

Forgotten Heroes: Henry “Hank” Thompson



by

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Hank Thompson Integrates Two Major League Teams

In 1947 Hank Thompson was the first African American ball player to play for the St. Louis Browns of the American League and then on July 8, 1950 he and Monte Irvin integrated the New York Giants of the National League.

Henry “Hank” Thompson was the third player to integrate the Major Leagues. Jackie Robinson was the first with the Brooklyn Dodgers and Larry Doby was the second with the Cleveland Indians.

He is the only Negro League player to integrate two different Major League teams.



Henry “Hank” Thompson and Willard “Homerun” Brown
St. Louis Browns (1947)
American League

Henry Curtis “Hank” Thompson was born on December 8, 1925 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to Ollie who was a railroad worker and Iona Thompson who was a cook/domestic worker.

Hank was an outstanding ball player. His baseball career would take him from the sandlots of Dallas (TX) to playing in two World Series for the New York Giants of the National League. He batted from the left hand side of the plate and threw right handed. He stood 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighed 171 pounds during his playing career. With the exception of the last couple of years of his career, he always hit for a solid batting average and had tremendous power to go along with it. He was known for having a keen eye at the plate and that along with patience this enabled him to draw a lot of walks.

Defensively, Hank Thompson was a very versatile ball player. During the majority of his career he played third base and in the outfield. He also played second base and shortstop. Hank was known for having a strong throwing arm and often described as an acrobatic fielder. Unfortunately, he also committed more than his share of errors.

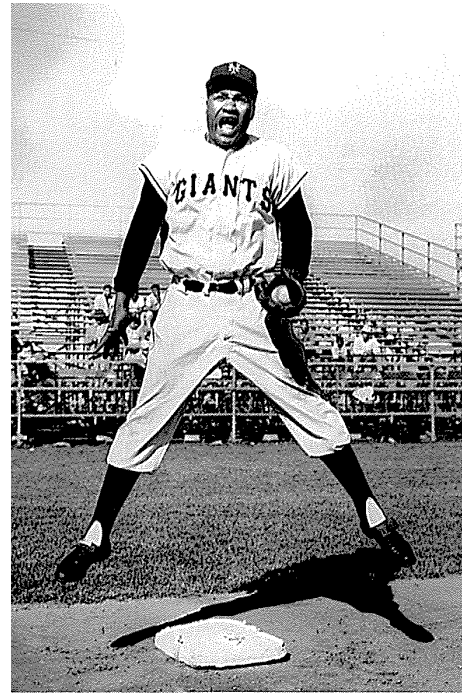
On the base paths and in the field of play Thompson possessed good speed. A good example of his power and speed was demonstrated by Hank on August 16th of 1950 against the Brooklyn Dodgers when he hit two inside the park homeruns in the same game at the Polo Grounds.

Hank Thompson is sometimes categorized as a hoodlum or tough character for all the trouble he got into and the fact that he always carried a gun even during his Major League career. While there is no question he had a significant number of problems and a very turbulent life off the field, it is also important to look at his upbringing. He grew up in South Dallas which was an extremely violent area, he had an alcoholic-abusive father who beat him for no reason, he spent the majority of his teenage years in reform school and he himself was an alcoholic. From a psychological perspective it is not surprising that he would have more than his share of demons. The only real positive thing in his life was baseball. It was his safe haven and when it was gone he spiraled even farther downward.

On the baseball field Hank Thompson was always well liked by his teammates and a fan favorite everywhere that he played. His personal life off the field during and after his baseball career was a completely different story. It was turbulent to say the least.

Former Negro League catcher, Stanley Glenn, probably did the best job in describing Hank Thompson. Glenn categorized Hank as follows: “a little bit off center. He had a drinking problem and a woman problem. He was like a time bomb. But he was all baseball on the field. He had all kinds of ability.” Kansas City Monarchs catcher, Sammie Haynes, had the following to say about Hank: “He (Thompson) had a lot of little kid in him...but he had a temper liked and to play rough.”

Hank Thompson was also a pioneer in integrating the Major Leagues. In July of 1947 when he joined the St. Louis Browns of the American League, he became the third African American player to play in the Major Leagues. Only Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers) and Larry Doby (Cleveland Indians) preceded him. Then on July 8th of 1949, Hank and Monte Irvin integrated the New York Giants.



Hank Thompson
New York Giants
1949-1956

Growing up in Texas

When he was very young his family moved to Dallas (TX). As a youngster his parents separated and Hank was raised by a single mother who was working all the time and Florence, his older sister, who couldn't control his behavior. According to Henry he didn't like school and played hooky on a regular basis. Hank started having legal problems with truancy and theft as a youth in South Dallas. As a teenager he spent six months in Gatesville Reform School which was located near Waco (TX). According to Hank it was at Gatesville that he played on his first organized baseball team. After being released from Gatesville, Hank returned to his home in South Dallas. Finished with the idea of going to school, he spent his time playing baseball or in the pool halls and jazz joints of the Deep Ellum section of town. He also frequented Burnett Field which was the home of the Dallas Steers of the Texas League. According to Hank they let him shag fly balls and occasionally even let him throw batting practice. All Hank wanted to do was play baseball. Thompson played ball any time he got the chance whether it was a pick-up game, recreation league or church league. To make matters even worse, according to Hank he started drinking when he was only 15 years old. The primary reason for his drinking was that according to him, he liked the taste of alcohol.

In 1941 Hank was recruited to play for the Dallas Green Monarchs of the Texas Negro League. It appears that Hank Thompson played for the Dallas Green Monarchs during the 1941 and 1942 seasons. He also reportedly played for several other local amateur and semi-professional teams in the Dallas area during this time.

Negro League Career

In 1942 Hank Thompson caught the eye of Bonnie Serrell who starred for the Kansas City Monarchs. The following spring Dizzy Dismukes who was the traveling secretary of Kansas City sent Hank a train ticket to the Monarch's spring training camp in New Orleans (LA). In 1943 at the age of only 17 years old, Hank Thompson was signed by the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro American League. When he joined the team, he immediately became the Monarchs' starting right fielder.

The Seamheads research team has found thirty-eight box scores for games which Hank played for the Kansas City Monarchs during the 1943 season. During his rookie season, he hit .325 with a .455 slugging percentage. Thompson's batting statistics for the season in "league" games were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1943	Kansas City	38	123	18	40	6	2	2	13	2	.325	.455

Besides Hank Thompson (.325) the other leading hitters for the Monarchs in 1943 were Willard Brown (.349), Buck O'Neil (.292) and Bonnie Serrell (.283).

Satchel Paige was the ace of Kansas City's pitching staff. Ted Alexander, Jack Matchett, Booker McDaniel, Gready McKinnis, Norris Phillips, Hilton Smith and George Walker rounded out the Monarchs' pitching staff in 1943.

The Kansas City Monarchs were managed by former Negro League catcher Frank Duncan who was considered a legend in Kansas City.

The Kansas City Monarchs had a very good season in 1943. According to the Seamheads research team they had a record of 41-26-1 (.612) in Negro American League games and a won-loss record of 48-37-1 (.565) in games against all levels of competition. Kansas City was considered the second best team in the Negro American League right after the Cleveland Buckeyes who went 37-21-1 (.638) in "league" games. Other teams that played in the Negro American League in 1943 were Birmingham Black Barons (39-29-2), Chicago American Giants (30-32), Memphis Red Sox (28-45-3) and Cincinnati Clowns (30-52-5).

World War II and Negro League Baseball

When the United States entered World War II, both “organized” and Negro League baseball were impacted by the drafting of ball players into the military. The Kansas City Monarchs were hit hard. They lost Willard Brown (OF), Joe Greene (C), Connie Johnson (P), Buck O’Neil (1B), Ted Strong and Hank Thompson (OF).

Hank Thompson joined the U.S. Army in March of 1944. He spent the better part of two years as a machine gunner with the 1695th Combat Engineers in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). He was engaged in heavy combat and was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. During his military career, Hank Thompson distinguished himself on the battle field, won two medals for bravery and attained the rank of sergeant.

Thompson viewed his service in the military as one of the highlights of his life. In an interview in 1965 when he was asked about his military service and his participation in the Battle of the Bulge, he was quoted as follows:

“If there was ever a moment that I did something for society, that was it. But you can’t make three good days balance off the rest of a man’s life.”

Hank Thompson Returns from the Military

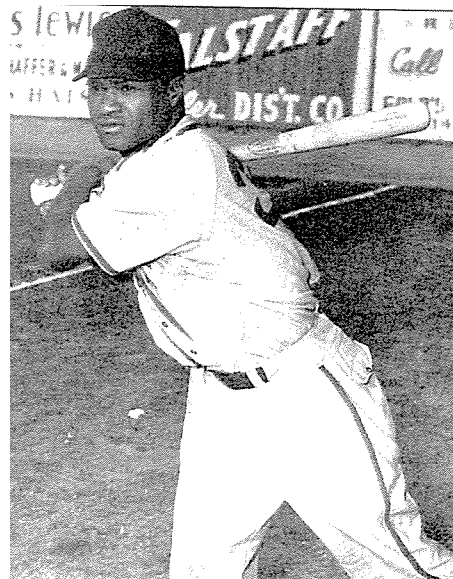
After his discharge from the military on June 20, 1946, Hank Thompson immediately rejoined the Kansas City Monarchs. Hank lost the better part of three years to military service and to say the least Thompson’s baseball skills were rusty and it showed on the field. Sixteen (16) box scores have been found with Hank in the Monarchs’ line-up. Hank hit a disappointing .274 in his brief stint with Kansas City in 1946. It is important to take into consideration that he had not played ball in months and was out of shape for playing baseball.

The 1946 Kansas City Monarchs were led by the hitting of Ted Strong (.321), Willard “Home Run” Brown (.306), Buck O’Neil (.284), Hank Thompson (.274) and Herb Souell (.273).

Connie Johnson (9-3) and James “Lefty” La Marque (6-3) were considered the team’s top two pitchers in 1943. Ted Alexander (4-1), Allen “Lefty” Bryant, Booker McDaniel, Satchel Paige (5-1), Hilton Smith (5-2), John Ford Smith (3-1) and Steve Enloe Wylie also pitched for Kansas City in 1946.

Led by Manager Frank Duncan, the Kansas City Monarchs were considered the top team in the Negro American League in 1946. They dominated their “league” opponents all season and compiled an unbelievable won-loss record of 50-16-2 (.758). Kansas City won both halves of the season.

The Birmingham Black Barons (31-26) ended the season in second place and were 14 ½ behind the champions. The Cleveland Buckeyes (31-34-1), Memphis Red Sox (34-38-2), Cincinnati-Indianapolis Clowns (31-41-1) and Chicago American Giants (31-53-2) rounded out the Negro American League in 1946.



Hank Thompson
Kansas City Monarchs

Negro League World Series vs Newark Eagles

Winning the Negro American League 1946 title gave the Kansas City Monarchs the opportunity to play the Newark Eagles who were the Negro National League champions in the Negro League World Series.

The Kansas City Monarchs behind the pitching of Hilton Smith and Satchel Paige took game one of the World Series with a 2-1 victory. The teams then traded victories with Kansas City winning games one, three and five. Thompson's four hits in game three which led to a 15-5 win for Kansas City was the highlight of the series for Hank. The Newark Eagles won games two and four. The Eagles were faced with a must win situation in game six. In a slugfest that included two homeruns each by Monte Irvin and Lenny Pearson, Newark prevailed with a 9-7 victory. After six games Newark and Kansas City were tied with three wins apiece. Newark ace Rufus Lewis took the mound for game seven and John Ford Smith got the nod for the Monarchs. Smith held the Eagles to three hits over eight innings, but Newark turned the three hits into three runs and took the game (3-2) and the Negro League World Series title.

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	New York City	Sept 17 th	Kansas City	2-1	Satchel Paige	Rufus Lewis
2	Newark	Sept 19 th	Newark	7-4	Max Manning	Satchel Paige
3	Kansas City	Sept 23 rd	Kansas City	15-5	Jim La Marque	Lemuel Hooker
4	Kansas City	Sept 24 th	Newark	8-1	Rufus Lewis	Ted Alexander
5	Chicago	Sept 25 th	Kansas City	5-1	Hilton Smith	Max Manning
6	Newark	Sept 26 th	Newark	9-7	Lemuel Hooker	Enloe Wylie
7	Newark	Sept 29 th	Newark	3-2	Rufus Lewis	John F. Smith

Hank Thompson played second base for the Monarchs and started all seven games. Thompson had a good series at the plate and in the field. He went 8 for 27 (.296) with five runs scored and three runs batted in.



Newark Eagles (1946)

Barnstorming with Satchel Paige

After the 1946 Negro League World Series, Satchel Paige formed an all star team that barnstormed against a “white” team of all stars featuring Bob Feller. The Satchel Paige All Stars included: Barney Brown (P), Willard Brown (OF), Johnny Davis (OF), Howard Easterling (2B), Gentry Jessup (P), Sam Jethroe (OF), Max Manning (P), Buck O’Neil (1B), Lennie Pearson (1B), Hilton Smith (P), Hank Thompson (3B), Quincy Troupe (C), Artie Wilson (SS) and other black baseball stars. Bob Feller’s All Stars included Bob Lemon (P), Phil Rizzuto (SS), Charlie Keller (OF), Mickey Vernon (1B), Ken Keltner (3B), Stan Musial (1B) and other Major League stars.

The Satchel Paige All Stars vs Bob Feller All Stars cross-country barnstorming tour was originally set-up to include a schedule of about 30 to 35 games in 27 days in 31 cities and 17 states. The tour started at Forbes Field (Pittsburgh, PA) on September 30th with a 3-0 victory by the Bob Feller All Stars. Over the 1946 tour, some of the stadiums and cities in which games were played included: Yankee Stadium (New York City, NY), Baltimore (MD), Columbus (OH), Dayton (OH), Comiskey Park (Chicago, IL), Kansas City (MO), Wichita (KS), Wrigley Field (Chicago), Long Beach (CA), Wrigley Field (Los Angeles, CA) and San Diego (CA). The tour was abruptly cut short in Long Beach (CA) on October 26th before all the games could be played when Kennesaw Mountain Landis, Major League Baseball Commissioner, ordered the tour stopped. Even with the abbreviated schedule, the tour was very successful.

The leading hitters for Satchel Paige’s team were Buck O’Neil (.333), Quincy Troupe (.313), Hank Thompson (.310) and Howard Easterling (.300).

Over the tour, Barney Brown, Gentry Jessup, James “Lefty” La Marque, Rufus Lewis, Satchel Paige, Hilton Smith and Neck Stanley all pitched for the Satchel Paige All Stars.

According to a The Sporting News magazine article published on November 6, 1946 the tour drew 271,645 fans for the games they played. Bob Feller reportedly made all the financial arrangements. He focused on one basic principle. Play in large cities where they could draw large crowds and it worked. Some of the “big” games during the tour were played at:

Stadium	Location	Attendance
Yankee Stadium	New York City, NY	27,462
Wrigley Field	Los Angeles, CA	22,577
Yankee Stadium	New York City, NY	21,291
Comiskey Park	Chicago, IL	21,131
Ruppert Stadium	Newark, NJ	13,000

The barnstorming tour was reported as a huge financial success. Reportedly Bob Feller made \$ 80,000 for the barnstorming tour. Sam Jethroe gave Feller a significant amount of credit for the tour and as he put it “He gave us a chance to show what we could do against the Major Leaguers.”



Bob Feller’s All Stars



Satchel Paige All Stars (1946)
(Hank Thompson – front row fourth from right)

An interesting side note to the tour is in this famous photo of the 1946 Satchel Paige All Star team. The picture shows the team getting ready to board an airplane. The traditional story told is that this was Satchel's airplane and that the team flew all over the country in it. However, according to Richard Wilkinson, the pilot of the plane and son of the owner of the Kansas City Monarchs (J.L. Wilkinson), the plane did not belong to Satchel and Paige made only one trip in it.

Thompson Travels to Cuba

After the conclusion of the 1946 Negro League World Series and the Satchel Paige All Stars barnstorming tour, Hank Thompson was signed by the Habana Leones of the Cuban Winter League to play shortstop for them during their winter league season. The sixty-six (66) game season in Cuba started on October 26th and ended on February 27th of 1947. Teams that played in the 1946-47 Cuban Winter League were Almendares, Cienfuegos, Habana and Marianao.

The highlight of the 1946-47 season was the opening of the Gran Stadium in Habana. Cuban baseball entrepreneur, Roberto Maduro, spent \$ 2 million dollar on the new stadium that seated 34,000 fans. Game one of the Cuban Winter League season was a sell out.

The Habana Leones were managed by team owner and former Major League player Mike Gonzalez. The team was led by the hitting of Lou Klein (.330), Hank Thompson (.320), Leonard "Lennie" Pearson (.260) and Herberito Blanco (.249). Hank Thompson's complete hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946-47	Habana	64	225	40	72	6	6	4	32	5	.320	.453

Hank was one of the top hitters in the "league" during the season and also led the Cuban Winter League in triples with six (6) for the season. It was during his first season in Cuba that he was given the nickname "Ametralladora" or "Machine Gun" because of his hard hit balls that seemed to spray all over the field like machine gun bullets. For his excellent play during the season Hank Thompson was selected to the 1946-47 Cuban Winter League All Star team.



Hank "Ametralladora" Thompson
Habana Leones

Thompson Travels to Venezuela

In March of 1947 Hank Thompson signed to play briefly for Vargas of the Venezuelan League. Vargas' need to bolster their line-up came about when the New York Yankees came to Venezuela to play an exhibition game against Vargas. Besides Thompson, the owners of Vargas also signed Ray Dandridge (3B), Ducky Davenport (CF) and Lennie Pearson (1B). Vargas already had a strong team that included Negro League players Sam Bankhead, Bill Cash (C), Tom Glover (P), Henry Miller (P), Hilton Smith (P) and Marvin Williams. All the reinforcement helped because Vargas scored two runs in the bottom of the ninth to give the locals a 4 to 3 win over the world famous Yankees. Hank Thompson went 1 for 3 in the game.

Vargas had an exceptionally unusual season in 1946-47. They finished the regular season with a record of 16-19 but won the "league" play-off to capture the title. The order of finish in the 1946-47 Venezuelan regular season was: C. Caracas (23-13), Magallanes (20-16), Vargas (16-19) and Venezuela (12-23). During the season Vargas was managed by Luis Aparico, Sr. and then Daniel Canoinco.

The pitching staff for the Leones included Manuel "Cocaina" Garcia (10-3), Fred Martin (9-8), James "Lefty" La Marque (7-6), Pedro Jimenez (6-3), Lazaro Medina (5-3) and Terris McDuffie (3-3).

Shortly after the start of the 1946-47 season, the Almendares Alacranes and Habana Leones pulled away from the two other clubs and made the season a two team race. Going into the last month of the season, Habana had a six (6) game lead in the "league" standings. Almendares responded to the challenge laid down by the Leones by winning 13 of their final 14 games to claim the championship by two games over Habana. On February 23rd the Leones still had a game and a half lead with three games left to be played. This was "do or die" time for the Alacranes. The first game of the final three games of the season featured Almendares ace pitcher Max Lanier who beat Habana 4-2 and then lefthander Agapito Mayor beat the Leones by a score of 2-1. With one days rest Lanier came back to beat the Habana Leones to clinch the title for the Alacranes. Almendares finished the season with a record of 42-24 (.636) and Habana compiled a record of 40-26 (.608). Cienfuegos and Marianao finished far out of the competition with identical 25-41 (.379) records.

New York Yankees					Vargas				
Name	Pos	AB	R	H	Name	Pos	AB	R	H
Stirnweiss	2B	3	1	1	Davenport	CF	5	0	1
W. Johnson	3B	4	1	1	Aparicio	SS	2	0	0
Henrich	RF	3	1	0	Thompson	LF	3	0	1
Keller	LF	2	0	0	Pearson	1B	4	1	3
Etten	1B	1	0	0	Williams	2B	4	0	1
Berra	C	2	0	0	Dandridge	3B-SS	4	1	1
Mapes	CF	3	0	0	Contreras	RF	3	0	0
Rizuto	SS	3	0	1	Cash	C	2	0	0
Bevens	P	1	0	0	Smith	P	1	0	0
D. Johnson	P	0	0	0	L. St. Clair	C	3	1	1
Robinson	C	2	0	1	Jessup	P	1	0	0
Reynolds	P	2	0	1	Bankhead	RF	0	0	0
Mack	2B	1	0	0	Woods	3B	1	0	1
Clark	RF	2	0	2	J. St. Clair	PH	1	1	0
Medwick	LF	1	0	0					
Phillips	1B	1	0	0					
Brown	SS	1	0	0					
Marshall	P	0	0	0					
Houck	C	1	0	0					
Totals		33	3	7			34	4	9
New York Yankees		0 0 0	0 0 3	0 0 0-3-7-1					
Vargas		0 0 0	2 0 0	0 0 2-4-9-2					
Triples: Dandridge, Davenport									
Pitchers		IP	W	L	SO	BB	R		
Bevens		3	0	0	0	0	0		
D. Johnson		1	0	0	1	0	2		
Reynolds		3	0	0	3	1	0		
Marshall		1½	0	1	0	1	2		
H. Smith		5	0	0	1	2	0		
Jessup		4	1	0	3	4	3		

MONARCHS BEAT BARONS

Willard Brown's double in the last of the ninth scored John O'Neil and Hank Thompson to give the Monarchs an 11 to 10 American league victory over the Birmingham Black Barons Monday night at Blues stadium. The victory closed a 3-game series with the Monarchs winning four to take a firmer second place grip.

Both teams collected fourteen hits, but the Monarchs stickers packed more power, blasting out eight extra base blows. Brown, who moved in from center field to shortstop, cracked out three doubles, while Thompson led the attack with a triple, single and two doubles in four times.

Ford Smith, Monarch right-filder, hit a 2-run homer over the rightfield fence in the eighth to put the Monarchs on the short end of a 10 to 9 score.

Anderson, who started for the Barons, was shelled in the third and Alonzo Perry came in and held the Monarchs in check through the seventh. Perry walked O'Neil to open the last half of the ninth and Thompson singled. That brought in Jimmy Newberry and Brown greeted him with a bold smash to left to end the game.

Chif Johnson, Monarch right hander, was loughed for four hits and four runs in the fourth with Second Baseman Lorenza Davis powering the drive with a 3-run homer over the left-field fence. Hilton Smith relieved Johnson in the sixth.

Hank Returns to Kansas City

Hank Thompson returned to play for the Kansas City Monarchs for the 1947 Negro American League season. Hank got off to a fast start to the season that would attract the attention of the St. Louis Browns of the American League.

Manager Frank Duncan's top hitters for the Kansas City Monarchs during the 1947 Negro American League season were Hank Thompson (.344), Willard "Homerun" Brown (OF), Buck O'Neil (1B), Othello "Chico" Renfroe (2B/SS), Herb Souell (3B) and Ted Strong (OF). According to a line-up card that appeared in the Kansas City Star, Hank Thompson was listed as the team's starting second baseman.

James "Lefty" LaMarque (12-2) and Hilton Smith (7-0) anchored Kansas City's pitching staff. Ted Alexander, Gene Collins, Connie Johnson, Satchel Paige, John Ford Smith and Enloe "Steve" Wylie also pitched for the Monarchs in 1947. The team was managed by former Monarch's catcher Frank Duncan.

The Kansas City Monarchs played well during the 1947 Negro American League season and according to newspaper reports they dominated "non-league" opponents. According to research by Larry Lester and Dick Clark the Kansas City Monarchs finished the 1947 Negro American League in second place in the final League standings with a record of 38-22 (.633), The Cleveland Buckeyes ran away with the "league" title with a record of 54-23 (.701).

The Birmingham Black Barons (34-26), Memphis Red Sox (33-45), Chicago American Giants (31-50) and Indianapolis Clowns round out the "league" standings.

Thompson Goes 4 for 4

Plain Dealer
Kansas City, KS
07-18-47

In a turbulent season, Hank proved that he was a superstar in the Negro Leagues and had all the capabilities of playing Major League baseball. In games that he played for the Kansas City Monarchs before and after his stint with St. Louis he batted .344 in "official" Negro American League games.

Hank's hitting statistics during his time with the Kansas City Monarchs in 1947 were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947	Kansas City	48	189	54	65	3	2	2	-	-	.344	.413

Hank Thompson Integrates the St. Louis Browns

In an attempt to improve their team and reportedly to draw more African American fans to the ballpark, the St. Louis Browns purchased the contracts of both Hank Thompson and Willard "Homerun" Brown from J.L. Wilkinson who owned the Kansas City Monarchs. The deal which was concluded on July 17, 1947 was on a conditional basis. The Kansas City Monarchs received a mere \$ 5,000.00 for the two Negro League stars.

Reportedly the Browns drew less than 1,000 fans for most of their home games which was the lowest in the Major Leagues. Initially, The Sporting News accused the St. Louis Browns of signing the two Negro League players as a promotional gimmick. The Sporting News contended that the Browns had recognized the popularity of Jackie Robinson with the Brooklyn Dodgers and that St. Louis was trying to cash in on the same idea. In addition the baseball weekly questioned the playing ability of both ball players. Thompson's play with St. Louis during his time with the team showed that there was no question that he could play Major League ball.

Jackie Robinson's entry into Major League Baseball with the Brooklyn Dodgers had been well planned. He was scouted taking into consideration not only his baseball talent but also his temperament and ability to deal with adverse conditions. In addition Jackie started off in the Minor Leagues with the Montreal Royals. This gave him the necessary time to acclimate to "organized" baseball and then when he was ready he was called up to the Dodgers. Hank Thompson and Willard Brown were signed and then just thrown into the line-up of a terrible team with no preparation. This would prove difficult for Thompson and Brown because they were both known to be head-strong and often reacted in a hothead manner. In addition Hank was already an alcoholic.



Hank Thompson
St. Louis Browns

Brown's Manager Muddy Ruel was very vocal about not wanting the two players (Thompson and Brown) on his team. During an interview with the Washington Afro-American in 1950 Thompson was quoted as follows:

"No one on the club would have anything to do with us. They wouldn't speak to us and they wouldn't even warm up with us. If Brown wasn't around and I asked another player to warm up with me, he'd just shake his head."

Hank Thompson's first game in the Major Leagues occurred on July 17, 1947. This was the same day that he joined the team. He was only 21 years old. Thompson's first game was against the Philadelphia Athletics and he went 0 for 4 in the game. Hank Thompson became the third African American ball player to play in the Major Leagues. Hank's debut was less than two weeks after Larry Doby had taken the field for the Cleveland Indians. Willard Brown debuted two days later. On July 20th Hank was the Browns' starting second baseman and Willard played centerfield. This was the first time in Major League baseball that two African American ball players appeared in the same line-up. Then on August 9th in a game against the Cleveland Indians, Hank played second base for St. Louis and Larry Doby was in the outfield for Cleveland.

List of Black Players who Integrated Major League Teams

Date	Player	Team	League
April 15, 1947	Jackie Robinson	Brooklyn Dodgers	National League
July 5, 1947	Larry Doby	Cleveland Indians	American League
July 17, 1947	Henry Thompson	St. Louis Browns	American League
July 8, 1949	Henry Thompson Monte Irvin	New York Giants New York Giants	National League National League
April 18, 1950	Sam Jethroe	Boston Braves	National League
May 1, 1951	Minnie Minoso	Chicago White Sox	American League
September 13, 1953	Bob Trice	Philadelphia Athletics	American League
September 17, 1953	Ernie Banks	Chicago Cubs	National League
April 13, 1954	Curt Roberts	Pittsburgh Pirates	National League
April 13, 1954	Tom Alston	St. Louis Cardinals	National League
April 17, 1954	Chuck Harmon Nino Escalera	Cincinnati Reds Cincinnati Reds	National League National League
September 6, 1954	Carlos Paula	Washington Senators	American League
April 14, 1955	Elston Howard	New York Yankees	American League
April 22, 1957	John Kennedy	Philadelphia Phillies	National League
June 6, 1958	Ozzie Virgil, Sr.	Detroit Tigers	American League
July 21, 1959	Pumpsie Green	Boston Red Sox	American League



Jackie Robinson Signs with the Brooklyn Dodgers

This was the first time that two African American ball players appeared on opposing teams against each other. Hank played most of his games at second base for the Browns and Willard played all of his games in the outfield.

The St. Louis Browns were the worst team in the American League during the 1947 season. They were managed by former St. Louis catcher Muddy Ruel and finished in last place in the final American League standings with a dismal record of 59-95 (.383). The Browns ended the season thirty-eight (38) games behind the New York Yankees (97-57) who won the American League championship.



Hank Thompson, Muddy Ruel and Willard Brown

Bob Dillinger (.294), Vern Stephens (.279), Johnny Bernardino (.261), Ray Coleman (.259), Wally Judnich (.258) and Hank Thompson (.256) were the leading hitters for the team during the 1947 season. As a team the Browns compiled a team batting average of .241 which tied them for last in the American League.

Besides having the poorest hitting team in the “league,” St. Louis also had the most ineffective pitching staff. The Browns compiled a miserable earned run average of 4.33. The next worst in the American League was the Washington Senators with a 3.97 ERA. Jack Kramer (11-16), Sam Zoldak (9-10), Ellis Kinder (8-15), Bob Muncrief (8-14), Fred Sanford (7-16) and Cliff Fannin (6-8) comprised the starting rotation for the St. Louis Browns in 1947.

Thompson and Brown both met with limited success in their short stint with the St. Louis Browns. Their batting statistics for the 1947 season with the Browns were as follows:

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Hank Thompson	27	78	10	20	1	1	0	5	2	.256	.295
Willard Brown	21	67	4	12	3	0	1	6	2	.179	.269

The Browns' management had hoped to cash in on having Negro ball players on their team like the Brooklyn Dodgers had seen with Jackie Robinson. St. Louis attracted a few more fans on the road but failed to increase attendance at home. Both Thompson and Brown were released on August 23rd after a game against the Philadelphia Athletics. According to St. Louis' General Manager, Bill DeWitt, "they had failed to reach Major League standards." This position was obviously unequivocally ridiculous. The most probable reason for releasing the pair was that the St. Louis Browns didn't want to spend another \$ 5,000.00 to extend the length of service for the two players. In reality neither player was given a fair evaluation. Hank Thompson would go on to star for the New York Giants and lead them to a World Series victory in 1954. Willard "Homerun" Brown's baseball career would land him in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

From this researcher's perspective Dewitt was both racist and an extremely poor judge of baseball talent. Reportedly Dewitt, when he owned the Cincinnati Reds, ordered rookie Pete Rose to not hang around the black ball players. In addition DeWitt made probably the worst trade in the history of Major League baseball when he sent Frank Robinson to the Baltimore Orioles for Milt Pappas, Jack Baldschun and Dick Simpson.

After leaving St. Louis, Hank and Willard returned to the Kansas City Monarchs. Their experience in the Major Leagues was negative to say the least. For Thompson and Brown it was difficult for them to sit on the bench when they knew they were significantly better than the majority of their teammates. Brown was quoted as saying that his old Kansas City Monarchs team would have had no problem in defeating the St. Louis Browns and he was probably right.

Hank Returns to Cuba

Prior to the start of the 1947-48 Cuban Winter League season, one of the top priorities of Habana management was to secure the services of Hank Thompson. When the Leones signed Hank he became the team's starting third baseman.

The 1947-48 Cuban season was extremely exciting and very complicated at the same time. The reason for this was that there were two competing "leagues" in Cuba over the winter of 1946-47. The first was the "original" Cuban Winter League and the other was known as the Players Federation. The Cuban Winter League included Almendares, Cienfuegos, Habana and Marianao. The Players Federation was comprised of the following teams: Alacranes, Cuba, Leones and Santiago. With two leagues and eight teams, owners competed for all the best players and fans got great baseball all season.

Each team in the Cuban Winter League played a seventy-two (72) game schedule during the season which started on October 19th and ended on February 24th of 1948.

The Habana Leones were led by the hitting of Negro League players Henry Kimbro (.346), Hank Thompson (.318) and Leonard Pearson (.284). Thompson's complete hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947-48	Habana	80	299	48	95	11	10	1	51	13	.318	.431

Hank Thompson had an excellent season in Cuba and was named to the Cuban Winter League All Star team for the second straight season. In addition his fifty-one (51) runs batted in led the "league."

Alex Patterson (12-9 w/ 2.94 ERA), Rufus Lewis (11-6 w/ 2.40 ERA) and James "Lefty" La Marque (11-7 w/ 3.93 ERA) anchored the pitching staff for Mike Gonzalez's Habana Leones.



Habana Leones (1947-48)
Cuban League Champions

(Back row left to right- **Manuel “Cocaina” Garcia**, Joseito Rodriquez, **Pedro Formenthal**, Pedro Baez, Charles Harrington, Fred Meagher, **Lennie Pearson** and **Jim “Lefty” LaMarque**. Center row left to right – Chino Hidalgo, Tom Lorenzo, Toby Atwell, **Mike Gonzalez**, Yuyo Acosta, Calampio Leon, Luis Suarez, Mosquito Ordena, **Hank Thompson** and Alex Patterson. Kneeling left to right – **Henry Kimbro**, Tony Zardon, Jiqui Vega, Batboy, Woody Bell, Clubhouse Attendant Alfarito, Emilio Cabrera and **Rufus Lewis**.)

Going into the final game of the 1947-48 season Almendares and Habana were tied for the “league” lead. In the final game of the season Gonzalez sent his ace pitcher Alex Patterson to the mound and Almendares responded with Conrado Marrero who was their best pitcher. With relief help from Negro Leaguer Rufus Lewis, the Habana Leones came away with a 3-2 win which gave them the Cuban Winter League championship. Habana finished with a record of 39-33 (.542) and Almendares ended the season in second place with a record of 38-34 (.528). Cienfuegos (35-37) was in third place and Marianao (32-40) ended the season in last place.

Thompson Ventures Back to Venezuela

During the winter of 1947-48 Thompson also played briefly for Magallanes in the Venezuelan League. Besides Thompson other Negro Leaguers on the Magallanes team during the season were: Joe Black, Johnny Hayes, Lester Lockett, Henry Mc Henry (P) and Archie Ware (1B).

Magallanes finished the season with a record of 16-23 (.410). They were in third place in the final “league” standings behind C. Caracas (25-14) and Vargas (24-15).

Tragedy Strikes Thompson

On his way to the Kansas City Monarch’s 1948 spring training camp in San Antonio (TX), tragedy struck Hank Thompson when he stopped in Dallas to visit his sister. According to Thompson, he and his brother-in-law were in a local bar when they ran into Buddy Crow who had been a sand-lot teammate of Hank’s in Dallas. An argument ensued with Crow when he was reportedly giving Thompson a hard time about his short stay in the Major Leagues with St. Louis. Crow was also harassing his sister. The argument escalated to a point of a drunk Crow pulling a knife on Hank. According to Hank he had seen Crow due severe injury to a man in a bar fight in years past. Hank, who was known to have carried a gun, pulled his weapon, fired three bullets into Crow’s chest killing him. Hank turned himself into the police the next day and was charged with murder. Thompson pleaded not guilty and was released on bond. Two years later the police ruled the incident self defense and the case was dismissed.

According to those who knew Hank on a personal basis, they said it significantly impacted him psychologically. His demeanor changed and he was said to have been a different man. He went from a happy go lucky attitude to drinking heavily on a regular basis. In an interview that Hank Thompson gave in 1965 he was quoted as saying “seventeen years later I still haven’t gotten over it.”

A Triumphant Return to the Monarchs

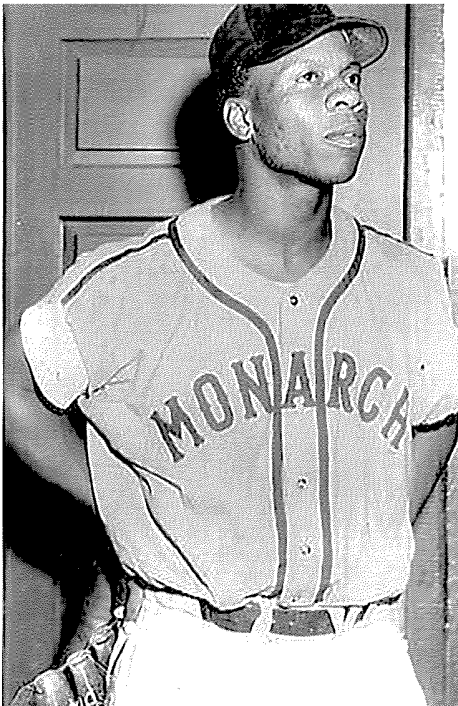
When the 1948 Negro American League season started, both Hank Thompson and Willard “Homerun” Brown were back with the Kansas City Monarchs as two of their starting outfielders. Hank had the best season of his Negro League career in 1948. He batted .375 with a “league” leading .633 slugging percentage. His complete batting statistics for the 1948 Negro American League season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948	Kansas City	70	267	75	100	20	8	11	58	20	.375	.633

The Monarchs’ starting line-up and their batting averages in Negro American League games for the 1948 season were:

Kansas City Monarchs (1948)

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Buck O’Neil	.253	OF	Hank Thompson	.375
2B	Curt Robert	.265	OF	Willard Brown	.374
SS	Eugene Baker	.293	OF	John Scott	.311
3B	Herb Souell	.302			
C	Earl Taborn	.301	P	James LaMarque	.309



Willard “Homerun” Brown

Willard Brown also had a “league” leading 18 homeruns and Hank Thompson finished in second place with 11 homeruns for the season

According to an article that appeared in the Baltimore Afro American on September 14, 1948 the Kansas City Monarchs were the best hitting team in the Negro American League with a .319 team batting average. By comparison the Chicago American Giants were the second best hitting team with a .277 team batting average.

James “Lefty” La Marque (15-5 w/ 1.96 ERA) was the ace of the Monarchs’ pitching staff and considered the best pitcher in the Negro American League for the 1948 season. John Ford Smith (10-5 w/ 2.64 ERA) and Gene Collins (9-3 w/ 2.23 ERA) rounded out the starting rotation. Herb Howard, Connie Johnson (2-2), Leonard Johnson (1-2), Gene Richardson (5-6), Hilton Smith (1-2) and Mickey Stubblefield also pitched for Kansas City in 1948. Besides the best hitting team in Negro League baseball, the Monarchs also had the best pitching staff in the “league” during the season.

When the 1948 Negro American League season ended, the Birmingham Black Barons had the best record in the “league” with a record of 57-21 (.731) and the Kansas City Monarchs were in second place with a record of 43-25 (.632). However, Birmingham had won the first half of the season and Kansas City had won the second half with a record of 19-7. This created the necessity of a play-off between the two teams. Each game was closely played. Birmingham defeated Kansas City four games to two to win the “league” title.

A summary of the 1948 Negro American League Play-off is as follows:

Game	Location	Date	Winning Team	Score	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
1	Birmingham	Sept. 11 th	Birmingham	5-4	Newberry	Richardson
2	Birmingham	Sept. 12 th	Birmingham	6-5	Greason	Smith
3	Memphis	Sept. 15 th	Birmingham	4-3	Powell	La Marque
4	Kansas City	Sept. 19 th	Kansas City	3-1	Smith	Newberry
5	Kansas City	Sept. 20 th	Kansas City	-	-	-
6	Kansas City	Sept. 22 nd	Kansas City	5-3	-	-
7	Birmingham	Sept. 23 rd	Birmingham	5-1	Greason	-

Complete hitting records are not currently available for the play-off series.

The highlight of the play-off series for Hank Thompson was hitting a two run homerun in the ninth inning of game six to give Kansas City a 5-3 win. This tied the series at three games for each team and forced a game seven.

An Excellent Negro League Career

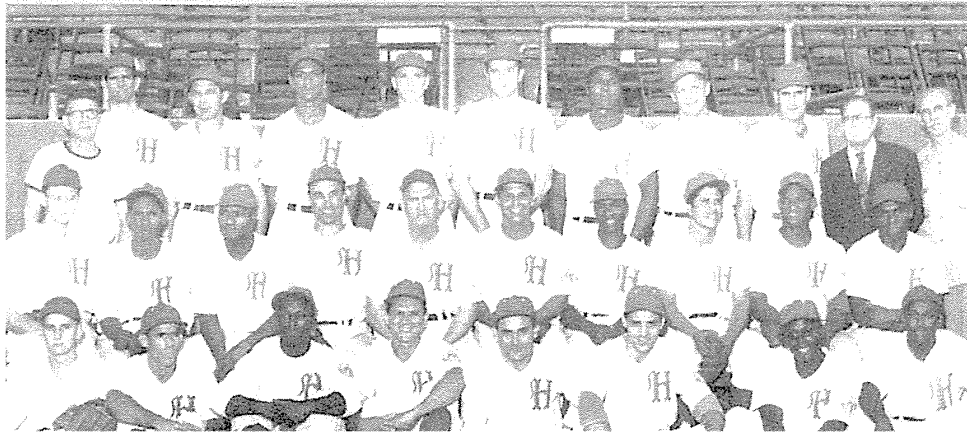
Hank spent all or parts of four seasons in the Negro Leagues. They all were with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro American League. During his brief Negro League career he was always one of the best players in the “league.” Currently 172 box scores have been located for games that Hank Thompson played against Negro League opponents during the regular season. In these 172 games Hank compiled a batting average of .344 with a .515 slugging percentage. These statistics are even more impressive when you take into consideration that when he returned to Kansas City from the military in 1946, he was not in playing shape and had not played baseball in over two years. He was “rusty” to say the least. If you subtract the 62 at bats and 17 hits he got in 1946 his career batting average would be ten points higher at .354.

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1943	Kansas City	38	123	18	40	6	2	2	13	2	.325	.455
1946	Kansas City	16	62	9	17	1	3	1	9	3	.274	.435
1947	Kansas City	48	189	54	65	3	2	2	-	-	.344	.413
1948	Kansas City	70	267	75	100	20	8	11	58	20	.375	.633
Total		172	641	156	222	30	15	16	80	25	.346	.515

Hank Thompson’s Last Season in Cuba

In the winter of 1948 Hank Thompson returned to Cuba for the third straight season to play for the Habana Leones. During the 1948-49 Cuban Winter League season Hank was one of the starting outfielders for the Leones.

The Cuban season began on October 8, 1948 and ended on February 17, 1949. Each team played a seventy-two (72) game schedule during the season. As in the previous two seasons that he had played in Cuba the “league” consisted of the same four teams. They were the Almendares Alacranes (Scorpions), Cienfuegos Elefantes (Elephants), Habana Leones (Lions) and Marianao Tigres (Tigers). The season saw unity between the owners and players. This resulted in only one professional league during the 1948-49 season.



Habana Leones (1948-49)

(Back row left to right – Trainer Luis Navarro, Emilio Cabrera, Oliverio Ortiz, **Rufus Lewis**, Ray Yochim, Charles Stanceau, **Lennie Pearson**, Ferrell Anderson, Gilberto Torres, GM Alfred Suarez, and GM Assistant. Middle row left to right – Paul Calvert, Calampio Leon, **Hank Thompson**, Bill Schuster, **Mike Gonzalez**, **Carlos Blanco**, Pablo Garcia, **Herberto Blanco**, **Pedro Formenthal** and **Henry Kimbro**. Front row left to right – Batboy, Chino Hidalgo, Rafael Rivas, Jose Cendan, **Manuel “Cocaina” Garcia** and Club House Attendant Alfarito.)

Hank Thompson was the leading hitter on the team with a .321 batting average and .513 slugging percentage. He also led the “league in runs (60), hits (85), triples (8) and slugging percentage (.513). Thompson’s complete hitting statistics for the 1948-49 Cuban season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1948-49	Habana	70	265	60	85	14	8	7	44	19	.321	.513

For the third straight year, Hank Thompson’s excellent play earned him a spot on the Cuban Winter League all star team, this time as an outfielder. Other Leones who contributed offensively during the season were Manuel “Chino” Hidalgo (.318), Pedro Formenthal (.288) and Henry Kimbro (.271).

The starting pitching rotation for manager Mike Gonzalez included Charles Stanceau (11-6), Ray Yochim (9-6), Rufus Lewis (8-5) and Paul Calvert (5-5).

The Habana Leones were managed by Mike Gonzalez and under his leadership, they had a good season for the 1948-49 Cuban Winter League season. They finished in second place in the final standings with a record of 39-33 (.542) They were eight games behind the “league” champion Almendares Alacranes who dominated play all season and posted an impressive 47-25 (.653) record. Almendares was led by the pitching duo of Octavio Rubert (9-1) and Morris Martin (9-2). Marianao (29-42) and Cienfuegos (28-43) finished far back in the standings.

An Outstanding Career in Cuba

Hank Thompson went to Cuba three straight seasons to play winter baseball from 1946 to 1949 and hit over .300 each season. His complete hitting statistics for his Cuban Winter League career were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946-47	Habana	64	225	40	72	6	6	4	32	5	.320	.453
1947-48	Habana	80	299	48	95	11	10	1	51	13	.318	.431
1948-49	Habana	70	265	60	85	14	8	7	44	19	.321	.513
Total		214	789	148	252	31	24	12	127	37	.319	.503

During his three year career in Cuba he led the “league” in runs (60 – 1948-49), hits (85 – 1948-49), triples (6 - 1946-47 and 8 -1948-49) and in runs batted in (51 – 1947-48).

After each of the three seasons that Hank played in Cuba he was named to the “league’s” all star team. This was impressive but not as impressive as making the all star team at a different position each season.

Thompson and Irvin Sign with the New York Giants

During the winter of 1948 Alex Pompez traveled to Cuba on behalf of the New York Giants with the sole purpose of signing Monte Irvin and Hank Thompson. Pompez’s task did not prove to be that difficult because the New York Giants were offering the two Negro Leaguers the opportunity to play in the Major Leagues. Reportedly, Hank Thompson asked for a signing bonus of \$ 5,000 but received a \$ 2,500 bonus for signing with the New York Giants.



Hank Thompson
Jersey City Giants

When the New York Giants opened their spring training in Sanford (FL) before the start of the 1949 season, Monte Irvin and Hank Thompson were both in camp. Also in camp for the Giants was John Ford Smith who had pitched for the Kansas City Monarchs the year before. Even though they were segregated from the rest of the club, they were just happy to be there.

At the end of spring training both Monte Irvin and Hank Thompson were assigned to the Jersey City Giants of the International League.

During the 1949 season the Jersey City Giants were led by the hitting of Monte Irvin (.373), Pete Milne (.309), Wes Westrum (.308), Jack Lohrke (.302) and Hank Thompson (.296). Former Negro League (New York Cubans) catcher Ray Noble (.259) also played for Jersey City during the season. Roger Bowman (15-9), Andy Tomsic (14-8), George Bamberger (14-11) and John Ford Smith (10-8) comprised the starting rotation for the Giants.

On June 1st Hank Thompson was hit in the head by a pitched ball and spent a couple of days in St. Francis Hospital. This would start a trend that would see Hank plagued by injuries during his career and often spending more than his share of time on the disabled list.

Besides being signed by the New York Giants and breaking in with the Jersey City Giants another monumental event occurred for Hank Thompson during the month of June of 1949. He got married to Maria Queseda whom he had met in Cuba while playing winter ball. According to an article that appeared in the Jersey Journal of Jersey City (NJ), the event occurred on June 9th. Former Negro Leaguer and fellow Jersey City teammate, John Henry Ford, served as his best man in the wedding.

Hank Thompson made headlines on June 23rd with his second serious injury of the season. This time he injured his ankle in a game against the Buffalo Bisons. The ankle injury would keep him out of the lineup for several days.

The Jersey City Giants finished the regular season in fourth place in the final International League standings with a credible record of 83-71 (.539). The Buffalo Bisons (90-64) won the regular season title.

Both Thompson and Brown adjusted to life in “organized” baseball and performed extremely well on the field. Hank split his time between shortstop and the outfield while Monte played exclusively in the outfield. Their hitting statistics during their short stay with Jersey City were as follows:

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Monte Irvin	63	204	55	76	18	5	9	52	14	.373	.642
Hank Thompson	68	230	53	68	14	3	14	37	11	.296	.565

Hank Thompson also had an impressive .565 slugging percentage and .447 on base percentage for the Jersey City Giants. Tragedy struck Jersey City in late May when both Thompson and Irvin were sidelined with injuries. Irvin was out with an ankle injury and Thompson was hospitalized when he was hit in the head with a pitched ball. Fortunately both made full recoveries rather quickly. Then on June 20th Hank went out with an ankle injury that cost him several days out of the starting line-up. Thompson and Irvin both played for Jersey City until July 1st when they were both called up to the Giants Major League club at the same time.

Thompson Makes the Big Leagues for the Second Time

Thompson and Irvin both joined the New York Giants on July 4, 1949. On July 8th both Hank Thompson and Monte Irvin integrated the New York Giants. Hank Thompson was the starting third baseman and Monte Irvin pinch hit in the eighth inning for the New York Giants. Hank’s contract with the Giants called for him to make \$ 7,500 which was \$ 2,500 above the league minimum. When the duo arrived in New York, Hank immediately became the team’s starting second baseman and Monte was used in a utility role.

According to an interview with Monte Irvin about adjusting to life in the Major Leagues, he and Thompson had to adjust to three things in order to be successful:

1. Getting rid of what he called “athletic rust.”
2. Getting used to not being the top player on the team.
3. Learning “organized” baseball’s way of doing things or as Irvin put it they “needed to get comfortable with life in Major League baseball.”



Hank Thompson and Monte Irvin Dress Out for Their First Game with the Giants



Hank Thompson
New York Giants

Thompson playing for the Giants at the Polo Grounds would prove to be significantly easier than when he was with St. Louis. The Polo Grounds were in Manhattan which was right next to Harlem. In addition the Giants were managed by Leo Durocher who had been instrumental in Jackie Robinson breaking in with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Lastly it also helped tremendously having Monte Irvin as his teammate. Monte was 30 years old and very mature. According to former Giants' second baseman, Bill Rigney, when Hank got out of line Monte was there to "get on his case."

Hank's debut with New York probably received less negativism from his teammates because he had a reputation as a tough character. It was common knowledge that he carried a gun and had killed a man. Teammates "gave him room" especially when he had been drinking.

According to Monte Irvin once the two showed that they could help the team and especially when Willie Mays joined them in 1951, as Monte put it:

"Once we put on that uniform, it wasn't between black and white. It was the Giants against the Dodgers. The name of the team on the front of your uniform mattered more than the color of your skin."

The 1949 New York Giants were a mediocre club and team management felt that Irvin and Thompson could really help improve their ball club. Fortunately for Thompson and Irvin, Durocher was not a racist. All he cared about was winning. On the day that Hank and Monte arrived at the club house, Durocher held a team meeting. Durocher was quoted as saying the following to his ball players:

"This is all I'm going to say about race. I don't give a dam about what color you are. As long as you play good baseball, you play on this team. We got Monte and Hank here. They got good credentials. I'm sure they'll help us get out of fifth place. We're all one team."

No one dared to challenge Leo on his position.

Bobby Thompson (.309 w/ 27 homeruns), Willard Marshall (.307), Whitey Lockman (.301), Sid Gordon (.284 w/ 26 homeruns) and Hank Thompson (.280) were the leading hitters for the New York Giants in 1949. As a team the New York Giants compiled a .261 team batting average which was fifth best in the “league.”

Hank Thompson did not disappoint the Giants and hit well for the second half of the season that he was with the team. When Hank arrived in New York he took over as the team’s starting second baseman and batted in the top part of the order. Monte Irvin, however, struggled and never really cracked the starting line-up with New York. Their complete hitting statistics for the 1949 season with the New York Giants were as follows:

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Hank Thompson	75	275	51	77	10	4	9	34	5	.280	.444
Monte Irvin	36	76	7	17	3	2	0	7	0	.224	.316

Some of Hank Thompson’s best games offensively in his first season with the New York Giants were:

Date	Opponent	Notes
July 19 th	Cincinnati	3 for 5 w/ two doubles, home run, two runs scored and one RBI
August 2 nd	Chicago	2 for 4 w/ double, stolen base, one run scored and one RBI
August 11 th	Boston	2 for 4 w/ triple, two runs scored and one RBI
August 17 th	Boston	2 for 3 w/ double, homerun, stolen base, one run scored and one RBI
August 29 th	Cincinnati	3 for 4 w/ double, home run, one run scored and one RBI
August 31 st	Pittsburgh	4 for 5 w/ two singles, double, homeruns, 4 RBIs and 3 runs scored
September 9 th	Brooklyn	2 for 4 w/ home run and two RBIs
September 10 th	Brooklyn	2 for 4 w/ double and two runs scored

The best game for Hank Thompson’s first season for the New York Giants came on August 31st at the Polo Grounds when his team was playing the Pittsburgh Pirates. Batting in the clean-up slot in the order, Thompson went 4 for 5 with a double, home run, three runs scored and four RBIs.

Larry Jansen (15-16), Sheldon Jones (15-12), Monty Kennedy (12-14), Dave Koslo (11-14 w/ 2.50 ERA) and Clint Hartung (9-11) made up the starting pitching rotation for the Giants in 1949. The Giants had the third most effective pitching staff with a team earned run average of 3.82 ERA. They were right behind the St. Louis Cardinals (3.44 ERA) and the Brooklyn Dodgers (3.80 ERA).

The New York Giants finished the regular season with a record of 73-81 (.474) and were in fifth place in the final National League standings. The Brooklyn Dodgers were the National League champions in 1949.

Hank Solidifies His Position as a Major League Player

After having a very good season with the New York Giants in 1949 and proving that he belonged in the Major Leagues, Hank Thompson entered spring training with a tremendous amount of confidence. He knew he was going to land a position in the team’s starting line-up. He just didn’t know which one.

The New York Giants held their 1950 spring training in Phoenix (AZ). Thompson and Irvin were both in attendance. Living conditions in Phoenix were significantly better for Thompson and Irvin than when they were in Sanford (FL) the year before. Thompson and Irvin were able to stay in the same hotel as the rest of the team but they couldn’t hang out in the hotel lobby or eat in the hotel restaurant. They had to go straight to their room and eat their meals through room service.

When spring training was over, both Thompson and Monte Irvin had made the Major League roster for New York. Hank was the Giants' starting third baseman and Monte was still a utility player. Thompson was moved to third base for the Giants to make way for the newly acquired Eddie Stanky. Leo Durocher returned to the New York Giants as the team's manager.

The leading hitters for the Giants during the 1950 season were Eddie Stanky (.300), Monte Irvin (.299), Whitey Lockman (.295), Don Mueller (.291) and Hank Thompson (.289 w/ 20 homeruns and 91 RBI). The Giants also got good run production from Bobby Thompson (25 homeruns and 85 RBI) and Wes Westrum (23 homeruns and 71 RBI). Hank Thompson and Monte Irvin both had excellent seasons in 1950. Their hitting statistics for the season were:

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Monte Irvin	110	374	61	112	19	5	15	66	3	.299	.497
Hank Thompson	148	512	82	148	17	6	20	91	8	.280	.463

Hank Thompson led the team in runs batted in with 91 and Monte Irvin led the team in slugging percentage with a .497 average. One of the highlights of the 1950 season for Hank occurred on August 16th when he hit two inside the park home runs in one game.

Defensively Hank Thompson had the best season of his career in 1950. The highlight of the season for Hank was breaking Pie Traynor's National League record with 43 double plays for a third baseman. This record stood until 1974 when Darrel Evans of the Atlanta Braves turned 45 double plays. It is important to note that Thompson set his record in only 138 games and it took Evans 160 games to break the record. Hank Thompson was considered the best third baseman in baseball during the 1950 season.

Larry Jansen (19-13 w/ 3.01 ERA and 21 complete games), Sal Maglie (18-4 2.71 ERA), Dave Koslo (13-15), Sheldon Jones (13-16) and Jin Hearn (11-3 w/ 1.94 ERA) were the starting pitchers for New York during the season. The New York Giants pitching staff ended the season with the second most effective pitching staff in the National League. Only the Philadelphia Phillies with a 3.50 ERA had a better team earned run average with a 3.71 ERA.

Led by the hitting of the Thompson-Irvin duo and solid pitching the New York Giants improved their won-loss record to 86-68 (.558) for the 1950 season. They ended the year in third place in the National League just two games behind the second place Brooklyn Dodgers (89-65) and five games behind the "league" champion Philadelphia Phillies (91-63).



Hank Thompson
New York Giants
1950

Hank Tours with Roy Campanella

After the conclusion of the New York Giants 1950 regular season, Hank Thompson played for both the Roy Campanella Major League Stars and Luke Easter's All Stars. Both teams played exhibition barnstorming schedules. Besides Thompson at third base, Campanella's team featured Roy Campanella (C), Larry Doby (OF), Luke Easter (1B), Monte Irvin (OF) and Don Newcombe (P). Luke Easter's All Stars was a lower level team that played smaller cities. Luke's team included a mixture of both Major League and Negro League players. Campy's roster included:

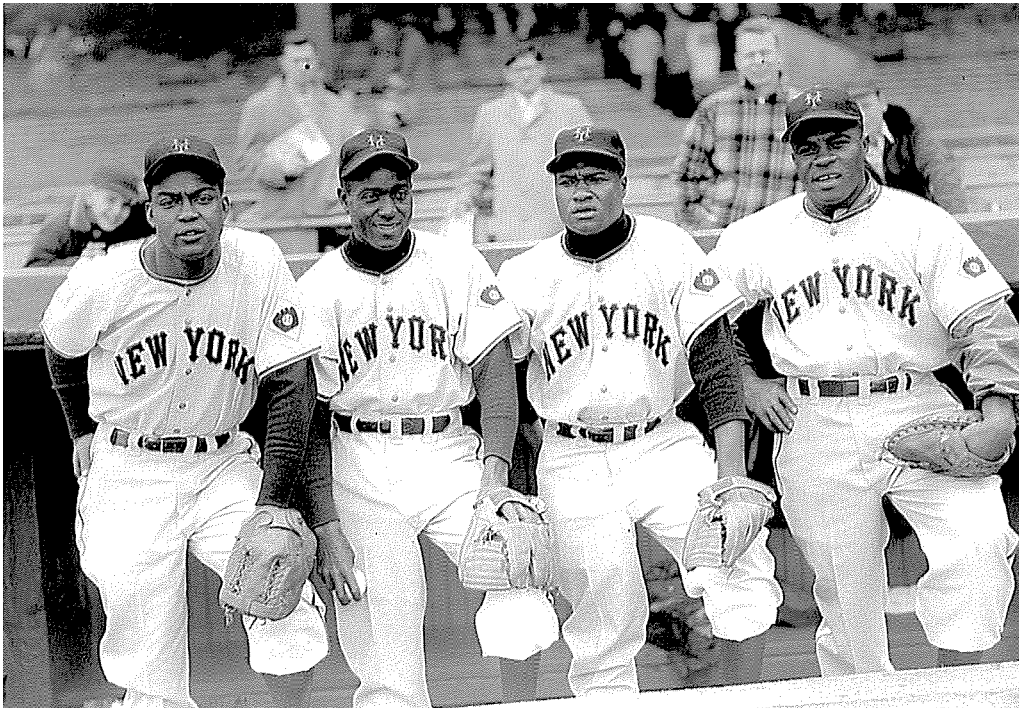
Marvin Barker (OF), Joe Black (P), Ray Dandridge (2B), Walter Hardy (SS), Johnny Hayes (C), Lenial Hooker (P), Monte Irvin (OF), James “Pee We” Jenkins (P), Jimmie Jones (OF), Lou Louden (C), Jimmy Newberry (P), Alex Newkirk (P), William Ricks (P), Pat Scantlebury (P) and Hank Thompson (3B).

1951 Brings a National League Title to New York Giants

Manager Leo Durocher built on the New York Giants’ success in 1950. While most of the New York Giants players were celebrating through a championship season, Hank Thompson was struggling both on and off the field. Reports were that when he started slumping he was drinking even more. Thompson suffered through the worst season of his professional career in 1951. He hit a disappointing .235 with an anemic .386 slugging percentage.

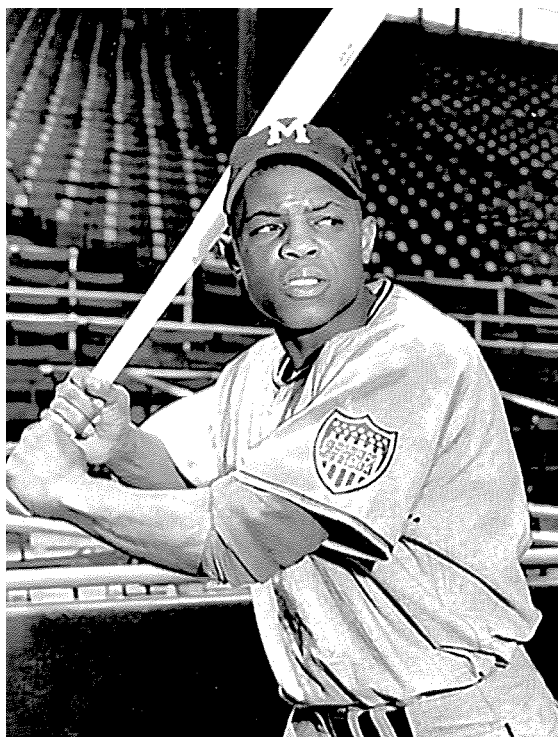
The 1951 New York Giants included five former Negro League players on their 1951 Major League roster. These players and their hitting statistics for the 1951 Giants season were as follows:

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Monte Irvin	151	558	94	174	19	11	24	121	12	.312	.514
Willie Mays	121	464	59	127	22	5	20	68	7	.274	.472
Hank Thompson	87	264	37	62	8	4	8	33	1	.235	.386
Ray Noble	55	141	16	33	6	0	5	26	0	.234	.383
Artie Wilson	19	22	2	4	0	0	0	1	2	.182	.182



Monte Irvin, Artie Wilson, Hank Thompson and Ray Noble

During the season the top hitters for the New York Giants were Monte Irvin (.312 w/ 24 homeruns and 121 RBI), Alvin Dark (.303), Bobby Thompson (.293 w/ 32 homeruns and 101 RBI) and Whitey Lockman (.282). The 1951 season would prove to be Monte Irvin’s breakout season as a Major League ball player.



Willie Mays
Minneapolis Millers

One of the highlights of the 1951 season was bringing up rookie Willie Mays from Minneapolis. Artie Wilson had won a roster spot in spring training but never really fit in the New York Giants plans that would have given Wilson a significant amount of playing time. Dissatisfied with his lack of performance and playing time, Artie requested that he be sent down to Triple A and recommended that the Giants bring up Willie Mays. The rest is history, Wilson would never return to the Major Leagues and Mays would begin a career that would end with him being inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

The New York Giants got excellent pitching from Sal Maglie (23-6 w/ 2.93 ERA), Larry Jansen (23-11 w/ 3.04 ERA) and Jim Hearn (17-9). George Spencer (10-4) and Dave Koslo (10-9) also contributed significantly to New York's pitching effort. New York's pitching staff posted a team ERA of 3.48 which was by far the best in the National League for the 1951 season. The Boston Braves came in second with a 3.75 ERA.

Hank is Sent Down to Minneapolis

Hank Thompson started off the 1951 season on the New York Giants Major League roster. By July 18th Hank's batting average was down to .239. To make matters even worse for Thompson, he was spiked by Frank Hiller of the Chicago Cubs on July 18th and was knocked out of action. His spot at third base was taken over by Bobby Thompson. Originally Hank was supposed to be optioned to Ottawa of the International League. Instead team management decided to let Hank recover while still on New York's Major League roster. On August 1st Thompson appeared unsuccessfully as a pinch hitter. Over the next week he got five more plate appearances as a pinch hitter but could only account for a lone single. Needless to say this did not work. At this point he was optioned to the Minneapolis Millers who were the Giants AAA farm club in the American Association. When Hank arrived in Minneapolis he moved to the outfield because third base was manned by Negro League great and future Hall of Famer Ray Dandridge.

The Minneapolis Millers were a mediocre team that finished the 1951 season in the middle of the pack with a record of 77-75 (507). During the 1951 season they were led by the hitting of former Negro Leaguer Ray Dandridge (.324), Ray Katt (.308), Neil Sheridan (.306), Pete Milne (.300) and Bobby Hoffman (.290). Willie Mays, who started the season with the Millers before he was called up to the Giants, destroyed American Association pitching early in the season with a .477 (71 for 149) batting average and .799 slugging percentage. Twenty-nine (29) of Mays' hits went for extra bases. Former Birmingham Black Barons player Artie Wilson also played briefly with Minneapolis and batted .390 in 17 games.

Adrian Zabala (14-12), Hoyt Wilhelm (11-14), Dixie Howell (9-9) and Hugh Oser (7-3) were the standouts on the Millers' pitching staff.

For some unknown reason Hank Thompson found his hitting touch with Minneapolis. In the fourteen (14) games that he played with the Millers his batting statistics were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1951	Minneapolis	14	53	18	18	2	0	7	13	5	.340	.774

Hank also posted an unbelievable on base percentage of 1.209. Due to Thompson's unbelievable hitting the Minneapolis Millers rang up a string of 12 straight wins.

Thompson Returns to the New York Giants

With his resurgence Hank Thompson was recalled to the New York Giants on August 28th for their championship run. With Bobby Thompson, who had lost his starting job in center field to Willie Mays, entrenched at third base, Hank Thompson spent most of his time on the bench until he replaced injured outfielder Don Mueller who had broken his ankle sliding into third base. Even though he struggled with his batting average the rest of the season, Hank was called upon to replace Bobby Thompson in the second game of a double header against the Pittsburgh Pirates. Hank responded with two hits and drove in the winning run in the ninth inning. The media dubbed the Giants stretch run for the pennant run as the "Miracle at Coogan's Bluff."



New York Giants (1951)

The New York Giants played good team baseball all season. They had a team batting average of .260 (tied for fourth in the National League) and compiled a team earned run average of 3.48 which was the best in the National League.

Going into August the New York Giants were thirteen and a half (13 ½) games behind the "league" leading Brooklyn Dodgers. Then Leo Durocher took over and worked his "magic." Behind a sixteen (16) game winning streak the New York Giants tied the Brooklyn Dodgers with two games to go. Both the Dodgers and Giants won their final two games and the regular season ended in a tie. To crown a National League champion, a three game play-off series was scheduled. The series took place on October 1st through 3rd. Each team won one of the first two games. In the last game with the Giants down, Bobby Thompson of the Giants hit one of the most famous homeruns in the history of Major League baseball to give the New York Giants a 5-4 win and the National League title. The media termed the homerun "As the shot that was heard around the world."

The New York Giants ended the regular season with a record of 98-59 (.624) for the 1951 National League season.

New York Giants vs New York Yankees in World Series

By winning the National League title, the New York Giants played the New York Yankees of the American League who had a record of 98-56 (.636). With two New York teams in the World Series, the series was dubbed the "Subway Series" in the media. When the series started it looked like the two teams were very evenly matched. The Yankees were managed by Casey Stengel. The top players for the New York Yankees were Yogi Berra (C), Joe DiMaggio (OF), Mickey Mantle (OF), Johnny Mize (1B) and Phil Rizzuto (SS).

The New York Giants started the World Series on a positive note in game one. Behind Monte Irvin stealing home in the first inning and Alvin Dark's three run homerun the Giants took a 5-1 win over the Yankees. Dave Koslo got the win and Allie Reynolds got the loss. The Yankees came back in game two to post a 3-1 win behind the pitching of Ed Lopat. Game three went to the Giants behind solid pitching from Jim Hearn and Sheldon Jones. Whitey Lockman hit a homerun to help the Giants to a 6-2 win. Unfortunately for the New York Giants, the New York Yankees took the next three games to claim the World Series title.

A summary of the 1951 World Series was as follows:

Date	Location	Score	Winning Team	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
Oct. 4 th	Yankee Stadium (Bronx, NY)	5-1	Giants	Koslo	Reynolds
Oct. 5 th	Yankee Stadium (Bronx, NY)	3-1	Yankees	Lopat	Jansen
Oct. 6 th	Polo Grounds (Manhattan, NY)	6-2	Giants	Hearn	Raschi
Oct. 8 th	Polo Grounds (Manhattan, NY)	6-2	Yankees	Reynolds	Maglie
Oct. 9 th	Polo Grounds (Manhattan, NY)	13-1	Yankees	Lopat	Jansen
Oct. 10 th	Yankee Stadium (Bronx, NY)	4-3	Yankees	Raschi	Koslo

Campy's All-Stars All Set for Tour

NEW YORK — Arrangements have been completed for the largest baseball post season extravaganza in history and southern baseball fans will be treated to a show by Roy Campanella's All Stars.

Included in the entourage are Monte Irvin, most runs driven in in the National League; the sensational Willie Mays and Hank Thomson of the New York Giants. The Cleveland Indians are contributing Larry Doby, Luke Easter and Suitcase Simpson. Then there will be big Don Newcombe, Roy's teammate.

The first-half schedule of the tour, Campanella and his group will play the Gil Hodges' All Stars. Hodges has with him an entire club of Big Leaguers—Infielders: Hodges, Eddie Robinson, Billy Goodman, Allie Clark; Outfielders: Gene Woodling, Sid Gordon, Gene Hermanski, and Cal Abrams; Catcher, Ralph Houk and such mound stalwarts as Eddie Ford, Frank Hille, Randy Gumpert, Bob Porterfield, Tommy Byrne and Chuck Stobbs.

Attendance in the series ranged from a low of 47,530 at the Polo Grounds in game five to a high of 66,018 at Yankee Stadium in game two. Yankee Stadium attracted on the average of about 10,000 to 15,000 more fans a game than at the Polo Grounds.

Hank Thompson started five games in the World Series for the New York Giants. Unfortunately for the Giants, Hank's hitting problems carried over to the post season as he went 2 for 14 for a miserable .143 batting. His five walks were the highlight of the World Series for him.

Hank Joins Campanella's All Stars

Hank Thompson joined the Roy Campanella's All Stars after the regular 1951 season to play third base for them on their post season barnstorming schedule. Roy Campanella's All Stars were a mix of both African American Major League and Negro League players. Major League players on the team were Joe Black (P), Roy Campanella (C), Larry Doby (OF), Luke Easter (OF/1B), Monte Irvin (OF), Willie Mays (OF), Don Newcombe (P), Harry Simpson (OF) and Hank Thompson (3B). Negro League players and former Negro League players who were playing in the Minor Leagues that also played for the 1951 Roy Campanella's All Stars were as follows: Lorenzo "Piper" Davis (2B), Leon Day (P/OF), Bob Griffith (P), Paul Hardy (C/SS), John Hayes (C), Len Hooker (P), James "Pee Wee" Jenkins (P), Lou Louden (C), Verdell "Lefty" Mathis (P), Jimmy Newberry (P), Lennie Pearson (1B) and William Powell (P).

Hank Regains a Starting Job with the Giants

Hank Thompson's starting job at third base had been taken over by Bobby Thompson. So Hank Thompson moved to the outfield and platooned with Bob Elliott to play left field for Monte Irvin who had broken his ankle in spring training. Then when centerfielder Willie Mays was drafted into the U.S. Army, Leo Durocher moved Hank to centerfield. Thompson also filled in at second base and third base during the season. By the end of the season Hank Thompson had regained his old starting job at third base. After such a poor season in 1951, New York Giants management did not give up on him. Thompson did not disappoint the confidence the Giants' management had in him. He did improve on his performance from the preceding season and raised his season batting average 25 points from .235 to .260. He also increased his slugging percentage by 68 points from .386 (1951) to .454 (1952). In addition Hank's 17 homeruns was the second most on the team behind Bobby Thompson's 24 homeruns. Thompson's hitting statistics for the 1952 season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1952	New York	128	423	67	110	13	9	17	67	4	.260	.454



Hank Thompson
New York Giants

With Leo Durocher as the Giants manager, the New York Giants felt good going into the 1952 season. Monte Irvin (.310), Al Dark (.301), Bill Rigney (.300), Whitey Lockman (.290), Don Mueller (.280) and Bobby Thompson (.270 w/ 24 homeruns and 108 RBI) led New York's hitting attack during the season. The New York Giants had a team batting average of only .256 for the 1952 season. This was only the fifth best in the "league."

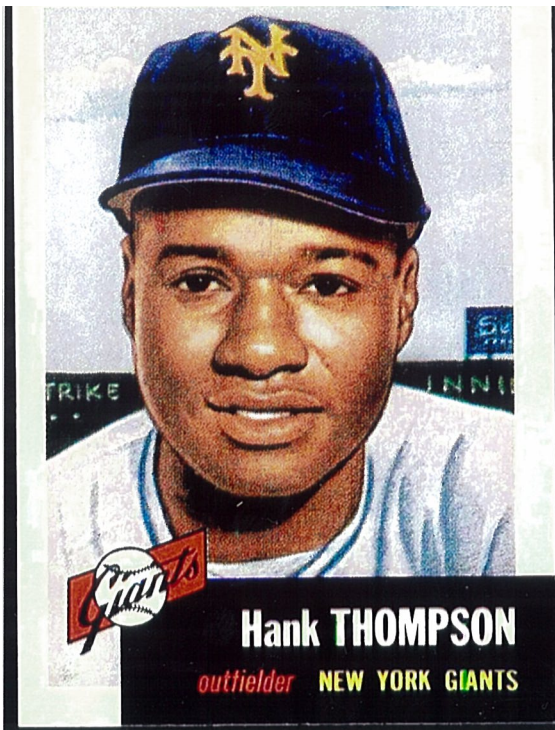
Starting pitcher Sal Maglie (18-8 w/ 2.92 ERA) and relief specialist Hoyt Wilhelm (15-3 w/ 2.43 ERA) anchored the New York Giants pitching staff. Jim Hearn (14-7), Larry Jansen (11-11), Dave Koslo (10-7) and Max Lanier (7-12) rounded out the starting rotation for the Giants. Durocher's Giants pitching staff with a 3.59 ERA was the fourth best in the National League.

Without a powerful hitting attack or dominant pitching staff, Durocher won ball games by playing good team baseball and by taking advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves. Durocher's Giants finished in second place in the final National League standings. They ended the season just 4 ½ games behind the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The New York Giants battled with the Brooklyn Dodgers, St. Louis Cardinals and the Philadelphia Phillies for supremacy in the National League the entire 1952 season. At the end of the season the final National League standings were as follows:

Team	Won	Lost	Pct.	Position	Games Behind
Brooklyn Dodgers	96	57	.627	1 st	-
New York Giants	92	62	.597	2 nd	4.5
St. Louis Cardinals	88	66	.571	3 rd	8.5
Philadelphia Phillies	87	67	.565	4 th	9.5

Campanella Recruits Thompson for Post Season Play



Hank Thompson
New York Giants
1953

After the regular season, Hank Thompson was recruited by the Roy Campanella All Stars to play for them on their Southern barnstorming tour. Other top African American Major League stars who played on the team were Joe Black (P), Roy Campanella (C), George Crowe (1B), Larry Doby (OF), Monte Irvin (OF) and Harry "Suitcase" Simpson (OF). Willie Mays also played in a couple of games for Campanella's All Stars while he was on furlough from the Army. The twenty-five (25) game tour started on October 10th in Charlotte (NC) and ended on November 3rd in Waco (TX). Some of the big cities that the team played in on the tour were Atlanta (GA), Houston (TX), Memphis (TN) and New Orleans (LA). According to newspaper reports the Roy Campanella All Stars drew 62,000 fans on the post season tour.

New York Giants Drop in the Standings

Tragedy struck the New York Giants in 1953. They dropped from a record of 92-62 (.597) and second place in the final "league" standings in 1952 to a won-loss record of 70-84 (.455) and fifth place in the National League in 1953. The Giants went from 4.5 games out of first place to thirty (35) games behind the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1953.

Hank spent the first month of the season on the bench while prized rookie Daryl Spencer played third base. Manager Leo Durocher moved Hank Thompson back to third base for the rest of the 1953 season. Hank responded to his manager's confidence in him by putting together the best season of his Major League career. He batted .302 with an impressive .567 slugging percentage. Thompson's slugging percentage of .567 ranked him 7th in the National League in that offensive category. His complete hitting statistics for the 1953 National League season were:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1953	New York	114	388	80	117	15	8	24	74	6	.302	.567

Thompson had an excellent season in 1953 even though his playing time was cut short by sitting on the bench most of the first month of the season. Then he missed most of the last month of the season because of a concussion he received when a bad hop ground ball hit him in the head and knocked him unconscious.

The New York Giants had a very good hitting team in 1953 that included the following:

Position	Player	Batting Average	Position	Player	Batting Average
1B	Whitey Lockman	.295	OF	Don Mueller	.333
2B	Davey Williams	.297	OF	Bobby Thompson	.288
SS	Al Dark	.300	OF	Monte Irvin	.329
3B	Hank Thompson	.302			
C	Wes Westrum	.224			

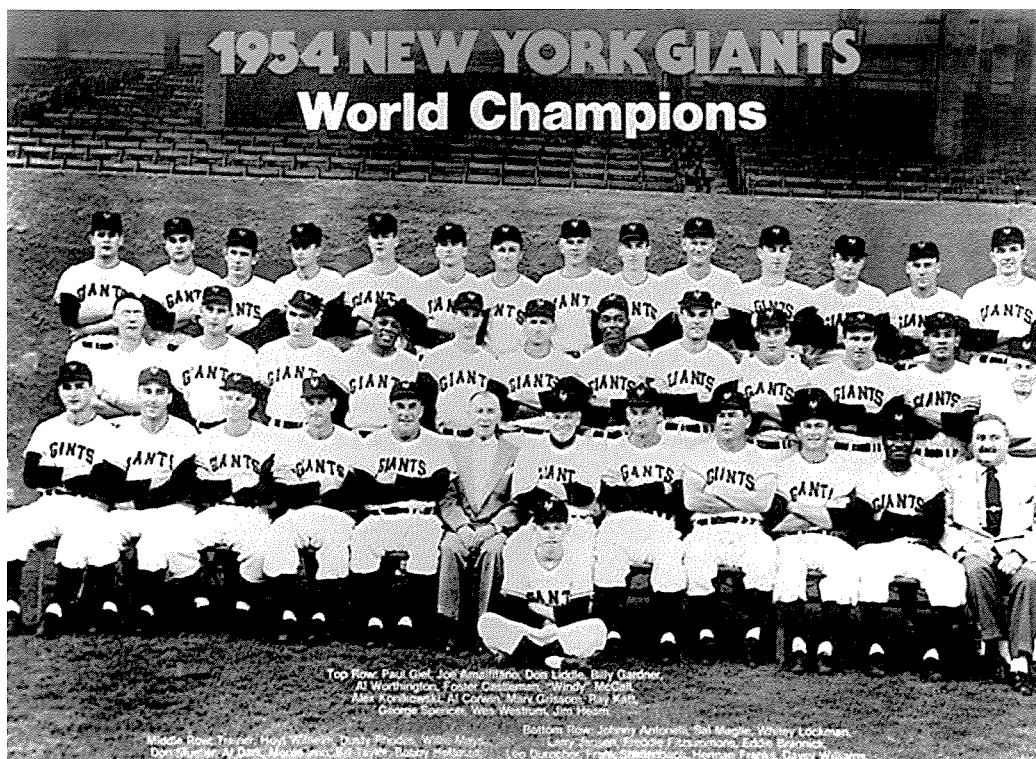
During the season the Giants had four players that each hit over 20 homeruns for the season. They were Bobby Thompson (26), Hank Thompson (24), Alvin Dark (23) and Monte Irvin (21). Bobby Thompson led the team in runs batted in with 106 RBI. The 1953 New York Giants posted an impressive team batting average of .271. Only the Brooklyn Dodgers (.285) and the St. Louis Cardinals (.273) hit better as a team for the season.

Unfortunately for Leo Durocher, his pitching staff was only mediocre and finished with the fifth best earned run average in the National League with a 4.25 ERA. The starting pitchers for the 1953 season were Ruben Gomez (13-11 w/3.40 ERA), Larry Jansen (11-16 w/ 4.14 ERA), Jim Hearn (9-12 w/ 4.53 ERA), Sal Maglie (8-9 w/ 4.15), Dave Koslo (6-12 w/ 4.76 ERA) and Al Worthington (4-8 w/ 3.44 ERA).

In short the 1953 season was the best of Hank Thompson's Major League career but a severe disappointment for the New Giants team as a whole.

Championship Season in New York

Determined to rebound from their sub par season in 1953, manager Leo Durocher began to devise a plan to take the New York Giants to a National League championship. One of the first things Durocher did was to install twenty-three (23) year old Willie Mays as the team's starting centerfielder. The 1954 season would prove to be Mays' breakout season to becoming a super star and future National Baseball Hall of Fame member. In addition starting pitcher Johnny Antonelli was acquired from the Milwaukee Braves on February 01, 1954. The New York Giants sent Sam Calderone and superstar outfielder Bobby Thompson to the Braves for Johnny Antonelli, Billy Klaus, Don Liddle, Ebba St. Claire and \$ 50,000 in cash. Not only would Johnny Antonelli become the ace of the Giants pitching staff but he would be the best pitcher in the National League during the 1954 season.



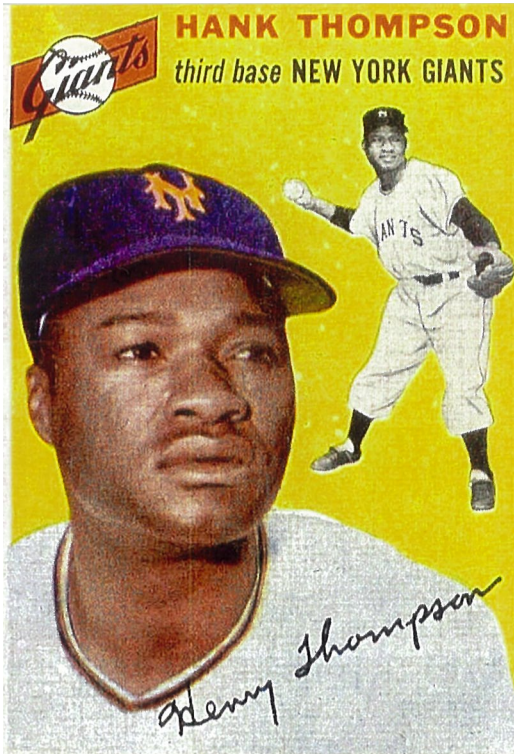
New York Giants (1954)
National League Champions

Former Birmingham Black Barons Willie Mays was the star of the team. He batted .345 with 41 homeruns, 110 RBI and a slugging percentage of .667. Not only did he offensively lead them to a National League title but he was also awarded the National League Most Valuable Player (MVP) award.

Don Mueller (.342), Alvin Dark (.293) and Hank Thompson (.263 w/ 26 homeruns and 86 RBI) were the top hitters for New York in 1954. Outfielder Dusty Rhodes was the Giants top player off the bench with a .341 batting average and .695 slugging percentage.

Even though Hank Thompson's batting average had dropped 39 points from .302 (1953) to .263 (1954), he was still the team's fourth best hitter of the starting players. His playing time was also somewhat limited while recovering from a chipped kneecap early in the season. During the 1954 season Hank set Major League career highs in doubles (18) and homeruns (26). He also drew 90 walks. His complete hitting statistics for the season were as follows:

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1954	New York	136	448	76	118	18	1	26	86	3	.263	.482



Hank Thompson
New York Giants
1954

Two of Hank's best games in Major League baseball occurred in 1954. In one game against the Brooklyn Dodgers, Thompson collected four hits including a two run homerun and drove in seven runs during the game. Then in a game played on June 3rd against the St. Louis Cardinals, Thompson got four hits including homeruns in his first three at bats. The Cardinals gave him an intentional pass on his fourth trip up. Then he singled in his last at bat to drive in his eighth run of the game.

Besides Willie Mays' great hitting, the New York Giants also had the best pitching staff in the National League with an amazing 3.10 team ERA. Johnny Antonelli was the ace of the pitching staff and the best pitcher in the National League with a record of 21-7 (.750) and an earned run average of 2.30. He also had 18 complete games and a "league" leading six (6) shutouts. Ruben Gomez (17-9 w/ 2.88 ERA), thirty-seven year old Sal Maglie (14-6 w/ 3.26 ERA), Don Liddle (9-6 w/ 3.06 ERA) and Jim Hearn (8-8 w/ 4.15 ERA) rounded out the starting rotation for Leo Durocher's Giants. New York also got extremely good relief pitching out of the bull pen from Hoyt Wilhelm (12-4 w/ 2.10 ERA), thirty-six year old Marv Grissom (10-7 w/ 2.35 ERA) and Windy Mc Call (2-5 w/ 3.25 ERA).

The New York Giants finished the season with a record of 97-57 (.630) and were five (5) games ahead of second place Brooklyn (92-62) and eleven (11) games ahead of third place Milwaukee (89-65).

New York Wins the World Series

Their National League championship sent the Giants to the 1954 World Series against the Cleveland Indians who were the champions of the American League with a record setting 111 wins during the season. Cleveland's won-loss record for the season was an impressive 111-43 (.721). The Cleveland Indians were managed by Al Lopez and included five future National

Baseball Hall of Fame members on their roster. These players were Larry Doby (OF), Bob Feller (P), Bob Lemon (P), Hal Newhouser (P) and Early Wynn (P).

On paper the series looked like it would be very competitive and the Cleveland Indians were a heavy favorite before the series got underway. Unfortunately for the Cleveland Indians, the New York Giants were not intimidated by their American League rivals. The New York Giants swept the series in four straight games.

Game one of the series was played at the Polo Grounds in Manhattan (NY) with 52,751 fans in the stadium. Cleveland scored two runs in the first inning off of Sal Maglie and the Giants tied it with two runs in the bottom of the third. Hank Thompson's single in the bottom of the third inning tied the game at 2-2. The game was still tied 2-2 after nine innings. With veteran Marv Grissom on the mound, New York retired the Indians in the top of the 10th inning. Cleveland's starting pitcher Bob Lemon was still in the game when pinch hitter Dusty Rhodes connected for a three run walk off home run to win the game by a score of 5 to 2 for the New York Giants.

Johnny Antonelli took the mound for the New York Giants the next day to face off against Early Wynn in game two. A large crowd of 49, 099 fans showed up at the Polo Grounds for the game. Antonelli scattered eight hits that included a first inning home run by former Negro League player Al Smith. Unfortunately for the Indians, Smith's solo homerun was all the scoring they would get as Antonelli pitched shut out ball the rest of the game. The Giants turned four base hits (one of which was by Hank Thompson in a two run fifth inning) into three runs. A solo homerun by Dusty Rhodes to lead off the bottom of the seventh inning gave the Giants an insurance run. The 3-1 victory by New York gave them a two win lead in the series.

Game three of the series moved to Cleveland Stadium in Cleveland (OH). Indians fans packed the ball park. Officially game three was attended by 71,555 fans. The New York Giants jumped out to a 6-0 lead before the Indians scored a run in the bottom of the seventh inning. The Giants collected ten hits in the game and the Indians could only manage four base hits off starter Rueben Gomez and relief specialist Hoyt Wilhelm. The game ended with the Giants taking a 6-2 victory. Gomez got credit for the win and Wilhelm picked up a save.

Trailing now 3 games to 0 the Cleveland Indians were in a must win situation. The decisive game four was played on October 2nd at Cleveland Stadium with a record 78,102 fans in attendance. With Don Liddle on the mound and Johnny Antonelli coming in to pick up a save in relief, the Giants completed their sweep of Cleveland with a 7 to 4 win. The Giants had jumped out to a 7-0 lead until pinch hitter Hank Majeski of the Indians hit a three run homerun in the bottom of the fifth inning.

Thompson's .364 paces hitters in World Series

CLEVELAND—Here are the World Series records for the seven players participating in the New York Giants four-game sweep:

		BATTING					
PLAYER & CLUB	AB	R	H	RBI	PCT.		
Thompson, Giants	11	6	4	2	.364		
Mays, Giants	14	4	4	3	.286		
Irvin, Giants	9	1	2	2	.222		
Smith, Indians	14	2	3	2	.214		
Doby, Indians	16	0	2	0	.125		
Pope, Indians	3	0	0	0	.000		
Gomez, Giants	4	0	0	0	.000		
		PITCHING					
PLAYER & CLUB	IP	H	R	SO	BB	W	L
Gomez, Giants	7 1/3	4	2	2	3	1	0

Hank Thompson had an excellent series against the Indians. As the team's starting third baseman, he got a hit in each game and went 4 for 11 for a .364 batting average with six (6) runs scored. Hank also broke Lou Gehrig's World Series record for a four game series for base on balls with seven (7) free passes. With four hits and seven walks, Hank Thompson compiled a .611 on base percentage for the 1954 World Series. Defensively, Thompson was flawless. In sixteen (16) chances he did not make an error. In addition he robbed Al Smith of a sure base hit and turned it into a double play. Hank was the hero to hometown Harlem.

An interesting side note to the 1954 World Series was that according to Negro League great Buck O'Neil he was hired by the Giants to keep Hank Thompson sober during the World Series. It obviously worked. Hank had a great series and the New York Giants won the title. This was the New York Giants' first World Series title since 1933.

A summary of the 1954 World Series is as follows:

Date	Location	Score	Winning Team	Winning Pitcher	Losing Pitcher
Sept. 29 th	Polo Grounds (Manhattan, NY)	5-2	New York	Grissom	Lemon
Sept. 30 th	Polo Grounds (Manhattan, NY)	3-1	New York	Antonelli	Wynn
Oct. 1 st	Cleveland Stadium (Cleveland, OH)	6-2	New York	Gomez	Garcia
Oct. 2 nd	Cleveland Stadium (Cleveland, OH)	7-4	New York	Liddle	Lemon



New York Giants
World's Champions
Sunday Mirror
 New York City, NY
 10-08-54

Each member of the New York Giants collected \$ 11,148 for the series win and each Cleveland Indians player got \$ 6,713 in their losing effort.

After the 1954 World Series, Hank Thompson was rewarded by the Giants' management with an increase in his salary that, according to a newspaper article that appeared in the Plain Dealer from Kansas City (KS) on 01-21-55, had him making a reported \$ 36,000 per season.

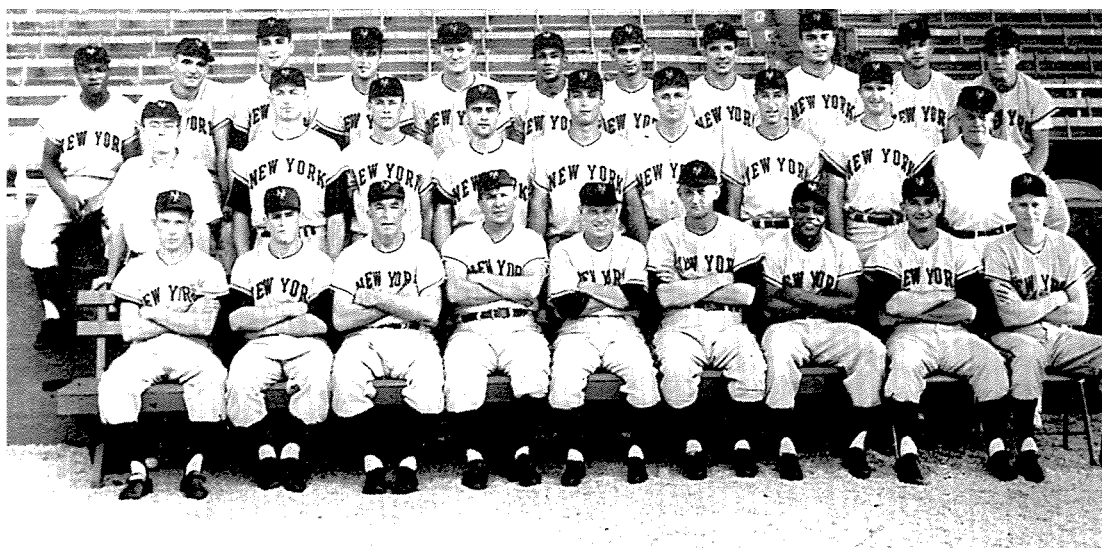
Barnstorming with Roy Campanella

After the 1954 World Series, Hank Thompson joined the Roy Campanella All Stars for their post season barnstorming tour. Thompson was the team's starting third baseman. Some of the other standout ball players who appeared with the Roy Campanella All Stars in 1954 were Joe Black (P), Roy Campanella (C), Larry Doby (OF), Junior Gilliam (2B), Monte Irvin (OF), Minnie Minoso (OF) and Don Newcombe (P). To fill out the roster Campanella also signed Gene Baker, Dave Hoskins, Brooks Lawrence, Jim Pendleton, Bob Trice and Charlie White.

The tour started on October 8th in Baltimore (MD) and ended on November 7th in New Orleans (LA). The team traveled all over the country playing in big cities like Atlanta (GA), Baltimore (MD), Houston (TX), Los Angeles (CA), New Orleans (LA) and San Francisco (CA). The thirty-two (32) game schedule took the team from one coast to the other. They also played a lot of smaller cities like Greenwood (MS), Biloxi, (MS), Mobile (AL), Ponchatoula (LA) and Houma (LA). The team was billed in the media as both the "Roy Campanella All Stars" and the "Campanella and Irvin All Stars."

New York Giants Falter after their World Series Championship

After winning the 1954 World Series and being crowned the “World’s Champion,” there was no place for New York to go but down. The question for everyone entering the 1955 National League season was whether or not Leo Durocher could work his “magic” for a second straight year. The answer would be “no.” Gone from the 1954 championship starting line-up were Wes Westrum (C), Whitey Lockman (1B), Davey Williams (2B) and Monte Irvin (OF). Replacements Ray Katt (.215), Gail Harris (.232) and Wayne Terwilliger (.257) didn’t fill in the missing gaps.



NEW YORK GIANTS, 1955

New York Giants (1955)

(Hank Thompson – back row first on left)

In 1955 the Giants were led by the hitting of Willie Mays (.319 w/ 51 homeruns and 127 RBI), Don Mueller (.306), Dusty Rhodes (.305) and Al Dark (.282).

From newspaper reports it appears that Hank Thompson had a very good spring training but unfortunately, his hitting did not carry over into the regular season. Hank Thompson had an off season as the team’s starting third baseman. In 135 games he went 106 for 432 for a .245 batting average and a disappointing .398 slugging percentage. One reason for his poor productivity offensively could have been his overall physical health. In an article that was published in the Plain Dealer of Kansas City (KS), the newspaper reported that Hank Thompson was going to be hospitalized in the elite ward of the Harkness Pavilion Hospital in New York City for at least several days for medical evaluation. Thompson had been complaining of chest pains but initial medical testing had not revealed a reason for his complaints. Then in August he was sidelined when he was hit in the forearm by a pitch thrown by Karl Spooner of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

On a positive note, his 17 homeruns, however, were the second best on the team behind Willie Mays (51 homeruns). Hank Thompson was not alone in his productivity being down. Six other regular Giants players had lower batting averages than they had in the 1954 season. The Giants compiled a .260 team batting average for the season which was fifth best in the “league.”

The pitching staff that had led the team to the World Series let management down in 1955. The pitching staff had a very strong earned run average of 3.77 which was second best in the “league” behind the Brooklyn Dodgers (3.68 ERA). The major problem related to pitching during the season was that the starting rotation and closers didn’t dominate like they had done in 1954.

The following chart identifies the problems that New York pitchers had in 1955.

New York Giants – Pitching Staff Comparison

Player	1954		1955	
	Record	ERA	Record	ERA
Johnny Antonelli	21-7	2.30	14-16	3.33
Reuben Gomez	17-9	2.88	9-10	4.56
Sal Maglie	14-6	3.26	9-5	3.75
Hoyt Wilhelm	12-4	2.10	4-1	3.93
Marv Grissom	10-7	2.35	5-4	2.92
Don Liddle	9-9	3.06	10-4	4.23
Jim Hearn	8-8	4.15	14-16	3.73

The New York Giants ended the 1955 season in third place in the final National League standings with a record of 80-74 (.519). They finished 18.5 games behind the Brooklyn Dodgers (98-55) who ran away from all their competitors in the National League.



Hank Thompson

Bowman Baseball Card
1955

Hank Joins Willie Mays All Stars for Post Season Play

After the end of the regular 1955 National League season, Hank Thompson joined the Willie Mays All Stars for their post season barnstorming tour. The Willie Mays All Stars were truly an African American All Star team. The team carried a roster of only 17 players. Besides Thompson the team included: Henry Aaron (OF), Gene Baker (2B), Ernie Banks (SS), Joe Black (P), Billy Bruton (OF), George Crowe (1B), Larry Doby (OF), Junior Gilliam (2B), Dave Hoskins (P), Elston Howard (C), Monte Irvin, Connie Johnson (P), Sam Jones (P), Brooks Lawrence (P), Lou Loudon (C), Willie Mays (OF), Minnie Minoso (OF), Don Newcombe (P), Al Smith and Charlie White (C). Players came and went during the tour across the country.

The Willie Mays All Star tour began on October 7th in Chapel Hill (NC) and ended on November 6th in Los Angeles (CA). The schedule of tour dates called for the team to play a thirty-one (31) game schedule. During the tour the team was referred to in the media as the “Willie Mays All Stars,” “Major League All Stars,” “Mays and Newcombe All Stars” and “Negro Major League All Stars.” From current research it appears that the tour only got limited newspaper coverage.

Willie Mays, Newk et Al. Here Oct. 10

Don Newcombe, Willie Mays, Ernie Banks and Junior Gilliam are big names in an array of Negro baseball talent that will be on exhibition next Monday night at Travelers Field.

Those four and 13 others will comprise a team of major league players that will oppose an all-star team from the Negro American League.

Newcombe and Gilliam will complete their World Series activities today as members of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Mays won the National League home run championship this year while outfielding for the New York Giants and Banks, of the Chicago Cubs, set a new record for home runs in one season by a shortstop. Mays whacked 51 home runs, Banks 44.

Others on the big leaguers' roster are infielders George Crowe of Milwaukee and Hank Thompson, New York Giants; Outfielders Henry Aaron and Bill Bruton of Milwaukee and Larry Doby of Cleveland; Pitchers Joe Black of Cincinnati, Sam Jones of the Cubs, Brooks Lawrence of St. Louis, Dave Hoskins of Cleveland and Connie Johnson of the Chicago White Sox.

Negro All-Stars in Two Tilts Here

The Negro Major League All-Stars headed by Willie Mays and Ernie Banks will play the Negro American League All-Stars at Pelican Stadium in single engagements Sunday afternoon, Oct. 23, and Tuesday night, Oct. 25. The afternoon game is slated for 2:30 o'clock and the night affair at 7:45 p. m.

Other major leaguers who will see action in the two games will be Hank Thompson, New York Giants; Al Smith, Larry Doby and Dave Hoskins, Cleveland Indians; Don Newcombe and Junior Gilliam, Brooklyn Dodgers; George Crowe, Henry Aaron and Charley White, Milwaukee Braves; Connie Johnson, Chicago White Sox; Brooks Lawrence, St. Louis Cards; Joe Black, Cincinnati Reds and Elston Howard, New York Yankees.

Jehosie Heard, Houston southpaw, will get the starting assignment for the American Leaguers. Other pitchers with this club are Eddie Hancock, Frank Barnes, Kelly Searcy, Ollie Brantly and Ace Robinson.

Advance sale of tickets will go on sale Monday morning at 1038 Drayades st. stated promoter Allen

Negro Stars Play Tonight In Peb Park

Many of the most outstanding players of major league baseball will be seen here tonight when a team of Negro major leaguers will meet the Negro American League All-Stars in an 8 p. m. game in Travelers Field.

According to reports, Don Newcombe of the World Champion Brooklyn Dodgers will pitch for the big leaguers and his Brooklyn teammate, Junior Gilliam, will patrol the outfield or play an infield position.

Other stars on the team include Willie Mays and Hank Thompson, Giants; Ernie Banks, Sam Jones and Gene Baker, Chicago Cubs; Henry Aaron, Bill Bruton, Charley White and George Crowe, Milwaukee; Brooks Lawrence, St. Louis; Larry Doby and Dave Hoskins, Cleveland; Connie Johnson, Chicago White Sox; Joe Black, Cincinnati.

The All-Stars will put their best alignment on the field against the big leaguers, according to Manager Rufus Ligons. His infield includes Curley Williams, formerly of the Florida International League, at first base; Willie Shelton of the Memphis Red Sox, second base; Gergoe Handy, also from the FIL, at third base and John Kennedy of the Birmingham Black Barons at shortstop.



Major League All Stars (1955)

(Back row left to right,- Harry "Suitcase" Simpson, Joe Black, **Hank Thompson** and Monte Irvin.
Kneeling left to right- George Crow, Larry Doby and Roy Campanella)

Touring with Willie May's All Star team was a team of Negro League players that appeared under the name of the "Negro American League All Stars." The team was managed by Rufus Ligon of the Memphis Red Sox. Some of Ligon's players included: Isaac Barnes, Ollie Brantley (P), Ray Haggins, Eddie Hancock, Leroy Hancock, George Handy, Willie Harris, Jehosie Heard (P), John Kennedy, Jessie Mitchell (OF), Ace Robinson, Kelly Searcy, Willie Sheelor and Curley Williams.

During the post season of 1955 Hank Thompson also played for the Roy Campanella All Stars and Major League All Stars. Both of these all-star teams had basically the same roster of players as the Willie Mays All Stars.

One of Hank Thompson's best games on the tour occurred in Corpus Christi (TX) on November 11th. Hank went three for four with two homeruns in the game.

**5,600 Watch
Big Leaguers
Mays, Thompson Homer
Twice in 10-1 Victory**

**Hank Hits 2 HR in Game
for Major League All Stars**

Corpus Christi Caller
Corpus Christi, TX
11-03-55

Hank Thompson is Severely Injured When He is Beaned

Hank Thompson hospitalized by concussion

ST. LOUIS, June 6 (AP)—Hank Thompson, 30-year-old third baseman of the New York Giants, suffered a severe concussion when hit on the head by a pitched ball in the fourth inning of tonight's game with the St. Louis Cardinals. Thompson will remain in Jewish Hospital here the next few days for observation, said Dr. I. C. Middleman, Cardinal club physician. The veteran Negro was carried from the field on a stretcher. X-rays were negative, showing he

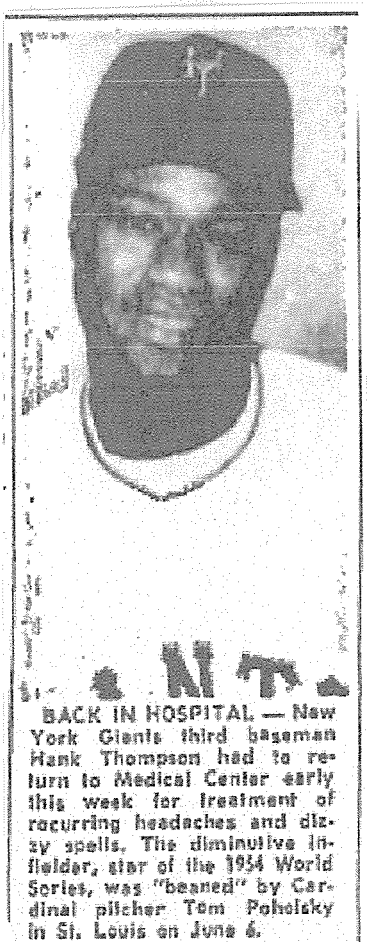
Giants' Hank Thompson Retained In Hospital

NEW YORK, June 15 (AP)—X-rays of Henry Thompson's head showed no concussion or fracture but doctors today ordered the New York Giant third baseman held in the hospital until late Sunday as a precautionary move.

Thompson was hit on the head by a pitched ball in a game at St. Louis on June 6. He returned to the lineup the next day but later had to quit because of continued dizziness. He was flown here for an examination

Augusta Chronicle
Augusta, GA
06-07-56

Greensboro Record
Greensboro, NC
06-15-56



New York, N. Y. — AP — Hank Thompson rejoined the New York Giants Saturday after a week-long hospital stay and belted a two run single in the eighth inning for a 3-2 victory over Pittsburgh. The defeat continued Bob Friend's losing streak, which started June 16.

Milwaukee Sentinel Journal
Milwaukee, WI
07-07-56

Baltimore Afro American
06-30-56

Giants Down Hill Spiral Continues

The New York Giants were disappointed in their performance during the 1955 season especially after being the World Champions in 1954. Going into the start of the 1956 season little did New York management know how bad things would get during their 1956 National League campaign. Before the start of the season Giants management felt they needed a change in direction and replaced Leo Durocher with Bill Rigney. The Giants management team got a significant change in direction, unfortunately it wasn't in the direction they wanted. In addition the starting line-up for the New York Giants was completely different. The only holdovers in the starting line-up besides Hank Thompson from the 1955 Giants were outfielders Willie Mays and Don Mueller. Every other position had a "new" starting player.

HANK THOMPSON

LOOKING FOR GOOD YEAR

NEW YORK — (CNS) — Hank Thompson got his best contract with the New York Giants to the tune of \$18,500 despite his bad year in '55.

As usual, Hank will have to fight several guys for his third base job—as young Daryl Spencer. But the 30 year old claims he's in the "pink" and no one will take his job from him if he can help it.

Hank was "ill" in the last part of the '55 season. His batting average took a tumble from .283 of the previous year of .245. But then Hank seems to have the pattern—good year followed by a bad one with another good year next, etc.

If this be so, his raring to get back to work should pay off in '56

Plain Dealer

Kansas City, KS

01-27-56

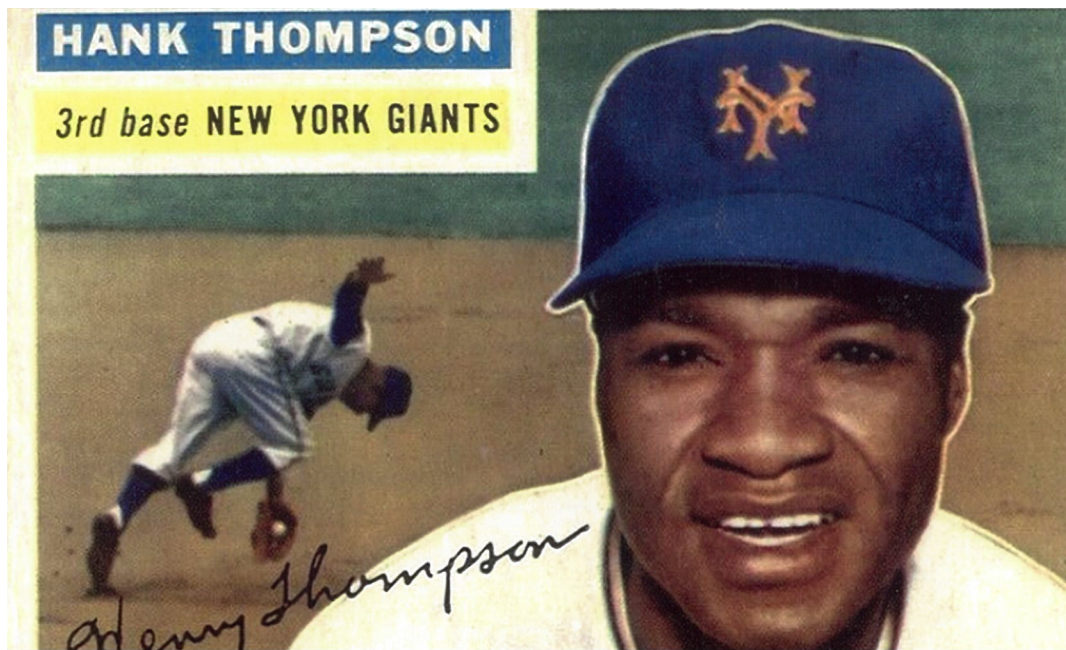
Hank Thompson started the 1956 season with renewed optimism. He had just gotten a new contract that paid him \$ 18,500 for the season and was confident that he would be the team's starting third baseman. Unfortunately Hank also suffered through what would be his last season in the Major Leagues. Hank played well in the early part of spring training before he injured his shoulder in spring training and lost his starting job at third base to rookie Foster Castleman. In five exhibition games for which we have box scores, Hank went 7 for 12 with 2 homeruns.

During the regular season Thompson's batting average went from .245 in 1955 to .235 in 1956. Hank Thompson only appeared in 83 games during the 1956 season. Defensively, Hank appeared in 54 games in the field and committed 14 errors for a pitiful .902 fielding percentage. The only bright spot in his season was hitting .333 with two homeruns in 24 plate appearances as a pinch hitter.

Hank was also plagued by injuries and what could be categorized as poor physical conditioning during the season.

Thompson's lack of productivity became such a concern for Giants' management that they considered trading their third baseman. On May 15th the Detroit Times published an article that there were trade rumors of Hank Thompson going to the Baltimore Orioles. Nothing ever came of the trade rumors.

To make matters even worse than his poor hitting on June 6th of the 1956 season, Hank was hit in the head by a ball thrown by pitcher Don Kaiser of the St. Louis Cardinals. He was taken off the field on a stretcher and transported to Jewish Hospital in St. Louis (MO). X-rays showed that he did not have a fractured skull but would suffer from severe recurring headaches for several weeks. The official medical diagnosis of his injury was a severe concussion. Hank tried to play the next day but was taken out of the line-up because he complained of dizziness. On June 15th he was flown from Cincinnati back to New York City for further tests and evaluation. During the next several weeks he was in and out of different hospitals on several occasions. The longest of these stays was in late June when he was hospitalized in New York City. Thompson did not return to the starting line-up until July 7th.



Hank Thompson
New York Giants
1956

Jackie Brandt (.299), Willie Mays (.296) and Red Schoendienst (.296) were the Giants leading hitters in 1956. The new starting line-up for Bill Rigney failed to produce offensively. The team batting average dropped from .260 in 1955 to .244 in 1956. Offensively the New York Giants were a major disappointment to say the least. The New York Giants were tied with the Chicago Cubs for the worst team batting average in the National League.

Johnny Antonelli who was the ace of the pitching staff rebounded from a down year in 1955. Antonelli was once again a twenty game winner. Johnny went 20-13 with a 2.86 ERA and five shutouts in 1956. Unfortunately the rest of the starting rotation didn't produce. Reuben Gomez (7-17 w/ 4.58 ERA), Al Worthington (7-14 w/ 3.97 ERA) Jim Hearn (5-11 w/ 3.97 ERA) and Joe Margonen (6-6 w/ 3.93 ERA) rounded out New York's starting rotation. To make matters worse the usually dependable Hoyt Wilhelm who had been their best closer only went 4-9 with 8 saves and a 3.83 ERA.

The New York Giants ended their 1956 National League season with a miserable record of 67-87 (.435) which left them in sixth place in the final "league" standings. They were 26 games behind the Brooklyn Dodgers who won the season title. The 1956 National League season had been closely played with the championship going down to the final week of the season. Unfortunately the New York Giants weren't in the mix. A mere two games separated the Brooklyn Dodgers, Milwaukee Braves and Cincinnati Reds.

Hank Thompson played his last game in the Major Leagues on September 30, 1956.

Hank Joins the Willie Mays All Stars

In 1955 Hank Thompson had played with the Willie Mays All Stars during their barnstorming tour. Once the regular 1956 season had concluded play Willie Mays put together another all-star team and recruited Hank to play second base for his team. Being recruited by Mays to play post season baseball was a real morale boost for Thompson after coming off a poor regular season.

The starting lineup for the 1956 Willie Mays All Stars was as follows:

Position	Player	Position	Player
1B	George Crowe	OF	Henry Aaron
2B	Hank Thompson	OF	Willie Mays
SS	Gene Baker	OF	Monte Irvin
3B	Al Smith		
C	Elston Howard/Charlie White	Utility	Jim Pendleton

Frank Robinson and Harry “Suitcase” Simpson also played in the outfield during the 1956 tour. The Willie Mays All Stars pitching staff included Joe Black, Connie Johnson, “Sad Sam” Jones, Brooks Lawrence and Don Newcombe.

The 1956 Willie Mays All Stars thirty-two (32) game barnstorming tour started on October 11th in Charlotte (NC) and ended on November 11th in Jacksonville (FL). The barnstorming tour focused on primarily mid size cities because there was less competition for the general public’s entertainment dollar. Unlike the 1955 tour the 1956 tour only traveled throughout the South. This enabled them to save a significant amount of money on travel expenses

Thompson’s Last Season in Professional Baseball

Before the 1957 season even started it was apparent that Hank Thompson did not fit into the New York Giants’ plans for the future. Hank didn’t help his case for making the Giants’ roster by missing an exhibition game against the Cleveland Indians in San Diego (CA). Manager Bill Rigney fined Thompson \$ 150 for the violation of team policy. When asked about losing his starting job at third base and even possibly not making the Giants’ Major League roster, Hank Thompson was quoted as follows in the media:

“Every time they shuffle the deck they lose me somewhere.”

“I don’t know what it is but Rig has never given me much attention. We’re the best of friends but he doesn’t seem to like me as a ball player.”

wanted and Forgotten
teran Hank Thompson apparently has
place in the Giants’ plans.

Jersey Journal
Jersey City, NJ
03-09-57

During spring training Hank Thompson got stiff competition for his third base starting position from Eddie Bressoud, Foster Castleman and Ozzie Virgil. After a poor spring training with limited game playing time and missing an exhibition game, Hank Thompson’s contract was sold to the Minneapolis Millers of the American Association in April of 1957 before the start of the regular season. The last time Hank had been sent down to Minneapolis, he found his hitting touch and quickly returned to the Major Leagues. This would not be the case in 1957.

Like in New York, Thompson never did fit into the Minneapolis Millers’ plans as a starter. He only appeared in 78 games (9 games as a pinch hitter, 13 games at second base and 56 games in the outfield) for the Millers. During the season Hank never got untracked with his hitting and was plagued with nagging leg injuries during the season. In his final season Hank Thompson hit a disappointing .243 with only two home runs.

Giants Sell Thompson To Minneapolis Team

NEW YORK, April 10 (INS)—Veteran infielder Hank Thompson has been sold outright by the New York Giants to their Minneapolis Farm team in the American Assn. The 31-year-old Thompson, who would have become an eight-year man July 30, batted only .234 last year. By participating in 43 double plays in 1950, his first year with the Giants, Thompson set a National League record for third baseman.

Greensboro Record

Greensboro, NC
04-10-57

For the 1957 season he went 54 for 222 for a .243 batting average with a miserable .293 slugging percentage which was the lowest of his career.

Orlando Cepeda (.309 w/ 25 homeruns and 108 RBI), Don Grate (.296), Jim Davenport (.291), Carlos Paula (.288) and Eddie Bressoud (.286) led the team in hitting in 1957. The Millers compiled a team batting average of .271 which was third best in the "league."

Max Surkont (15-5 w/ 3.05 ERA), Pete Burnside (10-5 w/ 2.47 ERA), Joe Margoneri (9-10 w/ 4.84 ERA), Gordon Jones (9-14 w/ 5.04 ERA) and Al Corwin (4-9 w/ 5.72 ERA) comprised the Millers' starting rotation. Other players who pitched for Minneapolis in 1957 were Gene Bearden (5-6), Mike Blyzka (7-3), Webbo Clarke (3-5), Stu Miller (3-3), Steve Ridzik (8-6) and Freddy Rodriguez (6-5).



Hank Thompson
New York Giants

On July 17, 1957 Hank Thompson retired from baseball. His season batting average had gone down for the fourth straight year and Thompson knew it was time to leave the game. When asked by newspaper reporters about his decision, Hank had the following to say:

"This game has been good to me, but it is a young man's game. I'm going home to California."

Ironically Hank Thompson was only thirty-one (31) years old. In reality he should have had several very good seasons left in front of him.

The primary issue for Hank was his legs. He explained his leg problems as follows: "They just went bad. Really they'd been bad for a long time. It was ligament rouble. I needed to have novocain shots to play and before games. I lived in the whirlpool. It was almost like my bed."

The Minneapolis Millers finished their season with a record of 85-69 (.552) and were in third place in the final American Association standings. The Millers ended the season eight games behind the Wichita Braves.

This was Hank Thompson's last season as a professional ball player. Unbelievable, he was done at age 31.

It is interesting to note that Topps Chewing Gum created a baseball card for Hank in their 1957 baseball card set. Photo of the card is to the left.

A Reported Comeback

On January 30, 1958 the Boston American published a short blurb in their newspaper that Hank Thompson was trying to make a comeback with the Chicago Cubs. Chicago would have been a logical choice because that is where Monte Irvin went after his playing days with the New York Giants had concluded. Apparently this was just preliminary talks or wishful thinking on Hank's part because he never shows up on an official roster for the Cubs.

Thompson Travels to Puerto Rico

In an attempt to prolong his baseball career and get back his hitting touch, Hank Thompson traveled to Puerto Rico to play for the Ponce Leones for their 1957-58 winter league season. Hank only played in three games for the Leones before being released and returning to the United States. His professional baseball career was officially over.

Life after Baseball

Henry Thompson met with success on the baseball field as a professional ball player. His personal life was a completely different story. To say that he led a turbulent life would be an understatement. After he retired from baseball, Hank was limited to taking menial jobs to support himself and his family because he had no real formal education or job skills training. According to Hank in a newspaper interview his income went from \$ 36,000 a year when he was playing in the Major Leagues to less than \$ 5,000 a year when he retired. He was also quoted in the interview “that when you make big money, you spend big and I did.” Some of the different jobs Thompson held were:

- According to Hank, immediately after he retired he was offered a job by the New York Giants as a part time “bird dog” scout but he turned it down.
- He worked as a taxi cab driver in New York City.
- Officiated baseball games.
- Hank drifted from job to job between bouts of unemployment. When he was unemployed, he often told people that he was in “public relations.” He even worked for a short period of time as a delivery boy, selling cars and officiating ball games..
- Bartending was the job that he held more often than others. He changed jobs quite often because he was fired on numerous occasions for taking money from the cash register. One of the bars that he worked at as a “mixologist” (bar tender) was at Jimmy Briggs Staghorn Bar on Broadway in New York City.
- In 1959 he managed a small chain of candy stores in Brooklyn (NY).
- In 1961 he was briefly employed by the New York Giants at their spring training site in Arizona. His job duties involved maintenance activities and cleaning the pool. The job was short lived and Hank moved back to Texas after it was over.

Turbulent Life Style Filled with Poor Choices

The question is often asked as to why his baseball career was so short. The answer is very simple – he was an alcoholic and had a propensity for getting into trouble with the law. According to Hank he was an alcoholic by the age of 17 and carried a gun most of his entire adult life.

A chronology of some of his personal and legal problems is as follows:

1938 - As a young teenager, he was arrested on a charge of stealing jewelry and sent to Gatesville Reform School.

1943 - His drinking problem started to affect his baseball career and his life outside baseball.

1943 - On December 15th of 1943, Hank Thompson was arrested in Dallas (TX) for larceny of less than \$ 50.00. The disposition of the case is not known.

1944-1945 While in the U.S. Army he got in trouble for being absent without leave (AWOL). He also went to the stockade on more than one occasion for drinking and fighting.

Hank Thompson Held In Auto Theft Case

NEW YORK (UP)—Former major league baseball star Hank Thompson said he didn't want the car, he had one of his own. He just wanted to use it, he said, to get to a party in Brooklyn so he could keep up his celebration.



THOMPSON

But Thompson said he didn't want the car, he had one of his own. He just wanted to use it, he said, to get to a party in Brooklyn so he could keep up his celebration. Thompson said he went to the garage where he keeps his own car at 4 a.m. yesterday, but found it blocked by other vehicles. Jones' car, free and clear, with the keys in the ignition was still going so he jumped, in and drove to Brooklyn, Thompson said.

Many hours later, still celebrating, the ball player found himself in conversation with two men, Frank Norflete, 38, and Richard Louber, 31, in a Harlem tavern. They told him they needed a car go someplace. He handed them Jones' keys, Thompson said.

Police, alerted by Jones in the hour later and picked up Norflete and Louber. They told authorities it was all a mistake: that good old Hank, had lent them the car.

Hank Thompson Cleared of Theft

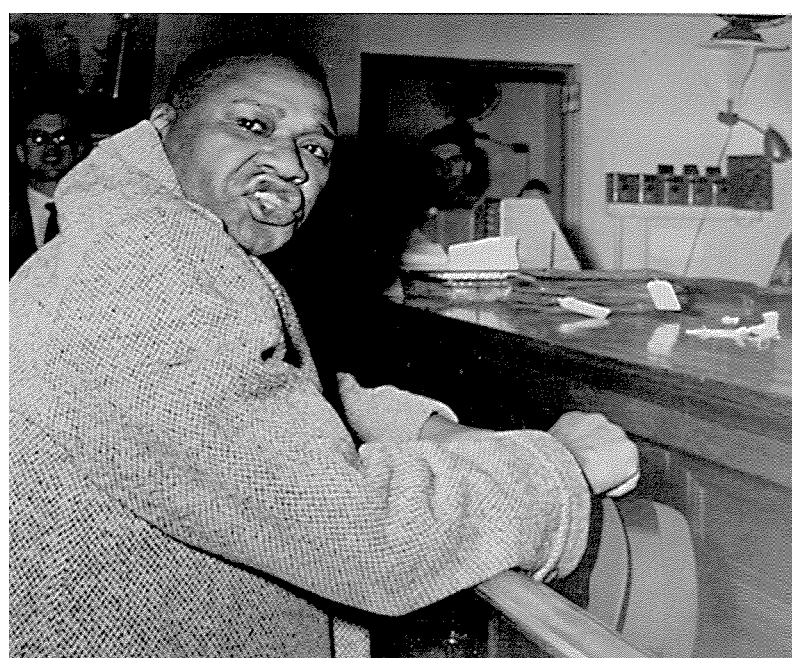
New York, N. Y.—UP—Hank Thompson, former New York Giant baseball player, was freed of charges of automobile theft Thursday.

Thompson, who played with the Minneapolis Millers of the American association last year, appeared in court on charges of borrowing a car without the owner's permission.

It was all a mistake, Thompson said.

Boston Traveler
Boston, MA
01-30-58

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Milwaukee, WI
01-31-58



Hank Thompson
Arrested and Booked
for Auto Theft

Kansas City Star
Kansas City, MO
01-31-58

- 1948 - Hank killed a man in 1948 in a bar fight but was acquitted with a verdict of justifiable homicide.
- 1953 - Around 4 am one morning in February of 1954, Hank became involved in an argument with a Harlem cab driver and ended up with 14 stitches in his head. He was originally charged with felonious assault but the case was later dismissed.
- 1954 - Thompson sold his World Series ring to a bar owner for drinking money.
- 1956 - Arrested for speeding in Newark (NJ). Hank was going 50 in a 25 mile per hour zone. He was taken to jail and got out pending a hearing after posting a \$ 58 bail bond.
- 1958 - He was arrested for auto theft. The incident started when he couldn't get his car out of a parking lot, so he took another car from the lot that had the keys in it. Later that evening he loaned the "stolen" car to two friends. When they were arrested, they called Hank to get them out of trouble. When Thompson arrived at the police station he was arrested also. According to Thompson he had been drinking heavily and it was all a mistake. Hank was later cleared of the charge.
- 1959 - Hank and his wife Maria Quesada got divorced. They had met when he was playing ball in Cuba and had gotten married on June 9th of 1949 right before Hank went up with the New York Giants.

Ex-Giant Outfielder Charged With Robbery

HOUSTON — (UPI) — Henry (Hank) Curtis Thompson, 39, former outfield star for the old New York Giants, has been charged in Houston with robbery by firearms and burglary.

Thompson is being held in connection with a liquor store robbery and the burglary of a printing shop Friday night.

Thompson is not to be confused with the famed Bobby Thomson of the 1951 playoff clutch homer against the Dodgers.

Liquor store owner Jack C. Torregrossa said the man who robbed his store forced him into a back room at gunpoint, locked him there and took about \$150 in cash and two pints of whisky.

1959 - Thompson pleaded guilty to the third degree assault and burglary (he stole \$3.00 from her purse) of Ruth Bowen who was the press agent for Dinah Washington and the Ink Spots. Reportedly, he and Ruth (who was still married to singer Billy Bowen) had been seeing each other. Hank was originally arraigned in felony court but pleaded the charges down. He spent a week in jail.

1961 - He was arrested for the armed robbery of a Manhattan bar and grill which he had frequently patronized. Hank pulled a gun in the bar and made off with a mere \$ 37.00. After a short chase by a passing police officer, Hank was arrested. The robbery occurred in February and when he was unable to post a \$ 3,500 bond he was remanded to the city jail. In November he pleaded guilty and was released from custody under a suspended sentence and was placed on probation. The primary reason for him not getting any jail time was that Baseball Commissioner Ford Frick and New York Giants owner Horace Stoneman had both written letters to the judge on behalf of Thompson. As part of his deal for no jail time, Judge George Postel order Hank not to drink liquor and go to the San Francisco Giants spring training camp in Phoenix (AZ) where he had a job waiting for him.

1963 - Hank Thompson walked into a Houston (TX) liquor store with a stolen gun and committed armed robbery. He was also charged in the burglary of a printing shop from which he allegedly stole two hand guns. The reason for the

Evansville Press

Evansville, IN

07-15-63

Former Baseball Star Is Arrested In \$37 Tavern Robbery In N. Y.

NEW YORK (AP) — Henry (Hank) Thompson, 40, who played in the 1951 and 1954 World Series with the New York Giants, was arrested Sunday on a charge of robbing a tavern of \$37.

Police said the former Negro baseball star entered Bill's Bar on Amsterdam Avenue at 1:30 a.m., drew a .22-caliber pistol and announced: "This is a stickup. Put the money on the bar."

The bartender handed him \$37, police said, and Thompson herded him and 10 patrons into the rear and then fled.

A patrolman noticed him hurrying from the tavern. The officer found out what had happened and arrested Thompson a short distance away following a brief scuffle. He was held in \$10,000 bail for a hearing March 3.

The arrest was one of several brushes with the law Thompson has had in past years. He was

charged with auto theft in 1958, but the charge was dismissed. A burglary charge was dismissed last year.

Now unemployed, Thompson last played with the Minneapolis Millers in the American Association in 1957. Prior to that he was with Jersey City in the International League and the St. Louis Browns.

He played both the infield and outfield.

Thompson Faces Several Charges

New York, N. Y. - UPI - Hank Thompson, former New York Giants third baseman, was to be arraigned in felony court Monday on charges of burglary and assault for allegedly slugging a woman press agent and stealing \$3 from her purse.

The charges against Thompson, a Negro, were brought by Mrs. Ruth Bowen, 34, who told police she and her husband, Billy Bowen, a musician, had known Thompson for about six years.

She said Thompson came to their apartment Saturday night, beat her, threatened to kill her and rifled her purse. She said that she fled the apartment and was treated at Columbia-Presbyterian medical center.

Police said Thompson called Mrs. Bowen's husband Sunday and set up a meeting with him on a Harlem street corner, where police, called by Bowen, arrested him.

The News and Courier
Charleston, SC
02-27-61

Former Giant Gets Sentence For Robbery

NEW YORK (AP) — Henry (Hank) Thompson, one-time New York Giants baseball player, was released under a suspended sentence Thursday after his plea of robbery.

Judge George Postel placed the nite probation with the understanding that he is not to drink liquor and is to go to the San Francisco Giants training camp near Phoenix, Ariz., where a job awaits him.

Thompson held up a tavern on Feb. 26, 1961 and got \$37. He claimed he had been drinking.

William C. Chance Jr., defense attorney, in a plea for Thompson, who played with the New York Giants in the World Series in 1951 and 1954, said that it was possible that Thompson's "rise to fame was too fast and his drop too sudden."

Milwaukee Journal and Sentinel
Milwaukee, WI
04-13-59

Advocate
Baton Rouge, LA
11-10-61

1963 – (continued) robbery and burglary was very simple – he was drunk and needed money. He made off with about \$ 270 in cash and two pints of whiskey. Hank was quickly apprehended by police, arrested, convicted, given a ten (10) year sentence and sent to Eastham Prison which was considered one of the worst prisons in the United States. Unlike the vast majority of the other times that he had gotten in trouble with the law, there was no easy way out. When questioned by newspaper reporters about the incident, Hank made the following comment:

“My luck has been bad. I want to see a doctor. I want to see what wrong with me and try to get straightened out. I feel bad about this.”

According to prison officials Hank Thompson was a model prisoner. After just six months at Eastham, he was transferred to the Ferguson Unit which was designed for less violent criminals.

At the Ferguson Unit he was assigned to the recreation department where he coached the prison baseball team and was given a job supervising younger (17-21 year olds) offenders. Before long Hank was made a trustee. It was while he was in prison that Thompson made one of the biggest decisions of his life. He joined Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and it appears for the first time in his life took responsibility for his drinking and the poor choices he had made.

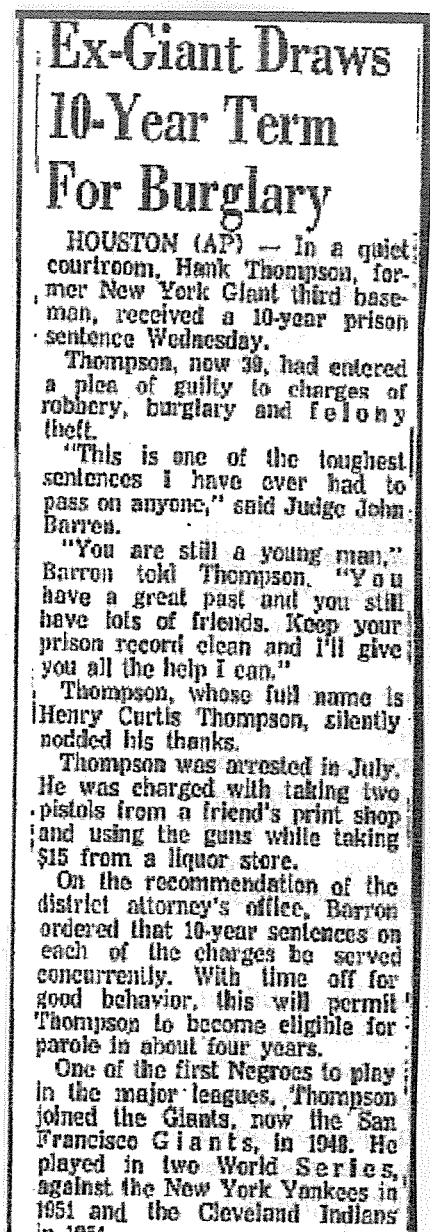
In a prison interview, Hank Thompson made the following statements about his intentions to change his life:

“When I get out I’m going to have to walk down streets with liquor stores and bars, and I’ll have to make a choice – walk past them and live, or walk into one and run wild again. They say life begins at 40. It better for me.”

Finally he had taken responsibility for his life choices. Admirably he didn’t blame others for his problems, he didn’t blame society, a bad childhood, being African American in a white run world or being washed up as a Major League ball player at only 31. Hank took responsibility for his own actions. Hank Thompson had ruined Hank Thompson’s life and no one else.

Hank Thompson was paroled from prison in 1966 after serving four (4) years of his ten (10) year prison term.

According to an interview in 1969, Hank viewed his time in prison as his savior. Hank explained this as follows: “I really think that I should be glad I got sent to the correctional farm in Ferguson, Texas. I needed to be stopped. If I hadn’t been, I would have killed somebody or I would have gotten myself killed.”



Former Giants third baseman Hank Thompson dies at 43

FRESNO, Calif.—(UPI)—Henry (Hammerin' Hank) Thompson, former New York Giants third baseman who played on two World Series teams, died at his home last night, according to an announcement by Fresno County deputy coroner Bob Morrison.

Thompson, 43, according to Morrison, suffered a seizure at home and was taken to the Fresno Veterans Administration Hospital, where he died.

Cause of death was not immediately determined. An autopsy was to be performed later.

Thompson and Monte Irvin were the first Negro players ever to sign Giant contracts,

seven times to set a record and tied another mark when he got one or more hits in each game of the 1954 World Series.

Thompson played nine years in the majors and compiled a lifetime batting mark of .267. He hit 129 homers over the span with 26 in the 1954 pennant winning year.

Evansville Press

Evansville, IN
10-01-69

Illinois State

Succumbs In Hospital After Seizure At Home

Ex-Giant Star Thompson Dies



HENRY THOMPSON

FRESNO Calif. (AP) — Hank Thompson, who rose to stardom with the miracle New York Giants of the 1950s, hit bottom after retirement and then dedicated his life to helping underprivileged boys, is dead at 43.

Thompson died in a Fresno hospital Tuesday night. He suffered a seizure at his home Monday night and never regained consciousness. His wife, Betty, and his mother, Iona Thompson, were at his bedside. The county coroner said it would be three or four days before the cause of death could be determined.

er Bobby Thompson were often referred to as the tom-tom twins because of their long-range hitting.

He hit 129 major league home runs. His best season was in 1953, when he hit 302.

He was sent down to Minneapolis in the American Association in 1967 and quit baseball

later that year.

Thompson was a cab driver in New York for a while and then domestic problems set in. He was divorced and went to Texas where he was convicted of armed robbery. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1963 but was paroled after four years.

Arriving in Fresno in 1958 to visit his mother, he went to work for the city recreation department as a playground director and married the former Betty Turner of Fresno. At the time he took the job, Thompson said he wanted to "dedicate my life to helping boys."

Daily Illinois State Journal

Springfield, IL
10-02-69

A Life Changed

After being released from prison for good behavior in 1967, Hank Thompson moved to Fresno (CA) to be close to his mother. It appears in his final years that he had turned his life around and continued his commitment to stay sober. He was active in the AA group in Fresno. He also got married to Betty Turner of Fresno and landed a steady job. Hank was hired by the Recreation Department of Fresno as a playground director at the Frank H. Ball Playground. Thompson seems to have realized the missteps of his life and was determined to try to help young people from making some of the same mistakes that he had made.

In a newspaper interview after he was released from prison and had started working for the Recreation Department in Fresno, he was quoted as follows:

“I try to help the youngsters by pointing to my life. I tell them how easily and quickly a man can fall from the limelight and get into trouble if he isn’t careful. I tell them how easy it is to go the other way.”

(Hank Thompson)

When talking to young people Hank Thompson always gave them the following advice:

1. Get advice about money; how to save it and how to invest it.
2. Live a clean life.
3. Stay away from those goodtime people who pretend to be your friends.
4. Stay away from liquor.
5. Stay healthy.
6. Baseball is the cleanest sport we have, so treat it decent.

His supervisor had the following to say about Hank Thompson and his work in the Fresno Recreation Department: “He did a tremendous job. He was dedicated and helped quite a few boys who could have gone wrong.”

An interesting side note to the later part of Hank Thompson’s life was that in the January 14th edition of the 1969 Plain Dealer newspaper of Cleveland (OH), it was reported that a movie about the life of Hank Thompson would be released in March of that year. Sidney Poitier was reported as the star of the movie. It is unclear if the movie was ever produced and current research does not show that it was ever released to the theaters.

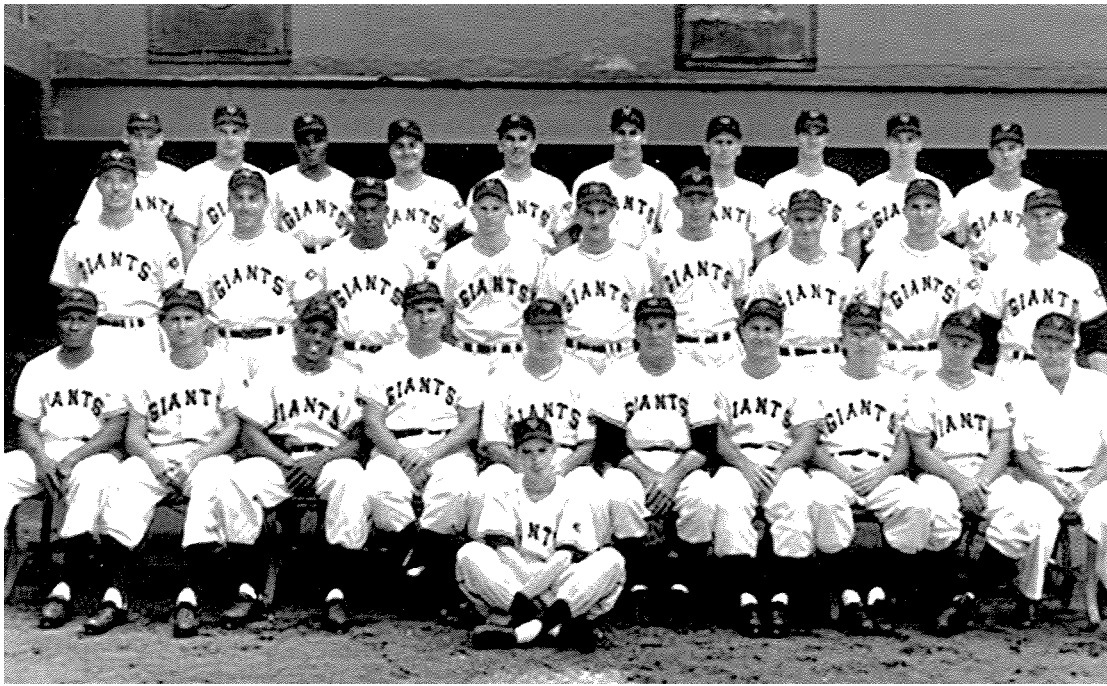
Occasionally he made trips to San Francisco to visit his old friend Willie Mays and watch his old displaced team play. In 1969 he appeared in a Giants’ old timer’s game that was played in San Francisco (CA).

Hank Thompson spent his remaining years living in a modest home in the Butler Park area of east Fresno with his wife and two step children.

Passing of a Legend

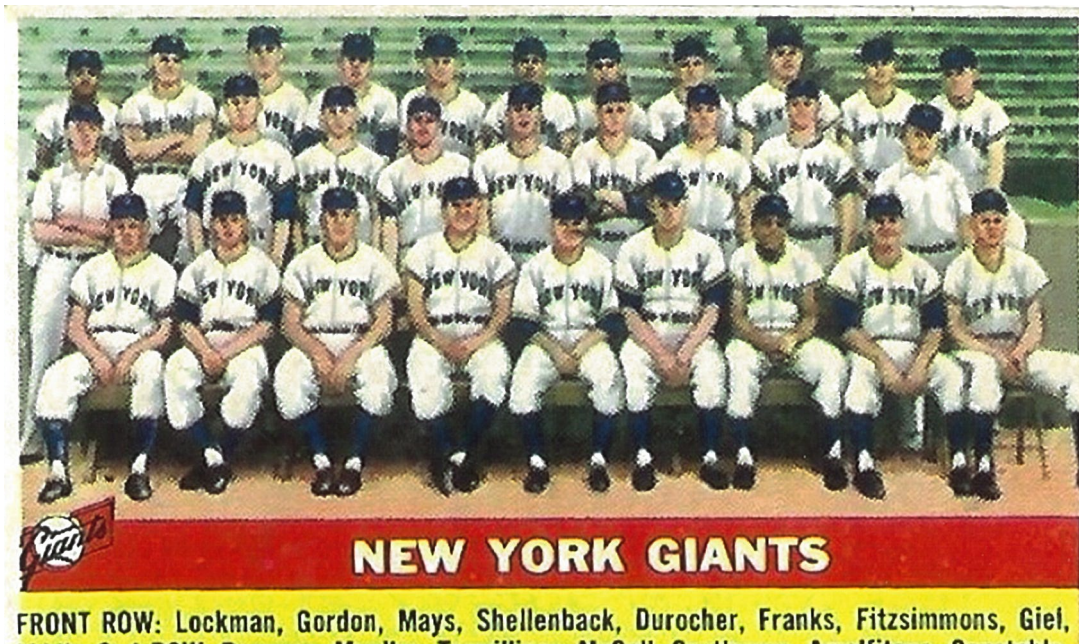
Tragically, Henry Curtis “Hank” Thompson passed away on September 30, 1969. Henry suffered what was believed to have been a seizure and was transported to the Fresno Veterans Administration Hospital in Fresno. His mother and wife were at his bedside in the hospital when he passed. He was only 43 years old. After an autopsy, the official cause of death was listed as natural causes (perhaps a heart attack or seizure). He was laid to rest in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Fresno, California. Ironically, the day he died was 13 years to the date that he played his last game in the Major Leagues.

In conclusion even with all of his personal demons he was a pioneer in black baseball and is a ball player who we should never forget. Hank Thompson had outstanding ability as a baseball player. His personal life was turbulent and after his retirement to say that Hank Thompson hit bottom is an understatement. Henry Thompson’s life was like his baseball career, it ended prematurely.



New York Giants (1951)

(Hank Thompson – front row first on left)



New York Giants (1956)

(Hank Thompson – back row first on left)

Playing Career

Regular Season

Year	Team	League
1941	Dallas Green Monarchs	Texas Negro League
1943	Kansas City Monarchs	Negro American League
1944-1946	Military Service	
1946-1947	Kansas City Monarchs	Negro American League
1947	St. Louis Browns	American League
1947-1948	Kansas City Monarchs	Negro American League
1949	Jersey City Giants	International League
1949-1951	New York Giants	National League
1951	Minneapolis Millers	American Association
1951-1956	New York Giants	National League
1957	Minneapolis Millers	American Association

Winter – Post Season

Year	Team	League
1946	Kansas City Monarchs	Negro World Series vs Newark Eagles
1946	Satchel Paige's All Stars	Barnstorming Tour vs Bob Feller's All Stars
1946-47	Vargas	Venezuelan League
1946-47	Habana Leones	Cuban Winter League
1947-48	Magallanes	Venezuelan League
1947-48	Habana Leones	Cuban Winter League
1948-49	Habana Leones	Cuban Winter League
1950	Roy Campanella All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1950	Luke Easter's All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1951	New York Giants	World Series vs New York Yankees
1951	Roy Campanella All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1954	New York Giants	World Series vs Cleveland Indians
1954	Roy Campanella All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1955	Roy Campanella All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1955	Major League All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1955	Willie Mays All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1956	Willie Mays All Stars	Barnstorming Tour
1957-58	Ponce Leones	Puerto Rican Winter League

Game Action



Hank is Safe at Third Base with a Triple



Thompson Tags Out Runner in Inter Squad Game

Career Statistics – Hitting (Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1943	Kansas City	38	123	18	40	6	2	2	13	2	.325	.455
1946	Kansas City	16	62	9	17	1	3	1	9	3	.274	.435
1947	Kansas City	48	189	54	65	3	2	4	14	2	.344	.413
1948	Kansas City	70	267	75	100	20	8	11	58	20	.375	.633
Total		172	641	156	222	30	15	18	94	27	.346	.515

Career Statistics – Hitting (World Series – Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946	Kansas City	7	27	5	8	1	0	0	3	1	.296	.333

Career Statistics – Hitting (Play-Off Series – Negro Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946	Kansas City	-	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	-	-
1948	Kansas City	7	26	4	6	0	0	1	3	0	.231	.346
Total		7	27	5	7	0	0	2	5	0	.259	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Minor Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1949	Jersey City	68	230	53	68	14	3	14	37	11	.296	.565
1951	Minneapolis	14	53	18	18	2	0	7	13	5	.340	.774
1957	Minneapolis	78	222	32	54	5	0	2	19	4	.243	.293
Total		160	505	103	140	21	3	23	69	20	.277	.467

Career Statistics – Hitting (Major Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947	St. Louis	27	78	10	20	1	1	0	5	2	.256	.295
1949	New York	75	275	51	77	10	4	9	34	5	.280	.444
1950	New York	148	512	82	148	17	6	20	91	8	.289	.463
1951	New York	87	264	37	62	8	4	8	33	1	.235	.386
1952	New York	128	423	67	110	13	9	17	67	4	.260	.454
1953	New York	114	388	80	117	15	8	24	74	6	.302	.567
1954	New York	136	448	76	118	18	1	26	86	3	.263	.482
1955	New York	135	432	65	106	13	1	17	63	2	.245	.398
1956	New York	83	183	24	43	9	0	8	29	2	.235	.415
Total		933	3003	492	801	104	34	129	482	33	.267	.453

Career Statistics – Hitting (World Series – Major League)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1951	New York	5	14	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	.143	.143
1954	New York	4	11	6	4	1	0	0	2	0	.364	.455
Total		9	25	8	6	1	0	0	2	0	.240	.280

Hank Thompson – New York Giants Star



New York Giants Starting Line-up (1954)

(Hank Thompson – third from left)



Monte Irvin, Willie Mays and Hank Thompson

Career Statistics – Hitting (Exhibition Games)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946	Paige All Stars	-	29	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	.310	-
1950	New York	3	4	3	4	1	-	3	3	-	-	-
1955	New York	3	9	3	4	1	0	2	5	1	-	-
1955	Willie Mays All Stars	1	4	-	3	-	-	2	2	-	.750	-
1956	New York	5	12	3	7	1	-	2	6	-	-	-
1957	New York	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
	Total	-	59	10	28	3	0	10	17	1	.475	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Venezuela)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1947	Vargas	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	.333	-

Career Statistics – Hitting (Cuban Leagues)

Year	Team	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
1946-47	Habana	64	225	40	72	6	6	4	32	5	.320	.453
1947-48	Habana	80	299	48	95	11	10	1	51	13	.318	.431
1948-49	Habana	70	265	60	85	14	8	7	44	19	.321	.513
	Total	214	789	148	252	31	24	12	127	37	.319	.503

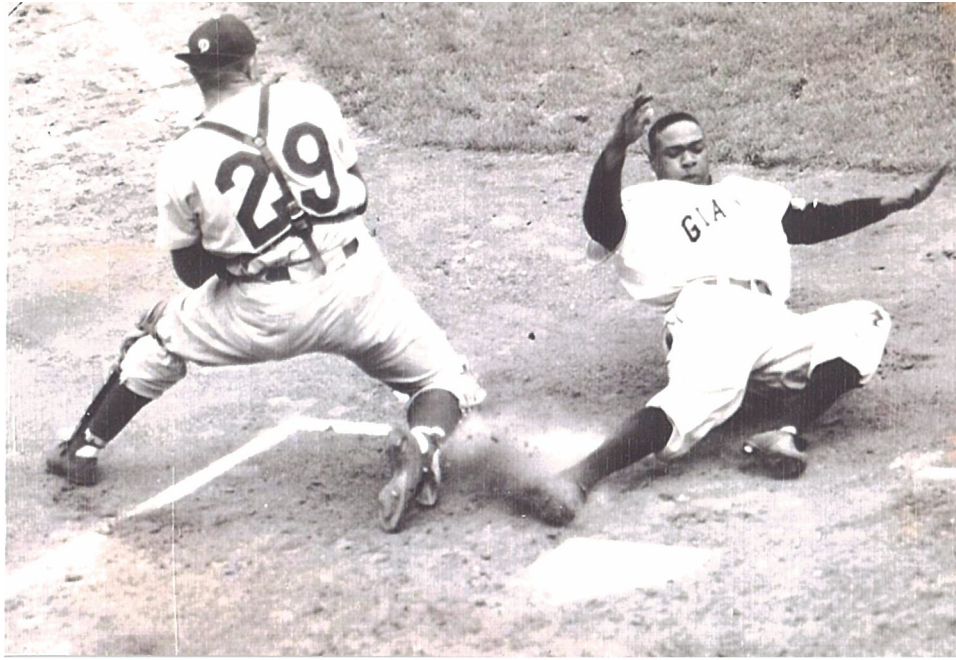
Career Statistics – Hitting (Career Totals)

	Games	AB	Runs	Hits	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG
Negro Leagues	172	641	156	222	30	15	18	94	27	.346	.515
Negro World Series	7	27	5	8	1	0	0	3	1	.296	.333
Negro Play-Offs	7	27	5	7	0	0	2	5	0	.259	-
Minor Leagues	160	505	103	140	21	3	23	69	20	.277	.467
Major Leagues	933	3003	492	801	104	34	129	482	33	.267	.453
Major League-World Series	9	25	8	6	1	0	0	2	0	.240	.280
Exhibition Games	-	59	10	28	3	0	10	17	1	.475	-
Cuba	214	789	148	252	31	24	12	127	37	.319	.503
Venezuela	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	.333	-
Total	1503	5079	927	1465	191	76	194	799	119	.288	-



Hank Thompson
and
Willie Mays

Game Action



Hank Scores Run Against the Philadelphia Phillies



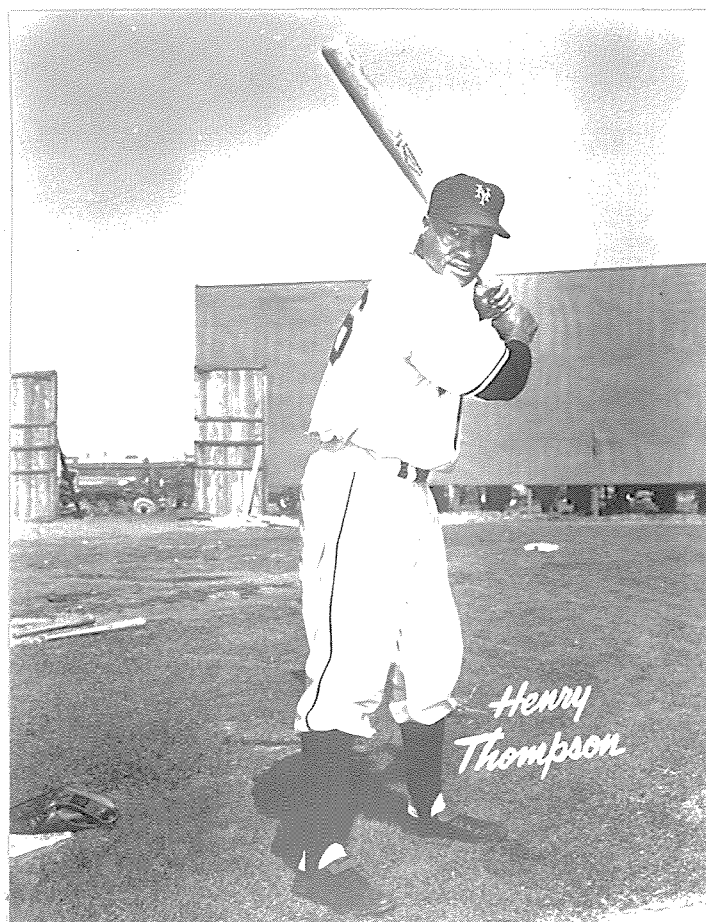
Hank Tags Out Johnny Klippstein of Chicago Cubs

Batting Leaders

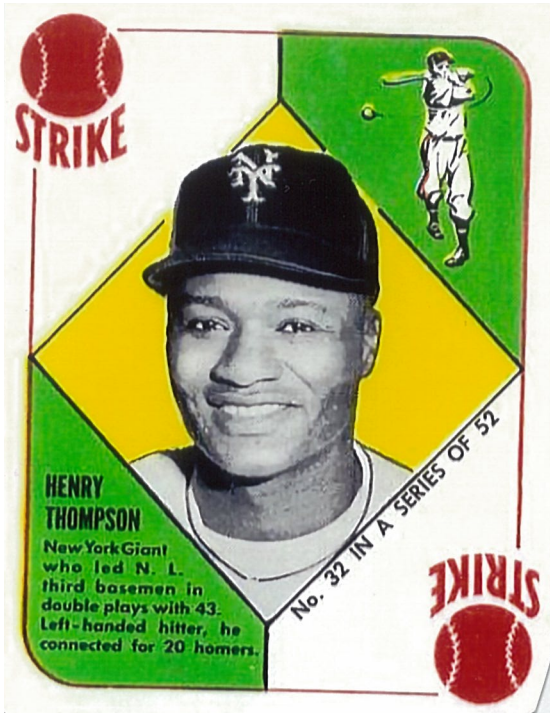
Year	Category	League	Number
1948	Slugging Percentage	Negro American League	.633
1948-49		Cuban Winter League	.513
1948-49	Runs	Cuban Winter League	60
1948-49	Hits	Cuban Winter League	85
1946-47	Triples	Cuban Winter League	6
1948-49		Cuban Winter League	8
1947-48	Runs Batted In	Cuban Winter League	51
1948	Stolen Bases	Negro American League	20

Defensive Leaders

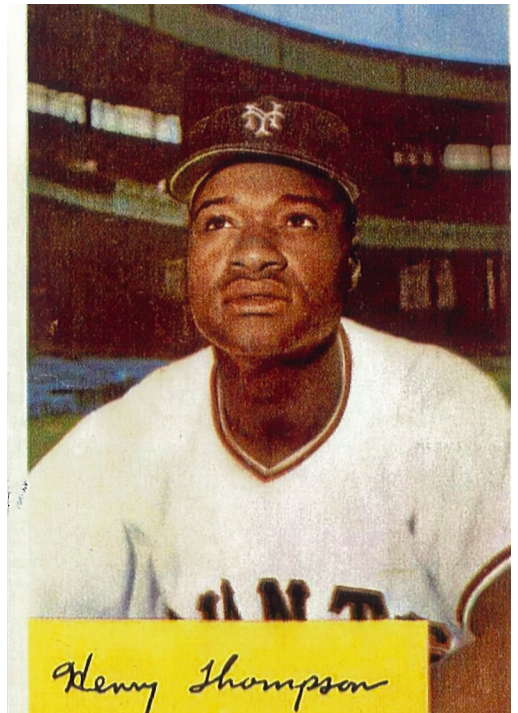
Year	Category	League	Number
1950	Double Plays (Third Base)	National League	43
1950	Errors (Third Base)	National League	26
	Errors (Third Base)	National League	22



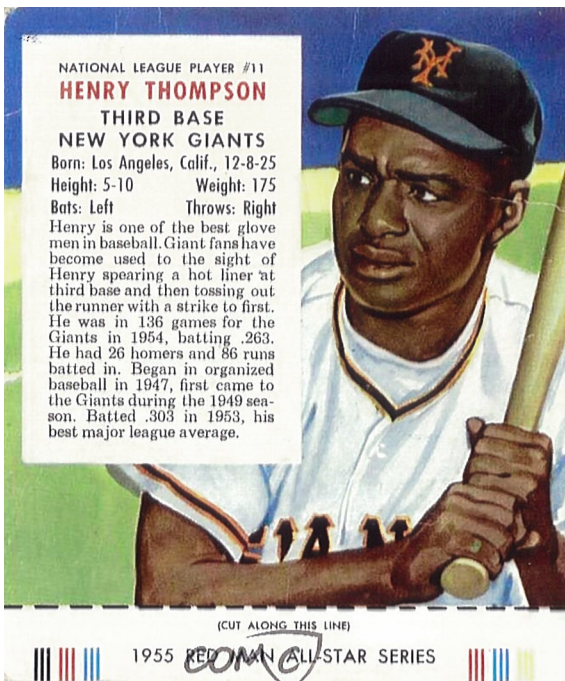
Hank Thompson Baseball Cards



Topps (1951)



Bowman (1954)



Red Man (1955)

Assessing Hank Thompson's Baseball Career

- Henry “Hank” Thompson was a **true pioneer in black baseball**. He was the third African American to play in the Major Leagues when he took the field for the St. Louis Browns in 1947. He broke into the Major Leagues two months and two days after Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers) and only twelve days after Larry Doby (Cleveland Indians). In addition, he was the first African American baseball player to:
 1. Integrate two different Major League teams. They were the St. Louis Browns (1947) and the New York Giants (1949).
 2. First African American ball player to play in both the American League and National League.
 3. In July of 1947 when the St. Louis Browns signed Hank and Willard “Homerun” Brown, they became the first black teammates to appear in the same starting line-up. On July 20th Hank started at second base and Willard started in the outfield.
 4. On July 17, 1947 when he took the field for the St. Louis Browns, he gained the distinction of being the youngest player to integrate a Major League baseball team. He was only 21 years old.
 5. On August 9th of 1947 Hank played second base for the St. Louis Browns in a game against the Cleveland Indians with Larry Doby in their line-up. This was the first time that two African American players appeared in a game on opposing teams.
 6. While playing for St. Louis in 1949, Hank Thompson became the first African American player to play in a Major League game at Yankee Stadium.
 7. During the 1949 season Hank Thompson became the first African American player to face a black pitcher in the Majors when he batted against Don Newcombe of the Brooklyn Dodgers.
 8. In 1951 when the New York Giants were playing in the World Series, Hank joined Monte Irvin and Willie Mays as becoming the first all-black outfield in Major League baseball history.

Even though Hank Thompson was not inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame like his fellow African American and Giants teammates Monte Irvin and Willie Mays, Hank should be remembered for proving that given the opportunity African Americans could play in the Major Leagues. His success with the New York Giants paved the way for many black ball players.

- Over his career Hank Thompson showed signs of being an **excellent hitter**. In the Negro Leagues he compiled a career batting average of .346 with a .515 slugging percentage. In games against all levels of competition, Hank Thompson compiled a career batting average of .288. Taking everything into consideration Hank Thompson was a solid hitter who had power.

His career batting average is significantly skewed by his poor hitting during the last three years (1955-1957) when his overall physical conditioning was extremely deteriorated by his years of alcoholism. If you factor out his last three seasons, Hank Thompson would have had a very respectable career batting average of .296.

- It is also important to take into consideration that Hank **lost two and a half years (1944-1946) of what could have been the most productive years of his Negro League career when he was serving in the military during World War II**. This coupled with the fact that when he returned to the United States in 1946 he immediately returned to the Kansas City Monarchs and was nowhere close to being in playing shape. Newspaper box scores

indicate that he played in at least 16 games for the Monarchs during the 1946 season. In his limited action in 1946 after returning from his military service, he hit a meager .274 which was 72 points under his career Negro League batting average.

- Hank Thompson was an **outstanding overall player**. He could hit for both average and power. He had good speed on the base paths and played adequate defense. In short he was truly a **complete ball player**.
- Thompson’s **Major League career is very under rated**. Hank had an excellent .825 career on base plus slugging (OPS) rating. The OPS helps better judge a player’s overall offensive performance. By comparison Hall of Famer George Kell had a .781 OPS career mark. In addition Hank Thompson has a higher adjusted OPS rating than ten of the third baseman elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

During his Major League career he came up to bat 3,529 times in 933 games. In these games he hit 129 home runs, drove in 482 runs and drew 493 walks. If you average this over a normalized season of 500 at bats, Hank Thompson would have put up the following offensive statistics per season: 22 homeruns, 82 RBIs and 84 base on balls.

- Thompson was a **very versatile player defensively**. The best example of this was seen during his three year career in Cuba. Each season Hank played a different position (1946-47 – shortstop, 1947-48 – third base and 1948-49 – outfield) and was selected to the “league’s” all star team each of these seasons

During his career he did show flashes of brilliance in the field especially at third base. In 1950 he broke Pie Traynor’s National League record with 43 double plays for a third baseman. Hank Thompson was considered the best third baseman in baseball during the 1950 season.

Defensively his top two strengths were his speed and strong throwing arm. It is extremely difficult to place a judgment on Hank Thompson’s defensive abilities. He had several strengths but also had several weaknesses. Leo Durocher rated him as the best third base in baseball while especially later in his career the media criticized him for his defensive play. Therefore it is important to look at some of his basic defensive statistics. The following chart identifies his rank in several defensive categories during some of his best seasons defensively in the National League:

Category	Position	Year	Number	Rank
Assists	Third Base	1950	303	2 nd
	Third Base	1954	267	3 rd
	Third Base	1955	262	2 nd
Defensive Games	Third Base	1950	138	2 nd
	Third Base	1954	130	3 rd
	Third Base	1955	124	5 th
Double Plays Turned	Third Base	1950	43	1 st
	Third Base	1954	27	2 nd
	Third Base	1955	23	3 rd
Fielding Percentage	Third Base	1954	.945	4 th
	Third Base	1955	.943	5 th
Putouts	Third Base	1950	136	4 th
	Third Base	1954	125	3 rd
	Third Base	1955	104	6 th

Range Factor (per 9 innings)	Third Base	1950	3.36	2 nd
	Third Base	1954	3.12	3 rd
	Third Base	1955	3.18	3 rd

Unfortunately he also led the National League in errors by a third baseman in 1950 (26) and in 1955 (22). Ironically he was considered the best third baseman in the National League during the 1950 season. Needless to say statistics can be very difficult to interpret and assign a value to their meaning.

- He played on several championship teams and was selected to numerous all star teams during his career. Some of these were as follows:

Championship Teams

Year	Team	League
1946	Kansas City Monarchs	Negro American League
1947-48	Habana Leones	Cuban Winter League
1951	New York Giants	National League
1954	New York Giants	National League
1954	New York Giants	World Series Champions

All Star Teams

Year	League	Position
1946-47	Cuban Winter League	Shortstop
1947-48	Cuban Winter League	Third Base
1948-49	Cuban Winter League	Outfield

- Thompson had a **significant drinking problem** his entire career. It undoubtedly affected his play on the field. A combination of his drinking, out of control life style and a string of minor injuries caused his physical skills to deteriorate quickly. During the last four years of his professional baseball career, his season's batting average went down each season. He went from a .302 batting average as a starter with the New York Giants to a .235 average as a part time player with the Minneapolis Saints.

In addition his alcoholism most likely impacted his overall physical condition. This in turn made him more prone to one nagging injury after another for the majority of his career.

A question that we will never know the answer to is what would his performance on the field have been if he had not had a problem with alcohol.

- He was **plagued with nagging injuries** throughout his career. He was out of the line-up on numerous occasions for injuries such as been beated in the head several times, elbow injuries and far too many times to count "reported" leg injuries. He was carted off the field on a stretcher on more than one occasion and several of these injuries landed him in the hospital. In addition he was even hospitalized at once for chest pains and another time for "questionable" physical conditioning. As he reached his late twenties his legs were gone and so was his baseball career.

When his legs gave out, he was through. According to Hank he could still hit but he couldn't run or move quick enough to field his position. In a 1969 newspaper interview he was quoted as follows: I could still hit but I was getting thrown out on a ball that should have been a double."

- Even with all of his personal problem and injuries, Hank Thompson had a **baseball career that any ball player would have been proud of**. The thing, however, **that distinguishes his career in “organized” baseball was not what he accomplished on the playing field but the potential that eluded him from doing so much more**. In Hank Thompson’s own words

“I became a baseball has-been at thirty-two.”

“It was awful. I couldn’t move around third base. Balls were going by me that I should have had. I was disgracing baseball and I still kept on boozing it up.”

(Henry “Hank” Thompson)

His alcoholism and life style off the field, which over the years had significantly reduced his reflexes and reaction times, in combination with his poor choices off the field without a doubt had a dramatic negative impact on what he could have accomplished in professional baseball.

During his days in New York City with the Giants, Hank was a star, got paid well by the Giants and enjoyed living the high life. He drove a brand new flashy Lincoln Capri and was known to have a closet full of expense suits. Hank took full advantage of the night life in Harlem and was known to always have a big wad of money in his pocket.

Hank Thompson was quoted in a newspaper article that appeared in the Jersey Journal on 6-19-69 that baseball had been “awfully nice” to him. Yes, he did make very good money playing in the Major Leagues. However, from a psychological perspective it enabled him to lead a life style that was counter-productive to his overall well-being. Then when he quit playing ball it was like a significant part of him died.

Unfortunately, after he retired from baseball he had no real transferable jobs skills to earn a living and was always hurting for money.



New York Giants (1954)
National League Champions
World Series Champions

(Willie Mays – middle row fourth from left, Monte Irvin – middle row seventh from left and Hank Thompson – front row second from right)

Selected Career Highlights

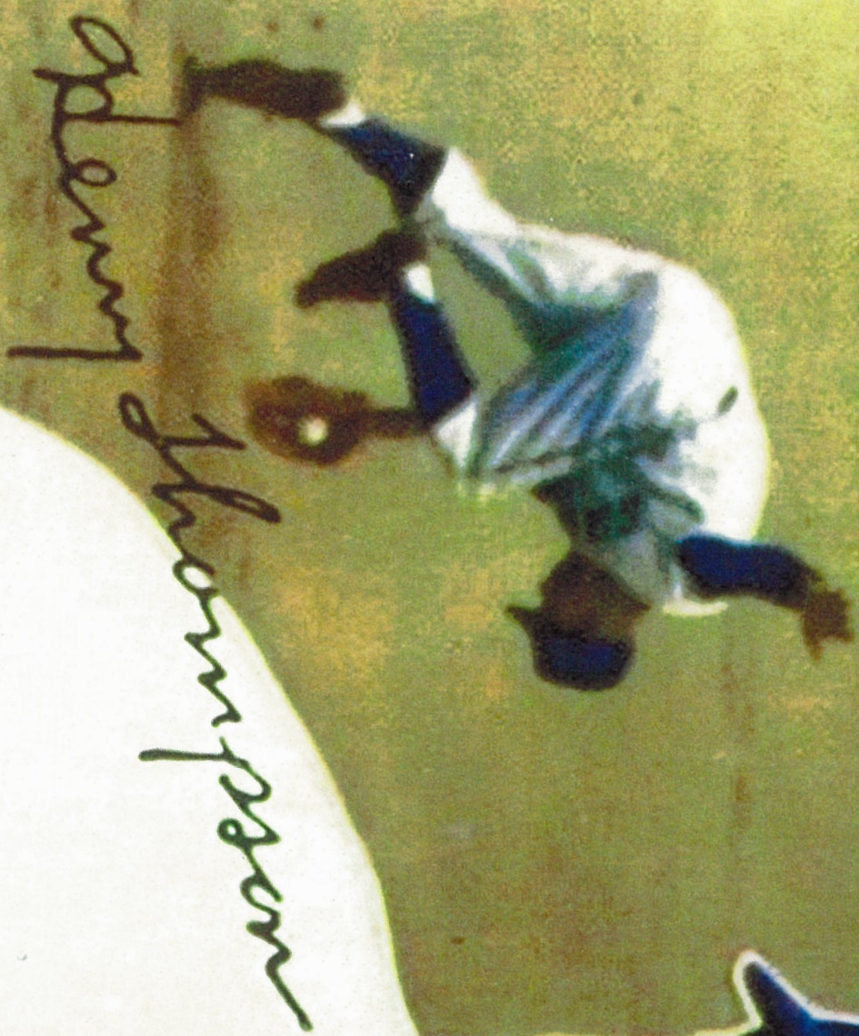
- During his Negro League career, Hank Thompson compiled an impressive career batting average of .346 and a slugging percentage of .515. In games against all levels of competition including his Major League career, Hank posted a career batting average of .288.
- Hank Thompson had his best season in the Negro Leagues in 1948 with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro American League. In 70 games Hank had 20 doubles, 8 triples, 11 homeruns, 58 runs batted in and a .375 batting average with a .513 slugging percentage. He also led the Negro American League in stolen bases with 20 steals.
- Henry Curtis Thompson has the distinction of being the only Negro League player to integrate two teams. In 1947 he was the first African American player to integrate the St. Louis Browns. Then in 1949 he and Monte Irvin integrated the New York Giants.
- Thompson played three seasons of winter baseball in Cuba (1946-47, 1947-48 and 1948-49). He had a career batting average in Cuba of .319 and a .503 career slugging percentage. He played a different position each season and was selected to the Cuban League All Star team each season.
- During the 1950 National League season, Thompson broke Pie Traynor's National League record with 43 double plays for a third baseman. Hank Thompson was considered the best third baseman in baseball during the 1950 season.
- Member of the 1951 and 1954 National League champion New York Giants.
- Hank Thompson had his best season in Major League baseball in 1953 for the New York Giants. He hit 24 homeruns, drove in 74 runs and batted .302 with a .567 slugging percentage.



- He had the best game of his Major League career on June 3rd of 1954 against the St. Louis Cardinals. Hank hit home runs in his first three at bats. The Cardinals intentionally walked him on his fourth plate appearance. He singled in his last at bat of the game and drove in his eighth (8) run of the game.
- Helped lead the New York Giants to the 1954 World Series championship. In 1954 he hit .364 with a .611 on base percentage against the Cleveland Indians of the American League in the 1954 World Series.
- Consistently toured with the top African all-star teams during post season play. Hank played with Roy Campanella's All Stars, Willie Mays All Stars, Luke Easter's All Stars and Major League All Stars

HANK THOMPSON

3rd base NEW YORK GIANTS



Hank Thompson