



## Salina's Rich Baseball History

Many baseball notables spent time with the Salina Blue Jays:



**"Satchel" Paige** – Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige pitched one summer in Salina, bringing a hall-of-fame arm to the middle of Kansas. In his time with the Blue Jays, Satchel never allowed a run. The Salina community also began to grow on him – he sponsored a baseball clinic for local children, opted to stay with the Blue Jays after turning down an offer to join a team in Vancouver, and said he wanted to make Salina "his permanent home," though he stayed for only that summer.

He was a Negro Leagues and Major League Baseball pitcher, known for his longevity in the game. While his outstanding pitching control first got him noticed, it was his infectious, cocky, enthusiastic personality that made him a star. In fact, Satchel would sometimes instruct his teammates to "take a seat" in the infield behind him, so that they too could watch as he struck out the side. Satchel joined the Cleveland Indians in 1948 at age 42, becoming the oldest major league rookie ever. He played in the major leagues until age 47, and made the All-Star teams in 1952 and '53. He played his last professional game in June 1966 – just one month short of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Satchel was the first player from the Negro Leagues to ever pitch in a World Series. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971.

**Chester Stranczek** – After being scouted by National Baseball Hall of Famers Ray Schalk and Rogers Hornsby, pitcher Chester Stranczek signed a one-year deal with the Salina Blue Jays, who were the Philadelphia Phillies' minor league affiliate, at the time. While playing for the Blue Jays, Stranczek developed a rivalry with Mickey Mantle, who was playing shortstop for teams in Independence and Joplin, Missouri, at the time.

"Mantle got four singles from me, but not one of them left the infield," Stranczek reflected.

Soon after, Stranczek was drafted to the Army. After serving, he returned to minor league baseball for a few years before retiring in 1955.

**Vern Frantz** – Pitcher Vern Frantz joined the Salina Blue Jays after spending five seasons (1946-50) with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was elected to the Kansas Baseball Hall of Fame in 1988.

**Don Spohn** – Pitcher Don Spohn joined the Salina Blue Jays after spending four seasons (1956-59) with the Kansas City A's minor league system.



**Bert Convy** – Prior to becoming a famous game show host, Bert Convy played two seasons with the Salina Blue Jays (1951-52) when he was just 17 years old. He walked away from the game thereafter to pursue a career in entertainment – to which he never looked back. Most notably, Convy was the host of Tattletales; Super Password; and Win, Lose or Draw.

Others include Bubba Church, Jim Command, Vance Dinges, "Jumpin' Joe" Dugan, Joe Gantenbein, Danny Schell, Gene Snyder, Paul Stuffer, and Lee Tate.

Source: Blog – Jeff Zimmerman: "[1960 Salina Blue Jays: The Year Satchel Paige Came to Town](#)"