



The One Constant: Baseball in Cuban National Identity



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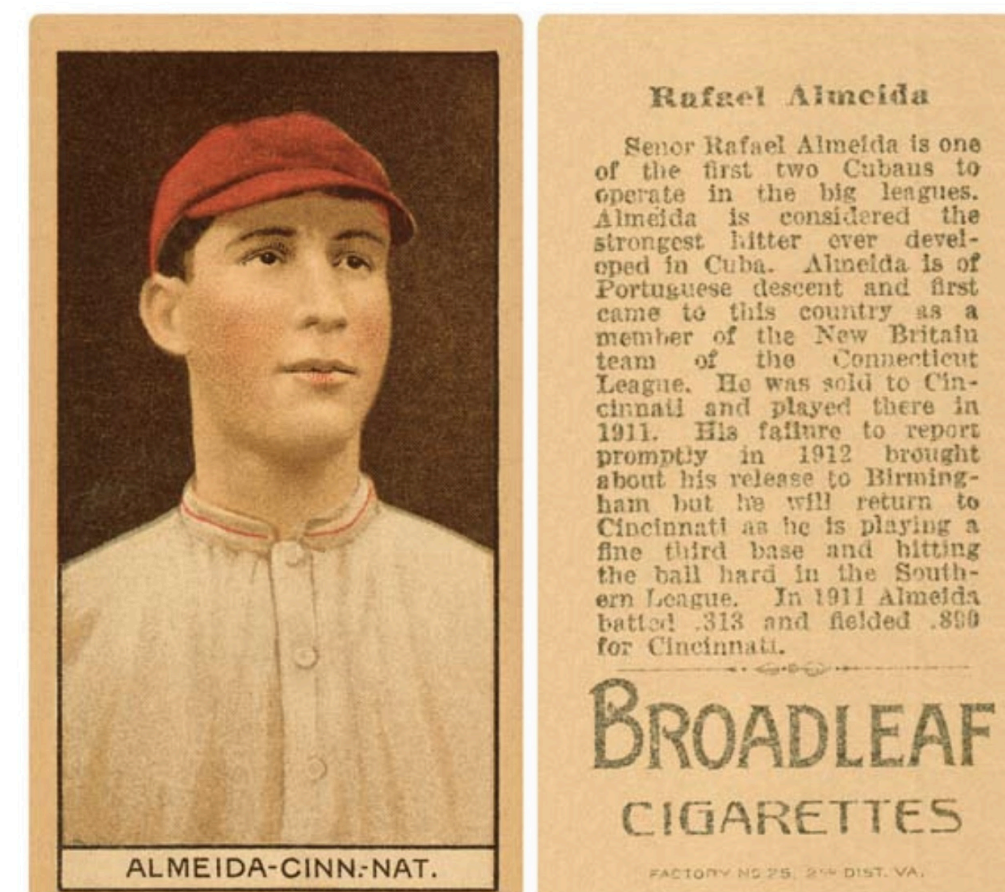
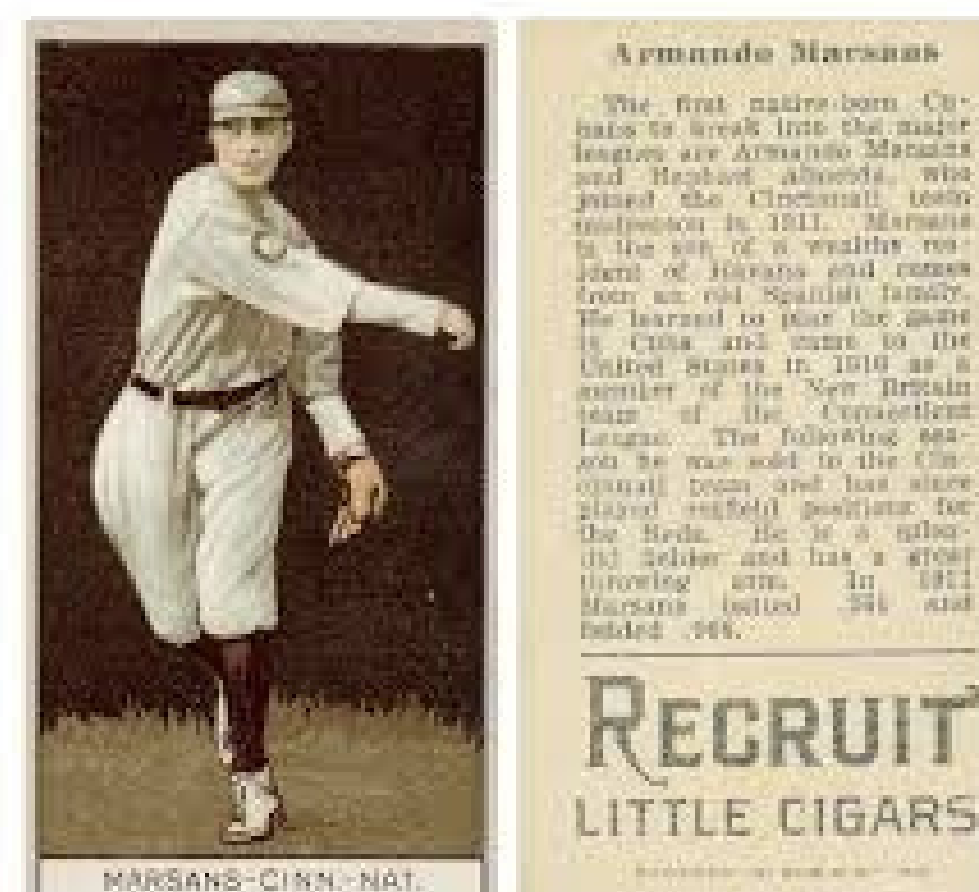
Introduction

Cuba's baseball prowess is well-known even to the most casual baseball fan, but its place in Cuban society has fluctuated with the islands' complex history. This I.S. seeks to answer what the game has represented in Cuba, and to examine the impact that sports can have on national identity. To answer these questions, this project will focus on the position that baseball held in Cuban society in three periods; while Cuba was under Spanish rule, while it was a US protectorate, and after the Cuban Revolution. It will also dive into where and how Cubans were playing baseball over that span.



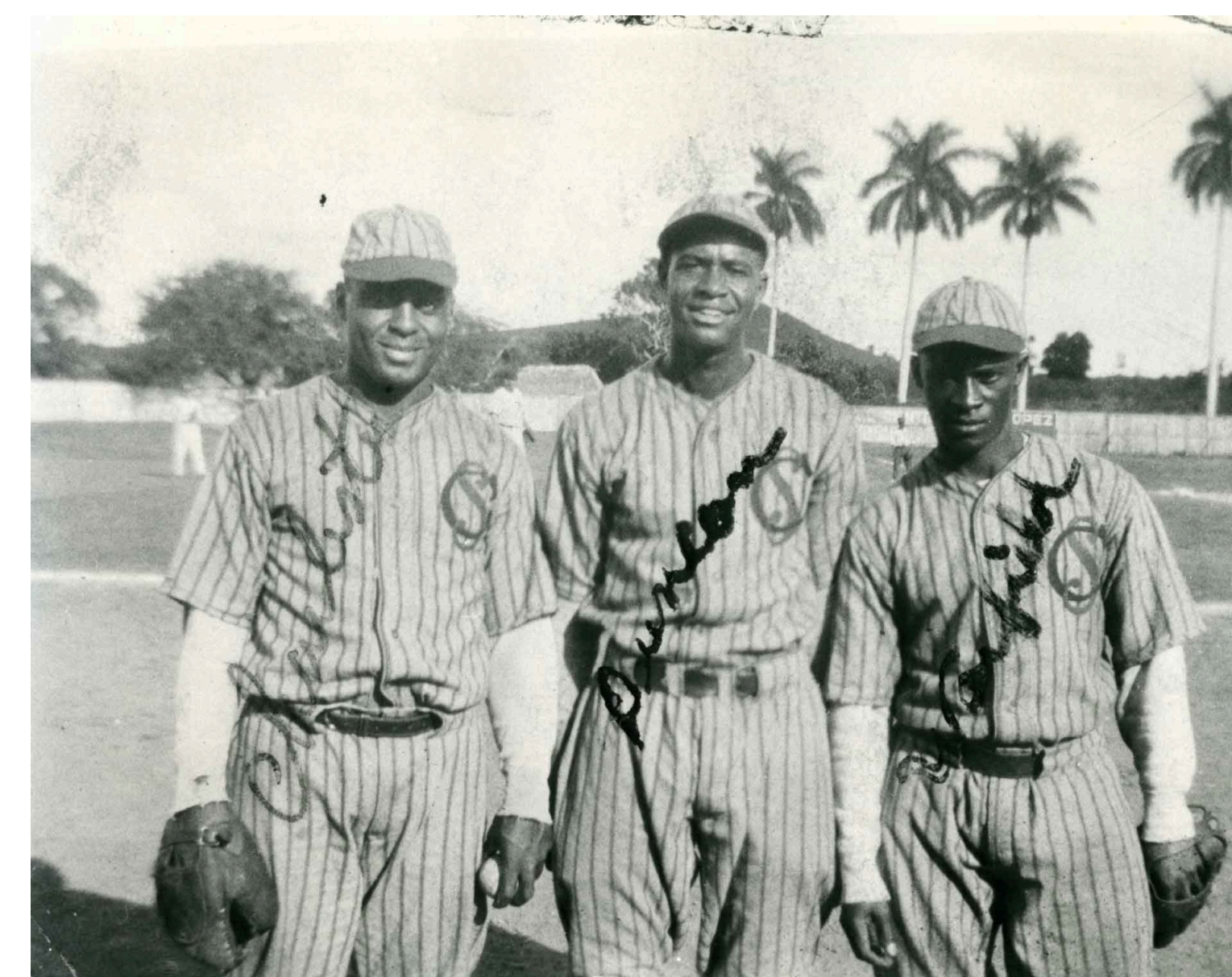
Primary Sources

- American newspaper Articles
- Interviews with players, agents, and sports writers
- Speeches from political leaders
- Cuban baseball publications
- Articles from *Granma*, a state-sponsored Cuban newspaper
- Trading Cards
- Photographs and paintings



A National Identity: 1860-1899

- Cuban college students returning from the U.S. bring baseball back with them
- Spanish colonial rule opposes baseball in favor of bullfighting, the Spanish national sport
- Baseball becomes a symbol of resistance against imperialism for Cuban people
- Cuban War for Independence (Spanish American War) ends with Cuban independence from Spain, Cuba as U.S. protectorate



Crossing Borders: 1899-1959

- Economic and social ties between Cuba and U.S. deepen
- Baseball becomes means of cultural exchange
- Cubans play in Negro Leagues, and eventually MLB, Americans play in Cuban Winter League
- Professional and amateur leagues in Cuba flourish
- Castro comes to power



Revolutionary Baseball 1959-2004

- Castro bans professional sports in Cuba
- U.S. places trade embargo on Cuba, movement between the countries halts
- Amateur leagues continue to have success
- Cuban National Team dominates international competition
- In 1991 the USSR, Cuba's main ally and trading partner, falls, decimating the Cuban economy
- Cuban players begin to defect to the U.S.
- Relations between Cuba and U.S. begin to relax, exhibitions between the two resume



2004-Present

- Improving relations between Cuba and U.S. halted by Trump presidency
- Player defections facilitated by organized crime syndicates
- Cuban national team no longer a dominant force

