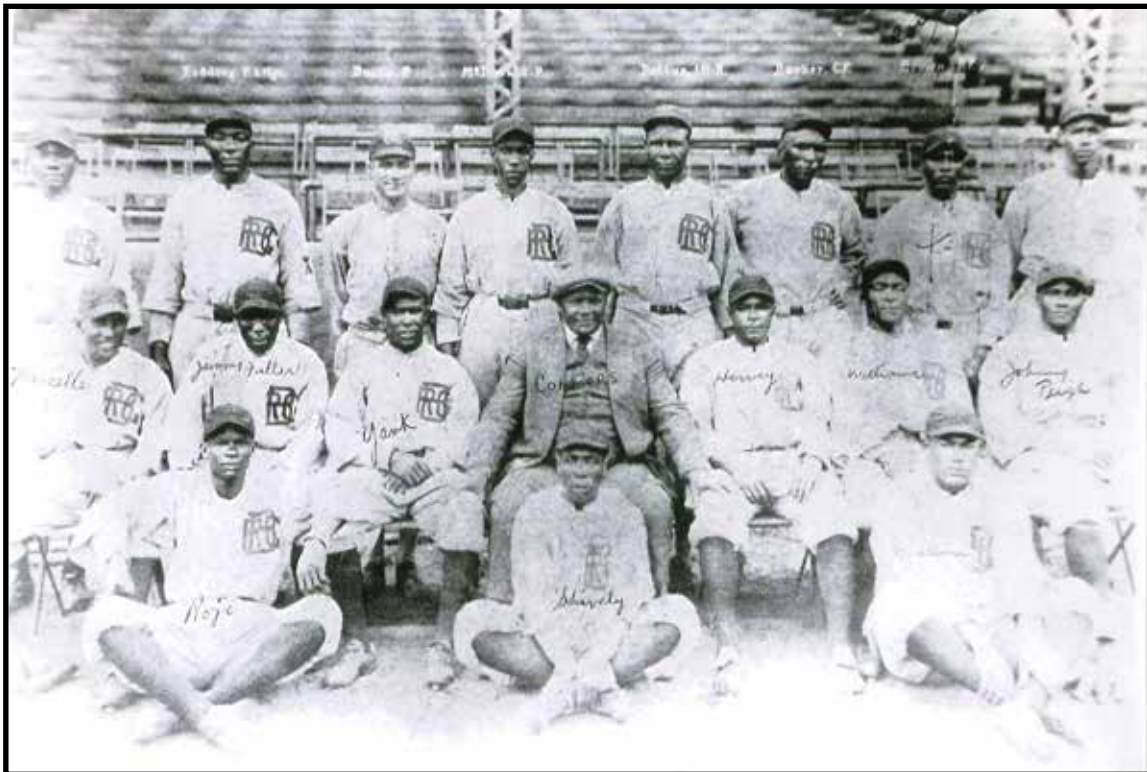
Prior to the start of the 1921 season, Nat Strong suffered devastating losses in his roster from the 1920 season. First John Henry "Pop" Lloyd who was his player-manager and the team's best player signed with the Columbus Buckeyes of the Negro National League as their player-manager. Lloyd also took with him Roy Roberts (P) and Clint Thomas (3B/OF). To make matters even worse Strong lost his entire 1920 starting pitching rotation of Kenneth "Ping" Gardner, Harry Kenyon, Roy Roberts and Juan Padron. Pitching had been the back bone of the team in 1920 and was the major reason they were so successful. In addition gone was George Green who was one of only two hitters to bat over .300 on the 1920 Brooklyn squad.

With the departure of Pop Lloyd, Eddie Douglass was named by Strong as the team's player-manager. The top hitters for the 1921 Brooklyn Royal Giants appear to have been Irvin Brooks (2B), Eddie Douglass (1B), Tom Fiall (CF), Jesse "Mountain" Hubbard (P) and Bob Scott (LF). Jesse Hubbard and Wayne Carr anchored the pitching staff that also included John Harris, Anthony Mahoney and Buck Williams. When all was said and done, Nat Strong could not adequately replace the key players that he lost from the 1920 team. What he ended up with was a weak hitting team with a poor pitching staff.

Current research has only revealed thirteen (13) box scores and line scores for the Brooklyn Royal Giants for the 1921 season. The Royal Giants went 5-8 (.385) in these thirteen games. Hilldale, New York Lincoln Giants and the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants were considered the top teams in the East for the 1921 season.

Strong Has More Problems with Atlantic City Bacharach Giants

According to an article that was published in the Baltimore Afro-American in May of 1922, the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants split into two factions with John Connors and Baron Wilkins on one side and Tom Jackson and Henry Tucker on the other side. Nat Strong figures into this controversy because Jackson and Tucker approached Strong to settle their differences with the promoter and have Nat book games for their "new" team that they called the "Original Atlantic City Bacharach Giants." When they were unsuccessful working out a deal with Strong, Jackson and Tucker promoted the idea of starting an eastern league that would include the following teams: Baltimore Black Sox, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Lincoln Giants and the "Original" Atlantic City Bacharach Giants.



Atlantic City Bacharach Giants (1921)

(Standing left to right – Unknown, **Dick Redding**, Maurice Busby, Mc Donald, William Pettus, Jess Barber, Brown and Unknown. Middle row left to right – **Oliver Marcelle**, Jimmy Fuller, James "Yank" Deas, **John Connor**, George Harvey, Andrew Williams and Johnny Pugh. Seated left to right – Julio Rojo, **George Shively** and Graham.)

According to research by Gary Ashwill and his Seamheads research team the Brooklyn Royal Giants were the best team in the East during the 1922 season. Eddie Douglas returned to Brooklyn as the team's player-manager. The Royal Giants were led by the hitting of Irvin Brooks (OF), Tom Fiall (OF), Eddie Douglas (1B) and Charles Spearman (C) during the season.

The primary reason for the team's turn around from the 1921 season was that Nat Strong went out and signed two new top level pitchers (Connie Rector and Otis Starks) for the 1922 season. The pitching staff for Brooklyn in 1922 included Jesse Hubbard, Connie Rector, Otis "Lefty" Starks and Buck Williams. The pitching staff appears to have performed extremely well all season.



Ed Bolden
Hilldale

Formation of the Eastern Colored League

When Rube Foster formed the Negro National League in 1920 his goal was to establish a national black baseball league. Feeling threatened by Foster and the Negro National League, team owners and promoters in the East decided to form their own league and crush Foster's plan of moving his sphere of influence to the East.

Through the leadership of Ed Bolden and Nat Strong, a movement was started to form the Eastern Colored League (ECL). Bolden and Strong were logical choices to bring the proposed league together. Bolden owned the Hilldale baseball team, controlled Hilldale Park and had the respect and trust of Eastern team owners. Nat Strong was not nearly as well-liked as Bolden but as a sports promoter, he controlled black baseball bookings in the East. In addition Strong owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants and was part owner of the Cuban Stars. Nat Strong and his partner Max Rosner also owned Dexter Park in Queens (NY) which was the home field of the Brooklyn Bushwicks of which Nat Strong was also a partner.

On December 16, 1922 a meeting of the top owners of black baseball teams in the East was held at the Christian Street YMCA in Philadelphia. The purpose of the meeting was to form the Eastern Colored League which was officially called the Mutual Association of Eastern Colored Baseball Clubs. Attendees at the organizational meeting included:

Attendee	Team	Attendee	Team
Ed Bolden	Hilldale	Charles Speeden	Baltimore Black Sox
Lloyd Thompson	Hilldale	George Rossiter	Baltimore Black Sox
James Keenan	Lincoln Giants	John J. McDevitt	Baltimore Black Sox
Nat Strong	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Thomas Jackson	Atlantic City Bacharach Giants
Alex Pompez	Cuban Stars	Henry Tucker	Atlantic City Bacharach Giants
		William Weeks	Atlantic City Bacharach Giants

During the meeting Ed Bolden was elected Chairman of the Eastern Colored League and James Keenan was elected as the Secretary-Treasurer. In addition a board of six commissioners was formed to oversee the operation of the league. Each team got to select one individual to serve on the board. Nat Strong represented the Brooklyn Royal Giants.

It was during these meetings that Nat Strong strengthened his working relationship with Alex Pompey who was the principal owner of the Cuban Stars. The relationship benefited both parties. Pompey got booking dates for the Cuban Stars and Strong got entry into the untapped Latino market in New York City.

Eastern Colored League's Inaugural Season

On January 23, 1923 a meeting was held in Philadelphia to develop policies and procedures for the Eastern Colored League. Another meeting was held at a later date to approve the inaugural league schedule that had been created by James Keenan, Nat Strong, Charles Speeden and Ben Taylor. The "league" played its opening game on April 24th. The teams that competed in the inaugural Eastern Colored League season and their final order of finish were as follows:

Eastern Colored League (1923)

	Games	Record	Pct.	Rank
Hilldale	49	32-17	.653	1 st
Cuban Stars (East)	40	23-17	.575	2 nd
Brooklyn Royal Giants	36	18-18	.500	3 rd
Atlantic City Bacharach Giants	42	19-23	.452	4 th
New York Lincoln Giants	38	16-22	.421	5 th
Baltimore Black Sox	49	19-30	.388	6 th

Dick "Cannonball" Redding Named Manager of the Brooklyn Royal Giants

Nat Strong's choice as manager for his Eastern Colored League team was Dick "Cannonball" Redding. Speculation is that Strong chose Redding for two major reasons. First with only one contract Strong got a capable manager and a player who would be one of the team's top pitchers. In addition Redding was extremely well-known and would be a huge draw at the gate anywhere the team played. Dick Redding managed the Brooklyn Royal Giants from 1923 through 1932.



Dick Redding

The Brooklyn Royal Giants played many of their home games at Dexter Park in Queens, New York in 1923. They split their schedule between playing in the Eastern Colored League and independent games against local lower level teams, semi-pro teams and "white" Minor League teams. When the Brooklyn Royal Giants were playing "non-Eastern Colored League" games against local opponents, Nat Strong billed the Brooklyn Royal Giants as the "Colored Champions of the East" and as having "the best colored pitchers in the world." Needless to say the Royal Giants were not even the best team in the East Colored League during the 1923 season, but according to newspaper reports they probably dominated lower level opponents. Newspaper accounts suggest that the Brooklyn Royal Giants had a very strong season and a financially successful season against "non-Eastern Colored League" teams during the 1923 season. An example of this is when on August 6th they drew 8,000 fans to a game against Fall



Fitchburg Sentinel

Fitchburg, MA
08-13-23

River of the Central League. They defeated the Fall River squad 6-3. The Royal Giants also took two games from the Central League leading the Fitchburg team during the season. In fourteen games for which newspaper accounts have been found against “non-Eastern Colored League” competition, the Royal Giants had a record of 13-1 (.929).

Nat Strong fielded a decent hitting line-up during the 1923 ECL season. His best hitters in “league” play during the season were Irvin Brooks (.381), Bert Wagner (.353), Bunny Downs (.327), Eddie Douglas (.321) and Charles Spearman (.289).

The Brooklyn Royal Giants, however, had a strong pitching staff during the 1923 season. Besides managing the team, Cannonball Redding was one of the team’s starting pitchers. Dick started nine (9) of the team’s thirty-six (36) Eastern Colored Leagues games and posted a won-loss record of 3-2. The rest of the Royal Giants pitching staff and their records in Eastern Colored League games were Connie Rector (4-2), Otis “Lefty” Starks (3-1), Willis “Pud” Flournoy (3-2), Jesse “Mountain” Hubbard (2-3) and Andrew “String Bean” Williams (0-3).

Dick Redding did a very good job managing the Royal Giants. In a very competitive league, they had a good season and finished the season in third place in the final Eastern Colored League standings with a record of 18-18 (.500). The one consistent problem with the Brooklyn Royal Giants during the 1923 season was Nat Strong’s refusal to follow the “official” league schedule. At the end of the regular Eastern Colored League season, the Brooklyn Royal Giants played the fewest games of any team in the “league.” Strong even went so far as refusing to play James Keenan’s Lincoln Giants from mid-May to the end of the season because of a disagreement between the two owners.

Rube Foster Feuds with Nat Strong

Rube Foster who was the founder of the Negro National League was extremely disappointed when the Eastern Colored League was founded. When Foster looked at baseball in the East, he identified Nat Strong as the real power and driving force. Foster became even more threatened by Nat Strong when Nat sent his Brooklyn Royal Giants on a barnstorming tour through the Midwest in July and August of 1923. To make matters even worse for Foster was the fact that the Brooklyn played well. According to an article that appeared in the Chicago Defender on August 4th the Brooklyn Royal Giants had taken five straight games from local ball clubs in late July.

In national newspaper stories, Foster had the following to say about his adversary from the East.

“ he has taken 10 % from the gross earnings of black clubs for 20 years and has never built a fence (Foster was referring to building a ball park) for them to use and never will.”

“ Strong has taken 10 % of revenues of black ball clubs for 30 years and never let blacks count a ticket, learn anything about the business and even yet run your league with a club in it and do not allow them at his own park (Dexter Park).”

Foster went on to criticize Strong for running his own white ball clubs (Bay Parkways, Ridgewoods, Murray Hill and Brooklyn Bushwicks) and even building a ball park (Dexter Park) for them while keeping his Brooklyn Royal Giants as basically a traveling team.

Even with all of the differences between Nat Strong and Rube Foster, The Negro National League sent letters to Strong in November of 1921 and January of 1922 that invited him to join the Negro National League (NNL). It appears that Nat Strong never seriously considered joining the NNL.

Brooklyn Royal Giants Enter Their Second Season in the Eastern Colored League

Prior to the start of the 1924 Eastern Colored League season, team owners held a meeting on February 9th in Philadelphia. Issues discussed at the meeting included the following:

1. New franchises were granted to the Harrisburg Giants who were owned by Col. C.W. Strothers and the Washington Potomacs who were owned by George W. Robinson and Ben Taylor.
2. The team owners also approved that the 1924 Eastern Colored League season be expanded from 50 games to 70 games.
3. In addition the league owners approved the 1924 season schedule that had been developed by Nat Strong, Ed Bolden, Ben Taylor and Charles Spedden.
4. Policies were also developed that covered player's and umpire's behavior.
5. The biggest problem discussed at the meeting was Nat Strong's unwillingness to follow the Eastern Colored League "official" schedule.

An excellent example of Nat Strong's unwillingness to adhere to the Eastern Colored League's schedule was seen in the opening game of the season. Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants were supposed to play the Harrisburg Giants. Strong instead wanted the Harrisburg Giants to play James Keenan's Lincoln Giants. When this didn't happen Nat Strong threatened to boycott the Lincoln Giants for the entire season. Fortunately, Nat never followed through on his threat.

JOE WILLIAMS, LINCOLN GIANTS CAST-OFF, FANS 25 MEN; LOSES IN 12TH

Brooklyn, N. Y., March 30.—Joe Williams of the Royal Giants fanned 25 men and saw his team go down to defeat before the onslaught of the Bushwicks after a thrilling contest that went 12 innings at Dexter park before 8,000 fans. The score was 4 to 3.

Flournoy started on the mound for the Royals, but was in poor form. After four men had come to bat Williams was called in, with one run in and the bases full. An error permitted another run to count and then Joe started striking them out. He fanned three in the first, two in the second, three each in the third and fourth, two each in the fifth and sixth, three in the seventh, one in the eighth, two in the ninth, one in the tenth, two in the eleventh, and one in the twelfth inning.

The score by innings:
Bushwicks...2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2—4
Royal Giants...0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 1—3
Pitchers—Stein, Zellars, Kelleher and Holman, Deufel; Flournoy, Williams and Spearman.

Dick "Cannonball" Redding was back at the helm for the Brooklyn Royal Giants for their second season in the ECL. To help improve the Royal Giants for the 1924 Eastern Colored League season, Nat Strong signed veteran pitcher Smokey Joe Williams. Unfortunately, Williams and the entire Brooklyn pitching staff struggled all season. Smokey Joe Williams who was being counted on to pitch some big games didn't come through consistently during the season. His 38 years of age showed during the season as he posted a dismal record of 3-8 with a 3.74 ERA against top level teams. Smokey Joe did show some flashes of his old brilliance, like on March 24th with 8,000 fans in attendance at Dexter Park. He struck out twenty-five (25) Brooklyn Bushwicks in a 12 inning 4-3 loss and in June he pitched a three hit 9-0 shutout over the New York Lincoln Giants. Willis Flournoy had the best season of all the starters in "league" play with a 3-5 record and 2.69 ERA. Connie Rector (2-2 w/ 4.79 ERA), Dick Redding (2-4 w/ 5.12 ERA) and Jesse Hubbard (2-4 w/ 7.20 ERA) rounded out the rest of the team's starting rotation during the 1924 Eastern Colored League season.

The top hitters for Brooklyn during 1924 were Bob Scott (.321), Irvin Brooks (.301), John Cason (.297) and Jules Thomas (.290).

NEW YORK SEMIPROS UNITE; FIGHT CZAR NAT STRONG

New York, March 21.—Will the Eastern Baseball league fare well this season? Is a question that is being considered by persons interested in the welfare of semi-pro baseball of both groups.

"Last season the Eastern league was a camouflaged affair with absolutely no foundation," says a white reader of the "World's Greatest Weekly." Naturally this particular white reader's grievance lies in the treatment of semi-pro teams of his group, which to an extent must have the players of our group at heart. In a letter to this office he has the following to say:

"Semi-pro booking conditions around Greater New York have been rotten for years—due to the fact that Nat Strong, owner of the Royal Giants, has practically controlled the bookings for most of the parks here and in New Jersey. Therefore, most everyone connected with independent ball, including John W. Connors and Barton Wilkins, were forced to do business with Strong or in most cases stay out of the circuit of parks which are members of Strong's Metropolitan association.

"Dexter Park, at Cypress Hills, L. I., is owned by a corporation, of which Max Rosner and Nat Strong, both white, are the principal stockholders. Since 1923 the seating capacity of this park has been enlarged; therefore, Strong booked the best attractions for premier New York appearance at this stadium and teams like the Farmers and East New York got second pick from attractions of Color or booked those attractions which Strong thought were not good enough for Dexter Park patrons.

"A short time ago Charles A. David, owner of the Bayside Baseball club of Bayside, L. I., gave a dinner to his ball players. This affair was also at-

tended by some of the powerful men in Eastern semi-pro circles and everybody enjoyed the festivities. Since then it has leaked out that plans are being formulated to organize an association that will be of mutual interest to everybody, Race or white, connected with independent baseball. It is said the feature of that baseball meeting was the absence of Nat Strong.

"Wilbur Creelin, manager of the Meadowbrooks of Newark, N. J., who conducts a sporting goods establishment there, responded with a neat little speech, in which he told how superior his ball was to Strong's, who makes a profit of \$3.40 on a dozen, while his profit was only \$2 on a dozen. After that announcement he received several orders from the independents for uniforms as well as balls. It is also hinted that he will receive a substantial order from members of the Eastern Race league for both in defiance of Nathaniel.

"The above fact was borne out when it became known that Tom Jackson of the Atlantic City Bacharach's gave an order to Mr. Creelin for uniforms, baseballs, etc.

"That this opposition against Strong by independents will work to the advantage of all concerned is the handwriting on the wall. Strong has never been up against real competition, but the time has arrived that prestige as well as finance is opposed to his activities. He has ruled with an iron hand for many years, and it is about time that semi-pro ball around Greater New York got a house cleaning. Here's hoping that Messrs. David and Creelin will make a good job of it. They deserve the hearty co-operation of every real manager, player and fan. We also hope that Messrs. Connors and Wilkins will again come into the fold."

New York Semi-Professionals Unite Against Nat Strong

Before the start of the 1924 season white semi-professional ball club owners and managers united to get better booking arrangements from Nat Strong and better pricing for sporting goods sold by Nat Strong Baseball Enterprises in the Greater New York City area. The conflict made national news in the black media. In an article that appeared in The Chicago Defender, the booking conditions in New York City were categorized as having been “rotten for years” because Nat Strong controlled most of the ball parks in New York and New Jersey and if you wanted to play ball there you had to deal with Nat Strong on his terms.

When all was said and done the unhappiness of individual white semiprofessional ball clubs did little to change Nat Strong’s business practices.

Brooklyn Royal Giants Get Expelled from the Eastern Colored League

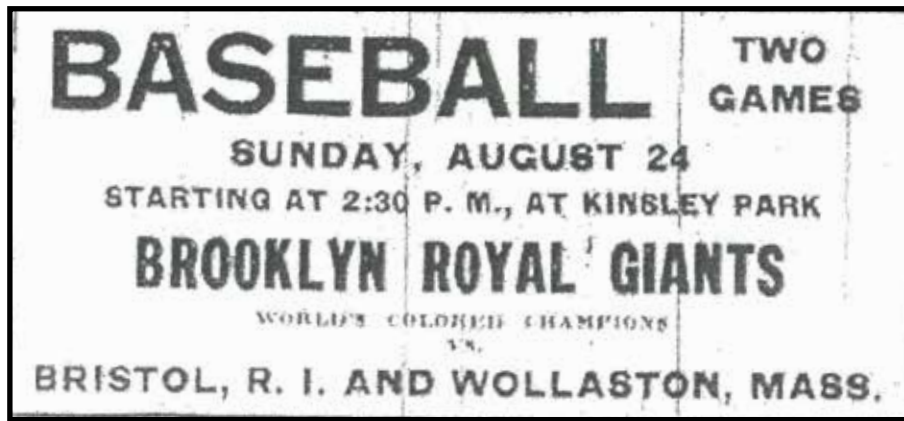


The Chicago Defender
06-07-24

Controversy surrounded Nat Strong and the Brooklyn Royal Giants from the very start of the 1924 season. A conflict between Nat Strong (owner of Royal Giants) and Jim Keenan (owner of Lincoln Giants) resulted in Brooklyn being expelled from the Eastern Colored League at a special meeting held on May 26th. Nat Strong did not help his case when he was a no-show at the meeting. Brooklyn was expelled from the “league” because of Nat Strong’s constant refusal to follow the “official” Eastern Colored League schedule. Nat Strong wired Ed Bolden that he had reconsidered his position and wanted his team back in the “league.” Cooler heads prevailed and the Royal Giants were reinstated at a June 6th meeting in Philadelphia. This was just another example of how Nat Strong consistently put his business interests above everyone else’s and the Eastern Colored League was no exception.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants dropped from third place in 1923 to sixth place in the final league standings for the 1924 season. Brooklyn had a won-loss record of 16-26 (.381) for the 1924 Eastern Colored League season. The Royal Giants played only 42 of the 70 games they were scheduled to play. Hilldale (47-22) won the Eastern Colored League title for the second straight year.

Brooklyn also played a significant number of games against independent, semi-pro and local town teams during the 1924 season. In games against these lower level teams, Nat Strong routinely billed his Brooklyn Royal Giants as the “World’s Colored Champions.”



Providence Journal

Providence, RI

08-25-24

According to a newspaper article that appeared in the New York Age, as the 1924 baseball season progressed Nat Strong lost more and more control of baseball in the New York City area. The following factors contributed to Strong's loss of control:

1. Nat only booked two black teams in New York City. They were the Brooklyn Royal Giants and the Cuban Stars.
2. He only controlled two ball parks.
3. The formation of the National Baseball Federation (NBF) in New York City limited his control of white semi-professional baseball teams.
4. The New York National Baseball Federation controlled a significant number of ball parks in New York City.
5. The Lincoln Giants joined the National Baseball Federation.
6. Nat Strong continued to refuse to provide a home ball park for the Brooklyn Royal Giants. This also was a significant source of concern for the officials of the Eastern Colored League.

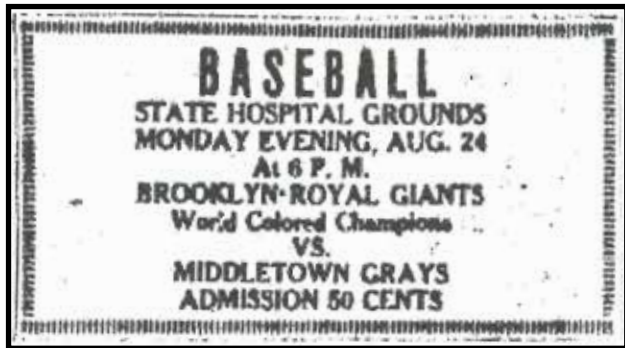
Strong Makes Changes for the 1925 Season

Disappointed with the team's performance in 1924, Nat Strong made several changes before the start of the 1925 season. First, Smokey Joe Williams was released. Then several new players were signed to bolster the roster. These players included Bill Holland (P), Charles "Chino" Smith (OF) and Elias "Country" Brown (OF). Dick Redding returned as the manager of the team and got good hitting during the season. The leading hitters for Brooklyn during the season were Irvin Brooks (.345), Charles Spearman (.344), Eddie Douglas (.329) and Chino Smith (.316). The pitching staff for the Royal Giants included Connie Rector (6-2), Dick Redding (3-4), Willis "Pud" Flourney (2-5), Jesse "Mountain" Hubbard (2-3) and Bill Holland (1-6).

During the 1925 season the owners of the Baltimore Black Sox, Harrisburg Giants, Lincoln Giants and Newark hatched a plan to remove Ed Bolden as the head of the Eastern Colored League. When Nat Strong heard of the plan, he threatened to prevent any of the teams involved in what he termed the "conspiracy" from playing in the New York market. With Nat taking such a strong position, the threat to Bolden's job went away. When the New York Age interviewed Nat Strong about the incident he was quoted as follows:

"It can't be a league (referring to the Eastern Colored League) because the majority of the teams only play Saturday and Sunday games."

Nat Strong's comments to the New York Age emphasized the lack of respect that he had towards black baseball. At the end of the day, Nat Strong was all about Nat Strong and what could be done to advance his best interests.



Middletown Daily Times Press

Middletown, NY
08-21-25

Besides their Eastern Colored League schedule, Brooklyn also played a significant number of games against local and semi-pro opponents. As they had done in years past the Brooklyn Royal Giants promoted themselves as “World Colored Champions” when they played non-league games.

Brooklyn finished the season with a disappointing won-loss record of 13-20 (.394) in “league” action. They were in fifth place in the final 1925 Eastern Colored League standings. The Brooklyn Royal Giants also played the fewest number of league games during the season. This was caused by Nat's position of canceling games whenever it was in his best interest.

As they had done the previous two seasons Ed Bolden's Hilldale team (52-15) won the Eastern Colored League title.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants team struggled the entire 1926 Eastern Colored League season. They didn't get consistent hitting or pitching in “league” play. Charles “Chino” Smith (.375) led the team in hitting. The team's other top hitters included Charles Spearman (.315), Jesse Hubbard (.311), Irvin Brooks (.286) and Tex Burnett (.284). From box scores that have been found, the Brooklyn Royal Giants had a team batting average of .252 in ECL games in 1926.

Even though the Royal Giants had a good starting pitching rotation on paper, none of them could get untracked during the season. From the twenty-six (26) box scores found for Brooklyn's starting pitchers for the 1926 season their won-loss records were as follows: Willis Flournoy (5-2), Bill Holland (2-6), Dick Redding (1-4), Connie Rector (1-2) and Jess Hubbard (0-3). From box scores that have been uncovered the Royal Giants had a team earned run average of 3.92.

During the 1926 season Nat Strong and James Keenan feuded. In an attempt to resolve the issues between the two owners, an owners meeting was held on July 28th. Strong chose not to attend the meeting. The conflict between Strong and Keenan was not the only issue facing the Eastern Colored League in 1926. Other issues that impacted the effectiveness and longevity of the Eastern Colored League were as follows:

1. Several Eastern Colored League teams also played in the Interstate League.
2. Nat Strong's refusal to adhere to the league schedule caused serious scheduling dilemmas. The Brooklyn Royal Giants only played twenty-six (26) league games during the 1926 season.
3. The feud between Strong and Keenan escalated as the season progressed. Towards the end of the regular season, James Keenan cancelled all of his team's remaining games with the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Cuban Stars.
4. Nat Strong's refusal to provide a home field for the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Cuban Stars created problems.

5. In an effort to encourage teams to play as many of their scheduled league games as possible, the Eastern Colored League commissioners implemented a policy that teams had to play at least fifty (50) "league" games to qualify for the Negro League World Series. At the end of the season only Hilldale (58 league games played) and the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants (54 league games played) met the minimum games played qualification for the Negro League World Series.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants finished the 1926 Eastern Colored League season with a disappointing record of 7-20 (.259). They were in seventh place in the final "league" standings. According to research by Gary Ashwill and his Seamheads research team the Brooklyn Royal Giants had a record of 11-24 (.314) in games against all levels of competition. Dick Lundy led the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants to the Eastern Colored League title with a record of 34-20 (.630). According to research by John Holway, the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants had a record of 63-15 (.808) in games against all levels of competition.

Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants appear to have fared significantly better in independent games they played against local and semi-pro teams. From the twenty-six (26) box scores and line scores that have been located by the Center for Negro League Baseball Research for non-league games that the Royal Giants played in 1926, Brooklyn had a record of 17-9 (.654).

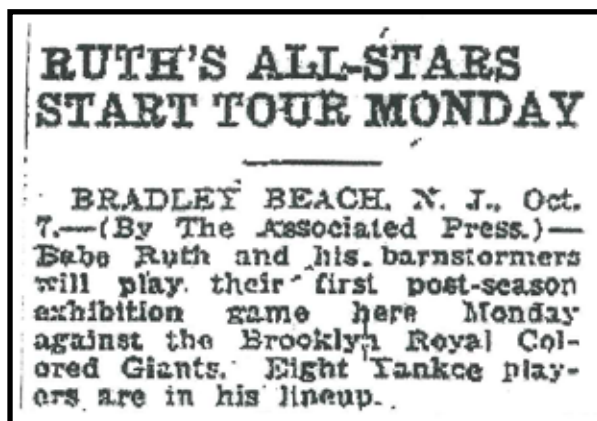
Even though Redding's pitching performance was unimpressive in his Eastern Colored League games, he appears to have been significantly more effective in non-league games. A good example of this is in late May when he pitched both ends of a double header first against Easter Brands and then against a strong Phoenix team. In the first game against Easter Brands he gave up only three hits and allowed just one run. In the second game against Phoenix he held his opponents to only two hits and one run. For the day Redding pitched 16 innings, posted two wins, gave up just five hits and allowed only two runs.

ROYALS WIN TWO									
Buffalo, N. Y., May 31.—The Brooklyn Royal Giants, with Dick Redding pitching, defeated the strong Phoenix team, 6 to 1, and the Easter Brands, 16 to 1.									
R.H.E.									
Royal Giants	...	300	324	4	—	16	16	3	
Easter Brands	...	100	000	0	—	1	3	2	
R.H.E.									
Phoenix	.....	000	001	000	—	1	3	0	
Royal Giants	...	001	000	041	—	6	14	1	

Redding Pitches and Wins Both Games of Doubleheader

Chicago Defender

06-05-26



When the regular Eastern Colored League season came to an end, the Brooklyn Royal Giants continued to barnstorm. Nat Strong's position was that if you weren't playing, you weren't making any money.

After the regular season, Nat Strong booked the Brooklyn Royal Giants in a pair of games against the Babe Ruth All Stars in Bradley Beach, New Jersey on October 11th and 26th. Ruth's All Stars team included eight other New York Yankees including Lou Gehrig in their line-up. With 5,000 fans in attendance, Redding beat Ruth's team of Major Leaguers by a score of 3-1 in the first game.

Ogden Standard Examiner

10-27-26



Bustin Babes

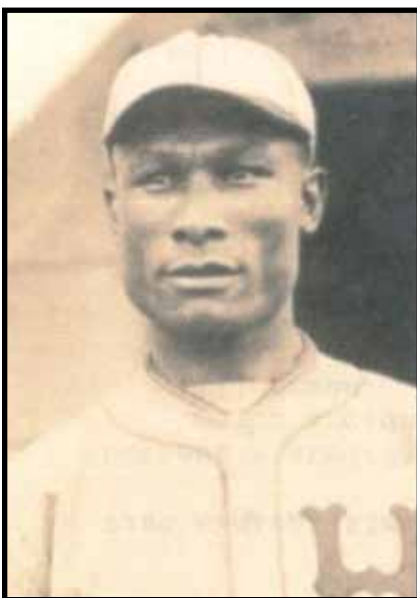
Babe Ruth's All Star Team

(**Babe Ruth** - standing third from right and **Lou Gehrig** – standing third from left)

On January 11, 1927 the team owners of the Eastern Colored League and Negro National League held a joint meeting in Detroit. Major policies implemented during the meeting were as follows:

1. The salary cap was reduced from \$ 3,000 per season to \$ 2,700 and that needed to include the manager.
2. The ECL reduced rosters to 14 players.
3. Changes to the organization of the Negro League World Series were implemented.
4. New policies regarding umpires were introduced.

Nat Strong's 1927 Brooklyn Royal Gants were managed by Dick "Cannonball" Redding and led by the hitting of Charles "Chino" Smith who had a break out season in 1927. In Eastern Colored League games and games against top level competition, Chino Smith batted .415 and had a slugging percentage of .703. Led by Chino's offensive play, the Brooklyn Royal Giants improved their record in 1927 to 15-31 (.326) in ECL action. Other Brooklyn hitters who were productive at the plate during the 1927 season were Irvin Brooks (OF), Willis "Pud" Flournoy (P), Robert Hudspeth (1B) and William Owens (SS).



Charles "Chino" Smith
Brooklyn Royal Giants

Bill Holland (6-7) and Pud Flournoy (4-7) were the team's best two pitchers during the year. Other members of the pitching staff included Otis "Lefty" Starks (2-3), Dick Redding (1-4) and Wayne Carr (0-3). As indicated from their records in Eastern Colored League games, the pitching staff struggled all season in "league" play.

In addition to their Eastern League schedule, Nate Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants played an extensive independent schedule. In "non-league" games Strong continued to bill his Royal Giants as "Colored Baseball Champions of the World" in the local media even though they weren't even one of the top teams in the Eastern Colored League. Nat Strong knew very well that in booking a game or sporting event it was all about marketing, promotion and perception. In Nat's mind if they went into a small town to play a local team and promoted themselves as the "World's Colored Champions" then that is who they were.

Brooklyn Royal Giants vs Babe Ruth All Stars

Nat Strong was a master at promoting games and promoting games against Major League all-star teams always brought out a great crowd. Over the years Babe Ruth and his all-star teams that most often included Lou Gehrig drew the biggest crowds for Nat Strong and his Brooklyn Royal Giants.

**Ruth And Gehrig
Break Up Game; No
More Baseballs**

**Thirty-Six Balls Disappear at
Exhibition Game in
New Jersey**

ASHBURY PARK, N. J., Oct. 14.—The Yankees' home run twins, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig had the town agog with their exhibition which ended when the management ran out of baseballs, some thirty-six balls disappearing into Deal Lake or among the fans, yesterday. The game ended after six innings with Ruth's club in front by five to four, on the Brooklyn Royal Giants, when Lou hit his second home run into the pond.

The entire park police force was called upon to handle an overflow attendance of 7000. Ruth refused to go on with his act until he cashed in on his share of \$2500 which delayed the start of the contest. Before the game got under way an attachment of \$100 was placed against the promoter, William Truby. After all the affairs were smoothed out the Babe went in and smashed a homer, autographed baseballs and shook hands with his admirers.

Lethbridge Herald

Lethbridge, Canada
10-19-27

**RUTH GETS 3
MORE HOMERS**

**Babe and Lou Join Team On
Barnstorming Trip.**

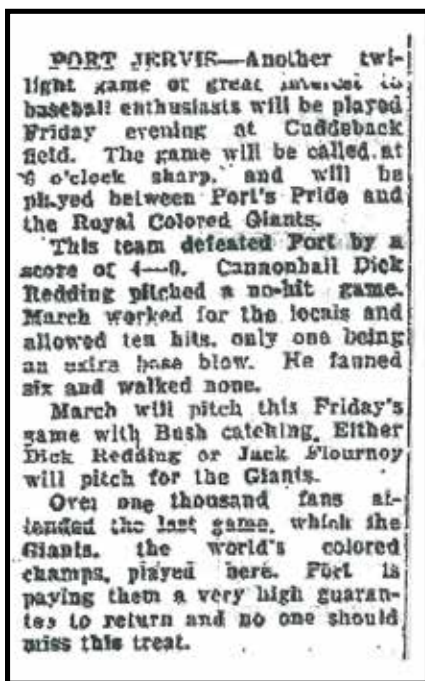
TRENTON, N. J., Oct. 11 (AP).—Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, of the world champion New York Yankees, opened their exhibition barnstorming tour here today, playing with a selected Trenton team against the Brooklyn Royal Giants. Before a large crowd Ruth hit three homers. Gehrig got a double and a single out of four times at bat.

After Ruth's third homer, the game was called with the score, 6 to 4, in Trenton's favor, as officials found difficulty in clearing enthusiastic spectators from the field.

Afro-American
11-04-27



Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig



Redding Pitches Another No-Hitter

Daily Herald Times Press
Middletown, NY
08-09-27

The Royal Giants met the Babe Ruth All Stars for a rematch on November 11th in Trenton, New Jersey. Supposedly before the game promoter George Glasco took Cannonball Redding aside and told him: "Now look you know why all these people are here. You know what they came to see. They're out here to see Ruth hit homeruns, right? ... so no funny business." Dick Redding supposedly winked and responded "Gotcha, right down the pike." Babe Ruth got three homeruns and Redding got a good payday.



Babe Ruth , child, Max Rosner and Lou Gehrig

The highlight of the 1927 season for the Brooklyn Royal Giants occurred in August when Dick Redding pitched a no-hitter against Port Jervis (NY) at Cuddaback Field with over one thousand fans in attendance. Brooklyn won the game by a score of 4-0.

After the regular season, the Brooklyn Royal Giants played an all-star team with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig in Asbury Park, New Jersey on October 14th. The game was so popular that the police had to be called in to control the overflow crowd of 7,000 fans that showed up for the game and couldn't get in the stadium. The game was called after six innings when they ran out of baseballs. Thirty-six (36) balls were lost to fans as souvenirs. The Ruth-Gehrig team was leading 5-4 when the game was called.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants finished the 1927 Eastern Colored League with a record of 15-31 (.326) and were in seventh place (last place) in the final "league" standings. The Atlantic City Bacharach Giants (54-35) won the Eastern Colored League title for the second season in a row.

Strong and Rosner Offer to Buy the Brooklyn Robins

In February of 1928 the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper ran a story that Nat Strong and his partner Max Rosner had offered to buy between 50 % to 100 % of the Brooklyn Robins of the National League. Rosner was also quoted as saying that if necessary, he and Strong could pay cash for the Major League ball club. Their plan also included building a new stadium on the site where Dexter Park was located. The new stadium would hold 125,000 fans. Unfortunately for Strong and Rosner, Charles Ebbets, the owner of the Brooklyn Robins, did not entertain their offer.

The Demise of the Eastern Colored League

The Eastern Colored League began to unravel from the very beginning of the 1928 baseball season. The Brooklyn Royal Giants started the 1928 season off slowly with a record of 4-6 (.400) and were in sixth place in the “league” standings. On March 3rd the Harrisburg Giants dropped out of the Eastern Colored League and were quickly followed by the Brooklyn Royal Giants. Hilldale then dropped out. That left only the Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, Baltimore Black Sox and Lincoln Giants. To fill out the “league” schedule two new teams were added. First, the Eastern All Stars who were owned by well known gambler Smithie Lucas were added to the “league.” The Eastern All Stars were quickly renamed the Philadelphia Tigers. Then the Brooklyn Stars were granted a franchise. The addition of two new teams was too little too late. The Eastern Colored League officially disbanded in June of 1928.

Nat Strong’s Impact on the Eastern Colored League

In the final analysis Nat Strong was a real dilemma for Eastern Colored League team owners:

1. From a positive perspective Nat was the most financially stable of all the Eastern Colored League team owners.
2. However, Nat always put his financial interests above those of the league. He never seemed to recognize or accept the fact that his business interests and those of the “league” should have been one and the same.
3. Nat undermined the other league’s team owners by refusing to adhere to the “league” schedule.
4. Strong could have helped the Eastern Colored League grow its market in the New York City area by providing home ball parks for the Brooklyn Royal Giants and Cuban Stars. He also could have scheduled significantly more “league” games at Dexter Park, but he refused to do that.
5. He never did embrace the concept of trying to develop a strong relationship with the black press.
6. Eastern Colored League team owners viewed Nat Strong as a liability to the success of the “league.”
7. Strong never seemed to consistently get along with Eastern Colored League officials or other team owners. An excellent example of this was expressed in the Pittsburgh Courier when Rollo Wilson wrote the following:

“Several of the commissioners... would like to see Mr. Nat Strong taken up to the “L” tracks on the Brooklyn Bridge and dumped into the East River.”

Nat Strong was also often referred to as the “Hebrew menace in colored baseball.”

8. The bottom line was that Nat Strong was not a “team” player. When the Eastern Colored League folded, Ed Bolden was very vocal that Nat Strong had only taken and never gave anything back to black baseball. Bolden went on to criticize Strong as lackadaisical and that he had a selfish attitude.

Pittsburgh Courier sports writer Rollo Wilson probably said it best when he wrote:

“Strong would only get out (withdraw from the Eastern Colored League) when it suits Nat Strong to do so.”

9. Nat Strong was least impacted of all the team owners when the Eastern Colored League folded. Strong still had his sports promotion and booking agency which was doing very well. Nat still owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants and he kept them extremely busy playing an independent schedule. Strong further benefited financially from the Royal Giants by not really investing any money in the team. In addition Dexter Park was making Nat Strong and Max Rosner a lot of money. Strong was also booking black teams into Dexter Park to play his Brooklyn Bushwicks nearly every Sunday. Even though he never paid black teams more than a \$ 600 guarantee for a doubleheader which was often significantly less than they could have made playing percentage ball, it was still a good payday for black team owners.

Brooklyn Royal Giants Go To An Independent Schedule

After dropping out of the league in 1928, the Brooklyn Royal Giants went back to playing an independent schedule. Owner Nat Strong kept the Brooklyn Royal Giants playing somewhere every day and he continued to promote the Royal Giants as the premier traveling club in the country. An article that appeared in the St. Alban's Daily Messenger (St. Albans, VT) had the following to say about the Brooklyn Royal Giants.

“Crowds threaten to break all attendance records from every reliable indication and will pack Coats Field tomorrow to witness the premier traveling semi-pro club of the United States, the Brooklyn Royal Giants, colored baseball champions of the world. Coming here with one of the most remarkable records ever achieved by any team in the country over a period of several years. Cannonball Redding and Speed Holland pre-eminently the world's premier pair of colored pitchers....When the romance of baseball is written this club will occupy a most prominent and interesting chapter.”



Willis "Pud" Flourney

The 1928 Royal Giants' team was led by the hitting of Charles "Chino" Smith (.371 with a .686 slugging percentage). Even though Smith was a great hitter, his volatile personality made him extremely difficult to manage. An example of this occurred in 1928 when Chino broke a bat over an umpire's head when he got what he thought was a bad call. It is unclear what if any disciplinary action was taken.

Namon Washington (.300), Elias "Country" Brown (.289) and Irvin Brooks (.286) also has very good seasons at the plate for the Royal Giants in 1928. The pitching staff for Brooklyn in 1928 included Willis "Pud" Flourney, Bill Holland, Otis "Lefty" Starks, Andrew "String Bean" Williams and Dick Redding. Redding was also the player-manager of the team.

After the 1928 regular season the Brooklyn Royal Giants took on a combined team from the Bustin' Babes (Babe Ruth's barnstorming team) and Larrupin' Lou's (Lou Gehrig's barnstorming team). The game was played in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

On January 15, 1929 Eastern team owners met at the Citizens Republican Club in Philadelphia and formed the American Negro League. Nat Strong was invited to the meeting but did not attend. Perhaps the reason that Nat did not attend the meeting was that he would not provide a home field for his team and that would have been a major obstacle for playing in the newly formed American Negro League.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants were considered by many as the top team in the East but did not play in the “new” league. The Royal Giants under the ownership of Nat Strong and with Dick Redding as their manager continued to play a successful independent schedule during the 1929 baseball season.



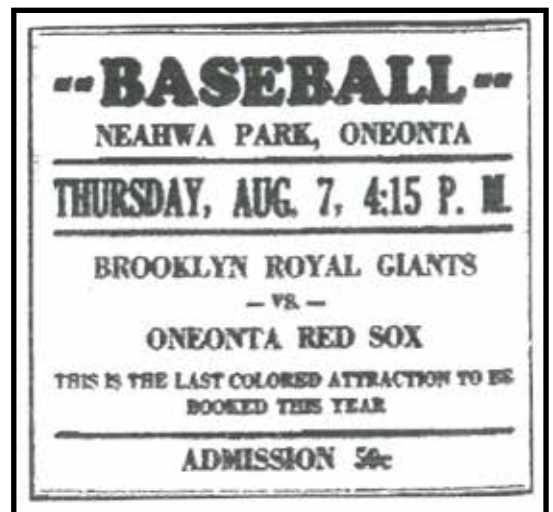
Oliver “The Ghost” Marcelle
Brooklyn Royal Giants

The 1930 season for the Brooklyn Royal Giants got off to a rocky start when in May Hilldale owner Lloyd Thompson tried to lure Oliver Marcelle, Dick Seay and Otis Starks away from the Royal Giants. Thompson withdrew his contract offers to the three players when Nat Strong threatened severe retaliation if Thompson stole his players. It was never made public what Strong meant by retaliation but it was quite obvious that Thompson didn’t want to find out or go up against Strong.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants started the 1930 baseball season by conducting their spring training at Dexter Park (Queens, NY) and Baker Field (Columbia University). After ten days of spring training they opened the season against the Bay Parkways on April 15th. Brooklyn fielded a solid team that included: Irvin Brooks (OF), Elias “Country” Brown (OF), Robert Hudspeth (1B), Oliver “The Ghost” Marcelle (3B), Ted Page (OF), Dick Seay (SS) and Namon Washington (OF). Redding’s pitching staff included Bill Force, Bob McClure, John “Neck” Stanley, Otis “Lefty” Starks and Herb Thomas. Dick Redding who was Brooklyn’s player-manager also made periodic starts during the season especially when they were needed to bring bigger crowds to the stadium.

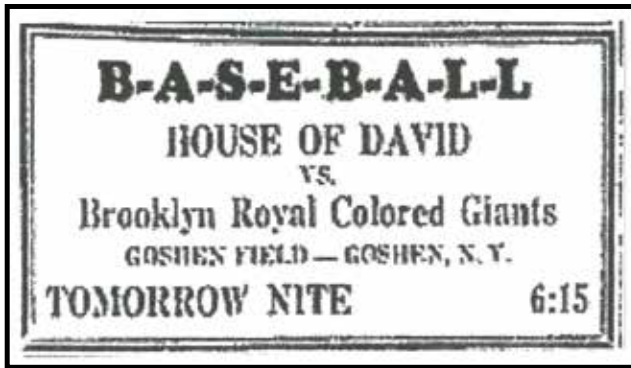
There was no league in the East during the 1930 baseball season. Like all the other teams in the East, Brooklyn played an independent schedule. Only a limited number of box scores have been found for the Brooklyn Royal Giants for the 1930 season. This small group of box scores that have been found up to this point is not enough to determine what level of team the Royal Giants were in 1930. According to Negro League researcher, Gary Ashwill, the Royal Giants were the sixth best team in the East for the 1930 season. The New York Lincoln Giants, Homestead Grays and Baltimore Black Sox were considered the best teams in the East for the 1930 season.

One of the highlights of the 1930 season for Nat Strong didn’t come in black baseball with the Brooklyn Royal Giants but in white baseball at Dexter Park. On July 23, 1930 night baseball was debuted at Dexter Park.



Oneonta Daily Star
08-06-30

Nat had originally not been in favor of installing lights primarily because of what it was going to cost but quickly changed his position when he saw how much the fans liked it and how they came out in droves for night baseball.



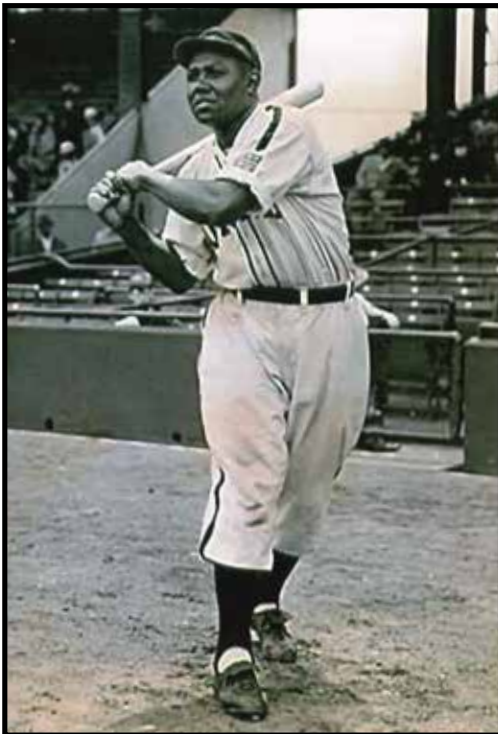
Middletown Times Herald

Middletown, NY
08-11-31

Brooklyn continued its independent schedule during the 1931 season. They appear to have been successful against lower level teams, but struggled against top level competition. According to Negro League researchers Larry Lester and Dick Clark, Brooklyn was 0-7 against top level teams. Top players on the 1931 team for Nat Strong's Royal Giants were Irvin Brooks (OF), Scrappy Brown (SS), Elias "Country" Brown (OF), Tom Fiall (3B), Ed "Huck" Rile (1B/P), Dick Seay (SS) and Namon Washington. Charles "Chino" Smith also played several games for the Royal Giants. The pitching staff was anchored by Ping Gardner, Wilbur Pritchett, Lefty Jackson and Dick Redding. Cannonball Redding was obviously well past his prime but he still has a good draw at the gate. The highlight of the 1931 season for the Royal Giants was a series they played against the House of David in New York.

The top teams in the East in 1931 were Hilldale (44-16) and the Homestead Grays (46-19). At best Nat Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants were the eighth best team in the East for the 1931 season. This didn't seem to bother Strong very much because he was booking games for the Royal Giants, they were playing just about every day and Nat was making money.

After two seasons with no formal black league in the East, several owners of black teams met at the Majestic Hotel in Cleveland (OH) and formed the East-West League. Nat chose not to attend the meeting and not to put his Brooklyn Royal Giants in the "league."



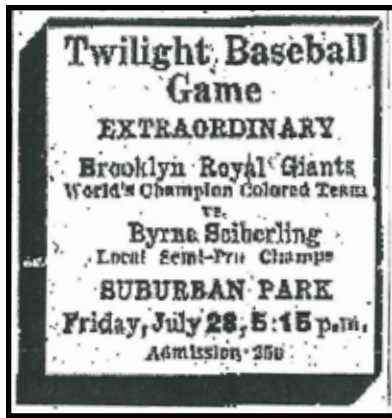
Walter "Buck" Leonard

Teams that played in the 1932 East-West League included the Baltimore Black Sox, Cleveland Stars, Cuban Stars, Detroit Wolves, Hilldale, Homestead Grays, Newark Browns, New York Black Yankees, Pittsburgh Crawfords and Washington Pilots. The East-West League only lasted one season.

Nat Strong and Dick Redding led the 1932 Brooklyn Royal Giants to a very successful season in 1932. They posted a won-loss record of 32-26 (.552) against top level competition during the season. The top players for the 1932 Royal Giants were "Homerun" Brooks and Elias "Country" Brown. Newspaper coverage of Dick Redding and the Brooklyn Royal Giants claim that Cannonball Redding had won at least thirty-five (35) games a year for the past five years. The media also compared Redding's fastball to that of Lefty Grove and Walter Johnson.

At the 1933 Negro National League meeting that was held in February in Indianapolis (IN), it was announced that Nat Strong and Eddie Gottlieb would book all games east of Pittsburgh for all of the Negro National League teams. This was quite an achievement for Nat Strong.

Nat Strong's Brooklyn Royal Giants' 1933 team included two rookies who went on to distinguished careers in the Negro Leagues. They were Gene Benson and Walter "Buck" Leonard. Buck and his brother Charles had been playing for the Baltimore

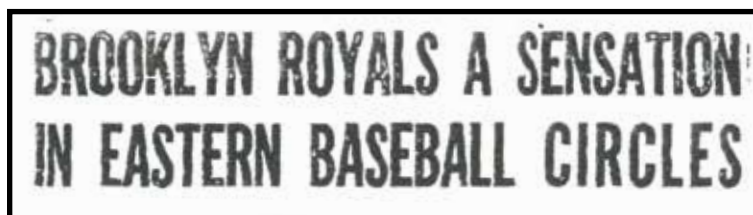


Syracuse Herald

Syracuse, NY
07-27-33

Stars when the team folded on the road. According to Buck the Royal Giants mainly played in and around New York City. They traveled in two automobiles, a seven passenger Pierce Arrow and a five passenger Cadillac. Leonard remembered playing a lot of county fairs during the time he was with the team. Buck Leonard got his shot as a starter when the Royal Giants' regular first base man Robert "Highpockets" Hudspeth had to leave the team and return home because he was suffering from tuberculosis. Besides Leonard and Benson, Brooklyn's roster also included several other quality ball players. Some of these players were Irvin Brooks (CF), Country Brown (3B), Chester "Buck" Buchanan (P), Goldie Cephus (2B), Highpockets Hudspeth (1B), James "Bobo" Leonard (OF), Ed "Huck" Rile (P/1B), Otis "Lefty" Starks (P) and Willie Williams (SS). According to Buck Leonard, Dick Redding also pitched occasionally for the Royal Giants.

Nat Strong continued to promote the Brooklyn Royal Giants as the "World's Champion Colored Team." During the 1933 season there was at least some element of truth to the billing. According to Gary Aswill and his Seamheads research team the 1933 Brooklyn Royal Giants were considered the best black baseball team in the East.



Newspaper Headline

The Chicago Defender
07-29-33

Prior to the start of the 1934 season Buck Leonard returned to New York City with the intention of playing for the Brooklyn Royal Giants but after a conversation with pitching legend Smokey Joe Williams, Buck tried out and was signed by the Homestead Grays. Nat Strong filled his roster out for the 1934 season with basically second tier level players and older players well beyond their prime. Some of the players Nat Strong signed for the 1934 season were Elias Country Brown (OF), Carlos (2B), Culver (3B), Robert Gaston (C), Lattimer (SS) and Huck Rile (1B).

The pitching staff for Strong included former Negro League star Luther Farrell as the ace of the Brooklyn Royal Giants pitching staff and veteran Otis "Lefty" Starks. Cannonball Redding continued to make spot starts for his team in 1934. In May of 1934 Redding pitched a three hitter against the Brooklyn Farmers to pick up the win.

Nat Strong continued to promote his Brooklyn Royal Giants as the "World's Champion Colored Team." As they had done for years, the Brooklyn Royal Giants played the majority of their games on an independent schedule during the 1934 season, but they also joined the Central New York Semi-Pro League for the second half of the 1934 season. Other teams in the league included the All Cortland's, Auburn Falcons, Auburn Imps, Chappie Johnson's Negro All Stars of Watertown, Oswego Zetts, Syracuse Learburys and Syracuse Marksons.

During the 1934 season Nat Strong also booked games for the New York Black Yankees of which he was supposedly a part owner when he provided financing for the team. The principle owners of the Black Yankees were racketeer James “Soldier Boy” Semler and entertainer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. Strong’s financial support for the New York Black Yankees reportedly came when he and African American night club owner M.E. Goodson provided an infusion of cash when the team’s original financial backers Marty Folkins (Bill Robinson’s manager) and John Powers dropped their financial support. The lack of a home field in New York City made it hard for the Black Yankees to compete in the Negro National League of which they were an associate member. The New York Black Yankees played most of their home games at Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, New Jersey during the 1934 season.



New York Black Yankees



Nat Strong – Real Estate Magnate

Around 1900 Nat Strong purchased the New York World Building which was located at 99 Park Row in New York City. Construction of the twenty (20) story sky scrapper which was designed by George Browne Post was completed in 1890. Originally it served as the headquarters for The New York World newspaper which was owned by Joseph Pulitzer. For five years it was the tallest building in New York City. The New York World Building was also called the Pulitzer Building.

Strong operated his sports promotion business from his offices in the World Building until his death in January of 1935.

The World Building
99 Park Row
New York City, NY

Passing of Nathaniel Strong

Nat Strong, Long Baseball Power, Buried in N. Y.

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. — Nathaniel (Nat) C. Strong, white, for many years a familiar figure in baseball, died at his home here Thursday afternoon, following a heart attack and was buried Sunday in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn.

Strong, who last Friday celebrated his sixty-first birthday, was the owner of the Brooklyn Royal Giants, long a fixture in colored baseball, and was interested as part-owner or booking agent in a number of other clubs.

Foe of Organization

Long an avowed foe of organized baseball, Strong was for years the story-petrel of the diamond pastime in the East and while some club owners opposed his methods, they nevertheless found themselves eventually operating under the Strong banner.

While it was consistently denied, a report persisted that Strong, who booked the New York Black Yankees, was financially interested in the club. He was also reported to have an interest in a team of touring Cuban ball players. His Bushwick team, white, played many games with colored clubs, and the fact that Dexter Park, home of the Bushwicks, was usually packed upon these occasions attests to the late mogul's business acumen.

Strong was also a pioneer in night baseball, electrifying his park in 1930. Last season more than 20,000 fans saw a night game between the Bushwicks and the New York Giants.

He booked games for such teams as the Pittsburgh Crawfords, Baltimore Black Sox, Philadelphia Stars and others from his offices in the Pulitzer Building, where he was quartered for more than thirty-five years.

His wife and four daughters survive.

Nathaniel C. Strong passed away at his home in New Rochelle (NY) in January of 1935 after suffering a heart attack. Strong had just celebrated his 61st birthday.

He was survived by his wife and four daughters.

Nat was laid to rest in the Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.



Nathaniel C. Strong
(1874-1935)

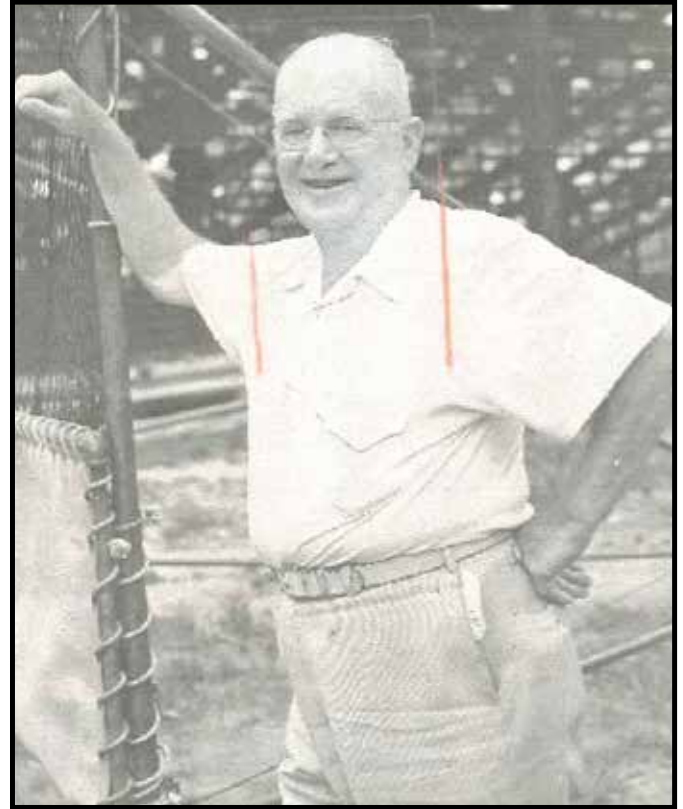
Baltimore Afro-American
01-19-35

Postscript to Strong's Sports Empire

After Nat Strong's death, his booking agency was taken over by Max Rosner and William Leuschner. Rosner and Leuschner did not change the name of the sports promotion and booking agency; it remained "Nat C. Strong Baseball Enterprises." The agency continued until the late 1940's or early 1950's. The duo of Leuschner and Rosner never did have the power and control of baseball in the East that Nat Strong had achieved.



Nate C. Strong Baseball Enterprises
Envelope
11-11-41



Max Rosner

The Brooklyn Royal Giants also continued to play an independent baseball schedule until at least 1942. In their final years, the Royal Giants who had once been a baseball headliner were reduced to a second tier club. With Strong's passing, Max Rosner became the sole owner of the Brooklyn Bushwicks. The Bushwicks played their final season in 1951.



Brooklyn Royal Giants
(c. 1940's)

Brooklyn Royal Giants Won-Loss Records

To date only a very small percentage of the games and won-loss records for the Brooklyn Royal Giants games have been uncovered. The mediocre won-loss record does support the contention that Nat Strong was more about making money than fielding a strong team and winning ball games.

Year	Team	League	Won	Lost	Pct.	Place
1914	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	14	19	.424	-
1915	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	4	2	.667	-
1916	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	15	10	.600	-
1917	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	17	12	.586	-
1918	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	15	15	.500	-
1919	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	6	12	.333	-
1920	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	34	26	.567	-
1921	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	5	8	.385	-
1922	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	5	2	.714	-
1923	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	18	18	.500	3 rd
1923	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	20	2	.909	-
1924	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	16	26	.381	6 th
1924	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	7	1	.875	-
1925	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	13	20	.394	5 th
1925	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	11	9	.550	-
1926	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	7	20	.259	7 th
1926	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	17	9	.654	-
1927	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	15	31	.326	7 th
1927	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	4	2	.667	-
1928	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Eastern Colored League	4	6	.400	-
1928	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	6	9	.400	-
1929	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	5	2	.714	-
1930	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	5	5	.500	-
1931	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	2	9	.182	-
1932	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	32	26	.552	-
1933	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	9	1	.900	-
1934	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Independent	1	2	.333	-
1934	Brooklyn Royal Giants	Central New York Semi-Pro League	-	-	-	-
Total			307	304	.502	-

(Note – Records for the Brooklyn Royal Giants presented here are in no way considered to be complete.)



Ridgewood Grounds
Home of the Brooklyn Royal Giants

Selected Career Highlights

- During his career Nat Strong was the most powerful sports promoter and booking agent on the East Coast.
- Nat Strong started his baseball career as the owner of the Murray Hills baseball team and the Ridgewoods. Both of these were white semi-professional teams that played primarily in the New York City area.
- In 1906 Nat Strong helped form the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba (NACBC). Nat served as the secretary-business manager of the organization. He also controlled scheduling and game bookings for the NACBC.
- He served as the president for the Intercity Association in New York City.
- Strong and Max Rosner owned the Brooklyn Bushwicks and Dexter Park. The Brooklyn Bushwicks were considered the best semi-professional team in the country.
- Nat owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants. He also was a part owner, an officer or controlled the Bay Parkways, Cuban Stars, Philadelphia Giants and New York Black Yankees.
- In late September of 1920 the Brooklyn Royal Giants defeated the Cuban Stars for the title of “Colored World’s Champions.”
- According to Gary Aswill and his Seamheads research team in 1922 and 1933 the Brooklyn Royal Giants were considered the best black baseball team in the East.
- Along with Ed Bolden of Hilldale, Strong was instrumental in founding the Eastern Colored League in 1923.
- In 1928 Nat Strong and Max Rosner tried to buy the Brooklyn Robins of the National League.
- Nat Strong and Max Rosner pioneered night baseball in New York City by installing lights at Dexter Park in 1930. Night baseball debuted at Dexter Park on July 23, 1930.
- Nathaniel Strong owned the World Building which was one of the tallest sky scrapers in New York City.
- When Nat Strong passed away his baseball legacy lived on. His sports promotion business, booking agency, the Brooklyn Royal Giants and the Brooklyn Bushwicks all remained very active. This was done primarily through the leadership of his partner Max Rosner and William Leuschner.
- Nat Strong was without question an “Early Pioneer of Black Baseball in America.”

Brooklyn Bushwicks (1916)

In 1916 Nat Strong became part owner of the Brooklyn Bushwicks along with Max Rosner. The Brooklyn Bushwicks were considered one of the premier semi-professional baseball teams. They played a very high level of baseball on the field and were extremely profitable.



Brooklyn Bushwicks (1916)
Dexter Park
Queens, NY

(Nat Strong – standing first on right)