

The Black Matty

William Clarence Matthews, "Harvard's Famous Colored Shortstop," and the Color Line

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Abstract

William Clarence Matthews, "Harvard's famous colored shortstop," was a terrific player, the best player on what was perhaps the best college team in the country at the turn of the last century. In the summer of 1905, the Boston Traveler announced that Matthews would soon join Fred Tenney's Boston Nationals, thereby breaching the color barrier in major league baseball — forty years before Jackie Robinson. The rumor of Matthews' breakthrough would prove to be false, but the player deserves to be more than a footnote to baseball history. His remarkable life reflected the special tensions and tentative opportunities of black Americans during the 50 years of his lifetime, 1877–1928. This article provides not only an overview of his extraordinary baseball career but of his life outside the game, which brought him into significant contact with the major figures of African American thought and culture of the time.

The New Man

DESPITE THE EARLY MORNING HOUR, the sports in their suits and bowler hats were out in force at Athletic Park well before game time, straining at the rope separating fans from the ball field, hoping to get a look at their new man. Their Burlington team was the defending Northern (Vermont) League Champions and it looked like they had another "fast" club this year. This day, the Fourth of July, 1905, was a special day indeed, for more than the grand baseball festivities. This was the day their regular shortstop, who had missed the first five games of the season because of his "college duties," would play his first game before a home crowd.

Throughout the spring the Burlington team had kept the identity of their shortstop a secret, saying only that Donovan or Ginley would fill in until the regular arrived. Not until June 28 did the Boston newspapers reveal the identity of the college man who

had signed on to play professionally with Burlington, now that his four years of school in that city were completed.

This was no “regular” shortstop. The fans winked at each other and nodded approvingly as the new man, small and sturdy, quick and athletic in appearance, darted about the field in the pregame practice, natty in his gray Burlington uniform with blue trim. Their appetites had been whetted by reports of his play over the weekend in Plattsburgh. In his first game, scheduled for Saturday, July 2, he “showed up fast” and “was liberally applauded” in practice before the game, according to the *Burlington Free Press*. Once the game started, the very first Plattsburgh hitter “upbanded the ball” to him and “he fairly ate it up.”¹

Alas, that first game for their new shortstop proved anticlimactic, called on account of rain with the score tied 0–0 after an inning and a half. Northern League fans had to wait another day to catch him in a contest of consequence. The next day, Sunday, July 3, he played errorless ball in the field and rapped out two hits, batting fourth, in a 6–5 loss at Plattsburgh. Clearly, this new shortstop could help the club win another league title.

The man out there between second and third for Burlington was none other than William Clarence Matthews, the famous Harvard player, whom they knew well from his play for the Crimson against the boys from the University of Vermont and other top eastern collegiate baseball teams. He was a distinctive talent, a “natural player,” according to one press report, “brilliant in fielding, a hard thrower, sure at the bat, and a flash of greased lightning on the bases.”²

Curiosity about Matthews’ skills was not the only reason the fans came out early on this holiday to see the college boy with the big rep. Their new player was a black man, the only black player in the “outlaw” Northern League — and the only black player ever to play in the league. He was almost certainly the only African American earning a paycheck playing baseball alongside whites in America in 1905. Matthews was already known in baseball circles as the best player on perhaps the best college team in the country at a time when talented college boys walked off their campuses onto major league rosters — players such as Matthews’ Harvard teammate Walter Clarkson and the incomparable Christy Mathewson from Bucknell.

The Fourth of July in the Northern League featured a spectacular home-and-home doubleheader between Burlington and archrival Rutland. In those games, played in a festive atmosphere before thousands of “excited excursionists,”³ traveling by train the 70 miles between cities, Matthews again lived up to his billing. Playing flawlessly at short and batting third, he had three hits in eight chances, as Burlington won the morning game, 5–1, at home, before losing the nightcap in Rutland, 5–3.

Pro Ball: Vermont’s Northern League

Matthews’ summer in the Northern League, his only season as a professional, was anything but anticlimactic. His very first night on the Burlington team must have yielded second thoughts about his decision to play in Vermont: The boat ride across

Lake Champlain to Plattsburgh was “most hazardous ... with waves washing the gun-wales on every roll of the little steamer,” as the *Free Press* reported the next day. “Life preservers were donned and every preparation made for the possible sinking of the boat.”⁴ Matthews survived that scare, but this close call was perhaps a harbinger of the season to come. As the summer of 1905 unfolded, he would discover in Vermont just how perilous life would be for a solitary black man in a white baseball world in 1905, 40 years before Jackie Robinson reintegrated the professional game.

Baseball in the first decade of the 20th century was a raucous affair. America was in love with the game and attached a fierce pride of place to its outcomes. Vermont was no exception. In 1905, Burlington, Vermont, was a lively city of about 20,000 that counted among its baseball fans “just about every man, woman, and child” in the area.⁵ The Northern League, in its fifth season in 1905, was the pride and joy of Vermont sports fans. The three largest towns in northern Vermont were represented: Burlington, Rutland, and Montpelier-Barre. A fourth team from Plattsburgh, New York, rounded out the league. Fans were transported from city to city to games by special trains and across the lake to Plattsburgh on steamers. The Northern League was one of the top

independent leagues in the country with outstanding college players playing under assumed names, recent college grads who had starred on their school clubs, and skilled veteran players, many with major league experience.

The favorite son of the Montpelier-Barre team in the summer of 1905 was a catcher/outfielder named Sam Apperious, whom Matthews knew well from his college play. As the captain of the Georgetown nine in 1904 and their coach in 1905, Apperious had boycotted contests against Harvard, refusing to be on the same field with a black man. In a striking twist of fate, Apperious and Matthews were townsmen, a white boy and a black boy both from Selma, Alabama, who headed north separately to play ball and get an education. In 1905, his second summer with the “Hyphens,” as Montpelier-Barre was known, Apperious continued to sit out games



Matthews in his Burlington uniform (watercolor by Molly W. Hawley)

rather than play against a colored man. This action produced a firestorm of editorial outrage across Vermont, a state proud of its Abolitionist roots and glory in the Civil War.

Challenging the Color Line

"Disrupting" the Northern League was not the only "row" that Matthews kicked up that summer. In July 1905, Harvard's "famous colored shortstop" became an even more controversial figure in baseball news⁶: It was rumored the he would be breaking baseball's color line in the big leagues by joining the Boston National League nine.⁷ The *Boston Traveler* announced in its July 15 edition that it was "probable" that Matthews would be joining the Boston Nationals "very soon."⁸ In the same story, Matthews offered his view, contending: "What a shame it is that black men are barred forever from participating in the national game.... Many negroes are brilliant players and should not be shut out because their skin is black."⁹

Newspapers around the country picked up the story and weighed in on the likelihood and propriety of such an innovation. The *Atlanta Constitution* reflected the view of the South, contemptuously asserting that he would never survive in baseball outside Harvard, "where a dark brown epidermis isn't any drawback."¹⁰

How seriously the rumor of a Matthews breakthrough in 1905 should be taken is open to question. Perhaps it was all a fabrication of an overzealous *Traveler* sportswriter. Perhaps an offhand remark by Boston player-manager Fred Tenney provided the fuel for a rumor that the *Traveler* then was happy to ignite. Perhaps it went beyond that, with extensive discussions behind closed doors among the magnates and their baseball men who ran the league. What is certain is that Tenney needed a second baseman for his woeful team, and Matthews was well qualified on the field. As a graduate of Brown University himself, and a Northerner (born and raised in Georgetown, Massachusetts), Tenney may have felt a kinship to and sympathy for his Ivy League brother that transcended race.

Whatever the facts, Matthews of course did not succeed in integrating the game. He said at the time that he hoped baseball's "magnates" would give him a chance. Obviously, the magnates did not go along with Tenney's rumored experiment, despite Matthews' worth as a baseball player and man. The unwritten law, the "color line," drawn in the 1880s, proved fixed in place.¹¹

During the Apperious boycott controversy, an editorial in the *St. Albans Messenger* ran under the headline "Apperious as a Text." The editorialist found the "attitude" of Apperious "useful to point to a moral," which illustrated "the awful inexorable code of the South."¹² In a larger sense, it wasn't Apperious so much as Matthews who was the "text." Matthews' life instructs readers on the special tensions and tentative opportunities of black Americans during the 50 years of his lifetime, 1877–1928. These were years of complexity and tumult as African Americans confronted the challenges of free-

dom. Gains in status, dignity, and material well-being were nullified by racist violence, legislative betrayal, and discrimination, based on notions of inherent inequality. The race question during Matthews' life was dominated by three towering figures—Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey—two of whom Matthews knew intimately, and the third (DuBois) he undoubtedly encountered in his public life.

There are few fictional protagonists with better *bona fides* than Matthews. He was born in Selma, Alabama, an iconic center of the Civil Rights Movement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., nearly 90 years later, in the last year of Reconstruction, 1877, the year Federal troops departed and the South was abandoned to the lilywhite Redeemers. Matthews was raised in Selma and Montgomery before attending Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School, from 1893–1897, when Booker T. Washington's grand experiment was only in its second decade. Later in his life, Matthews contended that he learned from Washington "that the best help a man can get is an opportunity to help himself."¹³ Washington sent the 20-year-old Matthews north to Boston and Phillips Andover Academy for further education, an act that anticipated the great northward migration of over a million Southern blacks in the first two decades of the 20th century. Matthews' goal in heading north was to prepare to return to the South "to teach."¹⁴ His extraor-

ordinary athletic talents were of indubitable appeal to Andover and, later, Harvard, institutions that took their sports very seriously. Money was a constant concern. He supported himself while in school by summer employment as a "parlor car porter and hotel bellboy"; at Harvard, he worked in the dining hall and "taught in a night school in Cambridge."¹⁵

Matthews' eight years in the Boston area while in school saw him enter the spotlight of sports celebrity. By the time he finished Andover in 1901, he was well known in baseball circles as a player of surpassing ability. Harvard played big-time college baseball and was thoroughly covered locally, regionally, and nationally in both the daily press and weekly and monthly news magazines. While it was not unheard of for a black man to play on a white school team in the North, it was certainly uncommon, and none was playing at the rarified level of Harvard's competition. It's noteworthy too that in



At Andover, ca. 1900. Matthews, according to the school's yearbook, was "the best all-around player that ever won an Andover suit."

1905 Boston had nine daily newspapers: the *Globe* (198,000 subscribers), *Post* (209,000), *Herald* (150,000), and *Evening Record* (102,000) had the largest circulations, and each covered Harvard baseball regularly. (When the opponent was Yale or Princeton, they did so with great zeal.)¹⁶ The consistent excellence of Matthews' play kept him in the public eye.

"Heroic devotion to the honor of his school"

At prestigious Andover, Matthews played football and baseball and ran track, and was fully engaged in school — hardly a mere novelty, though he was the only black student in his class and one of only five in the school. In baseball, his sterling play over his four years marked him as "the best preparatory shortstop in the country and certainly the best all-round player that ever won an Andover suit."¹⁷ Matthews' senior year in baseball was especially worthy of note, as he was elected captain of the team in this era before professional coaches, when the captain had broad responsibilities for instruction and organization. His election did not sit well in all quarters: One influential alumnus wrote at length to the school principal, objecting to the "captaincy of the Andover Ball team being held by a negro," and urging him to "correct" this "very bad blunder."¹⁸

In the all-important Andover-Exeter best-of-three series at the end of the season in 1901, his senior year, Matthews was truly heroic. Late in the season, he had moved behind the plate from his customary shortstop position because of the team's weakness at catcher. Andover lost the first game to Exeter in New Hampshire, 8–5, despite the fact that Matthews, batting cleanup, had two hits, scored two runs, and knocked in one in the losing effort. In the second game at home he split his thumb open (with the bone protruding) early in the contest, but despite his injury, he played another star game behind the plate and at the bat (two hits, a run scored), as Andover prevailed 9–2.

In the climactic final game, played at Exeter, Andover breezed to a 9–0 win before a raucous crowd. The school newspaper exulted in the play of their captain, in both their game account ("his backing, catching and batting were exceptionally good") and in an accompanying editorial: "The Phillipian wishes to thank heartily ... Captain Matthews for all he has done for Andover in athletics, not only baseball but in football and track, and especially for his heroic devotion to the honor of his school in playing the two decisive games with a disabled thumb."¹⁹

"Belching forth in exuberant discord"

Generally, Andover students went to Yale; Exeter students to Harvard. There was little chance, however, that Matthews would go anywhere other than Harvard, so distinctly more congenial to black students was Harvard at that time.²⁰ Sports at Harvard

was Andover writ even larger. Harvard had perhaps the strongest college baseball team in the country in Matthews' four years, and its season was prelude to a culminating series against its most heated rival, Yale, in contests that attracted national attention. In his first year at Harvard, Matthews endeared himself with Crimson fans by scoring the decisive run in the climactic game against Yale played before 10,000 fans in the Polo Grounds. The headline in the *New York Times* read: "Matthews, right-fielder, comes home with winning run in ninth."²¹

After this auspicious debut and the spectacular success of the team (21 wins in 24 games) in his freshman season, Matthews was a fixture in the Harvard lineup for the next three years.²² He played in the middle of the infield at shortstop and batted at the top of the order, anywhere from leadoff to cleanup, and performed with consistent brilliance. Harvard remained a powerhouse and he was the team's leading hitter in each of his final three years. He led the 1903 team with a .344 average; in 1904, the Harvard team was 17-5 and he batted .343; and in his senior year, the team was 18-6 with Matthews hitting .336. He was versatility personified, playing in the field with speed and flair, running the bases with daring, and hitting with remarkable consistency for both average and occasional power, despite his size (5'8," 145 pounds). In his last three years, he hit 10 home runs and stole 41 bases.²³ Harvard continued its domination of Yale in 1903 and 1904, and Matthews was brilliant in these games, before Yale turned the tables in the controversial series of 1905.²⁴

Matthews' best efforts were often in the most crucial games. In the first Yale game at Harvard in his sophomore year, for example, he came up in the first inning, and "fairly [met] a fast ball square on the nose":

Matthews was almost to third before the ball was even picked up. Randall had already crossed the plate, and then came Matthews, running like a deer, crossing the home plate yards ahead of the ball.

As Matthews was running, the racket on the Harvard stands grew louder and louder, and when he crossed the plate, the band was belching forth in exuberant discord.²⁵

There were of course many other on-field highlights in Matthews' baseball career at Harvard, none perhaps greater than the 6-1 win over Princeton his senior year, when he was the unquestioned star of the game in support of the Crimson's mound ace, Paul Coburn. As the *Herald* put it, Matthews "came very near to being the whole fireworks on the Harvard side. He made two of the four hits and seven of the nine totals [total bases]."²⁶

In the first inning against Princeton, with "8000 delirious supporters yelling like mad," Matthews again crushed a long home run, scoring two ahead of him. That was all the offense Harvard would need against the Tigers on this day. For good measure, he also tripled leading off the eighth inning and scored Harvard's fifth run, coming in on a slow roller to first. A wag on the *Boston Traveler* penned this verse in celebration:

HARVARD VICTOR OVER PRINCETON

Matthews, the Colored Shortstop of
the Crimson Team, Came Pretty
Near Being the Whole Thing,
His Hitting Being the Feature.

RUBAIYAT OF THE CRIMSON TEAM.

An open field,
Some dope concealed—
Wow, wow!

A jug of wine,
A 'ficer blue—
And thou!

GREAT DAY FOR THE CRIMSON

Ball Playing That Delighted Its Sup-
porters—Coburn Pitched Grandly
Against Princeton.

A May 21, 1905, article in the *Boston Herald* singled out Matthews for praise.

Who twisted the Tiger by the tail?
 Coburn!
 Who kited Byram in the air?
 Matthews!
 Who made the Orange batters quail?
 Coburn!
 Who spiked the leopard in his lair?
 Matthews!
 Why did old Nassau feel so blue?
 'Twas nine H. men so staunch and true!²⁷

“Abandon[ing] the southern trip”

Each spring, the Harvard baseball team, then as now, took a swing to the South for competition in warmer climes. Matthews' first three years on the team, he remained home in Cambridge while his teammates left for games against Virginia, Annapolis, Georgetown, and other Southern schools. If he, a black man, had taken the field those clubs would have exited, boycotted play, and gladly forfeited. More likely, they would not have shown up at all, if they had foreknowledge of Harvard's intent to play Matthews. For three springs, Harvard chose to defer to Southern sensibilities. In his senior year, however, on the eve of their departure, the team made the remarkable decision to cancel their games with Annapolis (two games) and Trinity (now Duke University). Instead, they traveled to Philadelphia, with “the little colored man's name on the list of players,”²⁸ where they played the Carlisle Indians, Williams College, and Syracuse University in hastily scheduled contests. Georgetown, with Sam Apperious, the previous year's captain, acting as its coach, had been removed from the Harvard schedule altogether in 1905.

The support of the Harvard players and undergraduates for their black teammate and friend thus became a part of Harvard baseball lore. In his obituary in the *Boston Globe* many years later (1928), Matthews was called “the shortstop for whom the varsity team abandoned a Southern trip”: “Appreciating that the popular colored player could not make the trip without suffering humiliation from Southern prejudice, the Harvard team stayed in the North.”²⁹

“The dark demon”

Matthews was also a football player of note for the Crimson, playing end-rush, a position usually taken up by a player of greater size than the diminutive Matthews. Matthews was injured in 1903 and missed the entire season, and had decided to forego football in 1904, his senior year. After suffering an embarrassing 11–0 loss to Penn and playing Dartmouth to a scoreless tie, the team was “reorganized” and Matthews was

induced to come out. Then, in *the* game, against Yale, he was magnificent, entering the fray as a substitute in the second half of a losing effort and playing with a ferocity that was celebrated in both the Boston and national press.

It can be argued that his gridiron fame was based on one memorable *play* in this game, which thrilled the 35,000 in attendance and symbolized Harvard's grit in a losing cause. After a short Harvard punt, Matthews "swooped down upon the Yale quarterback like a hawk," according to the *New York Times* (the *Boston Globe* had him "coming down the field like a racehorse"), and nailed Rockwell of Yale "with a thud that could be heard all over the field."³⁰ The *Globe* provided this rapt account of this play in its game story:

Then it was that Matthews, who superseded Randall toward the close of the first half, made the most brilliant individual effort of the afternoon. He was down the field like a flash under the punt, and while still going full speed he dove for little Rockwell as the ball settled in his arms. It was a perfect dive tackle. Rockwell went down as if hit with a hammer, the ball bounded out of his arms, and Montgomery, who had come down with Matthews, fell on it.

The little Yale quarterback lay on the sod knocked out by the fierce tackle for a few seconds and Matthews was in equally bad condition. Harvard stands were aroused as they had not been before during the afternoon.

In national reports, Matthews was described as the "dark demon" and celebrated for his "magnificent tackle of Rockwell."³¹ Reports circulated after the game that Yale players had intentionally tried to injure Matthews, but he characteristically took the high road, writing in a letter to the *Yale Alumni Magazine*:

My injuries came from the tackles of Rockwell and Shevlin and from diving into the heavy formations directed at Harvard's left tackle. I wore no padding on my shoulders and was unprotected in my shoulders and neck. I do not believe that any Yale men tried to use me unfairly.... The playing was hard and fierce, but always clean."³²

To be a football player at Harvard was a very big deal. It signified that you were a rough and tumble man, possessor of manly virtues, and provided Matthews, no doubt, with distinctive social cachet. Even without the glory that attached to game day heroics, the football identification connoted respect. It also countered the prevailing view of blacks as lazy and pusillanimous.

In this day when the game was especially dangerous and under attack for its brutality, football allowed Matthews to express bravery and resolution, and counter the stigma of "inferiority." Kelly Miller, a leading black scholar of Matthews' era, asserted in 1904 in *The Voice of the Negro* that Frederick Douglass had been the exemplar of "manly courage" in the midst of "humiliation and degradation." Social historian Gwendolyn Captain points out that the African American press of the day was full of stories that illustrated "fortitude and courage and also (not surprisingly) patience." The exclusion of black men from full participation in American society, including athletic expression at the highest levels, made athletic achievement on those occasions when it actually

did occur “highly prized ... tangible symbols of masculine achievement.”³³ Matthews basked in that glow.

One of “the boys”

And the private Matthews, the Matthews not on public display — what do we know of him? We must speculate on or deduce his private nature, as there is no archive of Matthewsiana: He died at age 51 without heirs. Public commentary about Matthews in the press was almost universally laudatory. Matthews’ own comments were respectful, dignified, and even noble. Judging from the honors he received, Matthews’ white peers at Andover and Harvard universally liked and respected him.

We do get a picture of Matthews out of the spotlight in the correspondence of Alain Locke, scholar of the Harlem Renaissance, to his mother in 1904–1905. Matthews, while not the focus, is frequently referred to because of his prominence at Harvard. Locke and Matthews overlapped at Harvard for just that one year. The 19-year-old Locke is generally contemptuous of his black schoolmates (“they are not fit for company.... I’m not used to this class and don’t intend to get used to them”), but he both exempts Matthews and includes him in his harsh estimate of his fellows. In a letter

from October 1904, just after he arrived, Locke describes being taken to the rooms of the “boys,” that is, the other “colored” students: “Matthews was one of them. I heard the talking of his going to a ‘dance’ in Boston and losing the 60 cents car-fare he had in a ‘game’ and having to walk to Cambridge at 5 degrees below zero. Momma don’t fear I am going to associate with such fellows.”³⁴

Later in the fall, he again describes to his mother Matthews’ socializing with black schoolmates: “Matthews was telling how he saw a man lynched at home in Montgomery, Alabama.... I guess the hero of the crowd Matthews or Matt as they called him must have said ‘ain’t’ twenty times.”³⁵ In another letter, he observed that Matthews was too busy to spend much time in fellowship, but “when he is alone in the group, then he lapses.”³⁶ However, after Matthews’ triumphant Princeton game in the spring of 1905, Locke reports with apparent satisfaction, “Matthews made himself the hero of the game — I was very glad on account of the Princeton prejudice against him.”³⁷



The man who created a stir simply by taking the field for the 1905 Burlington, Vermont, entry in the Northern League.

What can we conclude from Locke's ambivalent portrait of Matthews, other than Locke's alienation from his fellow black students? Ultimately, it is possible to view Matthews as humanized in the letters, as they suggest that he found a way at Harvard to exist in both the white student world that expected exemplary behavior, and the black student world that allowed him to use the word "ain't" and be one of the "boys." Locke's letters offer a glimpse of Matthews in his private time, when he was not on display as "Harvard's famous shortstop" and a paragon of virtue, but as one who could unwind with friends who were experiencing some of the same pressures as he.

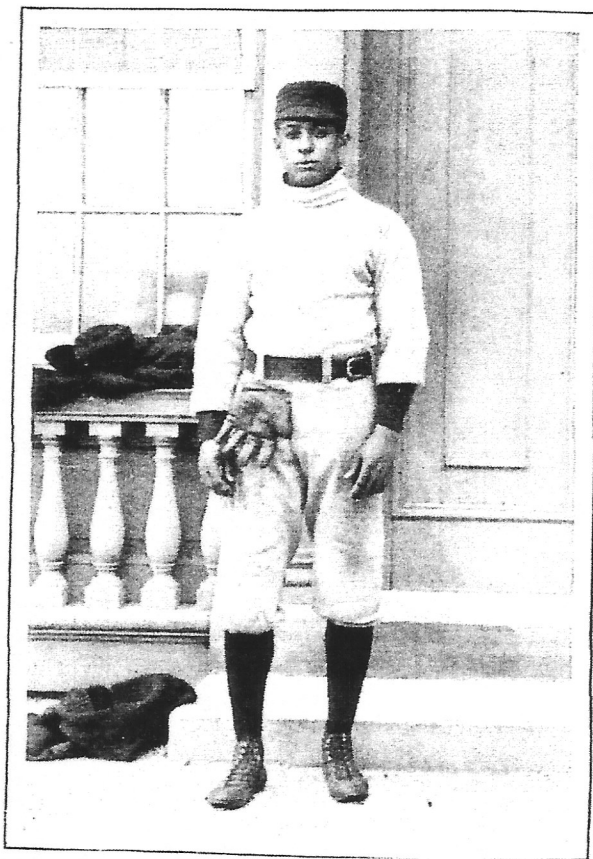
This tension suggested in Locke's letters between the public and private Matthews reflects DuBois's "doubleness": the archetypal tension within black life, the pressure on black figures in positions of public scrutiny to represent their race in a dignified manner, countering stereotypes, always acting the "gentleman," accepting insult without retort, resisting the urge to assert their manhood and stand their ground, despite the fact that the costs of such behavior were often dire, not only to the individual but to the collective. This is the tension between Washington and DuBois, and a half century later, between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, or in baseball terms between Jackie Robinson, who was required not to fight back however extreme the provocation, and other black players, such as the flamboyantly unpredictable Satchel Paige, or others unknown to us because of the consequences of their prideful assertions and independent spirit.

"An example and a moral"

Matthews had quite a senior year at Harvard, off the diamond as well as on. In the winter of 1905, he was elected to the prestigious Class Day Committee at Harvard, one of only nine seniors and the first black man so chosen in Harvard's long history. This honor was widely publicized. In March of that year, the *Colored American Magazine*, an important voice in the black community at the time, published an article authored by Matthews himself on "Negro Football Players on New England Teams." He identified players on teams at Harvard, Amherst, Williams, Colby, and Massachusetts College of Agriculture (later the University of Massachusetts), referring to himself with only the self-effacing comment, "so much has been written of late about this player that we will not say more about him here."³⁸

Then in June, the *Boston Herald* ran a long piece on the "The Colored Man at Harvard University" in its Sunday magazine. The article identified briefly each "young colored boy" at Harvard, all 17 undergraduates, and six others, in "other departments" or graduate school.³⁹ However, it focused primarily on Matthews as "admittedly the most prominent man of Negro parentage in Harvard, and one of the best-liked men in college." Matthews was extensively quoted, expressing in strongest terms his desire to be given an equal chance and not to be "patronized": "It is the most natural thing in the world for me to be colored, and the most unnatural thing for me to be catered to because of it."⁴⁰

Also, in June and July, the prominent national weekly *McClure's* published a two-part exposé of the evils of big-time college sports, written by muckraker Henry Beach Needham. In this extensive study of recruiting excesses, tramp athletes, brutality, and other problems, one athlete, Matthews, was exempted from the sins of the day and described as "an example and a moral." Identified in a picture as "Harvard's Best



A photograph, published in 1905, of Matthews at Harvard.

Player," Matthews was singled out as remarkably pure in an environment of widespread cheating.⁴¹ Needham praised Matthews extravagantly for his decision to play college sports and work his way through school rather than subsidize his education through summer ball. "For seven seasons he could have earned much money by playing with semi-professional teams," Needham observed, "but this he has refused to do." So by the time Matthews left Harvard to play pro ball in Vermont in the summer of 1905, he had achieved certain fame.

When the Northern League's 1905 season ended, shortly after Labor Day, Matthews chose not to join another team. Unlike many of the great black players in baseball's long segregated era, Matthews had outlets outside baseball. Boston sportswriter Myron Townsend reflected on the issue of Matthews' future in his column in the *Traveler* in the summer of 1905:

What will Matthews gain by playing professional ball?

Does he expect to star in the Cuban Giants or scintillate in the National League?

He will have to confine his diamond operations to the North and on clubs which are not in organized baseball. Negroes are barred from the leagues.

As a clean, right living young man who has an ambition to succeed in life it seems a pity that he would play ball for a living. Because his skin is black he can never play on any but itinerant colored nines that at best eke out a hand to mouth existence.

With all its insurmountable handicaps, baseball is not the place for Matthews.

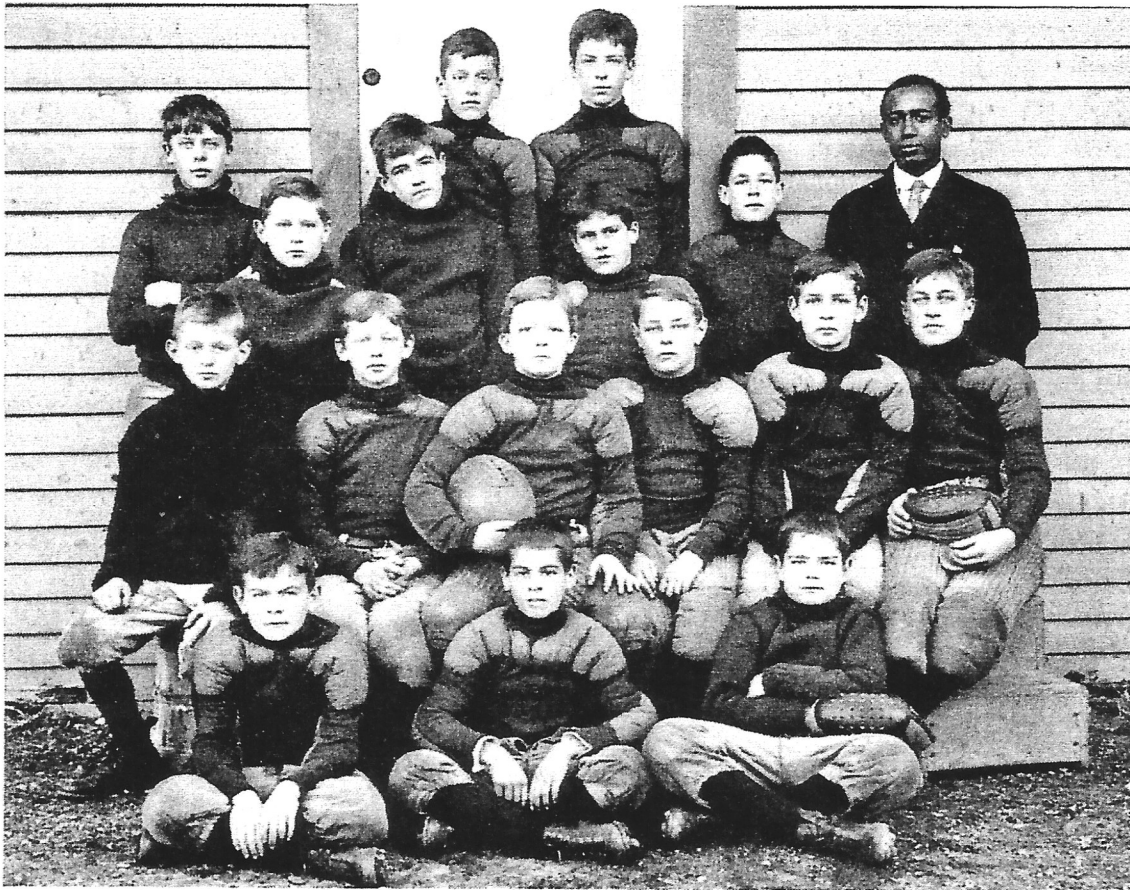
He should begin the battle for life somewhere else.⁴²

So he did. Twenty-eight years old and Harvard-educated,⁴³ he headed back to Boston to get on with his life. He returned to Harvard in the fall of 1905 to take two

courses in an effort to complete his degree. In the spring of 1906, he served as an athletic instructor at local secondary schools and enrolled in the fall at Boston University Law School. He supported himself in law school by coaching at three different high schools in Boston: Boston Latin School, Dorchester High School, and Noble and Greenough School. He struggled desperately to make ends meet but succeeded in passing the bar in 1908, joining a practice in Boston with a "prominent Boston attorney." He was appointed as an athletic instructor for the Boston Public Schools in 1908 and continued in that role until 1913 when his legal duties precluded further involvement in the high schools. Except to take a bride in 1907, Penelope Belle ("Nellie") Lloyd, from Hayneville, Alabama, a Tuskegee schoolmate, Matthews never returned to the South.

"The only colored player"

Though he chose teaching and law over baseball as a profession after his dalliance in the Northern League, Matthews maintained a baseball identity in the Boston area on various clubs in the summer months. In a retrospective piece on Matthews shortly



Matthews and his young charges at the Noble and Greenough School, Boston, 1908.



The Harvard baseball team of 1903, with Matthews seated at left in the front row.

before his death, William Nunn in the *Chicago Defender* pointed out that Matthews in his post-Harvard years had played four seasons in Beverly, just outside Boston, some of that time with future major league star Stuffie McInnis, from nearby Gloucester, and also played with Biddeford of the “Main [*sic*] State League,” with outstanding young players “Larry Gardner and [Ray] Collins” from Vermont, later of the Red Sox. Nunn also asserted that Matthews played in the “Milford League and with Stoughton of the Bay State League” and he added significantly that he had “the distinction of being the only colored player in all of those leagues.”⁴⁴

As well-known as he was in Boston, Matthews was a free agent able to play for any team looking for a talented, experienced player. Boston, like all cities (and indeed smaller communities), was teeming with baseball clubs. Often in the newspapers of the day in Boston, whole pages were devoted to clubs looking for games on open dates. McInnes’s biographer, Ed Brown, writes that the Beverly team “was a mixture of collegians and a few older men, with the occasional ‘ringer’ (undoubtedly paid for just that day’s work) to bolster the lineup for an important game.”⁴⁵ In this informal but extensive patchwork of clubs, Matthews could play for pay without reservation or fear; he could be a “ringer” with distinction, and not worry about violating the stringent precepts of the Ivy League.

Indeed, newspapers in both Beverly and in Biddeford document Matthews’ play in the summers of 1906, ’07, and ’08.⁴⁶ By the time Matthews joined the Beverly nine in 1906, the club was already off to a fast start, winning all four of its April games. The

undisputed star of the team was centerfielder and leadoff hitter Eddie Loughlin, who played the previous summer, near the end of the season, with Matthews in Vermont.⁴⁷ Matthews joined the Beverly club May and the Loughlin-Matthews combination led the North Shore team to a most successful 1906 season, as they won nearly all of their games, defeating similarly composed teams from Boston and neighboring towns that had also contracted baseball fever. The 1907 season was no less successful for Beverly, behind keystone mates Matthews (batting third) and McInnis (cleanup). The Beverly team played its home games on next-door Peabody's diamond and drew between 3,000 and 3,500 fans to these fierce intercity battles. The *Beverly Evening Times* covered their weekend games with extensive pregame and postgame reports: Intensely partisan, the *Times* declared their club alternately Champions of Boston, Champions of Essex County, and Champions of all of Massachusetts.

In 1908, Matthews started out with Beverly and then switched his allegiance to the Maine State League, playing 15 games for Biddeford (the southernmost Maine town in the league, closest to Boston) before being called back to Boston to meet his various professional obligations. Matthews had arrived in Biddeford with considerable fanfare, described in the press as "one of the best college baseball players in the country ... secured by the local management at much expense."⁴⁸ On July 15, he joined a Biddeford team sitting in third place behind powerhouse nines from Portland and Bangor. Much was expected of him, and he didn't disappoint. He was installed at shortstop and batted his customary third in the order.⁴⁹ In his first at-bat in the first inning of his first game, against Portland, with two outs and no one on base, "Matthews, the new shortstop, came up amid a great reception from the grandstand and bleachers. In appreciation of this he drove out a two base hit." He then scored on another double by the next batter, and "the crowd went wild."⁵⁰ Biddeford went on to smite the league-leaders, 12-0. As at Harvard and Burlington, Matthews was a master at the auspicious debut.⁵¹

"Prominent negro member of the bar"

In his life on the playing field and off, at Harvard and after Harvard, Matthews was fortunate to have in William Henry Lewis, Boston attorney and political figure, a mentor and role model. Lewis had been an All-American football player at both Amherst College and Harvard Law School, and was Matthews' football coach at Harvard. Lewis was a supporter of Booker T. Washington and Matthews, too, soon became a member of the Tuskegee political machine.⁵² In 1912, Washington was helpful in procuring for Matthews an appointment by President Taft as a special assistant to the U.S. district attorney in Boston. He succeeded Lewis, who had been named assistant attorney general of the United States, at the time the highest federal office ever held by an African American.⁵³

After World War I, the resolutely Republican Matthews nonetheless served as legal counsel to Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

from 1920 to 1923. The relationship of Matthews with the flamboyant Black Nationalist would seem an unlikely alliance. Absent the Garvey years, Matthews' Republican credentials are impeccable. Matthews never included his association with Garvey in autobiographical material, such as the five-year Class Reports at Harvard and *Who's Who in Colored America*. There is no mention of Garvey in any of the vast and varied accounts of Matthews' life in the obituaries following his untimely passing in 1928. Yet there he is, listed as an officer in the UNIA (assistant chief counsel, counselor general), speaking at a UNIA meeting in Boston in 1920, encouraging delegates to invest in the Black Star Steamship Line, Garvey's ambitious, ill-fated commercial enterprise.

In exile in London in 1928, Garvey attacked Matthews after the fact in a speech at the Royal Albert Hall, accusing him of betrayal, asserting that he had been a government agent while working for Garvey: "While he was in our employ he was also in the employ of the Government. When I was indicted by the Government they called him out from serving us as Counsel-General, and, after convicting me, they made him Assistant Attorney-General of the United States."⁵⁴

Garvey scholar Robert A. Hill, editor of the Garvey papers, finds none of this difficult to explain, reminding us that membership in the various black improvement organizations was fluid and that Garvey had an affinity for hyperbole:

In his 1928 speech in London, Garvey, in a cynical attempt at exoneration, simply manipulated Matthews' period of employment with the government to suggest once again that he was framed. But even so, Garvey himself does not suggest that Matthews was working on behalf of the FBI; the most one could say is that the reference was ambiguous, a reflection once more of his cynical "guilt by association" methodology....

Garvey's UNIA inherited a definite number of hold-over Bookerites.... Moreover, Garvey needed a fixer and that person was M(atthews).⁵⁵

Matthews was apparently well compensated for his role as Garvey's "fixer." A BOI agent (Bureau of Investigation, forerunner to the FBI) reported in June 1923 that Matthews told a BOI informant that he was receiving "\$6,000 per annum" for his services to Garvey.⁵⁶ Garvey needed a good lawyer of his race and Matthews fit the bill.

Even while with Garvey, Matthews continued to be involved with the Republican Party politics, and ultimately served as the first designated leader of the "colored section" of the Republican Party in support of Calvin Coolidge in the 1924 presidential election. As the *Boston Guardian* observed, "This was the first time in history that all matters concerning the race electorate in a Presidential campaign were delegated to a race person to direct."⁵⁷ After the election of the taciturn Vermonter, with the help of over a million black voters, Matthews presented Coolidge with a proposal of 17 points to address the inequities in the representation of "Negroes" in government. While his proposal received front-page treatment in the black press, the Coolidge Administration largely ignored it, but did appoint Matthews to a position in the U.S. Attorney General's Office as a reward for his efforts on behalf of the President. As an assistant U.S. attorney general, he was posted in Washington D.C., Lincoln, Nebraska, and San Francisco.

FRED TENNEY



CAPTAIN OF THE BOSTON NATIONAL BASEBALL TEAM.

BOSTON AND N. Y. BROKERS
MEET ON DIAMOND MAY 13

NEW YORK, April 12.—The annual game of baseball between Boston and New York stock exchanges will be held in New York, May 13, on the grounds of the American league club.

COLOR LINE DRAWN ON HARVARD

Two Colleges Said to Object to Matthews Playing on Nine

Two colleges have drawn the color line against Harvard; at least that was the reason advanced by the Crimson undergraduates yesterday, when it was announced that Matthews, the colored shortstop on the varsity nine, would be taken with the team, and that the games with Trinity and Annapolis had been cancelled.

Last year, owing to the objections raised against him the year previous, Matthews did not accompany the team on its Southern trip. As a consequence Georgetown, the college which was most insistent in its demand for his withdrawal, scored a victory over Harvard and, significantly enough, was dropped from the Crimson schedule this year.

This matter arranged, it was naturally expected that Matthews would accompany the team this year, and on Thursday night, when, after a sudden meeting of the Harvard athletic committee, the names of the men who would go on the trip were announced, the little colored man's was indeed on the list.

The team, cheered on by nearly 500 undergraduates, left Harvard square yesterday afternoon.

OLD-TIME FIGHTER DIES IN BROOKLYN

Ed Toughy, one of the old school of prize fighters, who in his day was the champion lightweight, died Wednesday in St. Catherine's Hospital, Brooklyn. When Toughy fought there were no such things as boxing gloves. He was at his best during the Civil war and won many memorable battles with bare knuckles, meeting all the crack men of his time.

Toughy was married twice and was in good circumstances. His death followed an operation for cancer of the stomach. He was 55 years old. His funeral will take place from the home of his widow, No. 427 Broadway, Brooklyn.

When Harvard traveled south, the choice was sometimes between playing Matthews and cancellation or forfeiture.



The 1905 Harvard Class Day Committee. Matthews (front row, center) was elected by his fellow seniors to serve on the honorary committee.

William Clarence Matthews died unexpectedly on April 9, 1928, at the age of 51, on a visit to Washington from his post in San Francisco. At the time of his death, he was working on “an important water adjudication matter, pending in the U.S. Courts of California.”⁵⁸ The cause of death was a “perforated gastric ulcer.” In its obituary, the *Boston Globe* described Matthews as “one of the most prominent Negro members of the bar in America.”⁵⁹ The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the national black weekly, carried an extensive account of the funeral, reporting that more than 1,500 were in attendance and “scores of telegrams” were received, including one from President Coolidge and another from U.S. Attorney General John Sargent. Other black newspapers also responded to his death and its immediate aftermath with front-page coverage. In the *New York Age*, the headline on the top of Page One announced Matthews’ death — and just under-



A photograph of Matthews that ran in the 1927 edition of *Who's Who in Colored America*.

A REAL HOME PAPER!
 Give it to: Mom, Sister, Friend
 No Any Other Paper Published

The New York Age

NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1923

YOUR ADVERTISING
 Reaches The Best Class of People
 and Brings Best Results.

WM. C. MATTHEWS DIES SUDDENLY IN WASHINGTON

William Clarence Matthews, Noted In College Athletics and Politics, Stricken In Washington, Is Dead

Starred in Baseball and Football at Harvard And After Practising Law in Boston, Was Made Special Asst. U. S. Attorney Gen'l

By R. B. LEMUS
 (By Telegraph to The New York Age.)

Washington, D. C.—William Clarence Matthews of Boston, Special Assistant U. S. Attorney General, died at Curtis' Private Sanatorium, here, on Monday night at 10.50 o'clock.

Mr. Matthews, who had been practicing a government job in Washington since June, 1922, came here for medical treatment. He had been stricken in his job at the Washington office.

Mr. Matthews was stricken in his room at the Hotel Whitcomb, and he was taken to the Curtis Sanatorium, where he died.

A separate arrangement to hold the funeral service was made by the family.

Mr. Matthews was born in 1877, in New York City. He was a member of the Harvard football team and the Harvard baseball team. He was a member of the Harvard law school and the Harvard law firm.

He was a member of the Harvard law firm and the Harvard law firm.

He was a member of the Harvard law firm and the Harvard law firm.

The Feast of Easter Marked In New York Churches By Brilliant Music, Eloquent Sermons, Fine Decorations

Clear Sunshine, With Nippy Air, Draws Many Thousands of Worshippers to the Various Houses of Worship To Celebrate Day

The brilliant sunlight and warmth of atmosphere which greeted the dawning of Easter Sunday, drew many thousands to the various houses of divine worship, even though there was a nip in the air which reminded one that winter was only in "the lap of spring."

Various churches, as is to be expected, were thronged with worshippers. The churches of the various denominations were all crowded with worshippers. The churches of the various denominations were all crowded with worshippers.

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Attorney Octavius C. Granady Shot To Death By Machine Gun Gang In Chicago Tuesday During Election

Negro Lawyer and Ex-Service Man Was Candidate for Ward Committeeman On Democratic Ticket, Opposing Mayor Thompson

Chicago, April 10.—Octavius C. Granady, attorney and Negro ex-service man, who opposed Morris E. Eller, boss of the 22nd Ward and leader in the Mayor Thompson faction, for the post of Ward Committeeman in today's primaries, was slain by machine gunners this evening after a thrilling race through the swarming streets of the ward.

It was the climax of a day of violence in the city. The streets were filled with people. The streets were filled with people.

The streets were filled with people. The streets were filled with people.

The streets were filled with people. The streets were filled with people.

MONTCLAIR FOLK FIGHT JIM CROW

THEATRE USAGE Charge of Segregation Is Made Against Clairidge

Montclair, N. J.—A meeting of colored citizens of Montclair, N. J., was held at the Montclair Theatre on Monday night, April 9, to discuss the charge of segregation made against the theatre.

The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre. The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre.

The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre. The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre.

The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre. The meeting was held at the Montclair Theatre.

CULLEN-DOBBS MARRIAGE IS A NOTABLE EVENT

Brilliant Hospital Ceremony Marked Union of Poet to Teacher

The wedding of Miss Helen Cullen Dobbs to George Cullen Dobbs, poet and teacher, was a notable event in the city.

The wedding was held at the city hall. The wedding was held at the city hall.

The wedding was held at the city hall. The wedding was held at the city hall.

The wedding was held at the city hall. The wedding was held at the city hall.

ORLANDO PEOPLE OF BOTH RACES WORK FOR GOOD

Interracial Commission Has Improved Conditions In 2 Years

Orlando, Fla.—The Orlando Interracial Commission, which was organized two years ago, has made a fine record for the people of both races.

The commission has made a fine record for the people of both races. The commission has made a fine record for the people of both races.

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Harlem's Negro Republicans Show Interest In Alleged Statement That Negro Prefers White Leader

Rank and File of Voters Object To Being So Rated and Say That Colored Leaders Who Agree Will Soon Lose Their Influence

Much interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans who are of the opinion that the race's voting strength in this community entitles it to a white leader.

The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans. The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans.

The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans. The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans.

The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans. The interest is being shown by Harlem's Negro Republicans.

UNION PARLEY REFUSED BY THE REYNOLDS CO.

Big Tobacco Company Is Discharging Men Who Join Labor Union

Winston-Salem, N. C.—The R. I. Reynolds Tobacco Co. has refused to accept the request of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America to discharge the men who have joined the labor union.

The company has refused to accept the request of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. The company has refused to accept the request of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

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HUNDREDS PAY TRIBUTE

Matthews' death was front-page news in African American papers around the country.

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Matthews' death was front-page news in African American papers around the country.

neath was a picture with the caption "Matty Is Dead."⁶⁰ The *New York Amsterdam News* wrote:

He was the greatest college baseball player of his time, and his football career, in spite of his light weight, was sensational. Whenever he played baseball or football against Yale or Princeton, something dramatic was sure to happen, a spectacular home run, a lightning double play, a hair-raising tackle. The sporting pages of the newspapers were full of his name.

Now he is dead at 52 [sic], after making his mark as U.S. Assistant District Attorney and an Assistant United States Attorney General.⁶¹

"The Jackie Robinson of his day"

The life of William Clarence Matthews is an absorbing story of a talented and ambitious black man in an America divided by race at the turn of the 20th century. The Progressive Era was good for baseball but not for African Americans. It was a period of optimism and expansion in mainstream life with a burgeoning industrial

economy dramatically changing the cultural landscape. The "Negro Problem," however, seemed intractable. While Matthews was best known early in his life for his athletic talents, he became a man of significant accomplishment outside sports, overcoming the barrier of color to become, according to the *Boston Evening Transcript*, "a leader of the colored race."⁶²

Matthews' combination of baseball skill and success outside baseball as a black man in white America has few parallels. He was mentored by Southerner Booker T. Washington, the preeminent black leader in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nurtured at the Harvard College of Northern black radicals W.E.B. DuBois and William Munroe Trotter, was a protégé of the estimable William Henry Lewis, and was an intimate associate of black nationalist Marcus Garvey, who built the largest single black-led movement in American history.

Matthews resembles in important ways the fictional protagonists of the classic African American novels *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright. He endured as a boy the daily brutalities to body and spirit of life in the Deep South. When he headed north, he encountered greater freedom of opportunity and movement, but hardly racial equality. What was his abortive attempt to integrate baseball in 1905 but a gesture by the majority white world to "keep this nigger boy running," in the phrase that haunts the eponymous hero in *Invisible Man*? Also, in the North, like Ellison's invisible man and Wright's black boy, Matthews had to negotiate the thicket of competing black ideologies designed to confront and ameliorate the "race problem" in America. Should he wait his turn, work hard, and prove his worth to white authority as Booker T. Washington contended? Or should he educate himself rigorously, become a member of the "talented tenth" of W.E.B. DuBois, and oppose racism at every opportunity? Or should he throw off the yoke of white oppression, express his solidarity with his black brethren, and fall in with Marcus Garvey?

Throughout his life, Matthews was exposed in intimate ways to the dominant modes of critical thought and action of the civil rights struggle in his turbulent times. In the end, we study Matthews because he is a text that advances our understanding of the complicated intersections of race and American culture. Matthews' political life was not noteworthy on the scale of his contemporaries Washington, DuBois, and Garvey. He was never a radical innovator or firebrand; for the most part, he chose to work within the system as he knew it. Nor was Matthews a baseball hero of the magnitude of Pop Lloyd, Satchel Paige, Jackie Robinson, and other enduring black stars. His baseball talents, however, were real and of a level to predict success in the white major leagues, or on the best of the barnstorming black teams of the era.

In the content of his character, and in his extraordinary athletic skills, Matthews does indeed resemble the impeccable Jackie Robinson. He was one of the giants on whose shoulders Robinson stood in making his historic contribution to American life. In 1965, and again three years later, *Boston Globe* columnist Harold Kaese made explicit comparisons of Matthews to Robinson. Kaese told the story in his first column of the decision made 60 years earlier by the Harvard baseball team to call off their spring trip

as a gesture of support for their black teammate. Kaese then declared, "He was the Jackie Robinson of his age."⁶³

In 1968, Kaese reflected on Matthews' gridiron exploits for Harvard in 1904, describing his prep background before entering Harvard and celebrating his athletic versatility: "Matthews was the first Negro to captain the Andover football team. He was a ten-letter man, the Jackie Robinson of his day."⁶⁴

Nineteen hundred five — the year of Matthews' fateful summer in Vermont, the year of his rumored entry into the major leagues — was an exciting year for baseball. The game was at a peak of popularity: *The Sporting Life*, baseball's bible at the time, covered no fewer than 20 leagues and nearly 150 professional teams, from Holyoke, Massachusetts, to Fargo, North Dakota, from Shreveport, Louisiana, to Tacoma, Washington. There were no Negro "leagues" in 1905 — just a handful of traveling independent teams, barnstorming the country playing all-comers, white and black.⁶⁵ It would be another 15 years before Rube Foster would organize the Negro National League, patterned after the white big leagues.

The best team in organized baseball in 1905 was undoubtedly the New York Giants of John McGraw. The Giants won 105 games to take the National League pennant. The World Series that year, pitting the Giants against Connie Mack's Philadelphia A's, saw the greatest postseason pitching performance in the history of the game to that point — and since. Giants ace Christy Mathewson — "Matty" — won Games 1, 3, and 5 to lead New York to the championship in just five games. All three Mathewson wins were complete game shutouts.⁶⁶ For his performance in 1905 (he also won 32 games in the regular season), plus his sterling character, Matty became perhaps America's most beloved and admired man.

Another extraordinary baseball player, and man, called "Matty" was also well known in 1905 — a less famous Matty to be sure, but a worthy one nonetheless: William Clarence Matthews, the black Matty.

Notes

1. *Burlington Free Press*, July 3, 1905.
2. *Harrisburg Patriot*, April 12, 1902.
3. *Burlington Free Press*, June 30, 1905.
4. *Burlington Free Press*, July 3, 1905.
5. *Burlington Free Press*, June 23, 1905.
6. "Harvard's famous colored shortstop" was a descriptive phrase that consistently accompanied mention of Matthews in the press.
7. The Boston National League team was not known as the "Braves" until 1912. See: M. Okkonen, "Team Nicknames 1900–1910," *Baseball Research Journal* Vol. 27 (1998): 80–83.
8. *Boston Traveler*, July 15, 1905.
9. *Boston Traveler*, July 15, 1905.
10. *Boston Traveler*, July 16, 1905.
11. For an extended discussion of the rumor of Matthews' entry into major league baseball in 1905, see: K. Lindholm, "Rumors and Facts: William Clarence Matthews's 1905 Challenge to Major League Baseball's Color Barrier," *Nine* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2008): 37–53.
12. *Rutland Herald*, July 29, 1905.

13. H.B. Needham, "The College Athlete: His Amateur Code — Its Evasion and Administration," *McClure's Magazine*, June 1905, p. 128.
14. Matthews' file, Harvard Archives, Harvard University, Boston, MA.
15. *Boston Guardian*, April 14, 1928 (Matthews' obit). Tuskegee Archives.
16. In 1905, Boston had a population of slightly over 611,000 people. The *Traveler* (circulation: 80,000), *Journal* (72,000), and *Transcript* (37,000) were also widely read. Source: Boston Public Library.
17. *Phillipian*, June 16, 1900.
18. E.G. Burgess to Cecil Bancroft, April 11, 1901, Andover Archives.
19. Ibid.
20. A periodical of the time, *The Illustrated Sporting News*, profiled the great prep schools of the Northeast and noted that Exeter "has a marked tendency toward Harvard," and Lawrenceville "sends most of its boys to Princeton," while Andover "ships its sturdy product annually to Yale" (Oct. 4, 1903; Jan. 23, 1904). The *Phillipian* reported in Matthews' senior year that 191 Andover grads were at that time enrolled at Yale (when Andover only graduated 75–80 boys a year); the *Washington Post* reported that Matthews was choosing Harvard over Yale, "owing to the impossibility of a colored student ever getting on an athletic team at Yale" (Sept. 1, 1901).
21. *New York Times*, June 29, 1902.
22. Because of injuries, Matthews played in only seven varsity games as a freshman, shuttling between third, second, shortstop, and the outfield. He batted 27 times and had 10 hits for a .270 average.
23. O. Chalk, *Black College Sport* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1976), pp. 16–17.
24. The first game in the series in 1905 ended in a 1–1 tie after 11 innings, Matthews scoring the only Harvard run, in what the *Globe* called in its headline the "greatest college game on record," despite the unsatisfactory outcome. After much debate, it was decided that the series would be decided by just one additional game, played in New Haven. Yale won 7–2, and Matthews ran out of magic in his final game for the Crimson. He had one hit and made a fine play in the field, but was also picked off, nipping a rally in the bud, and made an error.
25. *Boston Globe*, June 19, 1903.
26. *Boston Herald*, May 21, 1905.
27. *Boston Traveler*, May 22, 1905.
28. *Boston Post*, April 15, 1905.
29. *Boston Globe*, April 10, 1928.
30. *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1904.
31. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 20, 1904.
32. *New York Tribune*, Dec. 10, 1904.
33. G. Captain, "Enter Ladies and Gentlemen of Color: Gender, Sport, and the Ideal of African America Manhood and Womanhood During the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Journal of Sports History* 18.1 (1991): pp. 88, 95.
34. Alain Locke correspondence, Oct. 4, 1904, box 47, folder 37. I am indebted to Locke scholar David Abraham Weinfield, who was aware of my work on Matthews and provided these references to Matthews from his thorough examination of Locke's letters.
35. Locke correspondence, Oct. 4, 1904, box 47, folder 37.
36. Locke correspondence, May 31 1905, box 49, folder 20.
37. Locke correspondence, undated, spring 1905, Box 47, folder 7.
38. *Colored American Magazine* was published from 1900 to 1909 and enjoyed a subsidy from Booker T. Washington.
39. Including Matthew Bullock, the famous football player from Dartmouth, Matthews' contemporary and apparently his friend. Bullock was in Harvard Law School in 1905.
40. *Boston Herald*, June 11, 1905.
41. At the time of Needham's article praising Matthews, *McClure's Magazine* had a circulation of nearly a half-million. According to Frank L. Mott in *The History of American Magazines, 1885–1905*, *McClure's* set the standard for "the golden age of the ten-cent illustrated magazines, and was marked by freshness, brilliance and abundance of life in all departments." Needham's piece revealing abuses in big-time college athletics was published during its great muckraking period when Ida M. Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, and Ray Stannard Baker exposed corruption in the oil industry, municipal governments, and labor unions. From 1902 until 1911, *McClure's* "exerted a tremendous influence on the thinking of the American people, 'hardly less than that of Roosevelt himself,' according to some observers" (p. 607).

42. *Boston Traveler*, June 2, 1905. This was Thompson's evaluation before the *Traveler's* announcement of the Boston National's interest in signing Matthews.

43. In truth, Matthews never earned a Harvard degree though he had ample credits to do so and was often referred to in the press as a Harvard "graduate." It's a sad story. He entered Harvard with a "condition" in math (geometry). He had received a C in algebra and an E in geometry at Andover and not scored high enough on the Harvard entrance exams to be exempted from math in college. He needed to pass geometry at Harvard, or an equivalent math course, in order to receive his degree. He couldn't do it. His Harvard transcript shows no fewer than seven notations about this deficiency, the last one six years after his class had graduated. He took two Harvard courses in math and two makeup exams, never scoring high enough to pass. His appeals to be exempted from this condition were denied. There's no doubt that he was a real student at Harvard, not a ringer, but he struggled. Matthews' performance was not up to the high scholastic standards of Trotter and DuBois and other racial forebears at Harvard, but, then, they never scored the winning run against Yale before 9,000 fans in the Polo Grounds.

44. William Nunn, *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 14, 1928.

45. E. Brown, *That's the Stuff, Kid: The Life and Times of Baseball Legend Stuffy McInnis* (Beverly, MA: Beverly Historical Society, 2010). Matthews is mentioned on a number of occasions in this biography of McInnis, but never is any reference made to his color. That's because the author didn't know Matthews was black, he told me in a phone conversation, as no references were made to Matthews' skin color in the local papers. Apparently, it was not relevant. What was important was Matthews' skill.

46. I could not find documentation of his play in the "Milford League" or for "Stoughton of the Bay State League," but do not doubt Nunn's reporting.

47. The intersections in the lives of Matthews and Loughlin are intimate and immediate enough to assume a relationship. Loughlin was the same age as Matthews (born in 1877) but he finished at Harvard (class of 1900) before Matthews started. Loughlin was in the Law School at Harvard in 1904–1905, when Matthews too was studying there in his fourth year as an undergraduate. Eddie joined Matthews in Burlington in the summer of 1905 for a few games at the end of the year. Loughlin was an outstanding baseball player at Harvard, starting in center field on the 1900 Crimson team that went 16–6 in his senior year and defeated Yale. After graduation, Loughlin wrote in his 1910 Class Report that "during the summer months I play some semi-pro baseball, thus having plenty of fun and at the same time accumulating a little spare money." Twenty-five years out, he wrote, "I have not relinquished my love for baseball and every spring sees me actively engaged in coaching some school team." Clearly, Loughlin and Matthews shared a passion for the game.

48. *Biddeford Daily Journal*, July 17, 1908.

49. Baseball cognoscenti know that the no. 3 hitter is the best all-around batter in the lineup, and the shortstop perhaps the best athlete, lithe and quick. A shortstop who bats third is a special player indeed. In all the teams on which Matthews played, he was quickly installed as the third batter in the lineup.

50. *Biddeford Daily Journal*, July 17, 1908.

51. In Larry Lester's and Dick Clark's groundbreaking 1997 SABR publication, *The Negro Leagues*, Matthews is listed as having played for Burlington in the Northern League and also for a New York team called the Black Sox in 1910. His name does appear in two box scores in the *Amsterdam News*, for games on June 19 and June 20, along with this note: "Matthews, formerly of Harvard, is back in the game and is playing second for the Black Sox." He was hitless in those two games and his name does not appear in subsequent box scores; there are no further comments on his play or presence on the team. It appears that this Black Sox commitment was not a very extensive one.

52. Marcus Garvey and Robert A. Hill, ed., *Life and Lessons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), Glossary, p. 408.

53. In the 1924 presidential election, Lewis defected from the Republican ranks and campaigned for Democratic candidate John W. Davis. Matthews and Lewis clashed in the press, but reconciled shortly after the election. Lewis sat with Mrs. Matthews on the "front bench" at Matthews' memorial service in Boston in 1928 (*Chicago Defender*, April 21, 1928).

54. Garvey speech, Royal Albert Hall, London, June 6, 1928, *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers*, Robert A. Hill, ed.

55. Robert A. Hill, pers. comm., May 20, 2001, June 15, 2001.

56. Report by Bureau Agent Madison Ballantyne, June 17, 1921, Garvey Papers. Prof. Hill finds this \$6,000 figure unlikely and "wholly propagandistic. If he received as much as one-sixth of that amount, I would be astonished" (pers. comm., June 15, 2001).

57. *Boston Guardian*, April 14, 1928.
58. *New York Amsterdam News*, April 11, 1928.
59. *Boston Globe*, April 10, 1928.
60. *New York Age*, April 14, 1928.
61. *New York Amsterdam News*, April 18, 1928.
62. *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 11, 1928.
63. *Boston Globe*, Jan. 17, 1965.
64. *Boston Globe*, Nov. 20, 1968 (*italics mine*). In fact, Matthews did not captain the Andover football team; he was, however, the first Negro to captain the baseball team.
65. In 1906, there were nine barnstorming black teams and two Cuban teams, according to Jerry Malloy in his excellent introduction to the University of Nebraska's reissuing of Sol White's *History of Colored Baseball* (1907).
66. The Giants won the 1905 World Series four games to one. All five games were shutouts. Chief Bender of the A's pitched a four-hit shutout in Game 2 and the Giants' Iron Man Joe McGinnity won Game 4, 1-0.