

THE MOVEMENT
JACKIE ROBINSON

Points of Interest

As seen in the 360-degree demo video



Jackie Robinson (#42)

When he stepped onto the grass at Ebbets Field on April 15th, 1947, Jack Roosevelt Robinson became the first African American to play in modern Major League Baseball.

He was born on January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia to sharecropper parents. The family moved to Pasadena, California in 1920, where Jack eventually attended UCLA. As a student, he played football, basketball, track, and baseball—the last of which was his worst sport.

Jackie went on to serve in the Army as a lieutenant during the Second World War, but he faced a court-martial after he refused a racist demand to move to the back of an army bus. He was acquitted and honorably discharged from the Army in late 1944, returning to sports: football, basketball, and, finally, baseball.

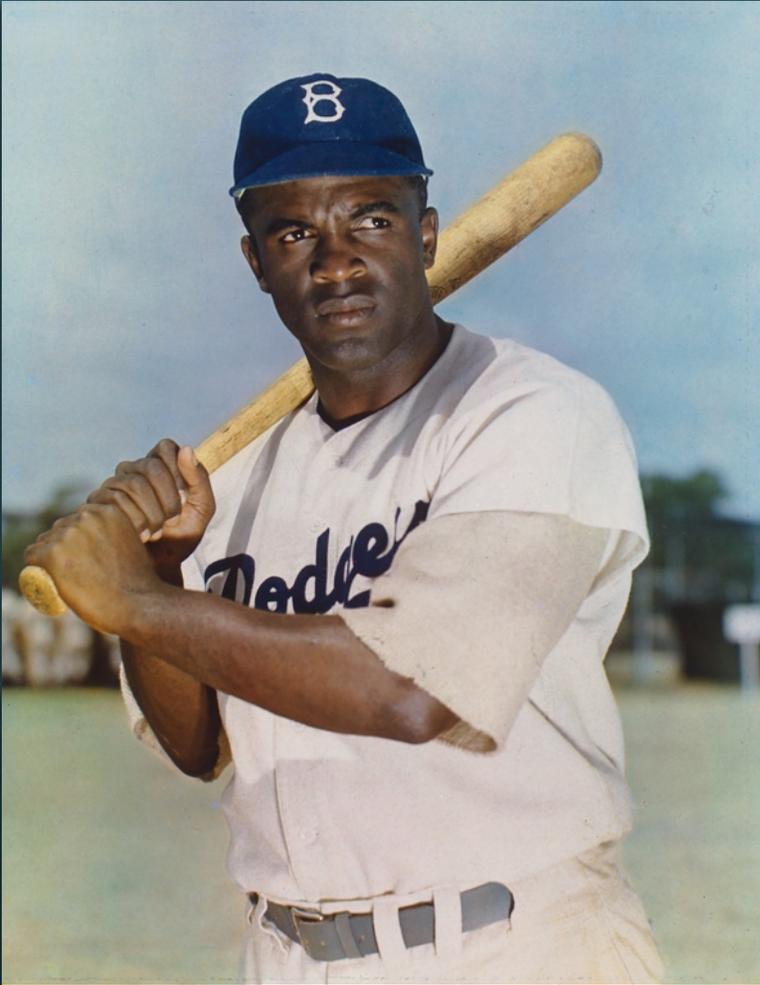
After playing for the Negro League's Kansas City Monarchs in 1945, he was signed to play for the Montreal Royals, the Dodgers' minor league affiliate team. With the Royals, Robinson won the Most Valuable Player award in 1946, leading them to a championship-winning season.

On April 11th, 1947, Jackie Robinson officially signed to play with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He debuted four days later on Opening Day, April 15th, playing first base. While he went hitless that game, he reached on an error and scored the Dodgers' go-ahead run in the seventh inning. The Dodgers went on to win the game, 5-3. History was made.

Over the course of his 10-year career with the Dodgers, Jackie won the 1947 Rookie of the Year Award, the 1949 Most Valuable Player Award, and was a six-time All Star.

In 1962, six years after Jackie retired from baseball, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. After retirement, he spent much of his time dedicated to the success of the Civil Rights Movement. He raised money for bail funds by hosting jazz concerts at his home in Connecticut, chaired the NAACP's Freedom Fund Drive, and participated in the 1963 March on Washington.

Jackie Robinson passed away in 1972 at the age of 53. In his memory, his wife Rachel founded the Jackie Robinson Foundation, which provides scholarships and mentorship programs for minority youth. Every year, Major League Baseball celebrates Jackie Robinson Day on April 15th to commemorate his legacy as a leader and a role model for all.

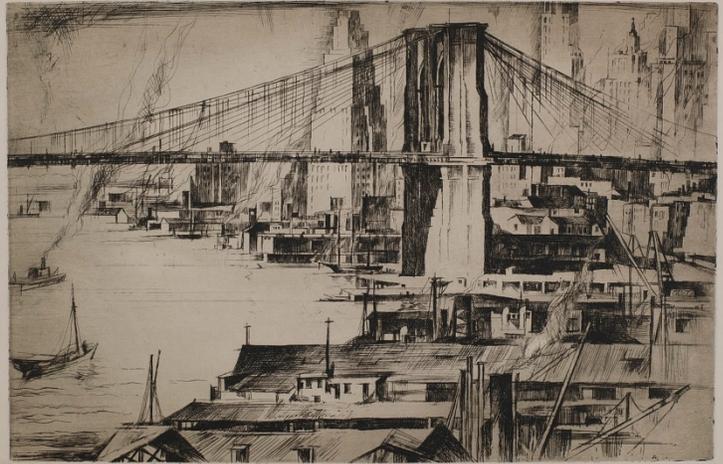


Jackie Robinson



Brooklyn, New York

By the 1940s, Brooklyn was relatively diverse, many of its residents being Italian American and Irish American immigrants, African American, and Jewish, among many other ethnic groups. One thing that united all Brooklynites was their mutual adoration of the Dodgers, who they affectionately nicknamed “Dem Bums”. Children in all of Brooklyn’s neighborhoods played stickball in the streets—baseball was an integral part of the local culture.

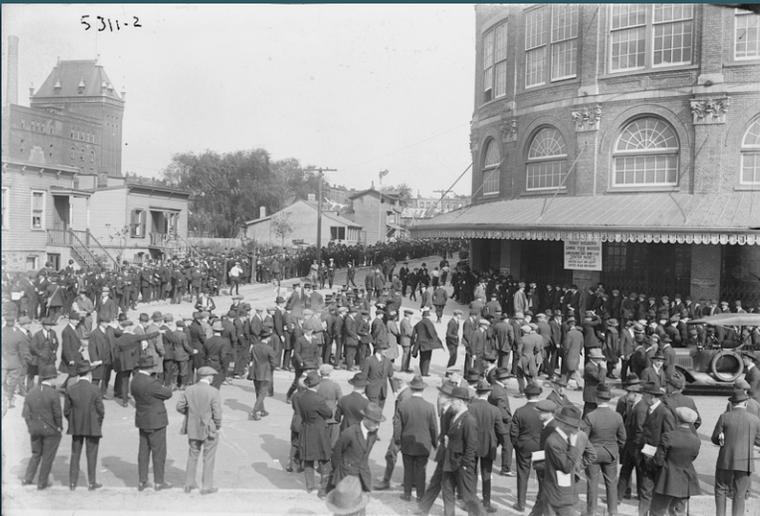


The Brooklyn Bridge



Ebbets Field Stadium

Ebbets Field was built in 1913, a period when baseball teams across the country were improving their venues to accommodate growing numbers of fans. For 47 years, the stadium was called home not only by the Dodgers, but also by five different professional American football teams. In 1960, two years after the Brooklyn Dodgers relocated to Los Angeles, Ebbets Field was torn down. The stadium’s front façade remains iconic to this day—its design was replicated by Citi Field, the New York Mets’ home stadium.



Crowd outside Ebbets Field before Game 1 of the 1920 World Series



Ebbets Field Rotunda

Ebbets Field’s main entrance was a grand rotunda which was 27 feet high and 80 feet in diameter. The walls were made of Italian-imported marble and the tile floors were embellished with a large baseball motif. For many visitors in the early 20th century, this may have been the most majestic structure they had encountered. The rotunda’s most recognizable feature was an ornate chandelier suspended several feet below the ceiling. Its design featured twelve spherical lights decorated like baseballs, each hanging from one of twelve baseball bats.



The Ebbets Field rotunda as seen in THE MOVEMENT: JACKIE ROBINSON



Ebbets Field Scoreboard

The sign atop the scoreboard still had not been replaced by Opening Day, as it still featured an advertisement from the previous year. The Ebbets Field scoreboard featured a unique billboard at its base from Abe Stark, a local clothier. It read “Hit Sign, Win Suit”—a feat that was only accomplished a handful of times after the sign was installed in 1931. Additionally, this scoreboard later became more recognizable after a Schaefer Beer sign was placed on top: the “h” and “e” would light up depending on whether a play was scored as a hit or an error.



#42 at the plate in *THE MOVEMENT*: JACKIE ROBINSON



Playing Field

Like most other ballparks of its era—such as Boston’s Fenway Park and Chicago’s Wrigley Field—Ebbets Field also featured its host of unique measurements and oddities. In 1947, the left field and right field foul poles were 343 and 297 feet from home plate, respectively. A pocket was formed in right-center field where the outfield seats ended and merged with the right field wall. This was the deepest part of the field, measuring 403 feet from home plate. In fact, the entire right field wall was a tricky obstacle for players unfamiliar with its sloped surfaces, as balls would bounce off of it unpredictably.



A photo from the first game ever played at Ebbets Field: April 5, 1913



Ebbets Field Press Box

Up in the press box, radio and television broadcasters called the baseball game so that viewers at home would be able to understand how the plays were unfolding. Throughout Dodger history, fans have been blessed by the voices of such iconic announcers as Red Barber and Vin Scully. Barber, often referred to as “the old redhead”, was the primary announcer on Opening Day, 1947. As Jackie Robinson took the field, breaking the color barrier, Barber nonchalantly announced the news to the world: “Jackie is very definitely brunette.”



Broadcaster Red Barber

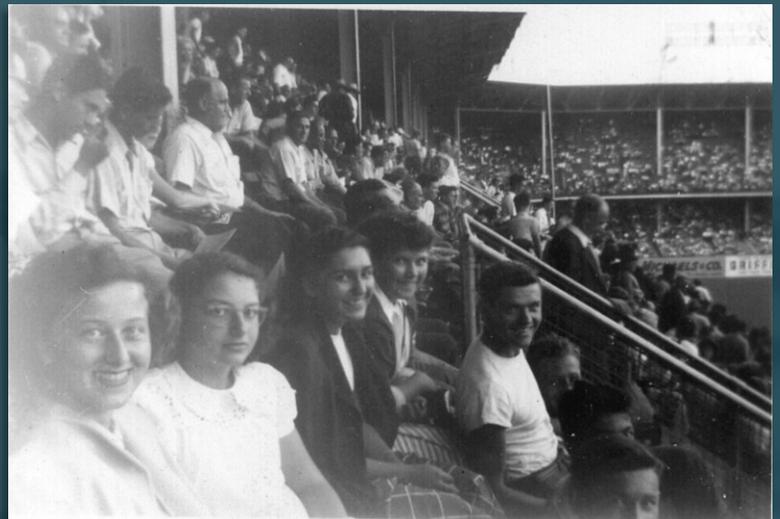


Vin Scully in the press box



Opening Day Crowd

26,623 people were in the stands for the first game of the Brooklyn Dodgers’ 1947 season, which was far below the estimated number of 35,000. The reason for this low turnout is debated: crowds may have been turned away by the reported hordes of attendees or by discomfort about Jackie Robinson’s presence, among many other reasons. Additionally, not only did the size of the crowd deviate from expectations, but so did the crowd’s racial diversity. Almost 60% were African American, dramatically higher than the usual 5-10%. From the stands, they cheered thunderously for Jackie Robinson every time he came to the plate. Among the crowd behind home plate were Rachel Robinson, Jackie’s wife, and five-month-old Jack Robinson, Jr.



A group of friends attend a game at Ebbets Field on September 3rd, 1948



Brooklyn Dodgers

1947 was another year of continued Dodger success in baseball's National League. That year, the team would win the pennant and make it to the World Series, a feat which was greatly aided by Jackie Robinson's dominant Rookie of the Year season. From 1947 to 1957, the team's final year in Brooklyn, they made six World Series appearances. The team would only win the title once, in 1955, before the move to Los Angeles. Besides Jackie, other key players on the 1947 roster included Ralph Branca, Dixie Walker, Eddie Stanky, and Pete Reiser, as well as future Hall of Famers Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider, and Arky Vaughan.



Brooklyn Dodgers team of 1947



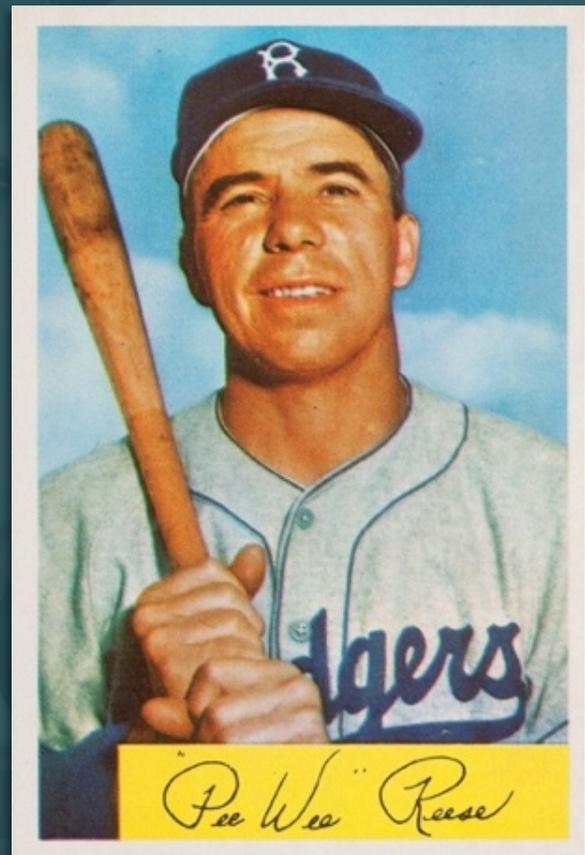
Clyde Sukeforth (#40)

Watching supportively from the Dodger dugout was manager Clyde Sukeforth, who had played a large role in persuading Jackie to sign with the Brooklyn Dodgers. In his entire career with the Dodgers, Sukeforth was primarily a scout and coach, only ever managing two games: April 15th and 17th, 1947. On Opening Day, he was actually an emergency replacement for the Dodgers' regular manager, Leo Durocher, who had been suspended just days before. Sukeforth and Jackie would remain lifelong friends.



Pete Reiser (#7)

Standing close behind Jackie in the on-deck circle was Pete Reiser, the Dodgers' center fielder. He was a three-time All Star, but his frequent self-endangerment for the sake of making a play led to a career full of injuries, some of them life-threatening. "Pistol Pete," as he was nicknamed, made two hits and walked twice on Opening Day. Although today we recognize the game for Jackie's debut, most newspapers on April 16th highlighted Reiser's performance while neglecting to mention Jackie's significance, in order to not upset their white readership.

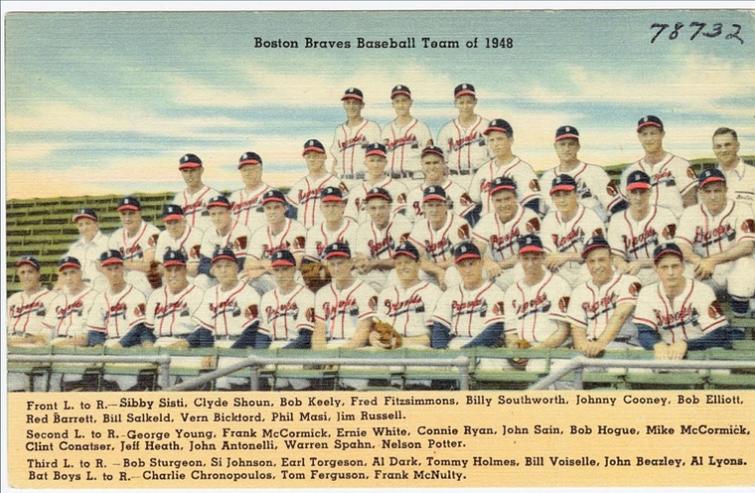


Pee Wee Reese on a 1954 trading card



Boston Braves

On Opening Day, 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers faced the Boston Braves. Like the Dodgers, the Braves would later relocate—first to Milwaukee in 1953, then to Atlanta in 1966. Though the 1947 Braves ended up placing third in the National League, the 1948 team won the pennant but lost the World Series against the Cleveland Indians. They were managed by Billy Southworth, a future Hall of Fame inductee. Key players on the team included Johnny Sain, Bob Elliott, Phil Masi, and future Hall of Famer Warren Spahn, the famous left-handed pitcher.



Boston Braves team of 1948



Johnny Sain (#33)

Right-handed pitcher Johnny Sain pitched six decent innings for the Braves on Opening Day. He was coming off of a fantastic 1946 season in which he led the league in complete games, won 20 games, and came in 5th in MVP voting—Sain was arguably the best pitcher in the National League that year. Still, the Braves lost the game, thanks in part to Jackie Robinson's speedy base running in the seventh inning.



Phil Masi (#10)

Phil Masi was coming off of two All Star seasons as Boston's primary catcher. He enjoyed continued success in 1947, which would become his best career season both offensively and defensively. Most famously, he was involved in a controversial play during the 1948 World Series against the Cleveland Indians in which he was called safe during a pickoff attempt—a call that was highly disputed by the opposing players, fans, and media. It wasn't until he died in 1990 that Masi admitted in his will of being tagged out.



Babe Pinelli

After playing eight seasons as a Major League third baseman, Babe Pinelli retired in 1927 to learn the art of umpiring. When he was hired by the National League in 1935, he became the first Italian American umpire in the Major Leagues. By 1947, he had established himself as a coolheaded and fair umpire. He would go on to be the home plate umpire during Don Larsen's perfect game in the 1956 World Series, which featured Larsen's New York Yankees against the Brooklyn Dodgers. Pinelli retired after the series ended. He was quoted as saying: "Why go on? I won't see a better pitched game. It's a perfect time to retire."



Pitchers Johnny Sain and Warren Spahn

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