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BENSON COUNTY FARMERS PRESS

Continuing the Devils Lake World, the Maddock Standard, Benson County Courier, the Esmond Bee and Dakota Siftings
 Volume 123, Number 1 Wednesday, February 8, 2006 Minnewaukan, ND 58351-0098

Seek information on black ball player at Brinsmade in 1915

There was a time when just about everyone in North Dakota knew the name and fame of pitcher John Wesley Donaldson. He was a baseball legend; And in 1915, this famous black barnstorming hurler came to Brinsmade.

This month he is being considered for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. The final vote will be announced on February 27 by the Baseball Hall of Fame.

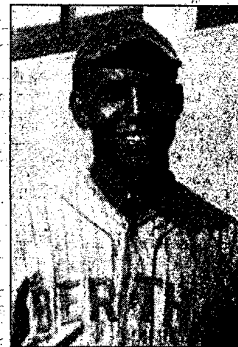
The story of Donaldson, who proved himself to be the "World's Greatest Negro Pitcher" in a time when baseball was divided by the color line, is a timely topic for consideration as the final list of 2006 Baseball Hall of Fame inductees is being compiled -- to be announced, incidentally, during Black History Month.

Donaldson's story was hidden away in hundreds of local newspaper stories that preserved some of the magical moments and the overwhelming numbers of strikeouts accumulated by this left-handed wonder.

The pitcher's prime years were 1911 to 1919, when he was the star hurler of J.L. Wilkinson's All Nations team. The All Nations featured a mix of players of many ethnic backgrounds, and the ball club first brought interracial baseball to hundreds of American cities. He was the best-known barnstorming pitcher in the decade before Satchel Paige, and Paige pitched on many diamonds where Donaldson had dominated earlier, including at Brinsmade.

On June 20, 1915 Donaldson and the All Nations arrived in Brinsmade. The locals were ready for the cosmopolitan travelers with the colossal reputation. The game was called after 12 innings without a run scored by either team. The legend of John Donaldson had spread to another North Dakota city, a legend that was relatively unknown until recent years.

Peter W. Gorton of Minneapolis, Minn. received a call five years ago from Steve Hoffbeck, his former high school history teacher, asking if he would like to join a team of writers to contribute to Hoffbeck's latest book, "Swinging for the Fences: Black Baseball in Minnesota" (MHS PRESS, 2005). The book chronicles the accomplishments of black baseball players in the state. Hoffbeck wondered if Gorton would take on the challenge of researching the career of an elusive old-time pitcher -- John Donaldson: Gorton



John Donaldson

took on the assignment and searched thousands of reels of microfilm in archives in seven states and found the box scores of this long-ignored, but stellar, baseball player.

Last July the Hall of Fame asked for recommendations of Hall-Of-Fame-worthy ballplayers for a special Negro Leagues and Pre-Negro Leagues election.

Already armed with the wealth of research, Gorton formed the Donaldson Network, a group with one goal, to uncover as much of Donaldson's hard-to-track career as possible before the final Hall of Fame vote. Today the volunteer network consists of over 150 researchers, historians and authors. To date they have documented over 250 victories and over 4,000 strikeouts for Donaldson -- ranking him among the game's all-time best.

Anyone with information about Donaldson's appearance at Brinsmade can contact Gorton at 1227 Washington St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413 or call him at 612-325-7815 or send e-mails to pwgortonmb@hotmail.com. More information is available at <http://johndonaldson.bravehost.com>, <http://archive.columbiatribune.com/2005/jun/20050611sp003.asp> and <http://archive.columbiatribune.com/2005/jun/20050612spor006.asp>.