

## Museum Notes

for the week of June 14 – 20, 2026

by Kristen Parrott, curator

Did you know that the great baseball pitcher Satchel Paige once played a game in Vernon County? Leroy “Satchel” Paige, born in Alabama in 1906, played with the Negro Leagues in the 1920’s, 30’s, and 40’s. In 1939, his team arrived in Vernon County.

The Kansas City Monarchs played Satchel Paige’s All Stars at the Vernon County Fair on Friday, September 22, 1939. The *Allamakee Journal and Lansing Mirror* promised that “This game will likely be the greatest baseball attraction ever offered Vernon County fans....”

The *Vernon County Broadcaster* reported that over 10,000 people attended the fair that Friday. In an exciting game, the Monarchs beat the All Stars, 5 to 4. The *Vernon County Censor* exclaimed that “This exhibition game, put on by two of the best colored teams in the nation, was just about the smoothest piece of baseball that one would want to see – fast as greased lightning and abounding with plays that brought plenty of applause.”

Paige joined the winning team, the Monarchs, a few years later, playing for them from 1941 to 1947. In 1948, as major league baseball was finally integrated, Satchel Paige was signed on by the Cleveland Indians. The team went on to win the World Series that year. Paige was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971, and died in 1982.

The Black population in Vernon County in the 1930’s was very small. Most white people who lived here would have had little contact with African Americans, and might mainly know about them from negative, sensationalistic stories in newspapers. I wonder how the teams felt about coming here, and what their interactions with local people were like.

On June 19 we celebrate Juneteenth, America’s newest federal holiday. Another name for the day is Black Independence Day, and it commemorates June 19, 1865, when the end of slavery in the United States was officially announced in Galveston, Texas. Juneteenth is a great time to look at local stories like this one about Black history.

Our next big holiday will be July 4, and as always the Vernon County Historical Society will celebrate it with the annual Strawberry Shortcake Social. The social will be held that Saturday, July 4, from 1 to 5PM, at the historic Sherry-Butt House museum at 795 N. Main St. in Viroqua. For \$6, you will receive homemade shortcake with strawberries, frozen vanilla custard, and a beverage, plus the opportunity to tour the house and enjoy music on the lawn.

The Viroqua Community Band will play outside at 1PM, and Kickapoo Joy Juice will play at 2PM. Inside the house you can enjoy a special exhibit of patriotic quilts on loan from the Vernon County Piecemakers Quilt Guild. Take-outs will be available, and in case of rain, the food will be by take-out only.