



The Honorable Marlene Anielski
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High St., 12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairwoman Anielski and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

I am writing to express support for House Bill 59, legislation to designate October 7 as Moses Fleetwood Walker Day in honor of the Ohioan who was the first African-American major league baseball player under contract. The Ohio History Connection hopes that the Ohio General Assembly will look favorably upon this legislation, which can assist in reminding Ohioans of another one of our state's pioneers in his field of endeavor.

Walker was born in Mount Pleasant in Jefferson County where the Ohio History Connection maintains two of our historic sites, the Quaker Meeting House as well as the Benjamin Lundy/Free Labor Store. Lundy (1789-1839), an abolitionist publisher, is Mount Pleasant's most famous native. His home is a National Historic Landmark and it was in this community along the Underground Railroad where Walker was born in 1856 to an African-American physician father and white mother. The family moved to Steubenville during his childhood. After high school, Walker enrolled in Oberlin College where he became a standout baseball player.

In 1884, the Toledo Blue Stockings baseball team Walker played for joined the American Association, a league that rivaled the National League prior to the existence of what is now known as the American League. Walker played that one season with the Toledo team (it folded after the end of that year) before playing for minor league teams, including Cleveland, until 1889. Baseball Hall of Famer Cap Anson is well known for helping erect the color barrier in baseball in the 1880s that would last until 1947, largely as a result of Anson's racist opposition to playing on the same field with Walker.

Walker died more than 90 years ago in Cleveland. An Ohio History Connection marker about his life stands today in front of the Toledo Mud Hens stadium in downtown Toledo.

Thank you for your consideration of this important and historic issue. This is important to Ohio history and if the Ohio History Connection can be helpful during the legislative process, please be sure to let us know.

Sincerely,

Todd Kleismit
Director of Community & Government Relations