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# Famed pitcher John Wesley Donaldson may be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame

## New Book chronicles Black Baseball in Minnesota

There was a time when just about everyone in Minnesota knew the name and fame of pitcher John Wesley Donaldson. He was a baseball legend. And in 1926, this famous black barnstorming hurler came to Ivanhoe. This month, he is being considered for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown, New York.

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 as we await the final list of 2006 Baseball Hall of Fame inductees - to be announced, incidentally, during Black History Month.

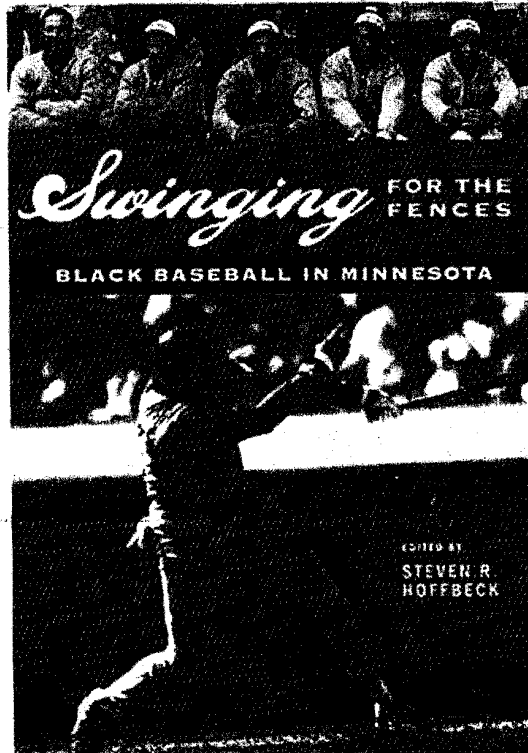
Donaldson's story was hidden away in hundreds of local newspaper stories that preserved some of the magical moments and the overwhelming numbers of strikeouts accumulated by this left-handed wonder.

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.

On August 22, 1926 while playing with the Lismore ball club, Donaldson arrived in Ivanhoe. Due to recent mound work Donaldson took his place in centerfield. That day the locals held Lismore scoreless for the 3 to 0 shutout.

The legend of John Wesley Donaldson had spread to another Minnesota city, a legend that was relatively unknown until recent years.

Mr. Pete Gorton 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 his latest book, "Swinging for the Fences: Black Baseball in Minnesota"



### Swinging For The Fences . . .

"Swinging For The Fences" is a new book recently published by MHS Press and edited by Steven R. Hoffbeck. The book chronicles the accomplishments of black baseball players in the State of Minnesota. Shown in the photograph above is a picture of the front cover of the book that was published in 2005. The book includes the story of John Wesley Donaldson who was a baseball legend. In 1926, Donaldson, a famous barnstorming hurler came to Ivanhoe where he pitched in an exhibition game for the J.L. Wilkerson All Nations Team. (Submitted Photo)

(MHS PRESS, 2005). The book chronicles the accomplishments of black baseball players in the state. Hoffbeck wondered if Pete Gorton would take on the challenge of researching the career of an elusive old-time pitcher—John Wesley Donaldson.

Gorton took on the assignment and searched thousands of reels of microfilm in archives in seven states and found the box scores of his long-ignored, but stellar, baseball exploits. 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, Pete Gorton formed

the Donaldson Network, a dedicated 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.

From the Online Wikipedia Encyclopedia it reports that John Wesley Donaldson was born February 20, 1892 and died April 12, 1970. He was an American Negro League baseball player.

He was born in Glasgow, Missouri, and began playing professional baseball around 1912, a time in American history when racial segregation prevented any chance for him to try out for a team in Major League Baseball. As such, he spent his entire career playing for Negro League teams in Tennessee, New York the U.S. Midwest, and in Saskatchewan, Canada. He became one of the best left-handed pitchers in Negro League baseball but was also a capable center fielder, a good hitter, and a solid baserunner.

Towns of only a few hundred in Minnesota would pack in crowds of 10,000 fans or more to see Donaldson pitch.

It would be a great tribute for the sport of baseball if he were inducted into the Hall of Fame. But even better, we can honor him during Black History month and all year we can respect and appreciate everything he brought to the wonderful game of baseball.



### *Uncovering a baseball legend . .*

Pete Gorton of Minneapolis, one of the researchers for t "Swinging For The Fences" uncovered the story of John Donaldson, a famous baseball legend who is being consic induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. pictured above with a poster of Donaldson, who proved hims the "World's Greatest Negro Baseball Pitcher" in a time when was divided by the color line. A famous barnstorming hurler, D came to Ivanhoe during the summer of 1926 where he pitch exhibition game for the J.L. Wilkerson All Nations Team. Donak the best-known barnstorming pitcher in the decade before Paige, and Paige pitched on many diamonds where Donald dominated earlier. The month of February is Black Histor