



## A NEW OPENING DAY IN THE CITY OF CHAMPIONS

One night in 1930, an accomplished young baseball player named Josh Gibson sat in the stands in Homestead as the Grays took on the Kansas City Monarchs. The Grays' catcher suffered an injury, and Homestead player-manager Judy Johnson scanned the stands in search of Gibson. Even at 18, Gibson was a budding star on the semipro circuit.

"I asked him if he wanted to catch and he said 'Yes, sir,'" Johnson says in the book *"The Ballplayers."*

Gibson must have left quite an impression, for the Grays signed him the next day.

"The black Babe Ruth" played 17 years as a catcher with the Grays and the Pittsburgh Crawfords from 1930-1946 and was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972. While Negro League statistics were incomplete, his Hall of Fame plaque estimates his home run total at "almost 800" with the phrase: "considered [the] greatest slugger in Negro Baseball leagues."

In a fitting tribute to this local legend, Pittsburgh will soon be home to a park named after Gibson, keeping his story alive for generations to come.

Plans have begun to build the Josh Gibson Heritage Park at Station Square. FedEx Ground has committed \$500,000 as the naming sponsor, and Forest City Development has donated land across from the Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel to house the park.

According to the Josh Gibson Foundation, the park will be a "hands on, interactive exhibit, providing historical and cultural context to the [Negro] League's presence in Pittsburgh" and will also feature seven other Negro League stars.

With 10 Eastern League pennants and three Negro League World Series victories, these teams will now be celebrated alongside our current sports teams in our City of Champions.

"Growing up in a baseball family, I heard countless stories about these great teams from my father over the years," says Eddie Vargo, vice president and senior business

Angela Wheland, FedEx Ground VP of communications; Sean Gibson, executive director of Josh Gibson Foundation; Ashley Gibson, Sean Gibson's daughter; and Pittsburgh artist Dino Guarino celebrated at a check presentation, where FedEx Ground donated \$500,000 to the Josh Gibson Heritage Park!



banker at Huntington Bank. "Now, fans of all ages we will be able to learn more about this rich sports history in our Pittsburgh area."

Sean Gibson, Josh's great grandson and the executive director of the Josh Gibson Foundation, said the concept for the park was discussed over nine years ago with Pittsburgh artist Dino Guarino to educate the public about Gibson's legacy and the Negro League's importance to Pittsburgh.

"Josh grew up in an era where things were segregated, and I'm pretty sure if he had the opportunity to play in the majors, he would have loved to," Sean says. "The Josh Gibson Heritage Park gives the community a look at what the Negro League players did and how important it all was. It's wonderful that their stories are being told in such a celebratory way."

Groundbreaking for the park is scheduled for summer 2016 with a target completion date of Major League Baseball's opening day in 2017.

For more information on Josh Gibson Heritage Park or the Josh Gibson Foundation, visit [joshgibson.org](http://joshgibson.org).

Huntington Bank, [huntington.com](http://huntington.com). — Kim Ravenda