

How you can be part of this effort

As part of the recognition of Charles Follis and after consultation with members of the extended Follis Family, we wish to:

- **Develop a two-sided Memorial Stone**, one side for the Follis Family and the other side for Charles Follis and his ground breaking career.
- **Create 9 weatherproof plaques for a Charles Follis Trail** which will follow Charles from early his Wooster days to High School to the College of Wooster to the Shelby Blues as the first African-American professional football player.
- **Establish a Charles Follis Scholarship** to be given to selected Wayne County African-American students who have a background in sports. (This scholarship will be administered by the local Wooster/Orrville NAACP Unit 3208 and combined with their current annual scholarship program.)

Budget

The total budget of \$25,000 includes:

- Memorial Stone \$9,500
- Charles Follis Trail \$5,500
- Charles Follis Scholarship..... \$10,000

Any funds that exceed the budget will go toward the Charles Follis Scholarship Fund, to be administered by the Wooster/Orrville NAACP Unit 3208.

Charles Follis Committee Members



Mike Franks, Lawrence Walker, Jim Stoner, Dave Broehl, Lydia Thompson (Honorary Chair), and Cheryl A. Goff

Please Contribute

If you wish to give to the Charles Follis Fund...

Please mail your check to:

The Charles Follis Fund
c/o Wayne County Community Foundation
517 N. Market Street
Wooster Ohio 44691

All contributions are tax deductible.

OR Contribute online:

Contributions may be made online using a credit card.
www.waynecountycommunityfoundation.org/funds
Scroll down to Charles Follis Fund and click Donate.



Thank you!

This brochure and all other materials has been paid for by private donations. 1/2020



Acknowledging a Legend

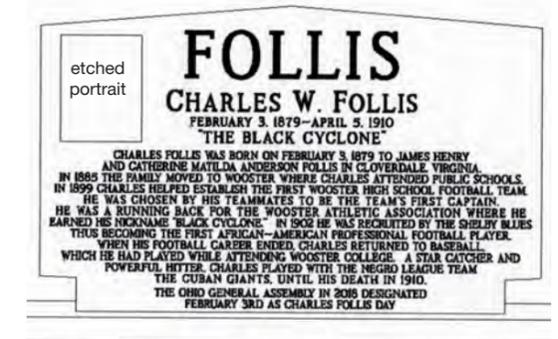
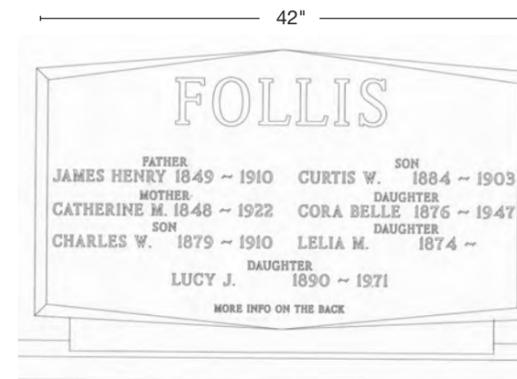
Charles Follis was the first African American professional football player in the United States. He grew up in Wooster, Ohio in the late 1800s and played for the Shelby Blues, a pre-NFL football team, signing a contract in 1904. His legacy, unknown for many years, was recently celebrated through the dedication of Follis Field, in Wooster. Also, February 3 has been officially proclaimed as Charles Follis Day by the State of Ohio.

Commemorating Monumental Achievement

A simple, weathered stone, obviously handmade by a talented friend or family member, is all that marks the final resting place of Wooster's Follis family, and that of Charles Follis, the first professional African-American football player. The Charles Follis Committee is seeking to properly preserve this stone, and replace it with a modern, enduring memorial to the Follis family, and a monument, celebrating Charles Follis' historic achievement.



Existing stone marker at Wooster Cemetery



Proposal for the New Monument

A granite, double-sided memorial stone, measuring 42 x 36 inches to commemorate the Follis family members on one side and feature a condensed narrative of Charles' life and achievements on the opposite side.

Follis Timeline

1879

Born in Virginia to former slaves J. Henry and Cathryn Follis, Charles moves to Wooster, Ohio in 1890.

1898

Started and captained the Wooster H.S. Football team, leading them to two undefeated seasons

1900

Integrated the Wooster University baseball team while attending College and played football for the Wooster Athletic Association of the Ohio Football League

1902

Signed to play professional football for Frank Schiffer in Shelby, Ohio

1906

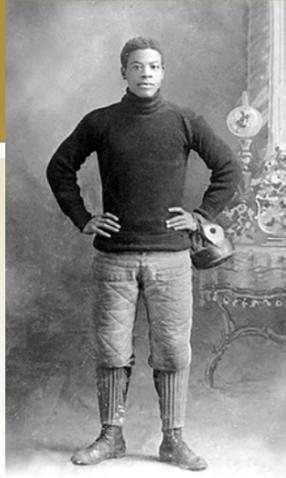
Retired from football to pursue a baseball career with The New Jersey Cuban Giants

1910

Charles passed away from pneumonia and is interred in a family grave site in Wooster Cemetery

1947

Branch Rickey, a teammate and assistant coach, remembered Charles as an exemplar in character and athletic ability when he signed Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers



Charles W. Follis

The First African American Professional Football Player

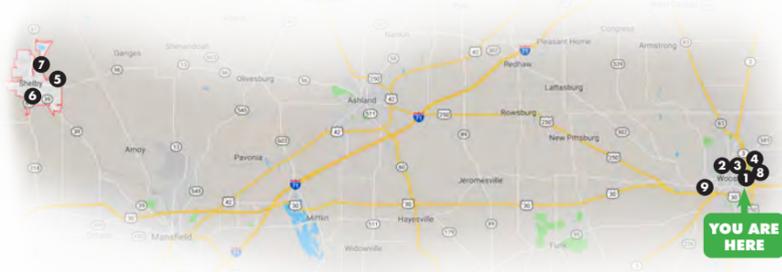
Charles Follis was born in 1879 to Cathryn and J. Henry Follis in Cloverdale, Virginia. In 1890 they moved to Wooster, Ohio. Charles excelled in baseball and Track and Field and in 1898 became the captain of the first Wooster High School (WHS) football team. Undefeated, he earned his nickname "The Black Cyclone." He went on to play baseball for Wooster University and football for the Wooster Athletic Club. Charles soon faced the tough Shelby Athletic Club (later, the Blues) and owner Frank Schiffer.

Schiffer said "I never want to play against him again," offering Charles a job and a place to live in Shelby, Ohio. Eventually, Charles was paid \$10.00 per game as the star player of the Shelby Blues until 1906, when he retired from football due to injuries. While in Shelby, Charles' ability and character impressed his teammate Branch Rickey.

Charles Follis finished his pro sports career as a standout catcher and slugger for The Cuban Giants Negro League in New Jersey, and sadly passed in 1910 after contracting pneumonia at the age of 30. He is buried in the Wooster Cemetery with his family. His old teammate, Branch Rickey, never forgot Charles and in 1947 as Major League baseball (MLB) was waning, Rickey (considering Charles an exemplar) signed Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers. This signing broke the race barrier, bringing an end to segregation in professional sports.

Charles' story was featured in a play entitled "The Black Cyclone", written and produced by Jim and Amy K. Stoner. For more information and a full map of sites, visit:

www.blackcyclone.org



THE BLACK CYCLONE Trail

9 Stops on the Amazing Journey of Charles Follis

- 1 The neighborhood where Charles grew up, Spink Street, Wooster, Ohio
- 2 Original Wooster High School Football Field, now Cornerstone Elementary
- 3 Follis Field, Wooster High School
- 4 Original Wooster University Football Field, now College of Wooster
- 5 Shelby-Oakland Cemetery, Frank and Julia Schiffer headstone
- 6 Weber's Bar, Shelby, Ohio, initially supported segregation, then rejected racism, and welcomed Charles
- 7 Original Shelby Blues Football Field
- 8 Wayne County Sports Hall of Fame at the Wayne County Historical Society. Charles was inducted in the Inaugural Class of 1976
- 9 Charles Follis Family memorial stone, Wooster Cemetery

Run, Charles. Run for the AGES!

The Black Cyclone Trail Project

Bringing Charles Follis to life, for future generations of sports and history fans, by creating the "Charles Follis Trail" is a priority of the committee. The trail will highlight important locations and milestones of Charles Follis' fast and furious decade, from his time as a standout football player at Wooster High School, through his playing professional football for the Shelby Blues in Shelby, Ohio. Stops in Wooster will include his boyhood home; the location of the Wooster High School football field (where Charles Follis earned the name, the "Black Cyclone"), now known as Cornerstone Elementary School; Follis Field, named in honor of Charles Follis, and used by the current Wooster High School football team; & the College of Wooster, where Charles Follis was a standout baseball player. Then, moving to Shelby, stops include Seltzer Hardware, where Charles Follis worked, while playing for the Shelby Blues; Weber's Bar, which initially supported segregation, then rejected racism, and welcomed Charles; and the site of Shelby Blues football field. Then back to Wooster to the Wayne County Sports Hall of Fame at the Wayne County Historical Society where Charles was inducted in the Inaugural Class of 1976; and finally the Follis Family grave site and the Charles Follis Memorial Stone.

← At each stop, an informative sign will be erected to provide details of the event(s) that happened at that location.

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world". – Harriet Tubman

Charles Follis Scholarship

How can Charles Follis continue to impact future generations?

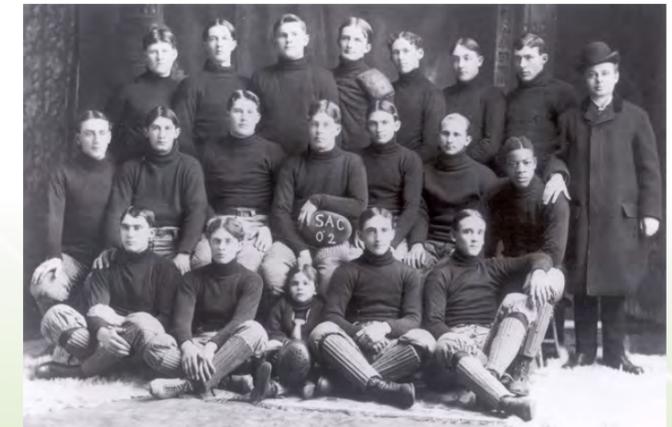
The Charles Follis Committee believes it is through a scholarship, in his name. Annually, a deserving African-American student from Wayne County, will receive a one-time gift, to assist them toward the cost of their higher education.

Why a scholarship?

Scholarships support the opportunity for deserving youth to earn an education. Receiving this scholarship provides the springboard for a student to succeed and grow, permits them to achieve their potential, and become a valuable and contributing member of society.



Wooster High School football team



The Shelby Athletic Club became the Shelby Blues