

Honoring Holden's African American Heritage

By Kim Goodfellow

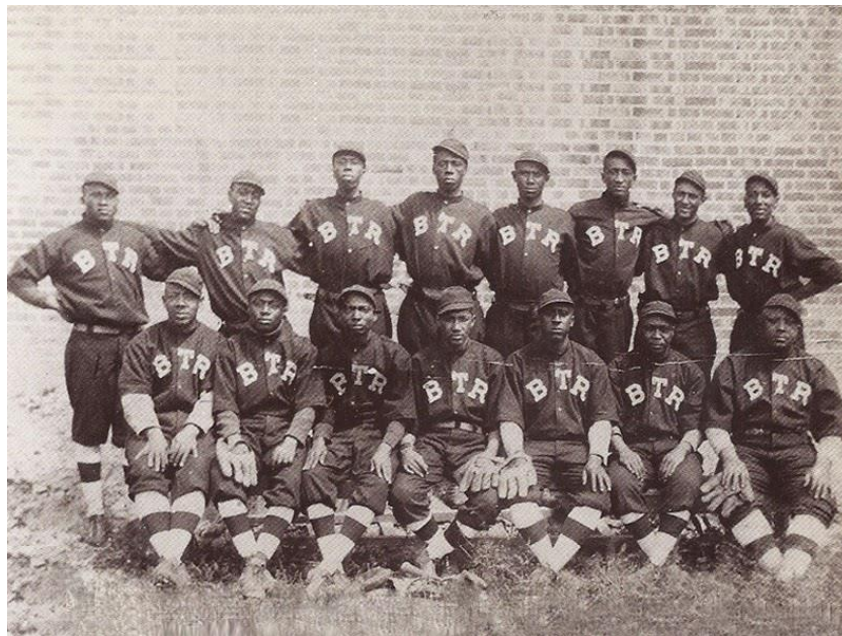
As part of the National African American Heritage month, the City of Holden would like to recognize the community's part in the rich history of Major League's Baseball Negro Leagues.

W.A. Brown ran a small baseball club in Holden, Missouri operating from approximately 1911 until 1926. This club, called the Tennessee Rats, or sometimes Brown's Tennessee Rats, consisted entirely of African American baseball players and was a traveling team, touring in Missouri and surrounding states. In the early years, the Tennessee Rats also produced a minstrel show to add to box office income offering musical and dramatic entertainment after the ball games.

The Negro National League was not formed until 1920, but the Tennessee Rats did manage to attract talented players, such as John Donaldson, who would go on to play with the All Nations, Kansas City Monarchs and several other teams.

Although the Tennessee Rats was not a "formal" Negro League team, they had an effect on the desegregation of baseball. Stats and information are hard to find on the local team, but a few historians are committed to collecting and maintaining records on this important historical baseball team. If you have any information or artifacts on this subject, please be sure and share with local historians.

"Brown's Tennessee Rats" did not come from Tennessee; but originated from Holden, MO. Although the name might cause some readers consternation, at that time it was a common occurrence to use self-deprecating names when naming sports leagues as a marketing ploy.



For more information, contact the Johnson County Missouri Historical Society or navigate to the following website:

<https://1973whsreunion.blogspot.com/2017/01/browns-tennessee-rats-baseball-team.html>