

BLACKS, BASEBALL, AND COAL MINING IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA¹

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Abstract: In the 1930s, while the Depression raged, baseball ruled in the mill towns and coal patches of western Pennsylvania. Children spent their free time playing games with makeshift balls, gloves, and bats on fields and hillsides across the region. Men, and occasionally women, played in leagues which grew out of places of employment, worship or recreation. In isolated coal towns, baseball was a major source of entertainment for miners, whether black or white, native or immigrant. This presentation will explore the importance of baseball as a unifying and Americanizing force for miners of diverse ethnic and racial groups and the unique story of the Ernest Grays, an African American baseball team from Ernest, Pennsylvania.

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