

Forgotten Heroes:

Artie Wilson



by

Center for Negro League Baseball Research

Dr. Layton Revel

&

Luis Munoz

Birmingham Industrial League Champions



ACIPCO (1938)
(Artie – back row first on right)



ACIPCO (1939)
(Artie – seated second from right)

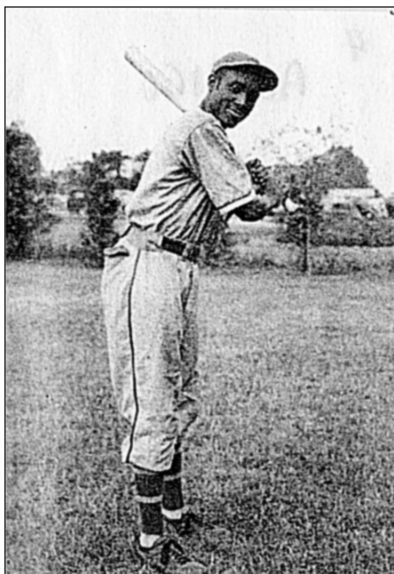
Arthur Lee “Artie” Wilson was born on October 28, 1920 in Springville (Jefferson County), Alabama. According to Artie, he taught himself how to hit as a youngster with a rubber ball and broomstick. As he got a little older he made baseballs by winding thread around a golf ball. Artie honed his baseball talents on the sandlots in and around Birmingham, Alabama.

Artie stood 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighed 160 pounds during his playing days. He batted from the left side and threw right handed. Artie played shortstop most of his career and is generally regarded as the best shortstop in black baseball during the five seasons he played in the Negro Leagues from 1944 to 1948.

Over his baseball career, Artie consistently hit over .300 everywhere he played. He frustrated opposing teams his whole career with his ability to hit the ball just out of the reach of opposing fielders. He was a line-drive hitter who had the ability to hit the ball to the opposite field. Even when opposing teams shifted most of their fielders to the left side of the diamond, Artie still found a way to get a base hit. To Artie hitting was really pretty simple “I just hit it where they pitched it.” Wilson also possessed excellent speed on the base paths and was an exceptional fielder.

Birmingham Industrial League Career

In 1937 Artie went to work at American Cast Iron Pipe Company (ACIPCO) in Birmingham and immediately started playing on their baseball team in the Birmingham Industrial League (BIL). ACIPCO already had a very powerful team and were a dominant force in the Birmingham Industrial League before Artie joined them. The ACIPCO Pipemen had won eight league championships in nine years from 1928 to 1936 before Artie joined the team in 1937. The highlight of the ACIPCO teams from this period was the 1935 squad that compiled an amazing record of 83-5. 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. Wilson excelled on the baseball diamond and soon became the team’s leading hitter as their starting shortstop. During his employment at ACIPCO he worked mainly in machine shop number three of the plant.



ACIPCO
(1937-1943)

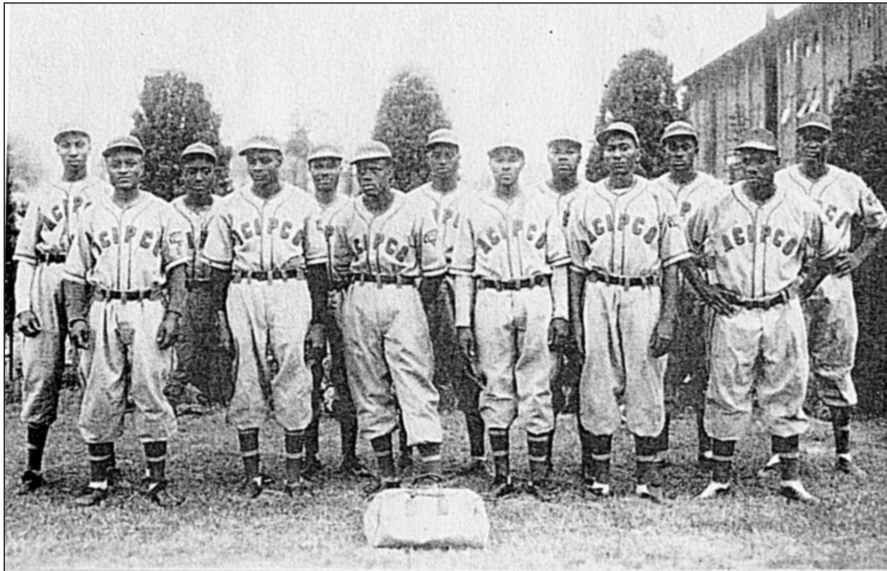
Artie joined the ACIPCO Pipemen baseball team for the 1937 season. The team entered the 1937 season having won seven straight Birmingham Industrial League championships. Artie had an excellent season in his first year with ACIPCO. He finished the season with a .364 batting average. As a team, ACIPCO suffered through an injury plagued season. ACIPCO’s starting line-up only 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 for the season and finished in second place in the league behind Stockham.

When the 1938 season started, Wilson was back at shortstop and the team’s lead off hitter. ACIPCO finished the Birmingham Industrial League season in second place in the league standings. Wilson had another outstanding season at the plate. He won the BIL batting championship with a .419 batting average. Artie also led the league in hits with 82 and runs scored with 64. For Wilson the highlight of his season was hitting ten (10) homeruns. The amazing part of his homerun production for the year was that he only hit a total of 35 homeruns for his entire baseball career.

Birmingham Industrial League Champions



ACIPCO (1938)
(Artie – kneeling second on right)



ACIPCO (1941)
(Artie – back row second from left)

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. Artie had another outstanding season and finished the year with a .411 batting average. However, he lost the league batting championship to first year ACIPCO player Lorenzo “Piper” Davis who hit .450 for the season.



ACIPCO (1939)
(Artie – middle row first on right)

Behind a strong team that included future Negro League players: Lorenzo “Piper” Davis, Greedy Mc Kinnis, William Powell, Ed Steele and Artie Wilson, the 1940 ACIPCO team won its second straight Birmingham Industrial League championship. Artie continued his dominate play and posted a .398 batting average.

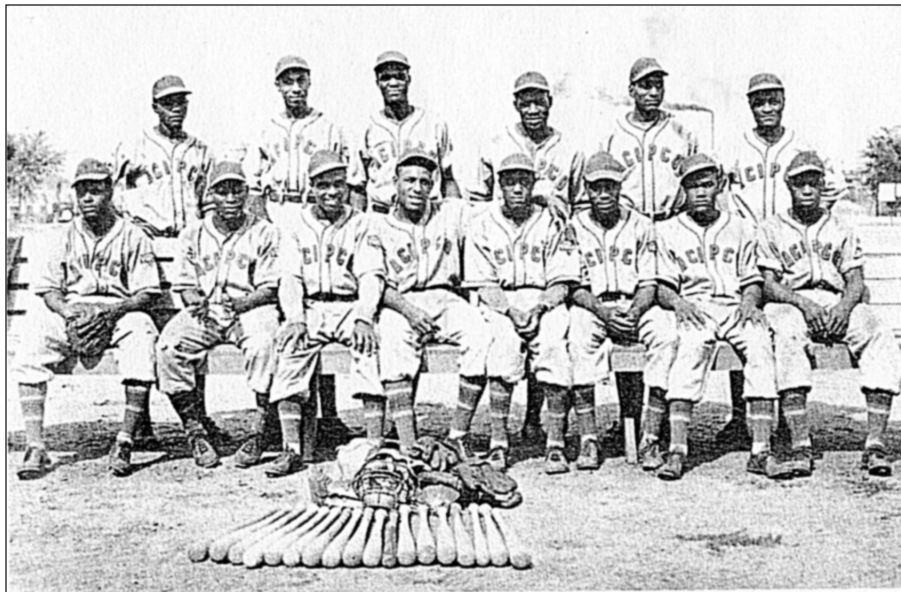
ACIPCO won its third straight Birmingham Industrial League championship in 1941. Artie won his second league batting title with a .446 average and also led the league in hits with 52.

When World War II started, Wilson was spared from having to serve. In 1942 he received a physical deferment from serving in the military because his right hand had been injured in an industrial accident while working at the ACIPCO plant.

One of the many highlights of Artie’s career with ACIPCO in the Birmingham Industrial League (BIL) came in 1942 when he won the Birmingham Industrial League batting title with a .476 batting average and helped lead ACIPCO to a BIL championship with an amazing 49-1 record. During the course of the season ACIPCO won an unprecedented 32 consecutive ball games. What made this season even more remarkable was that Stockham Valve and U.S. Steel also had powerhouse teams and at the beginning of the season, both were picked above ACIPCO to win the league title. Besides Wilson ACIPCO had three other starters on the team that also hit over .400 for the season - Ed Steele (.470 with 11 homeruns), Lorenzo “Piper” Davis (.451 with 14 homeruns) and Waldo Dudley (.411 with 6 homeruns). Nathaniel Pollard (20-1 with 12 shutouts) and Harry Simpson (13-0 with 4 shutouts) anchored the pitching staff.

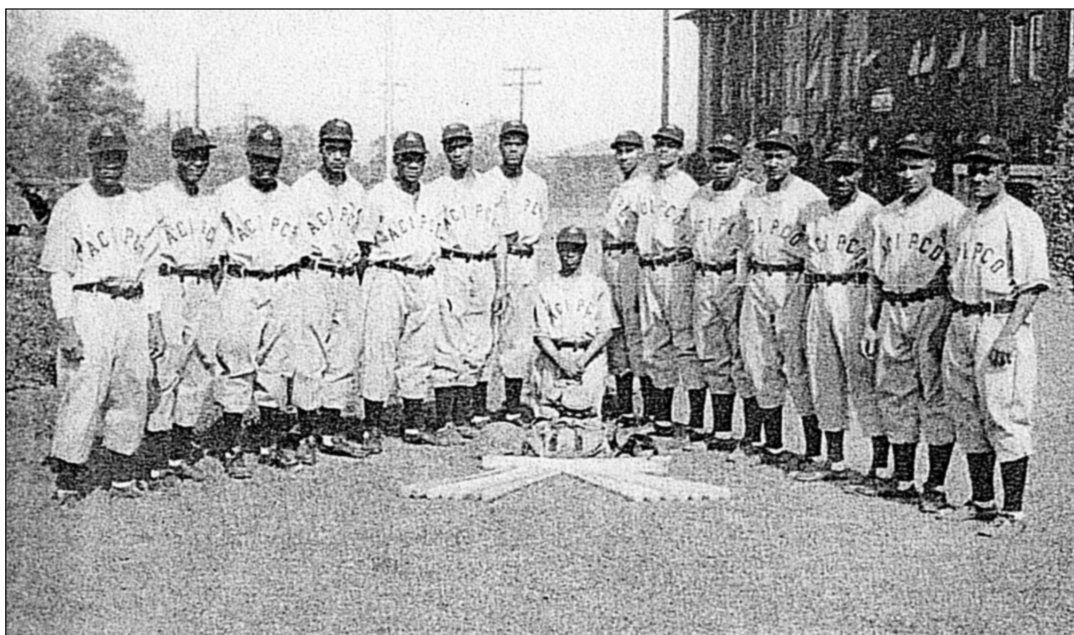


Artie and daughter
ACIPCO News
(1940)



ACIPCO (1942)
(Artie – seated fourth from right)

When the 1943 season started, Artie Wilson and the ACIPCO Pipemen picked right up where they had left off at the end of the 1942 season. ACIPCO finished the season with a record of 47-4 and won their fifth straight Birmingham Industrial League championship. Besides Artie there were five other players on the team that would go on to play in the Negro Leagues: Ed Steele (.435), Lorenzo “Piper” Davis (.411), Herman Bell (.333), Sam Hairston (.313) and Nate Pollard (16-0). Other players that starred for ACIPCO during the 1943 season included: Waldo Dudley (.386), Earl Little (.377 and 13-0 pitching record), Jim Williams (.326) and Harry Simpson (7-1). The 1943 season would be Artie’s last year with ACIPCO and he went out in style by winning his third straight batting title. For the 1943 season he collected a league leading 85 hits in 168 trips to the plate for an unbelievable .559 batting average.



ACIPCO (1943)
(Artie- third from right)

Artie played seven seasons with ACIPCO from 1937 to 1943 before signing with the Birmingham Black Barons to play in the Negro American League. Over his career in the Birmingham Industrial League he hit over .400 in five of his seven seasons and compiled a lifetime career batting average of .438. Behind his strong play at shortstop and his incredible hitting, he led ACIPCO to five straight Birmingham Industrial League championships from 1939 to 1943.

Negro League Career

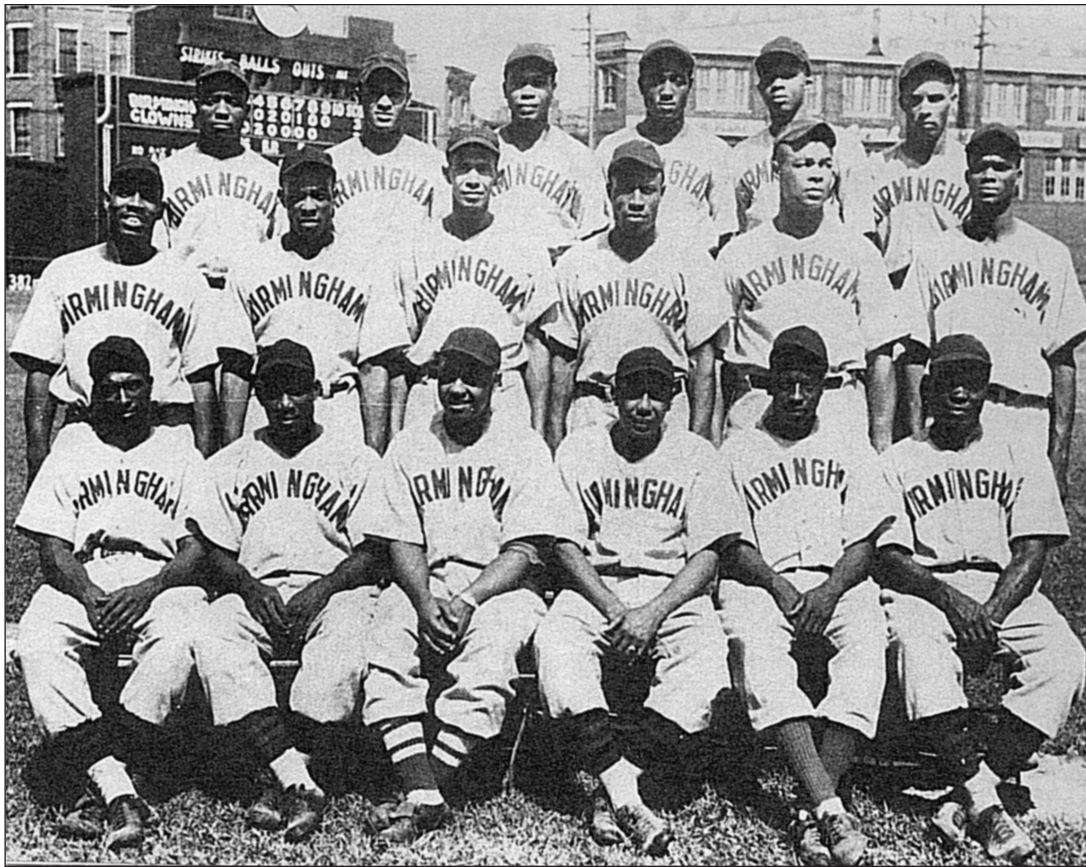
Artie joined the Birmingham Black Barons as the team's starting shortstop for the 1944 Negro American League season. Wilson quickly established himself as one of the Negro American League's top hitters. Behind Artie's hitting and dazzling play at shortstop, the Birmingham Black Barons won the Negro American League championship with a 48-22 (.686) record. Artie finished the season with a .346 batting average. This put him in second place for the Negro American League batting title behind Sam Jethroe (.353). During the 1944 season, the Birmingham Black Barons had five players in their starting line-up that hit over .300: Artie Wilson (.346), Leandy Young (.341), John Scott (.327), Johnny Britton (.324) and "Big" Ed Steele (.303). The Black Barons' pitching staff was anchored by Alfred Saylor, the Negro American League's leading pitcher, with a 14-5 record on the mound. Wilson also finished in second place in steals with 17 just one behind Sam Jethroe's league leading 18 stolen bases.

After the 1944 Negro League season was over, he was selected for the East-West All Star game that was played in Comiskey Park (Chicago, IL) on August 13, 1944. Wilson collected two hits in four at bats and helped lead the West squad to a 7-4 victory before 50,000 fans.



Artie Wilson
Birmingham Black Barons (1944-1948)

As the champions of the Negro American League, the Birmingham Black Barons met the Homestead Grays who were the champions of the Negro National League in the Negro League World Series. Unfortunately for the Black Barons, they were dealt a serious blow that would affect the outcome of the series before it ever began. Several days before the first game was scheduled to be played on September 17, 1944 five members of the starting line-up for the Black



Birmingham Black Barons (1944)
Negro American League Champions
(Artie – back row third from left)



Birmingham Black Barons (1946)
(Artie – middle row second from right)

Barons (Pepper Bassett, Johnny Britton, Tommy Sampson, Artie Wilson and Leandy Young) were involved in a serious automobile accident. As a result of the accident Bassett, Sampson and Young missed the Negro League World Series altogether. Britton played with a patch over one eye and Wilson played but was severely limited in his performance. The Homestead Grays easily won the series by a count of 4 games to 1.

Artie improved on his hot hitting during the 1945 Negro American League season. He finished the season with a .374 batting average. Unfortunately, he again finished in second place just behind Sam Jethroe (.393) for the league batting title. The Birmingham Black Barons finished in second place in the Negro American League standings with a 39-30 record behind the Cleveland Buckeyes (53-16).

In 1946 the Birmingham Black Barons finished in second place again for the second straight year with a 35-25 (.583) record. The Kansas City Monarchs won the Negro American League title with a record of 43-14 (.754). Artie was selected to play in both East West All Star games during the 1946 season and collected two hits in seven official at bats.



Birmingham Black Barons (1946)
(Artie – back row fifth from right)

The 1947 Negro American League season would be Artie's fourth with the Birmingham Black Barons. Artie had another great season at the plate with a .373 average. Artie finished the season in second place for the Negro American League batting title for the third time in four years. John Ritchey led the league with a .381 average. Like the previous year, Artie was selected to play in both East West All Star games (game one played at Comiskey Park and game two played at the Polo Grounds in New York) during the 1947 season. He was the hero of game two as he went 4 for 4 with four runs scored and two stolen bases. With his four hits in one East West All Star game, he joined the legendary Josh Gibson as one of the only two players in Negro League history to accomplish this feat. Behind Wilson's strong play, the West squad won an 8-2 victory before 38,402 fans that had piled into Comiskey Park. It was at the 1947 East West All Star game that Major League Baseball was scouting eight Negro League players (Dan Bankhead, Piper Davis, Luis Marquez, Minnie Minoso, Gentry Jessup, Sam Jethroe, Goose Tatum and Artie Wilson) for potential signing.

The Birmingham Black Barons and Artie Wilson both had remarkable seasons in 1948. Artie hit .402 for the season and won the Negro American League batting title. Behind his hot hitting, the Black Barons won the Negro American League championship with a 55-21 (.724) record.

East West All Star Games

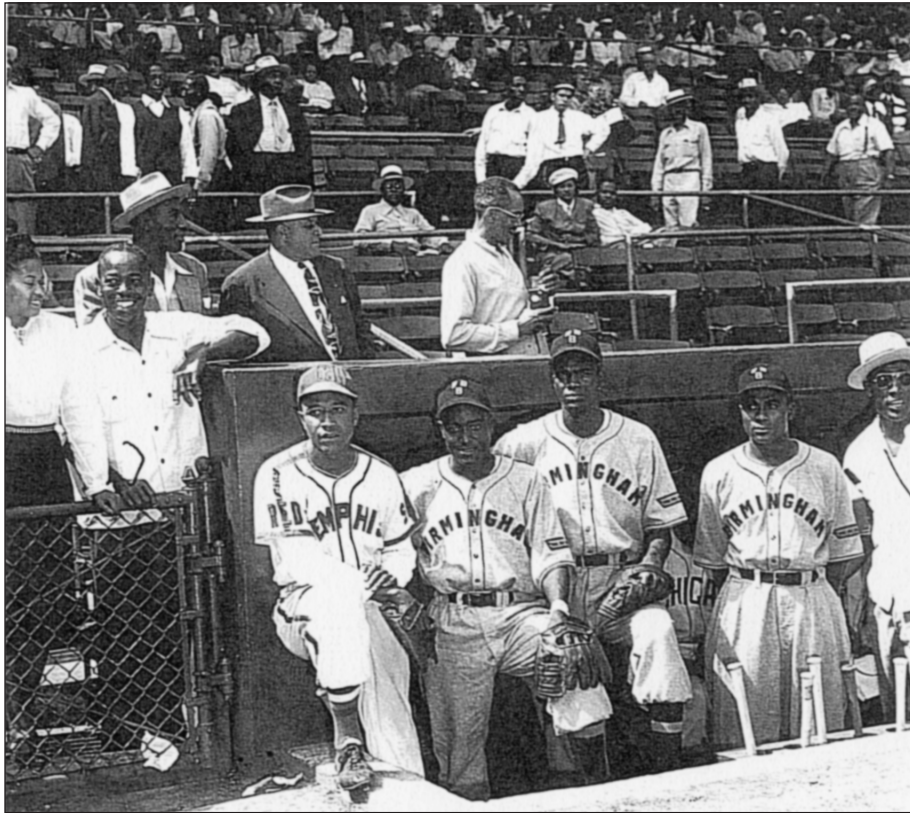


East West All Star Game (1946)
West Squad
(Artie – kneeling seventh from right)



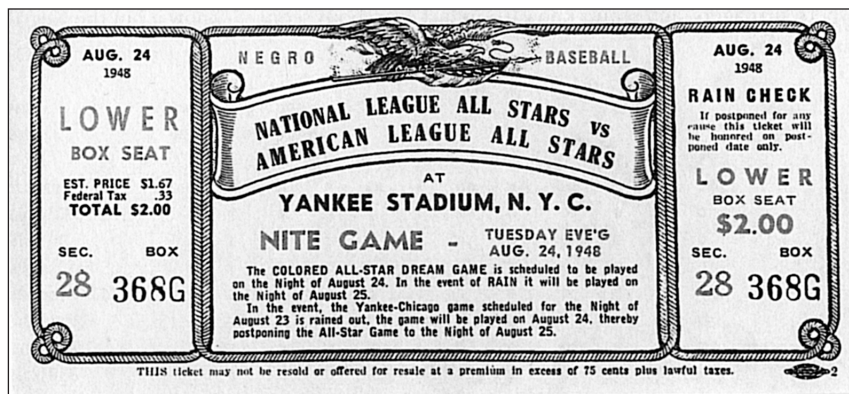
East West All Star Game (1948)
West Squad
(Artie – kneeling third from right)

In 1948, Artie was selected for both East West All Star games for the third straight year. As the leadoff hitter for the West squad in game one that was played at Comiskey Park (Chicago, IL) on August 22, 1948, he went 3 for 4 and helped lead the West to a 3-0 victory over the East squad.



East West All Star Game (1948)
 (Verdell Mathis, Artie Wilson, Piper Davis, William Powell and Gentry Jessup)

The Birmingham Black Barons faced the Kansas City Monarchs to determine who would represent the Negro American League in the 1948 Negro League World Series. In game one Piper Davis collected four hits and Artie Wilson had three hits as they paced the Black Barons to a 5-4 victory. When the series was concluded the Black Barons had won four games to the Kansas City Monarchs three games and moved on to the Negro League World Series to face the Homestead Grays. In the Negro League World Series which started on September 26, 1948, the Black Barons could manage only one victory, while dropping four. Like in 1944 when the Black Barons faced the Homestead Grays, the Grays were crowned Negro League World Series champions.



East West All Star Game Ticket (1948)

Barnstorming with Satchel Paige

After the 1946 Negro League season was over, Satchel Paige formed an all star team that barnstormed against a “white” team of all stars featuring Bob Feller. The Satchel Paige All Stars included: Barney Brown, Willard Brown, Johnny Davis, Howard Easterling, Gentry Jessup, Sam Jethroe, Max Manning, Buck O’Neil, Lennie Pearson, Hilton Smith, Hank Thompson, Quincy Troupe, Artie Wilson and other black baseball stars. Bob Feller’s All Stars included Bob Lemon, Phil Rizzuto, Charlie Keller, Mickey Vernon, Stan Musial and other Major League stars.

The Satchel Paige All Stars vs Bob Feller All Stars cross-country barnstorming tour was originally set-up to include a schedule of about 30 games. The tour started in Forbes Field (Pittsburgh, PA) on September 30 with a 3-0 victory by the Bob Feller All Stars. Over the 1946 tour, some of the stadiums and cities in which games were played included: Yankee Stadium (New York City, NY), Baltimore (MD), Columbus (OH), Dayton (OH), Comiskey Park (Chicago, IL), Kansas City (MO), Wichita (KS), Wrigley Field (Chicago, IL), Long Beach (CA), Wrigley Field (Los Angeles, CA) and San Diego (CA). The tour was abruptly cut short in Long Beach (CA) on October 26 before all the games could be played when Kennesaw Mountain Landis, Major League Baseball Commissioner, ordered the tour stopped. Even with the abbreviated schedule, the tour was very successful. According to a The Sporting News magazine article published on November 6, 1946 the tour drew 271,645 fans for the games they played.

Paige's All-Stars					Bob Feller's All-Stars				
Name	Pos	AB	R	H	Name	Pos	AB	R	H
Wilson	SS	3	1	2	Rizzuto	SS	3	0	0
Thompson	3B	3	1	2	Berardino	2B	3	0	1
Jethroe	CF	4	0	0	Vernon	1B	4	0	1
Davis	LF	4	0	0	Keller	LF	4	0	1
Troupe	C	2	2	1	Heath	RF	4	0	1
Easterling	2B	4	1	2	Chapman	CF	4	0	1
Benson	RF	4	0	1	Keltner	3B	4	0	0
O'Neil	1B	3	0	1	Chandler	P	1	0	1
Paige	P	2	0	1	Hegan	C	2	0	1
Stanley	P	2	0	0	Hayes	PH-C	3	0	0
					Feller	P	1	0	0
Totals		35	4	9			33	0	7
Paige's All-Stars		0	1	0	0	2	0	4	9-1
Bob Feller's All-Stars		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7-0
Doubles—Chandler, Thompson									
Triples—Easterling									
Home Runs—Thompson									
	Pitcher	IP	W	L	R	H	SO	BB	
	Paige	5	1	0	0	3	4	1	
	Stanley	4	0	0	0	4	5	1	
	Feller	5	0	1	1	4	0	4	
	Chandler	4	0	0	3	5	3	0	

Satchel Paige All Stars
Box Score

An interesting side note to the tour is in this famous photo of the 1946 Satchel Paige All Star team. The picture shows the team getting ready to board an airplane. The traditional story told is that this was Satchel’s airplane and that the team flew all over the country in it. However, according to Richard Wilkinson, the pilot of the plane and son of the owner of the Kansas City Monarchs (J.L. Wilkinson), the plane did not belong to Satchel and Paige made only one trip in it.



Satchel Paige All Stars (1946)
(Artie – standing second from right)

Wilson Signs with Organized Baseball

Artie's play in the Negro Leagues and Puerto Rico got him noticed by Major League baseball scouts when they started signing black ball players after Jackie Robinson was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League. For whom and where Wilson would play would end up being a controversy that the Commissioner of Baseball would have to resolve.

Both the New York Yankees and the Cleveland Indians showed the strongest interest in signing Artie. Upon the recommendation of New York Yankees scout Tom Greenwade, the Yankees were the first to acquire Wilson's contract from Tom Hayes, Jr., President of the Birmingham Black Barons. The Cleveland Indians entered the picture when Bill Veeck flew to Puerto Rico in



Cleveland Indians Spring Training
Mesa, Arizona
(1949)

February of 1949 to sign Artie. When Veeck arrived in Mayaguez where Artie had been playing winter baseball, he found that Wilson had left Mayaguez and was driving back to San Juan. Never at a loss for ingenuity, Veeck had local radio stations announce over the airways that Veeck was looking for Wilson to sign him to a Major League contract and would meet him in San Juan at the San Geronimo Hotel. When Artie arrived in San Juan, he weighed his options. The Yankees wanted to sign him, but they wanted to assign him to the Newark Bears of the International League making \$ 500 per month. With the Birmingham Black Barons he had been making \$ 750 per month and the Mayaguez Indians were paying him even more than that. The Cleveland Indians offered him significantly more than the Yankees and Artie signed with them on February 10, 1949. After spring training with Cleveland in Mesa, Arizona, Artie was assigned to the San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League. The New York Yankees owner, George Weiss, was unhappy with losing Wilson and complained to Happy Chandler, the Commissioner of Baseball, that Veeck had been unethical in his contract dealings with Wilson. The Commissioner agreed with the Yankees and voided Artie's Cleveland Indians contract on May 12, 1949. Artie was then considered the property of the New York Yankees. Shortly thereafter the Yankees sold his contract to the Oakland Oaks of the Pacific Coast League on May 17, 1949.

Wilson Starts his Pacific Coast League Career

Artie's first stop in the Pacific Coast League was with the San Diego Padres where he played 31 games in the Cleveland Indians organization before his contract was resolved. When Artie's contract was finally resolved, he ended up on the Oakland Oaks roster where he was the team's first black ball player. In Oakland he teamed with his roommate and friend Billy Martin (future Yankee great and Major League manager) to form a dazzling double play combination. According to Wilson, Martin also stood up for him anytime racism reared its ugly head.

Once he settled in with Oakland, his hitting picked up where he left off in the Negro Leagues and Puerto Rico. Artie finished his first season in the Pacific Coast League (PCL) by winning the league batting championship with a .348 batting average and also led the league in stolen bases with 47 steals. He also has the distinction for becoming the first PCL player to win the league's batting title without hitting a homerun. Wilson's play with his bat and glove helped lead the Oaks to a second place finish in the Pacific Coast League with a record of 101-83.

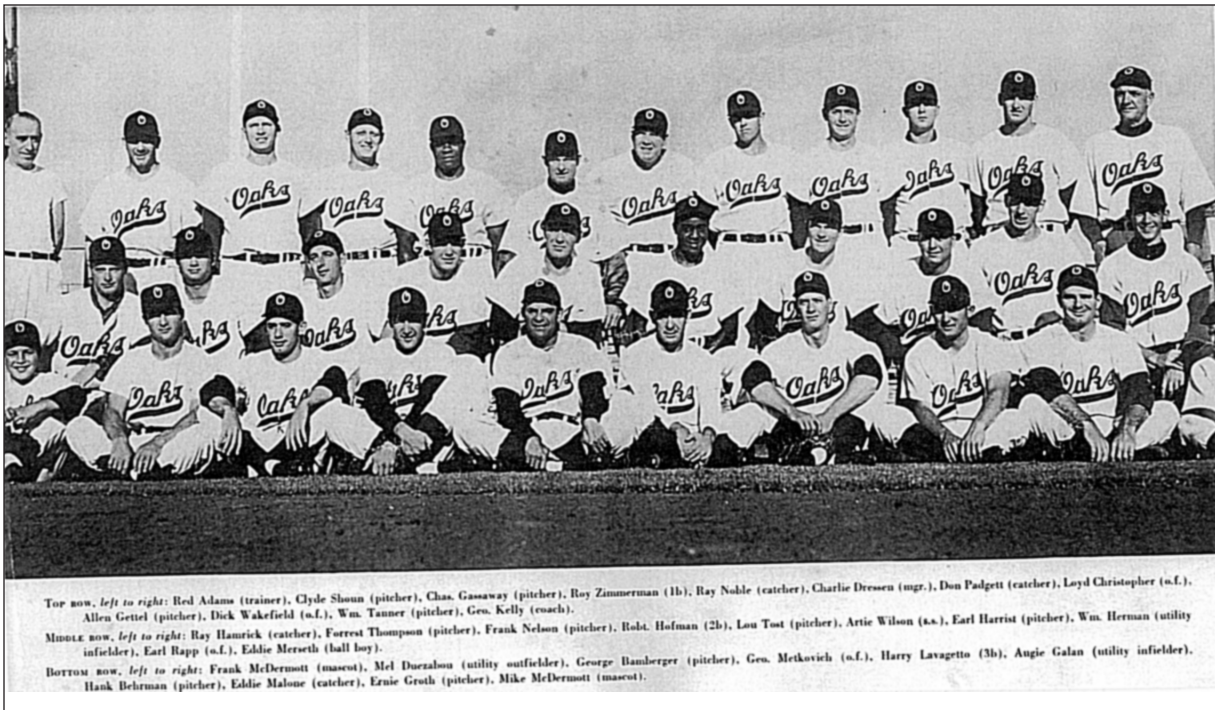


Oakland Oaks (1949)
 (Ray Noble, Chuck Dressen, Alonzo Perry and Artie Wilson)

As the Oaks' starting shortstop for the 1950 Pacific Coast League season, he had another strong year hitting and finished the season with a .311 batting average as Oakland won the Pacific Coast League championship with a record of 118-82. At the end of the 1950 season when the Pacific Coast League Most Valuable Player (MVP) award voting took place, Wilson finished in second place.

In his first two years in "organized" baseball Artie had made his presence known.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	San Diego/ Oakland	165	607	129	211	19	9	0	37	47	.348	.409
1950	Oakland	196	848	168	264	27	17	1	48	31	.311	.387



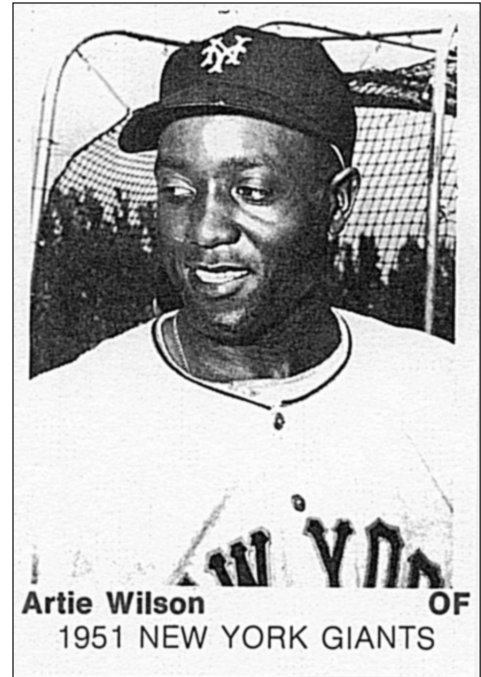
Oakland Oaks Premium (1950)

With his play in Oakland, interest in Artie Wilson increased and several Major League teams vied for his contract. The New York Giants proved to have the strongest interest. On October 11, 1950, Artie was traded along with Al Gettel and Ray Noble by the Oakland Oaks to the New York Giants for Wes Bailey, Bill Ayers, Bert Haas, Joe Lafata and \$ 125,000 in cash.

Wilson Makes the Majors

Artie went to spring training in Florida with the New York Giants in 1951. After an excellent spring training and rave reviews from Leo Durocher, the team's manager, Artie made the Giants Major League roster. Artie debuted in his first National League game with the Giants on April 18, 1951.

Artie never seemed to get a "real" look or a fair chance to demonstrate his baseball skills at the Major League level. He played in his final Major League game on May 23, 1951. For whatever reason, New York used him in only 19 games mainly as a utility infielder, pinch hitter and pinch runner before sending him back down to the Minor Leagues in late May. In 22 plate appearances in the Majors, Artie collected just 4 hits. Wilson was replaced on the New York Giants roster with another former Birmingham Black Baron and Birmingham native. The name of this young player was Willie Mays.



Back in the Minors

When the Giants sent Artie down to the Minors in late May of 1951 he was assigned first to Ottawa of the International League and then to the Minneapolis Millers of the American Association. With the Millers, Wilson put up excellent numbers.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1951	Minneapolis	17	59	12	23	2	1	2	13	0	.390	.559



As soon as Artie was sent down to the Minors, Brick Laws, owner of the Oakland Oaks, saw an opportunity to get his starting shortstop and most popular player back. Laws worked out a deal with the New York Giants and Minneapolis Millers to bring Wilson back to Oakland. The trade sent Lorenzo "Piper" Davis from Oakland to Ottawa in exchange for Wilson returning to the Oaks. When Artie arrived back in Oakland for his first game, the fans greeted him with a floral arrangement at home plate. The Oaks drew a total of over 23,000 fans for his first three games back in Oakland, but unfortunately Artie failed to produce. Artie finished the 1951 season with the Oakland Oaks and appeared in 81 games for his old team. For the first time in his baseball career he struggled at the plate and finished the season with a .255 batting average (the lowest of his career). When the season was over, Artie's contract was sold to the Seattle Rainiers.

In his first season with Seattle (1952), Wilson's hitting was back on track as he finished the season with a .316 batting average while collecting 216 hits. Seattle finished with a respectable 96-84 record which was good enough for third place in the PCL.

In 1953 Artie was in his second season with the Seattle Rainiers and had moved to second base. He had an excellent year at the plate hitting .332. At the end of the season Artie finished in second place behind Bob Dillinger for the Pacific Coast League batting title. With Wilson in the lineup, Seattle had a good season finishing with a 98-82 record for second place in the Pacific Coast League.

Artie returned to Seattle for the 1954 PCL season and moved from second base to playing first base for the Rainiers. Artie collected 222 hits for the season and had a .336 batting average.

Over his three years with Seattle from 1952-1954, Wilson collected over 200 hits each season and hit over .300 each year.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1952	Seattle	160	683	95	216	15	8	1	59	25	.316	.366
1953	Seattle	177	638	80	212	23	14	2	76	9	.332	.422
1954	Seattle	163	660	92	222	24	16	0	50	20	.336	.421

In 1955 Artie moved to Portland and played second base for the Beavers for all of the 1955 PCL season and part of the 1956 season. Wilson had a good season in 1955 hitting .307.



Portland Beavers Premium Photo
(Artie – front row second from right)

In 1956 he played for both Portland and Seattle and finished the season with a .293 batting average even though his playing time was significantly limited. Artie moved to Sacramento to play the 1957 PCL season. Wilson was now near the end of his career and relegated to the role of a part time player. At the end of the 1957 season, Artie Wilson retired from professional baseball. His retirement would be interrupted in 1962 when he returned to briefly play for the Tri Cities Braves for the Northwest League and the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League.

Puerto Rican League Contract

UNIFORM PLAYER CONTRACT

Approved by the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUES

For use by Clubs of Affiliated Winter Leagues

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Pursuant to an agreement between the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues and the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League, the latter League becomes an unclassified affiliate of the National Association.

The attention of both Club and Player is specifically directed to the following excerpt from Rule 3 (a) of the Major-Minor League Rules:

"No Club shall make a contract different from the uniform contract . . . The making of any agreement between a Club and a Player not embodied in the contract shall subject both parties to discipline" by the Commissioner, or the Executive Committee, or the President of the National Association.

A copy of this contract, when executed, must be delivered by the Club to the Player either in person or by registered mail, and the original must be returned to the President of the National Association.

Parties The Santurce Club of the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League, herein called the Club, and Arthur Lee Wilson, herein called the Player, do hereby enter into the following contract:

Agreement 1. The Club agrees to employ the Player to render skilled service as a baseball player during such portion of the winter season 1954-55, as this contract may be in effect.

2. The Player covenants that he is capable of, and will perform with expertness, diligence and fidelity, the service stated, and such other duties as may be required of him in such employment. The Club agrees that the Player is to perform only in officially scheduled games of its league, any approved post-season series and a limited number of exhibition games.

Compensation 3. For the services aforesaid the Club will pay the Player at the rate of One Thousand (\$1000) dollars per month as follows:

In semi-monthly installments in United States funds payable after the commencement of the playing season covered by this contract. The Club will also pay, as additional compensation, the transportation expense of the Player from his residence in the United States to and from the home city of the Club, including meals en route. The Club will pay the living expenses of the Player while he performs under this contract, said living expenses to include room and food, in living quarters comparable to first-class establishments, the detailed specifications of which are stated on Page Three of this contract under Special Provisions. The payment of living expenses will start the day the Player reports to the Club at the Club's direction and will cease on the date of the termination of the Player's service. If the Player is in service of the Club for part of the playing season only, he shall receive such proportion of the salary above mentioned as the number of days of his actual employment in any month in the Club's playing season bears to the number of days in said month. However, the Player is guaranteed salary for a period of not less than thirty (30) days, notwithstanding termination of the contract by cancellation of the invitation or unconditional release issued to him under Section 8 hereof before expiration of the 30-day period, unless he is adjudged guilty of a breach of this contract, including misconduct.

Medical Care 4. The Club will pay medical, surgical and hospital (to be selected or agreed to by the Club) expense in the event the Player suffers an injury while playing baseball under this contract. In addition, the Club will pay the Player his full salary and expenses for not less than thirty (30) days from date of his injury, if his disability and/or the Winter League season continue for that period, at the expiration of which he may be given his unconditional release plus return transportation and traveling expenses to his place of residence if he is able to travel. However, the Player shall receive full salary subsequent to this 30-day period, notwithstanding his inability to perform, if the Club does not give him his unconditional release, or if his physical condition prevents his return to his residence. In the latter event, the Player shall also be paid the expenses set forth in this contract. The Player agrees that no claim for salary or medical expense shall be made by him against the Major or Minor League Club to which he is under contract or reservation because of any injury sustained by him while performing under this contract.

Loyalty 5. (a) The Player will faithfully serve the Club or any other Club to which, in conformity with Section 7 hereof, this contract may be assigned, and pledges himself to the public to conform to high standards of personal conduct, fair play and good sportsmanship. (b) The Player represents that he does not, directly or indirectly, own stock or have any financial interest in the earnings of any affiliated Winter League Club, except as herein set forth, and covenants that he will not hereafter, while connected with any Club, acquire or hold any such stock or interest except in accordance with the Major-Minor League Rules.

Puerto Rican Winter League Career

After the 1947 Negro League American League season, Artie was recruited to play for the Mayaguez Indios (Indians) of the Puerto Rican Winter League. Behind the hitting of Wilson, Mayaguez won the league championship with a record of 39-21 for the 1947-48 winter league season. Artie hit .405 with a .542 slugging percentage for the 1947-48 season and finished in third place for the league batting title behind Willard Brown (.432) and Bob Thurman (.411). Artie also led the league in hits with 102 and finished in second place in runs scored with 66.

Artie returned to Puerto Rico for the 1948-49 winter league season as the player-manager of Mayaguez. Behind his strong hitting and managerial skills, Mayaguez easily won the Puerto Rican Winter League championship with a 51-29 record. One of the keys to Wilson's success was bringing several Negro League ball players to Puerto Rico to play for the Indios. This group of former Negro League players included: Luke Easter, Wilmer Fields, Johnny Davis and Alonzo Perry. The Indios beat Santurce 4-2 in the playoff series final to win both the regular season and playoff championships. Artie batted .373 for the season and finished in third place for a second straight year for the league batting title, this time behind Luke Easter (.402) and Dixie Howell (.384). For the regular season Wilson collected 126 hits which led the league and still stands today as the most hits in any one season in Puerto Rican Winter League history. Artie also came in third place in the league in runs scored with 69.

Wilson's performance during his first two years with Mayaguez made him a local hero and legend in Puerto Rican baseball. The fans and the City of Mayaguez were so excited when the Indios won the championship that Artie was made the acting mayor of the city for two days. According to Artie the entire town partied for those two days celebrating the championship. At the end of the season Artie was named "Manager of the Year" of the Puerto Rican League and also named to the Puerto Rican League All Star team as a player. After the season, Wilson and the Mayaguez Indios went to Havana, Cuba to take part in the very first Caribbean World Series.

Wilson returned to play for Mayaguez for the 1949-50, 1950-51 and 1951-52 winter league seasons before moving to Santurce in 1953. In his last season with Mayaguez (1951-52), he hit .358 and finished second to Bob Boyd (.374) for the Puerto Rican League batting title. He played for the Santurce Cangrejeros (Crabbers) for the 1953-54 season and for a brief time at the start of the 1954-55 season.

Over his Puerto Rican League career he hit .345 and led the league in hits two times. He was also selected to five all star teams (1947-48, 1948-49, 1949-50, 1951-52 and 1953-54).



1950-51 Toleteros Baseball Card
(Puerto Rico)



EFFRAIN BLASINI
BOSQUE PERFECTO



CARLOS A. SANTIAGO
ZONA PASE



CARLOS BERNIER
BOSQUE PERFECTO



JORGE ROSA
BOSQUE CENTRAL



JOHNNY DAVIS
LANZADOR



TITE FIGUEROA
LANZADOR



MAXIMO CASALS
LANZADOR



ALBERTO ALICEA
LANZADOR



LUCIUS EASTER
5TH BASE



ARTIE WILSON
JARDINERO CORTO - *Capitan*



FAVOR BAIFRON
ENTRENADOR



WILMER FIELDS
LANZADOR



CEFO CONDE
LANZADOR



JUAN PEREZ
LANZADOR



WILLIE AORALES
BOSQUE PERFECTO



ALOISO PERRY
LANZADOR



LUIS VILLODAS
RECEPTOR



HUBERTO AARTI
RECEPTOR



YILLO ALONSO
LANZADOR

INDIA
Alveo
collection

FOTO ASESIA
AVE. A ESP. CALLE 12
BO. OBAHECO, SMHT.

MAYAGÜEZ

Assessing Artie's Career

Artie Wilson played baseball for twenty-six seasons from 1937 to 1962. Over his career he consistently hit over .300 everywhere he played. He won six batting titles, came in second place five times and third place on two other occasions for league batting championships. There is no question he was a great baseball player.

To put his career in perspective, it is important to take the following into consideration:

- Artie's career in the Birmingham Industrial League (BIL) should not be taken lightly. The BIL was not your typical sand lot league; it was highly competitive. The ACIPCO team that Artie played for regularly had five or six future Negro League players on their squad. In addition there were numerous players in the league that gave up the opportunity to play in the Negro Leagues for a good steady company paycheck and the opportunity to play highly competitive baseball in the BIL.
- Artie won four (4) Birmingham Industrial League (BIL) batting titles and ended his BIL career with a .438 career batting average. He holds the record for the highest career batting average of all time in the Birmingham Industrial League.
- Artie lost seven prime years to the Negro Leagues from 1927 to 1943 when he played for ACIPCO in the Birmingham Industrial League.
- Artie won a batting title at each level of baseball that he played: Birmingham Industrial League (1938, 1941, 1942 and 1943), Negro American League (1948) and Pacific Coast League (1949). He also came in runner-up five times (1944, 1945, 1947, 1951-52 and 1953) and in third place twice (1947-48 and 1948-49) for league batting titles.
- Artie ended his Negro American League career with the third highest batting average (.376) of all time in the Negro Leagues.
- Artie was the last player to hit .400 (.402 in 1948) in a top level league.
- Artie was an All Star at virtually every level where he played. Over his career, he made numerous All Star teams in the Birmingham Industrial League, Negro American League, Puerto Rican Winter League and Pacific Coast League.
- Artie's Major League career needs to be put in perspective. In his short stay with the New York Giants in 1951 (19 games and 22 at bats), Artie was never given a "fair" shot. He was used sparingly as a utility player, pinch hitter and pinch runner. Tommy Lasorda (Dodger great) once called Artie "the greatest player to have never played in the Major Leagues." From this researcher's perspective, Lasorda was right.
- Research has still not uncovered one regular Negro American League season, two winter league seasons statistics and all of his barnstorming numbers. When these records are finally found Artie will no doubt have collected over 3,000 hits for his baseball career.
- Artie Wilson had a "great" baseball career and is truly a "Forgotten Hero."

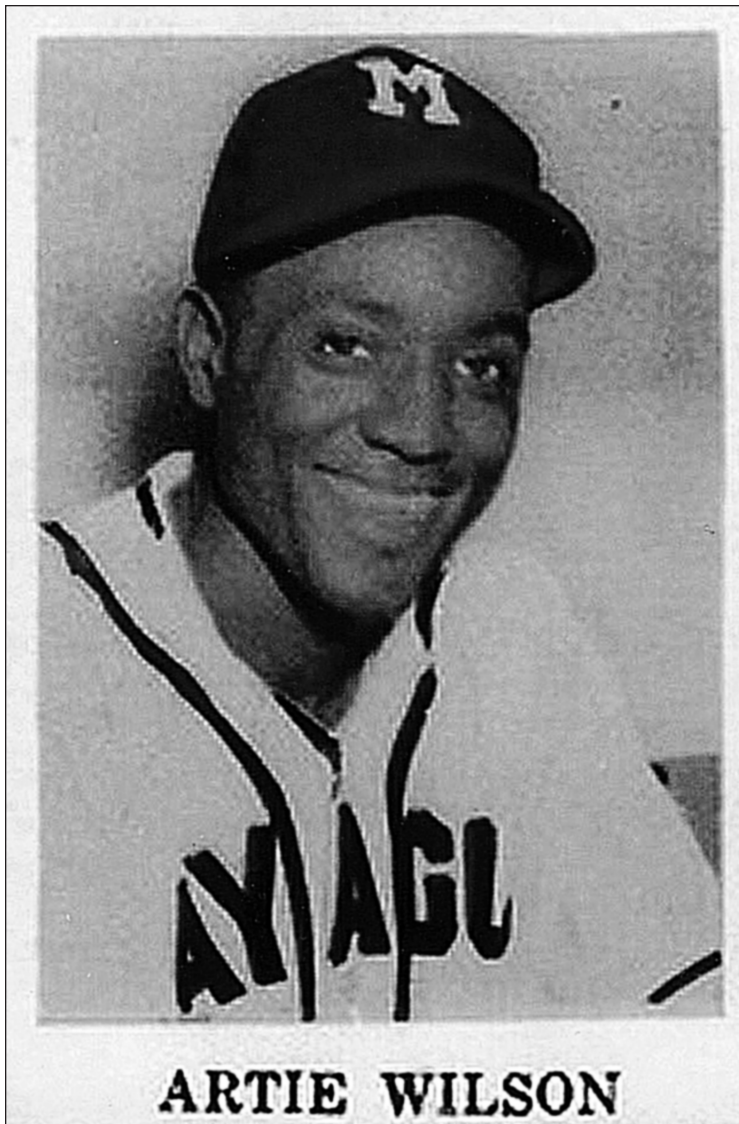


ARTIE WILSON—Infielder

Life after Baseball

After his baseball career, Artie settled in Portland, Oregon with his wife and raised their children. Artie went to work for a local car dealership where he sold cars for over 40 years. His son Artie Wilson, Jr. was a standout basketball player for the University of Hawaii Rainbows from 1970 to 1972. Over his college basketball career, Artie Jr. led the Rainbows to a 47-8 record, the University of Hawaii's first national ranking and a trip to the National Invitational Tournament (N.I.T.).

Throughout his career and after, Artie has always been a modest unassuming man. In an interview several years ago when he was asked about having hit .400, he responded as follows: "I still say it doesn't mean that much. I never worried about my batting average and nobody ever mentioned it to me. I never looked in the newspaper to keep up with my batting average. All I worried about was playing and getting on base." In the final analysis Artie played baseball because he loved the game and was one of the most popular players to ever play in the Pacific Coast League.



His baseball career took him from the Birmingham Industrial League to the Negro American League to the Pacific Coast League and finally to the Major Leagues. Everywhere Artie played he was an All Star.

Artie's accomplishments in baseball have been recognized by his induction into three sports hall of fames:

Oregon Sports Hall of Fame (1989)

Puerto Rican Baseball Hall of Fame (1993) and

Pacific Coast League Baseball Hall of Fame (2003).

1950-51 Toleteros Baseball Card
(Puerto Rico)



Birmingham Black Barons (1948)
(Artie – fifth from right)



Mayaguez Indians (1949-50)
(Artie- back row seventh from right)



Seattle Rainiers (1953)
(Artie – middle row second from left)

Playing Career

Regular Season:

Year	Team	League
1937-1943	ACIPCO Pipemen	Birmingham Industrial League
1944-1948	Birmingham Black Barons	Negro American League
1949	San Diego Padres	Pacific Coast League
1949-1950	Oakland Oaks	Pacific Coast League
1951	New York Giants	National League
1951	Ottawa Giants	International League
1951	Minneapolis Millers	American Association
1951	Oakland Oaks	Pacific Coast League
1952-1954	Seattle Rainiers	Pacific Coast League
1955-1956	Portland Beavers	Pacific Coast League
1956	Seattle Rainiers	Pacific Coast League
1957	Sacramento Solons	Pacific Coast League
1962	Tri-Cities Braves	Northwest League
1962	Portland Beavers	Pacific Coast League

Winter Leagues:

1944-45	Birmingham Black Barons	California Winter League
1946	Cincinnati Crescents	Independent – Barnstorming Team
1946	Satchel Paige All Stars	Series vs Bob Feller All Stars
1947-48	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Winter League
1948	Satchel Paige All Stars	Independent – Barnstorming Tour
1948-49	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Winter League
1949	Mayaguez Indios	1 st Caribbean World Series (Cuba)
1949-50	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Winter League
1950-51	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Winter League
1951-52	Mayaguez Indios	Puerto Rican Winter League
1953-54	Santurce Cangrejeros	Puerto Rican Winter League
1954-55	Santurce Cangrejeros	Puerto Rican Winter League



Seattle Rainiers (1954)
(Artie – top row third from left)



Birmingham Black Barons (1948)
(Artie – middle row second from left)



Birmingham Black Barons
Negro American League Champions (1948)
(Artie – top of photo right of arrow)

Career Statistics - Hitting

Career Statistics – Hitting (Birmingham Industrial League - BIL)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1937	ACIPCO	-	96	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	.364	-
1938	ACIPCO	-	196	64	82	-	-	10	49	-	.419	-
1939	ACIPCO	-	84	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	.411	-
1940	ACIPCO	-	103	-	41	-	-	-	-	-	.398	-
1941	ACIPCO	-	118	-	52	-	-	-	-	-	.446	-
1942	ACIPCO	-	126	-	60	-	-	4	-	-	.476	-
1943	ACIPCO	-	168	-	85	-	-	-	-	-	.559	-
Total			891	64	390	-	-	14	49	-	.438	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Negro League)

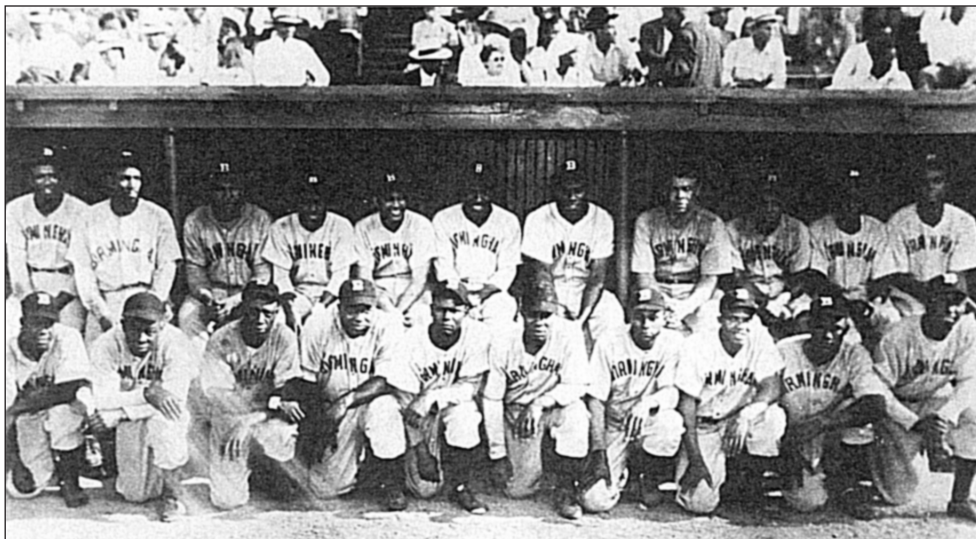
Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944	Birmingham	65	266	51	92	9	6	0	-	17	.346	.425
1945	Birmingham	59	235	51	88	8	2	3	23	15	.374	.464
1946	Birmingham	Records not available										
1947	Birmingham	53	212	42	79	-	-	-	-	-	.373	.473
1948	Birmingham	76	333	78	134	19	8	2	41	10	.402	.526
Total		253	1046	222	393	36	16	5	64	42	.376	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (East-West All Star Games)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944	West	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	.500	.500
1946	West	2	7	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	.286	.286
1947	West	2	8	4	4	0	0	0	1	2	.500	.500
1948	West	2	7	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	.429	.429
Total		7	26	7	11	0	0	0	2	3	.423	.423

Career Statistics – Hitting (California Winter League)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1944-45	Birmingham	2	7	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	.286	-



Birmingham Black Barons (1946)
(Artie – back row fourth from left)

Career Statistics – Hitting (Major Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1951	New York	19	22	2	4	0	0	0	1	2	.182	.182

Career Statistics – Hitting (Minor Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	San Diego/ Oakland	165	607	129	211	19	9	0	37	47	.348	.409
1950	Oakland	196	848	168	264	27	17	1	48	31	.311	.387
1951	Ottawa	2	7	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	.286	.429
1951	Minneapolis	17	59	12	23	2	1	2	13	0	.390	.559
1951	Oakland	81	349	39	89	8	1	0	22	6	.255	.284
1952	Seattle	160	683	95	216	15	8	1	59	25	.316	.366
1953	Seattle	177	638	80	212	23	14	2	76	9	.332	.422
1954	Seattle	163	660	92	222	24	16	0	50	20	.336	.421
1955	Portland	155	616	88	189	20	2	2	23	12	.307	.356
1956	Portland Seattle	101	273	33	80	9	4	0	25	6	.293	.355
1957	Sacramento	75	315	34	83	10	6	0	17	3	.263	.333
1962	Tri Cities	14	42	7	9	0	0	0	2	1	.214	.214
1962	Portland	25	55	3	9	0	1	0	2	0	.164	.200
	Total	1331	5152	782	1609	158	79	8	374	161	.312	.378

Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter League – Puerto Rico)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947-48	Mayaguez	60	252	66	102	-	-	-	-	-	.405	.542
1948-49	Mayaguez	80	338	69	126	-	-	3	-	9	.373	.481
1949-50	Mayaguez	77	262	52	87	-	-	-	53	-	.332	.445
1950-51	Mayaguez	65	232	21	56	10	1	5	33	2	.241	.358
1951-52	Mayaguez		204	30	73	-	-	-	24	-	.358	-
1953-54	Santurce		Records not available									
1954-55	Santurce		Records not available									
	Total	282	1288	238	444	10	1	8	110	11	.345	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Winter League – Caribbean World Series)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Mayaguez	6	26	4	9	0	0	0	1	3	.346	.346

Career Hitting Statistics (Totals)

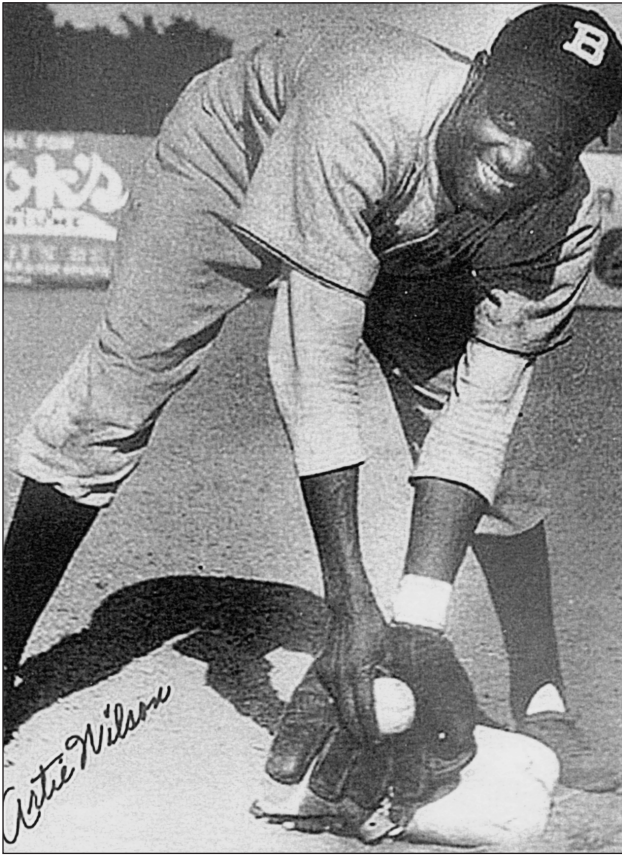
	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Industrial League	-	891	64	390	-	-	14	49	-	.438	-
Negro Leagues	253	1046	222	393	36	16	5	64	42	.376	-
East West All Star Games	7	26	7	11	0	0	0	2	3	.423	.423
California Winter League	2	7	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	.286	-
Major Leagues	19	22	2	4	0	0	0	1	2	.182	.182
Minor Leagues	1331	5152	782	1609	158	79	8	374	161	.312	.378
Barnstorming	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	.667	.667
Puerto Rico	282	1288	238	444	10	1	8	110	11	.345	-
Caribbean World Series	6	26	4	9	0	0	0	1	3	.346	.346
Total	1901	8461	1320	2864	204	96	35	601	222	.338	-

Batting and League Leader Hitting Titles

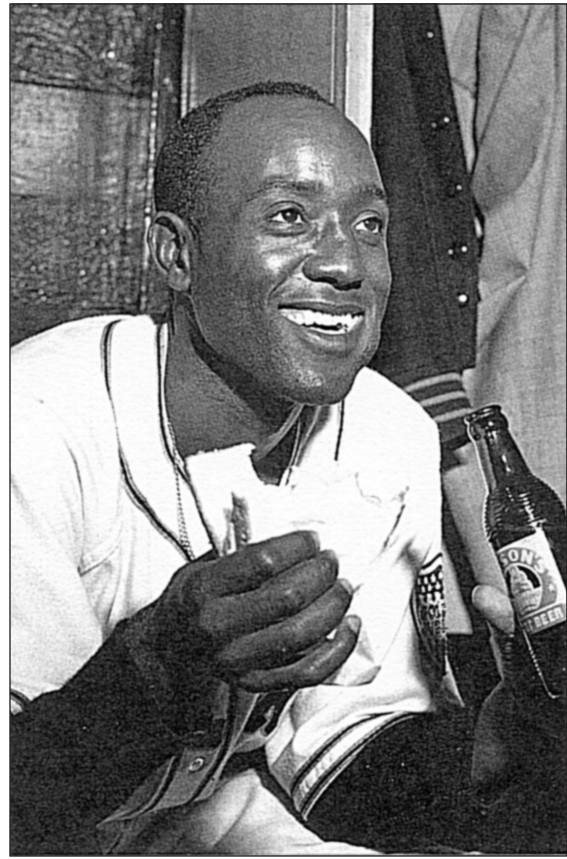
Category	Year	League	Number
Batting Average	1938	Birmingham Industrial League	.419
	1941	Birmingham Industrial League	.476
	1942	Birmingham Industrial League	.476
	1943	Birmingham Industrial League	.559
	1948	Negro American League	.402
	1949	Pacific Coast League	.348
At Bats	1948	Negro American League	333
	1950	Pacific Coast League	848
	1954	Pacific Coast League	660
Hits	1938	Birmingham Industrial League	82
	1941	Birmingham Industrial League	52
	1942	Birmingham Industrial League	60
	1943	Birmingham Industrial League	85
	1947-48	Puerto Rican Winter League	102
	1948	Negro American League	134
	1948-49	Puerto Rican Winter League	126
	1950	Pacific Coast League	264
	1952	Pacific Coast League	216
Runs Scored	1938	Birmingham Industrial League	64
	1948	Negro American League	78
	1950	Pacific Coast League	168
Triples	1944	Negro American League	6
	1953	Pacific Coast League	14
	1954	Pacific Coast League	16
Runs Batted In (RBI)	1938	Birmingham Industrial League	49
Stolen Bases	1949	Pacific Coast League	47



Ed Steele, Lorenzo "Piper" Davis and Artie Wilson



Birmingham Black Barons (1944-1948)



Negro American League Champions (1948)



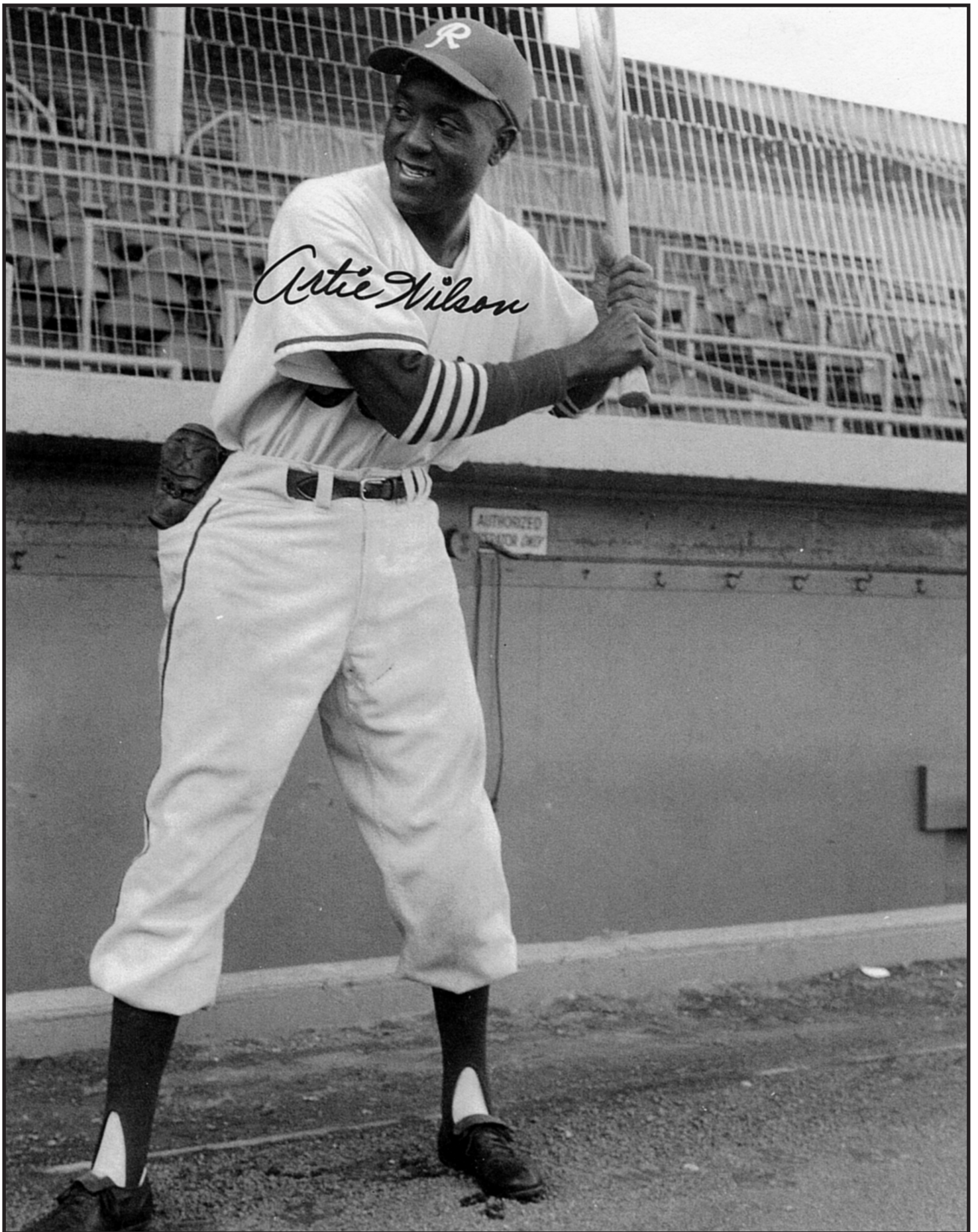
Mothers Cookie - Baseball Card (1952)



Remar Bread - Baseball Card (1950)

Selected Career Highlights

- Won four (4) Birmingham Industrial League batting titles: 1938 (.419), 1941 (.446), 1942 (.476) and 1943 (.559).
- Led ACIPCO to five straight Birmingham Industrial League titles (1939 to 1943) including an unparalleled record of 49-1 with 32 consecutive wins in 1942.
- Negro League career batting average of .376 in regular season league play. Third on the all-time list of lifetime Negro League career batting averages behind Chino Smith (.434) and Larry Doby (.384).
- Selected for four East-West All Star teams in the Negro Leagues. Batted .423 in seven all star games.
- Won the Negro League batting championship in 1948 with a .402 batting average. Last professional player to hit .400 in a top-level league.
- Led the Birmingham Black Barons to two Negro American League titles (1944 and 1948).
- Played in two Negro League World Series (1944 and 1948).
- Hit .405 for the 1947-48 Puerto Rican Winter League season.
- Named “Manager of the Year” as the player-manager of the Mayaguez Indios and led them to a Puerto Rican League title with a record of 51-29 for the 1948-49 season.
- His 126 hits during the 1948-49 season still stands as the Puerto Rican League all-time single season record for hits in one season.
- Selected to five Puerto Rican League All Star teams (1947-48, 1948-49, 1949-50, 1951-52 and 1953-54).
- Won the Pacific Coast League batting title in 1949 with a .348 batting average.
- Collected over 200 hits five different years in the Pacific Coast League.
- Selected to the Pacific Coast League All Star team in 1949, 1950, 1952 and 1953.
- Came in runner-up five times (1944, 1945, 1947, 1951-52 and 1953) and in third place twice (1947-48 and 1948-49) for league batting titles.
- Career lifetime batting average of .338. Hit over .300 in 22 of the 26 full seasons he played in semi-professional and professional baseball.
- Played on ten (10) championship teams (1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1947-48, 1948, 1948-49 and 1950) during his baseball career.
- Elected to the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.
- Elected to the Puerto Rican Baseball Hall of Fame in 1993.
- Elected to the Pacific Coast League (PCL) Hall of Fame in 2003.



Seattle Rainiers (Pacific Coast League)