

Integration Timeline of the Boston Red Sox

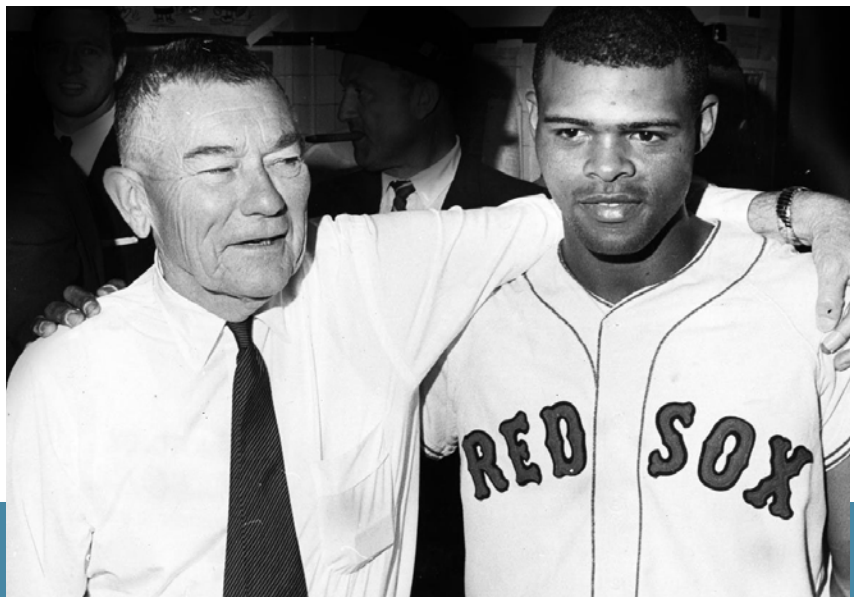
UNDER TOM YAWKEY'S OWNERSHIP

It's impossible to talk honestly about the issue of integration in America and the Boston Red Sox without first acknowledging the brutal, painful, and shameful legacy of American slavery and segregation. To this very day, we live with a host of inequities and injustices that arose from systems that turned people into property and, even after emancipation, denied those same people jobs, opportunities, and basic rights simply on the basis of the color of their skin. Thankfully, African-Americans, other people of color, and their friends refused to accept that inferior position and through lawsuits, peaceful protest, and constant advocacy pushed the nation to live up to its own ideals of "liberty and justice for all."

As the nation was evolving in the mid-1900s, so too was Major League Baseball, including the Red Sox. Contrary to popular belief, the Red Sox were not resistant to integration. In fact, under the leadership of Tom Yawkey, the Red Sox successfully recruited Black players to their minor league teams. Yawkey also made numerous sincere and credible offers to recruit talented and established Black players to Boston's major league roster a full decade before integrating the major league team with the addition of Elijah "Pumpsie" Green in 1959.

We acknowledge that these facts don't change the regrettable and painful reality that the Red Sox were last to integrate in Major League Baseball. Ugly things happened in Boston and the consequences were painful, demeaning, and wrong. It was painful for players who had to work under those conditions and for fans of color who wanted to embrace their home team, but felt that their home team didn't embrace them.

Mindful of all that, we invite you to [learn more about the true story of Tom Yawkey](#)—a man "who changed and grew," as the great pitcher Jim Lonborg so eloquently put it—who bought a moribund team, revived it, integrated it, and, particularly in his last decade and half of life, worked hard to recruit talent regardless of race. We invite you to learn how the legacy of Tom and Jean Yawkey, whose generous and often anonymous philanthropy extended to people of all races and classes, continues to this day through the Yawkey Foundation.



Tom Yawkey and Reggie Smith are pictured in 1967.

YAWKEY
FOUNDATION



1903-
1945

1903

Major League Baseball (MLB) is established.

1933

Tom Yawkey, at 30 years old, purchases the Boston Red Sox. The team signs Latino Mel Almada, the first Mexican-born player in MLB history. Almada plays four years with the Red Sox and is inducted into the Mexican Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.



◀ Tom Yawkey in the late 1930s.

▶ Mel Almada, the first Mexican-born player in Major League Baseball, pictured with fellow Red Sox Billy Werber and Rick Ferrell. Almada was on the team from 1933 to 1937.



1945

The Red Sox hold a tryout for future Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson along with Samuel Jethroe and Marvin Williams. Although Tom Yawkey was not in Boston at the time of the tryout, a false narrative emerges years later about Yawkey and that tryout which casts an unsubstantiated and pejorative pall over Tom's character and values pertaining to racial matters.

In October, less than two months after the end of World War II, the Brooklyn Dodgers sign Jackie Robinson to a minor league deal to play for their triple-A international team in more racially tolerant Montréal, Canada.

the Boston pilot will do. No one can say that he is a vigorous foe of those campaigning for Negro players in the big leagues, because he did agree to give the three players a tryout and he was on the scene the entire time they were being drilled by Coaches Duffy and Woodall. Like Mr. Rickey, Joe Cronin and the Boston management gave the players every consideration at the time of the tryout and at no time did they appear to be perturbed over the situation. They too, then, deserve the benefit of doubt and the patience of the baseball public and press.

Smith, Wendell. "Smitty's Sports Spurts." Pittsburgh Courier, 28 Apr. 1945, p. 12.

Something new was written in Boston baseball history today when the Red Sox gave workouts to three Negro baseball players—asplicants to big league berths.

"Three Negroes Given Workout by Red Sox."
Boston Globe, 16 Apr. 1945, p. 17.

1947

The Brooklyn Dodgers are the first MLB team to integrate with the signing of Jackie Robinson to its major league roster. A few months later, the Cleveland Indians integrate with the signing of Larry Doby.



1948

An Executive Order is signed to end segregation in the Armed Services.

1949

By the end of the 1949 season, only four of the 16 MLB teams have Black players on their major league rosters.

Piper Davis First Negro Star to Join Sox Farm Team

Piper Davis, 25-year-old hard-hitting second baseman for the Birmingham Black Barons, today became the first Negro baseball player to join the Red Sox chain of farm teams.

◀ "Piper Davis First Negro Star to Join Sox Farm Team." Boston Globe, 15 Aug. 1949, p. 11.

▶ Butler, Joe M. "Sockers Awaiting Visit By Cronin on Saturday." Scranton Times-Tribune, 30 Mar. 1950, p. 31.

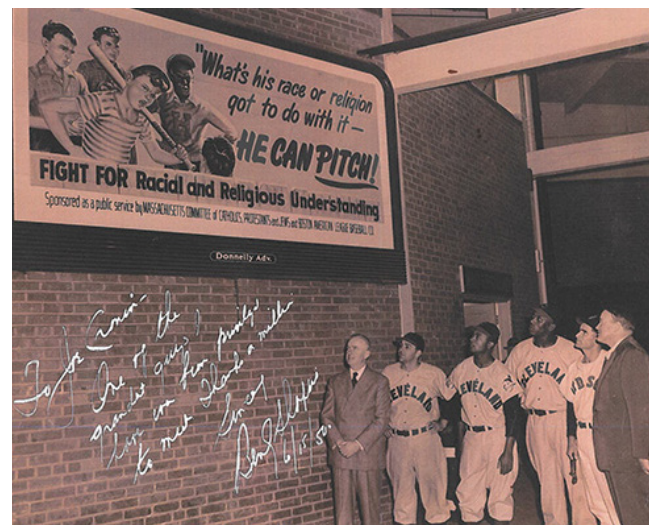


1950

With the Red Sox having signed 33-year-old talented and established Black infielder, Lorenzo "Piper" Davis, to a minor league contract, Davis is the first Black player to join the Red Sox organization. According to the [African American Registry](#), his signing ends an era of racial exclusion by the Red Sox. Davis was a player/manager for future Hall of Famer Willie Mays' team at the time. Mays signs with the New York Giants that same year. The Red Sox also attempt to acquire Black future Hall of Famer Larry Doby from Cleveland.

Also in 1950, the Red Sox proudly display a billboard emphasizing the Yawkey-owned team's commitment to inclusion. Prominently placed for all the team's fans, players, employees and visitors to see upon entering Fenway Park, the billboard's installation is celebrated by the team's senior executives and prominent players in MLB.

▶ Red Sox' senior executives and MLB players proudly showcase a new billboard at Fenway Park in 1950. Pictured R-L: Red Sox General Manager (1947-59) Joe Cronin; Red Sox player Bobby Doerr; Cleveland players Larry Doby, Bobby Avila, and Lou Boudreau; and Ben Shapiro of the Massachusetts Committee of Catholics, Protestants and Jews.





1952-1954

1952

The Red Sox enter into a bidding war to acquire Double A pitcher Bill Greason from the Texas League, offering over three times the average baseball salary at the time. Greason would go on to play for the St. Louis Cardinals as their second ever Black player. The Red Sox offer is declined because the team's owner decides to retain Greason for another season.

The Red Sox make a second attempt to acquire Black center fielder Larry Doby with a substantial offer, but Cleveland's general manager refuses to trade the future Hall of Famer. Offers at that time were made to teams, not players, but Tom Yawkey was known for making strong offers for established players, irrespective of race. To obtain Doby, the Red Sox even offer to trade All-Star player Dom DiMaggio, fan favorite and future Boston Red Sox Hall of Famer, whose salary was more than three times that of the average baseball player in the 1950s. Cleveland declines the trade because Doby is deemed too valuable to their team.

Red Sox Seek Negro Pitcher, Ex-Marine Ace

The Red Sox are definitely interested in Bill Greason, highly-touted Negro pitcher with Oklahoma City. General Manager Joe Cronin said today. The negotiation stage has not yet been reached, however.

◀ "Red Sox Seek Negro Pitcher, Ex-Marine Ace." Boston Globe, 23 Dec. 1952, p. 1.

▶ Hurwitz, Hy. "Braves' Trade Talks With Dodgers Ebb." Boston Globe, 7 Dec. 1952, p. 48.

▶ Boston Red Sox player Earl Wilson.

TRADE TALK—At one time this Fall, the Boston Red Sox offered Dom DiMaggio to the Cleveland Indians in exchange for Larry Doby. . . Right now, the Cleveland club is so involved in a bitter intra-club front office battle that they are out of the trading picture.



1953

The Red Sox sign Black pitcher Earl Wilson to a minor league contract.

Sox Tried to Get Smith

General Manager Hank Greenberg of the Indians stated flatly last night that the Red Sox have made overtures to him the past three years for one of his Negro players, third baseman and outfielder Al Smith.

◀ Keane, Clif. "Sox Tried to Get Smith, Says Greenberg." Boston Globe, 12 Jun. 1957, p. 22.

1954

The Red Sox make an offer to acquire Dodgers' Black second baseman and future All-Star Charlie Neal. The offer was comparable to the salary of Ted Williams, the highest paid professional baseball player at the time. However, the offer is declined with the Dodgers' vice president stating that Neal figures into their plans for the upcoming season. That same year, the Red Sox make a substantial offer to acquire Black outfielder and future All-Star Al Smith from Cleveland, but the offer is rejected.

Red Sox Offer \$100,000 for Dodger Rookie Neal

Buzz Bavasi, Dodgers' vice president, said that the Sox made "the highest offer ever made for a minor league ball player—more than \$100,000."

◀ Hurwitz, Hy. "Red Sox Offer \$100,000 for Dodger Rookie Neal." Boston Globe, 7 Dec. 1954, p. 56.



1954

The Supreme Court rules in Brown v. Board of Education that segregation in schools is unconstitutional.

1955

The Red Sox sign Black infielder Elijah "Pumpsie" Green from the Oakland Oaks to the team's minor league system.

By the end of the 1955 season, 13 of the 16 MLB teams have Black players on their major league rosters.



1955

Rosa Parks sparks the Montgomery bus boycott.

- ▶ Holbrook, Bob. "Red Sox Eager to Sign Negro Players." Boston Globe, 15 Jul. 1956, p. 58.

Red Sox Eager to Sign Negro Players

1957

At spring training, the Red Sox determine Earl Wilson is ready to be promoted to the majors after pitching a 5-2 victory in a game against the team's major league squad. However, he then receives his military draft notice and enlists in the U.S. Marines for two years.

The Red Sox sign Latino Mike Fornieles to their major league roster. Fornieles was a Cuban-born, All-Star pitcher who went on to play six years with the team.



1957

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 is signed to protect voter rights.

Boston's First Negro Player Will Enlist

FULLERTON, Calif. (AP) — Earl Wilson, 23, expected to be the first Negro ever to play with the Boston Red Sox, Monday announced he was enlisting in the Marines for his service stint and would report to the San Diego, Calif., Marine recruit station Wednesday.

- ◀ "Boston's First Negro Player Will Enlist." Great Falls Tribune, 2 Apr. 1957, p. 11.

- ▶ Shechman, Bill. "Plenty's Parents Rabid Red Sox Fans." Boston Globe, 28 June 1958.



PLENTY OF HAPPINESS for Plenty family of Somerville. Mr. and Mrs. Hank Larry, who recently signed Red Sox contracts.

1958

The Red Sox sign Black Bostonian Lawrence Plenty to its Waterloo, Iowa minor league team.

1959

The Red Sox integrate its major league roster with the promotion of Elijah “Pumpsie” Green. Earl Wilson is also promoted to the major league roster weeks later after completing his military service.



1960

The Greensboro Sit-In, a non-violent protest of segregation, inspires similar sit-ins in other states.

1960-1966

The Red Sox spend much of the decade acquiring talented players such as Black outfielder Willie Tasby in 1960, Black infielder Billy Harrell in 1961, Puerto Rican infielder Félix Mantilla in 1962, and Cuban outfielder Román Mejías in 1963. Black outfielder and third baseman Al Smith finally joins the team in 1964, and Black outfielder Lenny Green joins in 1965.

In 1966 the team gets a major skill boost with the addition of Black third baseman Joe Foy, Cuban outfielder José Tartabull, Black first baseman George Scott, Puerto Rican pitcher José Santiago, Black outfielder Reggie Smith, Virgin Islander outfielder Joe Christopher, Black second baseman George Smith, and Black pitcher John Wyatt.



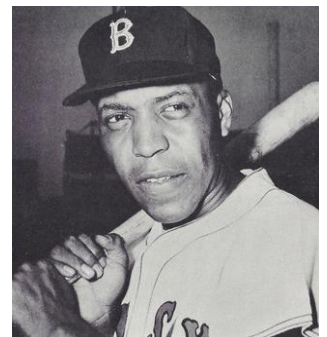
1961

Freedom Riders challenge Jim Crow laws in the South.



1963

Martin Luther King Jr. gives his “I Have a Dream” speech.



▲ Red Sox outfielder Willie Tasby.



1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is signed to prevent employment and education discrimination and outlaw racial segregation in all public places and most private businesses.



1965

Martin Luther King Jr. leads the first civil rights march in Boston. More than 20,000 people marched from Nubian Square in Roxbury to Boston Common.



1967-
1976

1967

Tom Yawkey continues to assemble one of the best and most diverse teams in all of MLB, the “Impossible Dream Team,” and wins the American League Championship. Some of the players of color include Joe Foy, Elston Howard, Jose Santiago, George Scott, Reggie Smith, Jose Tartabull, and John Wyatt.



▲ Red Sox first baseman George Scott swings at a pitch during a game at Fenway Park in 1967.



1968

The Civil Rights Act of 1968 is signed to provide equal housing opportunity.

As a matter of fact, in 1966, the Sox could have virtually fielded an all-black lineup with Scott at first, George Smith at second, Felix Mantilla at short, Foy at third, Joe Christopher, Reggie Smith and Green in the outfield, and Wilson on the mound. In 1972, 11 players, or almost half the team, were black or Hispanic.

1968-1974

Throughout the late '60s and early '70s, Tom Yawkey and the Red Sox add more notable talent such as Puerto Rican infielder Luis Alvarado, Black outfielder Floyd Robinson, and Puerto Rican pitcher Juan Pizarro in 1968; Puerto Rican catcher Joe Azcue and Mexican pitcher Vicente Romo in 1969; Puerto Rican pitcher Roger Moret in 1970; Black first baseman Cecil Cooper, Venezuelan shortstop Luis Aparicio, Cuban pitcher Luis Tiant, Puerto Rican outfielder Juan Beniquez, and Panamanian left fielder Ben Oglivie in 1971; Black outfielder/third baseman Tommy Harper, Black pitcher Lynn McGlothen, and Black pitcher Bob Veale in 1972; Puerto Rican first baseman Orlando Cepeda and Dominican shortstop Mario Guerrero in 1973; Black left fielder/designated hitter Jim Rice, Cuban pitcher Diego Seguí, and Dominican pitcher Juan Marichal in 1974.

▲ McDonough, Will. “To Him, The Series Was Far Off Base.” Boston Globe, 10 Aug. 1991, p. 29.



▲ Members of the 1974 Boston Red Sox, from left to right, Mario Guerrero, Roger Moret, Juan Marichal, Juan Beniquez, Orlando Cepeda, Luis Tiant, and Luis Aparicio

1975

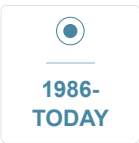
The culmination of the Red Sox’s acquisition of top talent results in the team winning the American League Championship and then playing in what is considered one of the best World Series of all time, ultimately losing in the final game against the Cincinnati Reds 4-3. Notable players of color on the team include Cecil Cooper, Roger Moret, Jim Rice, and Luis Tiant.



◀ From left, Jim Rice, Tom Yawkey, Haywood Sullivan and Mrs. Yawkey watch a Red Sox game against the Cleveland Indians from a rooftop box at Fenway Park in Boston, Sept. 26, 1975. (Photo by Dan Goshtigian/ The Boston Globe via Getty Images)

1976

Tom Yawkey passes away and his will establishes the Yawkey Foundation to support the places and causes that were important to him during his lifetime.



1986
Tom's wife, Jean Yawkey, establishes the Thomas A. Yawkey Scholarship Fund at Boston College to provide scholarships for minority student-athlete baseball players from the Greater Boston area.

The Red Sox play in the World Series under the ownership of Jean Yawkey, who was one of the first women owners of an MLB team.

1988
Jean Yawkey underwrites the Boston exhibit of the Jackie Robinson Foundation national tour, spreading awareness of Jackie Robinson's life and legacy among thousands of exhibition visitors.

That same year, Jean has an inspiring conversation with Rachel Robinson, Jackie Robinson's widow. She establishes the Yawkey Scholarship with the Jackie Robinson Foundation to financially support minority students aspiring to attend college and provide higher education guidance. Since then, the Yawkey Foundation has funded the Jackie Robinson Foundation with more than \$3.6 million in scholarships, a new museum, and other mission-related support which continues today.

Also in 1988, the Yawkey-owned Red Sox hire MLB's first African-American woman executive, Elaine Weddington Steward. Originally brought into the front office team by Jean Yawkey as an associate counsel, shortly thereafter Steward was promoted to assistant general manager in 1990.



▲ Jean Yawkey interacts with Red Sox fans at Fenway Park.

1992
Jean Yawkey passes away. Yawkey majority ownership of the Red Sox continues in the form of a trust.



▲ The Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities program was established in Boston by the Yawkey Foundation in collaboration with the Yawkey-owned Boston Red Sox.

2002 to Present Day
After more than 70 years of Yawkey ownership, the Red Sox are sold for over \$700 million, which at the time is the highest price ever paid for a major league team. The Yawkey interest, as the majority shareholder, is sold for more than \$400 million. As Tom and Jean Yawkey intended, their proceeds from this sale go directly to the Yawkey Foundation in order to continue its legacy of making significant and positive impacts on the quality of life for children, families, and the underserved in the areas that the Yawkeys called home: Boston, Massachusetts and Georgetown County, South Carolina.

To this day, the Yawkey Foundation continues Tom Yawkey's pure love of baseball by making the sport accessible to all with their commitments to Roberto Clemente Field in Boston's Fenway neighborhood, Monan Park in Dorchester, the baseball and softball facilities at Boston College, The BASE in Roxbury, and other amateur baseball teams throughout Boston. The Yawkey Foundation also continues to support organizations and programs that promote understanding around racial issues that persist today, including King Boston, the International African American Museum, and other programs in Boston, New England, and South Carolina.



▲ Along with funding the renovation of Clemente Field, the Yawkey Foundation has supported the renovation of baseball facilities throughout Boston.

TELLING THE WHOLE STORY:

Tom Yawkey's Repeated Attempts to Acquire Talented, Black Players Demonstrate An Earnest Effort to Integrate Red Sox

As so many fought for equality during the civil rights movement, it is difficult to fathom the state of race relations in America in the 1940s and '50s. Without insight into the actual, yet little-known facts about the Boston Red Sox' efforts to integrate during that time, it is easy to look back on the past and label Tom Yawkey as a racist. However, a closer examination of the reporting at the time reveals important fact-based details that have been obscured about the actions of the Red Sox. The sincere and credible efforts to recruit Black players to their major league roster throughout the 1950s were informed, purely and exclusively, by baseball-based decisions.

Under Tom Yawkey, the Red Sox signed the first Mexican-born player in the MLB in 1933. The franchise's first Black minor league player, Lorenzo "Piper" Davis, took to the field in 1950. Offers were made to acquire Black players from other major league teams in 1950, 1952, and 1954. The Red Sox would not have been the last MLB team to integrate had Earl Wilson not been drafted into the military in 1957 – Wilson was on the verge of being promoted to the major league roster at the time. The Red Sox also went on to have some of the most diverse rosters of the 1960s and '70s, and some of the greatest players in baseball played for Boston during Tom Yawkey's tenure.



▲ Red Sox player Elston Howard speaks with Tom Yawkey during batting practice at Fenway Park in 1967.

The story of Tom and Jean Yawkey, and examples of how their generosity continues to this day to provide resources, opportunity, and dignity to the vulnerable and underserved of all races, ethnicities, and abilities, can be found on the [Yawkey Foundation website](https://www.yawkeyfoundation.org).