

Whirty: Who were the 'Secret 9' on Louis Armstrong's baseball team?

From SABR member Ryan Whirty at the New Orleans Times-Picayune on January 22, 2019:

It's perhaps one of the most intriguing photos of Louis Armstrong.

Taken in 1931, the image shows Satchmo smiling as he stands with 17 young men looking quite dapper in bright, white new baseball uniforms, the word "Armstrong" emblazoned across their plush cotton jerseys. Armstrong is pictured leaning on a baseball bat, while two bat boys sit on the ground in front, a pile of bats and a catcher's mask at their feet.

The picture is the only known photograph of the Armstrong Secret 9 semipro baseball team, a squad bankrolled by the cornet legend. The vintage photo has been published and republished in numerous New Orleans and national media outlets, accompanying stories and books about jazz lore, New Orleans history and the Negro Leagues, the segregation-era black baseball teams and circuits that existed before Jackie Robinson and others integrated America's pastime in the 1940s and '50s.

And for a month this past summer, visitors to the International House Hotel in New Orleans were greeted by a mural-sized reproduction of the image. Sean Cummings, CEO of Ekistics, Inc., a development firm that renovated and converted the building into a hotel, had the iconic photo blown up. With help from Inkwell Press in the Bywater and using meticulous research, the hotel also reproduced Secret 9 jerseys, including the fabrics used in 1931 to create the originals.

It was part of a renewed effort, involving Cummings and others, to bring more public attention to the image in hopes of solving a long-standing mystery: Who, exactly, are the gentlemen pictured in the famous photo?

Read the full article here: https://www.nola.com/expo/news/g66l-2019/01/27ffcb8ae35611/who-are-the-secret-9-famously-photographed-withlouis-armstrong-new-effort-aims-to-find-out.html



The Mystery of the Secret 9

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