

# This Day in History... December 9, 1930

## Death of Rube Foster

Andrew "Rube" Foster died on December 9, 1930. Known as the "Father of Black Baseball," he created the Negro National League, the first major professional baseball league for African American athletes.

Born on September 17, 1879, in Calvert, Texas, Foster was the son of a minister at the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Foster started playing professional baseball when he was 18 with the independent black team, the Waco Yellow Jackets. He moved to the Hot Springs Arlingtons in 1901 and then the Chicago Union Giants in 1902. By that time, he was well-known as a talented pitcher.

Foster earned his nickname, "Rube" between 1902 and 1905. During a postseason exhibition game, he out-pitched Philadelphia Athletics pitcher Rube Waddell. Subsequent newspaper articles referred to Foster as Rube, and the nickname stuck.

In 1904, Foster went to the Philadelphia Giants and had a great season. He won 20 games, lost six, and pitched two no-hitters. He also batted .400 and helped the team win that year's championship. The next season he went 25-3 and the team won the championship again. The *Philadelphia Telegraph* remarked, "Foster has never been equaled in a pitcher's box."

In 1907, Foster was made playing manager of the Chicago Leland Giants. The team went 110-10, including 48 straight wins. Foster took control of the team in 1910 and put together what he considered the best team of his career. They went 123-6, with Foster's record that year going 13-2. In 1911, the team became the Chicago American Giants and went on to win the western black championship four years in a row.

Over the next few years, Foster pitched less frequently, making his final pitching appearance in 1917. During these years, there were also some arguments between the teams over who earned league titles, leading some to call for a united black baseball league.

In 1920, Foster met with several other Negro baseball team owners at the YMCA in Kansas City. When the meeting concluded, Foster introduced the Negro National League by proclaiming, "We are the ship, all else the sea."

Foster said his goal for forming a Negro League was "to create a profession that would equal the earning capacity of any other profession... and do something concrete for the loyalty of the Race." Foster backed that up by paying his players a minimum salary of \$175 a month – at a time when the average monthly salary in America was \$103.

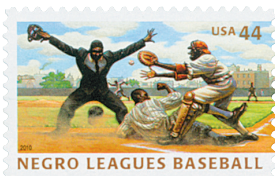
Foster worked 15-hour days to keep the league running. To ensure payrolls were met on time, Rube advanced loans to other owners out of his own pocket. He also shifted players within the league to ensure equal competition between teams. Foster wanted black players to be ready when integration finally came. He routinely spoke to players, telling them to always play at the highest level of excellence.

By 1926, Foster grew increasingly paranoid and began carrying a gun. He experienced several delusions, including the belief he would be called to pitch in the World Series at any moment. Part way through the 1926 season, was institutionalized in Kankakee, Illinois. He never recovered and died there on December 9, 1930. Thousands turned out for his Chicago funeral, including "an overflow crowd of 3,000 people who 'stood in the snow and rain.'" When his funeral ended, his coffin was closed "at the usual hour a ballgame ends."

The league suffered without Foster there to lead it and it was disbanded in 1931. Foster devoted his life to Negro baseball and to the uplifting of the sport as well as his race. Although Foster was not alive to see it, his dream of integration in baseball came true in 1947, when Jackie Robinson took the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers.



*Foster was one of the best African American pitchers of the first decade of the 1900s.*



*Every year, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum hosts an Andrew "Rube" Foster Lecture in September.*



*Foster was the first person from the Negro leagues elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame as a pioneer or executive.*



*Satchel Paige was one of the top stars of the Negro Leagues.*



*Robinson was the first baseball player honored with his own stamp.*

# This Day in History... December 9, 1930

## Death of Rube Foster

Andrew “Rube” Foster died on December 9, 1930. Known as the “Father of Black Baseball,” he created the Negro National League, the first major professional baseball league for African American athletes.

Born on September 17, 1879, in Calvert, Texas, Foster was the son of a minister at the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Foster started playing professional baseball when he was 18 with the independent black team, the Waco Yellow Jackets. He moved to the Hot Springs Arlingtons in 1901 and then the Chicago Union Giants in 1902. By that time, he was well-known as a talented pitcher.

Foster earned his nickname, “Rube” between 1902 and 1905. During a postseason exhibition game, he out-pitched Philadelphia Athletics pitcher Rube Waddell. Subsequent newspaper articles referred to Foster as Rube, and the nickname stuck.

In 1904, Foster went to the Philadelphia Giants and had a great season. He won 20 games, lost six, and pitched two no-hitters. He also batted .400 and helped the team win that year’s championship. The next season he went 25-3 and the team won the championship again. The *Philadelphia Telegraph* remarked, “Foster has never been equaled in a pitcher’s box.”

In 1907, Foster was made playing manager of the Chicago Leland Giants. The team went 110-10, including 48 straight wins. Foster took control of the team in 1910 and put together what he considered the best team of his career. They went 123-6, with Foster’s record that year going 13-2. In 1911, the team became the Chicago American Giants and went on to win the western black championship four years in a row.

Over the next few years, Foster pitched less frequently, making his final pitching appearance in 1917. During these years, there were also some arguments between the teams over who earned league titles, leading some to call for a united black baseball league.

In 1920, Foster met with several other Negro baseball team owners at the YMCA in Kansas City. When the meeting concluded, Foster introduced the Negro National League by proclaiming, “We are the ship, all else the sea.”

Foster said his goal for forming a Negro League was “to create a profession that would equal the earning capacity of any other profession... and do something concrete for the loyalty of the Race.” Foster backed that up by paying his players a minimum salary of \$175 a month – at a time when the average monthly salary in America was \$103.

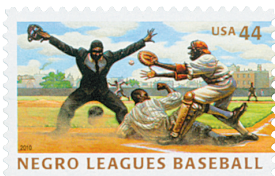
Foster worked 15-hour days to keep the league running. To ensure payrolls were met on time, Rube advanced loans to other owners out of his own pocket. He also shifted players within the league to ensure equal competition between teams. Foster wanted black players to be ready when integration finally came. He routinely spoke to players, telling them to always play at the highest level of excellence.

By 1926, Foster grew increasingly paranoid and began carrying a gun. He experienced several delusions, including the belief he would be called to pitch in the World Series at any moment. Part way through the 1926 season, was institutionalized in Kankakee, Illinois. He never recovered and died there on December 9, 1930. Thousands turned out for his Chicago funeral, including “an overflow crowd of 3,000 people who ‘stood in the snow and rain.’” When his funeral ended, his coffin was closed “at the usual hour a ballgame ends.”

The league suffered without Foster there to lead it and it was disbanded in 1931. Foster devoted his life to Negro baseball and to the uplifting of the sport as well as his race. Although Foster was not alive to see it, his dream of integration in baseball came true in 1947, when Jackie Robinson took the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers.



*Foster was one of the best African American pitchers of the first decade of the 1900s.*



*Every year, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum hosts an Andrew “Rube” Foster Lecture in September.*



*Foster was the first person from the Negro leagues elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame as a pioneer or executive.*



*Satchel Paige was one of the top stars of the Negro Leagues.*



*Robinson was the first baseball player honored with his own stamp.*