

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO)

ACIPCO Dominates the Birmingham Industrial League

From the 1920's through the 1940's American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) was the most dominate team in the Birmingham Industrial League and produced some of the greatest teams in the history of semi-professional baseball in the United States.

During this time period, the ACIPCO Pipemen won nine (9) straight Birmingham Industrial League championships from 1928 to 1936.

Over a sixteen (16) year period from 1928 to 1943, American Cast Iron and Pipe won fourteen (14) Birmingham Industrial League titles. Only Stockham Valves and Fittings in 1937 and 1938 (when they brought pitcher Mute Banks from Atlanta) could take the "league" title from American Cast Iron and Pipe. ACIPCO was still extremely competitive both of these years and came in second place each of these seasons.

ACIPCO played their home games at Sloss Field in Birmingham.

Industrial League baseball was extremely popular in Birmingham and it was not uncommon for a key game to draw 10,000 to 12,000 fans especially if ACIPCO was playing their arch rival Stockham Valves and Fittings

Birmingham Industrial League Champions (1928-1949)

Year	Champion	Record
1928	ACIPCO	
1929	ACIPCO	
1930	ACIPCO	
1931	ACIPCO	
1932	ACIPCO	
1933	ACIPCO	
1934	ACIPCO	
1935	ACIPCO	83-6 (.934)
1936	ACIPCO	
1937	Stockham	
1938	Stockham	
1939	ACIPCO	
1940	ACIPCO	
1941	ACIPCO	
1942	ACIPCO	49-1 (.980)
1943	ACIPCO	47-4 (.922)
1946	ACIPCO	57-11 (.838)
1949	ACIPCO	35-7 (.833)

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1935)

One of the first truly great teams of American Cast Iron and Pipe was their 1935 squad who compiled an amazing record of 83-6 (.934) during the regular season and went 2-0 against the Birmingham Black Barons in post season play.

When the season started in March, team manager Robert Bolden knew he had a special squad and that he had the best pitching staff in the South and a line-up that could score runs.

The leading hitters for the 1935 ACIPCO squad as reported in the ACIPCO News in their June edition were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Walter Calhoun	.625	V.R. Gardner	.400
Earl Little	.500	Robert Bolden	.392
Ivory Scott	.500	Parker Austin	.392
Felix Manning	.478	Waldo Dudley	.285
Harris Moseley	.470	William Howard	.264
James Williams	.444	Coleman Forrest	.200
Ed Steele	.416	Carter Gaston	.111
Hubert Pigrom	.411		

ACIPCO dominated their opponents all season. Besides playing all the teams in the Birmingham Industrial League they played any and all teams who would take the field with them.

During the season the hitters produced at the plate, but their real key to success was an amazing pitching staff that included:

Player	Won-Loss Record
Earl Little	18-1
Walter Calhoun	17-0
Carter Gaston	16-2
V.R. Gardener	13-1
Coleman Forrest	12-0
Walter James	6-1
Walter Davis	1-1

The ACIPCO squad capped off a brilliant season during the first week of October by taking a doubleheader over the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro Southern League. ACIPCO won the first game 13-8 and then to add insult to injury they shut out the Negro Leaguers by a score of 6-0 in the second game.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1936)

Struggling through an injury plagued season in 1936, Manager V. R. Gardner led the ACIPCO Pipemen to another Birmingham Industrial League title.

Ed Steele, Waldo Dudley, Ivory Scott and Hubert Pigrom led the team in hitting during the 1936 season.

When the season was on the line, Carter “White Rose” Gaston pitched 22 consecutive scoreless innings.

During the season their main competition came from the Ensley Steel Giants. At the conclusion of the season the two teams met in the Birmingham Industrial League Play-off Championship Series. ACIPCO won both games in the play-off series that was held at Rickwood Field.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1937)

Robert Bolden took over as manager of ACIPCO before the start of the 1937 season. Unfortunately for Bolden, the ACIPCO Pipemen suffered through an injury plagued season in 1937. ACIPCO's starting line-up appeared in only 20 of the 61 games the team played. Even with all the injury problems, ACIPCO posted an impressive record of 45-15-1 (.750) for the season and finished in second place in the "league" behind Stockham.

The leading hitters for ACIPCO for the 1937 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Ivory Scott	.419	Robert Bolden	.304
Artie Wilson	.364	William Howard	.289
Parker Austin	.356	Waldo Dudley	.274
Ed Steele	.329	Walter James	.262
James Williams	.323	Howard Smith	.225

Walter Calhoun and Earl Little anchored the pitching staff. George Bonner, Maxie Forge, Jesse Hollis and Carter Gaston also pitched for ACIPCO during 1937.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1938)

The 1938 Birmingham Industrial League season turned into a three team race between ACIPCO, Stockham and U.S. Steel.

The leading hitters for ACIPCO during the 1938 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Artie Wilson	.419	Robert Bolden	.346
Walter Calhoun	.413	Walter James	.333
Waldo Dudley	.390	Ivory Scott	.314
James Williams	.376	Jones	.310
Ed Steele	.375	Parker Austin	.287
William Howard	.374	Bennett	.283
Charlie Woodard	.372	Earl Little	.195

The pitching staff and their pitching records for the 1938 season for ACIPCO were:

Player	Games	Won	Lost	Strikeouts
Charlie Woodard	16	9	3	50
Earl Little	14	8	3	55
Walter Calhoun	10	6	4	36

Player	Games	Won	Lost	Strikeouts
Henry Newberry	9	5	2	62
Speck Forrest	5	4	1	25
Robert Bolden	4	2	0	9

One of the highlights of the season for the Birmingham Industrial League was a benefit game for the City Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs and Negro Boy’s Club. ACIPCO played against their arch rival Stockham which was played at Rickwood Field on Saturday, July 16th. The event drew a tremendous crowd of 7,377 paid admissions. Behind the brilliant pitching of “Mute” Banks, Stockham took the game by a score of 7-1.

Although the ACIPCO team was unable to win the Birmingham Industrial League championship they did post an impressive record of 14-6 (.700) which left them in second place behind “league” champion Stockham. ACIPCO compiled an overall record of 34-13 (.723) for the 1938 season.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1939)

ACIPCO returned to its championship form for the 1939 season. The Pipemen won the Birmingham Industrial League championship over strong rival teams from Stockham, Bessemer and Perfection Mattress.

The leading hitters for ACIPCO during the 1939 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Lorenzo Davis	.450	William Howard	.291
Jimmie Shamburger	.431	Walter James	.261
Artie Wilson	.411	Parker Austin	.241
James Williams	.381	Waldo Dudley	.211
Ed Steele	.300	Robert Bolden	.200

The turning point of the season for ACIPCO was a game played on June 3rd against Stockham at Sloss Field. Over 10,000 fans were in attendance to see Harry “School Boy” Simpson pitch ACIPCO to a 5-2 win over Stockham.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1940)

Behind a strong team that included future Negro League players Lorenzo “Piper” Davis, Gread Mc Kinnis, William Powell, Ed Steele and Artie Wilson, the 1940 ACIPCO team won its second straight Birmingham Industrial League championship.

The leading hitters for ACIPCO during the 1940 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Artie Wilson	.398	Waldo Dudley	.337
Lorenzo Davis	.388	Ed Steele	.325
Jimmie Shamburger	.388	Gread McKinnis	.318
William Howard	.358	Walter James	.281
Jim Williams	.345	Ishmael Taylor	.205

Newcomer Gread McKinnis was the ace of ACIPCO’s pitching staff. Earl Little, William Powell and Charles Woodard also continued to put in fine performances on the mound for the Pipemen during the 1940 Birmingham Industrial League season.

The deciding game that clinched the pennant for ACIPCO was a hard fought 8-7 victory over Stockham on August 24th at Sloss Field.

After the regular season, ACIPCO played an exhibition game against the All Stars at Sloss Field on Labor Day. A crowd of approximately 12,000 fans were on hand to see ACIPCO come away with a 9-6 victory.

**American Cast Iron and Pipe
Robert Bolden and Jim Williams
Receive Championship Trophy
(1940)**

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1941)

ACIPCO won its third straight Birmingham Industrial League championship in 1941. The leading hitters for ACIPCO during the 1941 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Artie Wilson	.446	Ed Steele	.336
Jim Williams	.377	Waldo Dudley	.297
Earl Little	.356	William Howard	.258
Lorenzo Davis	.352	Walter James	.256

William Powell was the ace of the pitching staff. Earl Little and Harry Simpson rounded out the starting rotation.

The feature game of the season for ACIPCO was played on July 26th against their arch rival Stockham. Behind the brilliant pitching of William Powell, ACIPCO defeated Stockham by a score of 4 to 1. Approximately 10,000 fans attended the game which was played at Sloss Field. The victory set the stage for ACIPCO capturing the Birmingham Industrial League title for the 1941 season.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO)

“Best Industrial League Team of All-Time” (1942)

ACIPCO continued to dominate the Birmingham Industrial League (BIL) in 1942. They were virtually unbeatable in both “league” and “non-league” action. The Pipemen won the BIL championship with an amazing record of 28-0 in “league” play and posted an overall record 49-1 (.950) for the season. During the course of the season ACIPCO won an unprecedented thirty-two (32) consecutive ball games.

What made this season even more remarkable was that both Stockham and U.S. Steel also had powerhouse teams and at the beginning of the season, both were picked above ACIPCO to win the Birmingham Industrial League title.

As a team ACIPCO was unbelievable when it came to hitting and scoring runs. At the end of the season they had a team batting average of .372. They had four starters on the team who hit over .400 for the season: Artie Wilson (“league “ leading .476), Ed

Steele (.470 with 11 homeruns), Lorenzo “Piper” Davis (.451 with 14 homeruns) and Waldo Dudley (.411 with 6 homeruns).

The starting line-up for ACIPCO during the 1942 season was as follows:

Position	Player	Avg.	Position	Player	Avg.
1B	James Williams	.292	OF	Ed Steele	.470
2B	Lorenzo Davis	.451	OF	Waldo Dudley	.400
SS	Artie Wilson	.476	OF	Walter James	.413
3B	Charles Perkins	.310	Utility	Clarence Warren	.350
C	Herman Bell	.351	P	Harry Simpson	.320
			P	Nate Pollard	.256

Nathaniel Pollard (20-1 with 12 shutouts) and Harry Simpson (13-0 with 4 shutouts) anchored the pitching staff for ACIPCO during the 1942 season. Jesse Rabze (9-0) and Earl Little (7-0) rounded out the starting rotation for the Pipemakers.

**Herman Bell
Catcher**

**Robert Gulley
Catcher**

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1943)

When the 1943 season started Robert Bolden, manager of ACIPCO, and his Pipemen picked right up where they had left off at the end of the 1942 season. ACIPCO finished the season with an outstanding record of 47-4 (.922) and won their fifth straight Birmingham Industrial League title.

Six of Bolden's players would go on to play in the Negro American League. These players were Artie Wilson (shortstop), Ed Steele (outfield), Lorenzo "Piper" Davis (second base), Herman Bell (catcher), Sam Hairston (third base) and Nate Pollard (pitcher).

The leading hitters for ACIPCO during the 1943 season were as follows:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Artie Wilson	.559	Jim Williams	.326
Ed Steele	.435	Sam Hairston	.313
Waldo Dudley	.386	Nate Pollard	.265
Earl Little	.377	Albert Bennett	.253
Herman Bell	.333	Matthew Jenkins	.250

Nathaniel Pollard (16-0) and Earl Little (13-0) were the team's top two pitchers and did not lose a game all season. Jesse Rabze (8-3), Harry Simpson (7-1), Lawrence Williams (2-0) and Robert Bolden (1-0) also pitched for ACIPCO during the 1943 season.

When the Birmingham Industrial League season ended on August 28th, ACIPCO had won the Red Division of the "league" with a record of 14-2 (.875). Their only two "league" losses were to L & N and Stockham. The Pipemen also went 33-2 (.943) in "non-league" games. Their two losses in what they called practice games were to Westfield and Ensley. When "league" and "non-league" games were added together, ACIPCO had a record of 47-4 (.922) for the 1943 season.

After the conclusion of the regular season, ACIPCO faced Sayreton, winners of the Blue Division in a two game play-off series at Sloss Field for the "league" championship. Nate Pollard won the first game by a score of 9-5 and Earl Little took the second game by a score of 8-2. The two victories gave ACIPCO the Birmingham Industrial League title.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO)

Players Exit to the Negro Leagues

Prior to the start of the 1944 season, ACIPCO saw the exodus of Herman Bell, Lorenzo Davis, Sam Hairston, Nathaniel Pollard, Ed Steele and Artie Wilson going to the Negro Leagues. Players leaving to go on to professional ball was not Manager Robert Bolden's only problem. Players like star pitchers Earl Little and Harry Simpson were getting older and would soon retire. Bolden was faced with having to rebuild his entire team.

New players like Warren Harris (first base), Fred Jones (pitcher), Shedrick "Shag" Jones (second base) and Charles Webster (outfield) would be signed and lead the ACIPCO Pipemen into the future of Birmingham Industrial League play.

The end to the dynasty of American Cast Iron and Pipe was coming to an end. ACIPCO would still field strong teams like the 1946 squad that won the Birmingham Industrial League crown with a "league" record of 17-3 (.850) and an overall won-loss record of 57-11 (.838).

ACIPCO would still be a proving ground for young ball players on their way up to professional ball. The 1946 and 1947 teams featured a young outfielder by the name of Frank Evans who would go on to play in the Negro Leagues and then embark on a career in “organized” ball that would span over forty (40) years. Also appearing on the 1947 ACIPCO roster was short stop Rufus Gibson who would go on to star for the Birmingham Black Barons in the Negro American League.

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1948)

By the mid to late 1940's, there started being more parity among the teams that played in the Birmingham Industrial League. In 1948 ACIPCO, National Cast Iron Pipe, Stockham and U.S. Pipe (Bessemer) all fielded very strong teams.

Manager Robert Bolden had five starters from his 1947 team return and brought in a group of young players with promising potential. Bolden got excellent hitting from his team all season. The top hitters for ACIPCO during the 1948 season were:

Player	Batting Average	Player	Batting Average
Robert Baldwin	.410	Robert Martin	.340
Shedrick Jones	.380	Matthew Jenkins	.305
T.J. Harris	.370	Holloway	.290
Jesse Wallace	.360	Willie Ivory	.260
Mitchell June	.351	James Williams	.230
James Larry	.341	Jesse Rabze	.160

As a team, the ACIPCO Pipemen posted a team batting average of .343 for the 1948 season.

Jesse Rabze, who went 10-6 (.625) for the season, was the ace of the pitching staff. James Howard, Willie Garner, (no first name) Jenkins and Robert Bolden also pitched for ACIPCO during the season.

Fans supported the ACIPCO team all season. The ACIPCO News reported in their July issue that 18,500 fans attended the seven games that ACIPCO played during the month of June. ACIPCO won five games and lost two during the month of June.

ACIPCO finished the season tied for second place with Stockham in the final Birmingham Industrial League standings. U.S. Pipe from Bessemer won the “league” championship at the end of the season. ACIPCO ended the season with a record of 14-6 (.700) in “league” play and 17-7 (.708) in “non-league” games. Their overall record for the season was a very impressive 31-13 (.704). In a season of rebuilding Robert Bolden, team manager, did an excellent job.

Mitchell June
ACIPCO
Third Base

Shedrick Jones
ACIPCO
Catcher

Robert Martin
ACIPCO
Outfield

American Cast Iron and Pipe (ACIPCO) (1949)

The American Cast Iron and Pipe baseball team returned to championship form during the 1949 Birmingham Industrial League season.

Team Manager Robert Bolden got unbelievable hitting the entire season. Every member of the starting line-up hit over .300 for the season.

Position	Player	Avg.	Position	Player	Avg.
1B	Robert Bolden	.362	OF	Mitchell June	.471
2B	Jesse Wallace	.327	OF	T. J. Harris	.432
SS	Willie Ivory	.381	OF	Robert Martin	.393
3B	James Laurry	.411			
C	Robert Andrews	.350	P	Matthew Jenkins	.354
C	Shedrick Jones	.329			

Outfielder Robert Martin also led the “league” in homeruns with twelve (12) and slugging percentage with a .807 average.

For the 1949 season the ACIPCO Pipemen compiled an unbelievable .376 team batting average.

The pitching staff for ACIPCO was led by Matthew Jenkins (13-2) and William Houser (12-3). Jenkins also led the team in strike outs with 96. William Garner (7-0) and Robert Bolden (2-1) also pitched for ACIPCO during the 1949 season.

Besides great hitting and spectacular pitching, Bolden's Pipemen also ran the bases extremely well. In 40 games the team had 100 stolen bases. Six (6) players on Bolden's squad each stole more than 11 bases for the 1949 season.

Like they had done in years past, ACIPCO drew big crowds whenever and wherever they played. According to the August edition of the ACIPCO News, the Pipemen drew 17,000 fans for the six (6) games they played during the month of July.

When the 1949 Birmingham Industrial League season ended on September 3rd, the ACIPCO Pipemen had captured the Birmingham Industrial League championship. They posted a 16-4 (.800) record in "league" games, went 2-0 (1.000) in the BIL play-offs, and compiled a won-loss record of 17-3 (.850) in "non-league" games. Their overall record for the 1949 season was an amazing 35-7 (.833).

The ACIPCO baseball team celebrated their championship with a trip to St. Louis (MO) to see the St. Louis Cardinals play the Brooklyn Dodgers.

**American Cast Iron and Pipe
Robert Bolden and Jim Williams
Receive Championship Trophy
(1949)**