

Collection #  
P 0597

**ORANGE COUNTY NEGRO BASEBALL TEAM  
PHOTOGRAPHS, N.D., 1931**

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 OVA box of photographs

COLLECTION DATES: n.d., 1931

PROVENANCE: A.F Schoenecker, Jr., Minneapolis, MN, 2002

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2002.0443

NOTES:

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

There is confusion about the history of some early twentieth-century African American baseball teams. This applies to the Orange County, Indiana, teams included in this collection.

Several sources list the West Baden Sprudels as a team that played from 1910 to 1916. However, there are newspaper articles that report about a team called the West Baden Sprudels as late as 1931. An article in the *Richmond Paladium and Sun-Telegram* on 7 August 1928 mentions the West Baden Sprudels as having “an established reputation as one of Indiana’s fastest colored semi-pro baseball clubs and have had a team in the field for more than 15 years.” It also names Carlson D. Burnett as the club’s president.

The Sprudels were a semi-professional independent club owned by the Burnett-Pollard-Rogers Baseball Club Company. The team was named for “Sprudel,” the legendary gnome adopted as the mascot for the West Baden Springs Hotel. The team’s home games were played in Sprudel Park, part of the hotel’s complex in Orange County. The baseball diamond was encircled by an enclosed double-decker bicycle track until 1925, when the track was torn down.

From 1910 to 1913 the team was managed by Charles Isham (“C.I.”) Taylor. His three younger brothers played on the team: “Steel Arm” John was a pitcher, “Candy” Jim played third base, and Ben was the first baseman. The brothers were known as the “Famous Taylors.”

Some sources tell of the rivalry between the West Baden Springs Hotel team – the Sprudels – and the French Lick Springs Hotel team – the Plutos, also known as the Red Devils. This Pluto team played from 1912 to 1914. It was managed by H.P. Warmack in 1912 and by Sam Gordon in 1913 and 1914.

One source states that “during the three years the Plutos existed, the club played 62 games, winning 23, losing 37 and tying only two times. From 1912 – 1914, the closest the team placed in the Western Independent Clubs was 6th in 1913.” However, *The Times of Munster, Indiana*, on 4 June 1914 reported that the French Lick “Plutos or ‘Red Devils,’ are the fastest colored ball team on the road” and were the 1913 champions of the Spring Valley league, having “traveled 7,820 miles and won 90 out of 97 games....”

In this collection, the photograph labeled “Pluto Red Devils of French Lick and West Baden” is clearly dated 1931, with the last names of team members written to identify each player. The caption also says that Carlson D. Burnett is the owner and manager. In May 1931, *The Indianapolis Recorder* reported that the West Baden Pluto club was managed by “Carlson Burnett, former manager of Sprudel club.” In the photograph, the players’ caps have “WB” on them, indicating West Baden.

Sources:

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*The Courier-Journal* (Louisville). “Louisville Sox Whip Pluto Red Devils, 11-3,” 31 May 1931, section 5, p. 3.

*The Courier-Journal* (Louisville). “Marydale Defeated,” 21 September 1931, p. 8.

*The Courier-Journal* (Louisville). “West Baden Nine Billed,” 24 May 1931, section 5, p. 1.

*The Courier-Journal* (Louisville). “White Sox Win Twice,” 1 June 1931, p. 7.

*The Jasper Herald*. “Hoosiers Defeated by West Baden,” 29 August 1924, p. 1.

*The Jasper Herald*. “Reds Defeated by Sprudels in Thriller,” 10 July 1931, p. 1.

*The Jasper Herald*. “Reds Open Season at Shoals Sunday,” 11 May 1928, p. 1.

*The Pittsburgh Courier*. “Red Devils,” 4 April 1931, section 2, p. 5.

*The Richmond Paladium and Sun-Telegram*. “Empires Demolish West Baden Crew,” 10 August 1928, p. 10.

*The Richmond Paladium and Sun-Telegram*. “Empires Meet West Baden Club Here on Thursday,” 7 August 1928, p. 10.

*The Times* (Munster, Ind.). “Plutos Coming,” 4 June 1914, p. 7.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains two hand-tinted black-and-white photographs mounted on wood with a lacquer coating. The photographs are of African American baseball teams outdoors. One has no identification or date, but the players appear to be wearing (West Baden) Sprudels uniforms. The other photograph has the caption “Pluto Red Devils of French Lick and West Baden, 1931 / Carlson D. Burnett / owner & manager.” Last names of the team members are written on the photograph to identify each person.

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[West Baden] Sprudels, n.d.

Pluto Red Devils of French Lick and West Baden, 1931. Last names of the players are written to identify each team member pictured: back row – McAtee, Ripley, Moore, Spratt, Stone, Reeder, Miller, Delmer(?) or Delner(?), Mitchell, King, Williams; in front – Dry, Burnette. Caption states that Carlson D. Burnett is owner and manager.

### CONTAINER

OVA Photographs Box 1,  
Folder 1

OVA Photographs Box 1,  
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