

The Donaldson Network

Happy Holidays to all who have contributed to the rediscovery efforts in 2009. We have added wins to the victory total of the *Most Prolific Black Pitcher of All Time*. Increasing the number of wins is important, but maybe more important are the pieces of the puzzle and stories of discovery that have accompanied them. John Donaldson's career is becoming better known on a daily basis.

We want to thank everyone for their outstanding efforts and welcome the new faces who have taken up the charge. We've added to our ranks and we are determined to return John Donaldson to his rightful place in history.

Some highlights from recent months that will be featured in this issue are: Scouts Speak, Burr Oak Cemetery Update, Research Finds and the "Mystery of the Hat" is potentially solved. Please feel free to comment on what you liked or disliked about this most recent newsletter. We are constantly looking to improve the experience of our members and ways to help revolutionize the difficult work that continues to lie before us.



Donaldson Teammates List Organized!

We made a major upgrade to our web page recently that should provide a huge lift to our effort. A list was compiled from the hundreds of box scores and game accounts that we've accumulated over the years of players' names.

Click here to see it: [Teammates and Opponents List](#)

The list shows only a fraction of the known thousands of people who played with and against John Donaldson. The list has already brought descendants of former ballplayers to our network seeking more information on their ancestors.

Communication is the key component to the Donaldson Network.

Contact us [here](#) if you have questions about anyone on the Teammates List.

Network Validation:

Note: Originally this was to appear in the “Research Finds” section. The story kept growing, and growing and it continued to beg for its own section, so here it is! ...Enjoy!

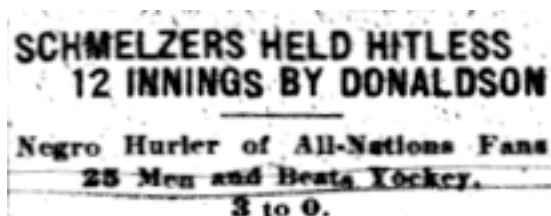
NEW DONALDSON NO-HITTERS - PATRICK ([email](#))

The Donaldson Network has created a unique organization of researchers. With resources across the country, and cyberspace, many eyes can help produce results that experts continue to tell us can't be done.

Here is a great example: It is commonly reported that the most significant achievement of John Donaldson's pitching career was his feat of throwing 3 consecutive no-hitters in 1915. Many papers reported this and throughout the near-century that has passed since, many publications have made similar assertions.

We have a twist to the “3 Consecutive games” to report...well almost.

The Donaldson Network in the months since the last newsletter has accepted many contributions of information piecing the Donaldson puzzle back together. We received an email from Patrick alerting us to a “blurb” from the July 4, 1923, Kansas City Kansan newspaper. It related the story of a Donaldson no-hitter. Patrick suggested we attempt to verify the Kansas claim and we quickly found the local newspaper and it affirmed indeed that John Donaldson threw a no-hitter in Ironton, Minnesota on June 28, 1923 against Crosby, Minnesota. This potential 9th no-hitter was quickly added to the total victories currently kept by the Donaldson Network. A truly historic find, using modern methods to achieve a singular goal. A researcher in Kansas alerts a researcher in Minnesota about a blurb in an obscure paper, which results in documentation of another historic feat by a legendary pitcher... Remarkable!



SCHMELZERS HELD HITLESS
12 INNINGS BY DONALDSON
Negro Hurler of All-Nations Fans
25 Men and Beats Yockey.
3 to 0.



DONALDSON PITCHES
NO-HIT, NO-RUN GAME
AND BEATS CROSBY
Perham, Minn., June 30.—(Special to The Herald)—The All Nations

ALL-NATIONS BEAT JOHNSONS.**Visitors Win Fast Game from Biscuit Men by 3 to 1 Score.**

In a spectacular battle staged at Mizou park yesterday afternoon the All-Nation baseball club won over the Johnson Biscuit company's independent organization by the score of 3 to 1. The game was decided in the ninth frame, when Dunbar, the Indian playing with the visitors, rapped out a two-bagger that scored the two runners on the sacks. The game was closely played throughout.

The feature of the struggle was the flinging of Donaldson, the Cuban pitcher with the traveling club. Donaldson was in superb form, pitching a no-hit game and whiffing twenty of the Johnson players during the battle. Carrie, the girl who plays the first station for the vis-

A few days later, as a part of our systematic checking of newspapers, perusing an Interlibrary Loan of the Sioux City (IA) Journal another no-hitter pitched by Donaldson was discovered.

Immediately we thought how ironic, or more like, creepy, would it be if the Donaldson Network, in 2009, would be able to rediscover 3 no-hitters thrown by John Donaldson consecutively.

Meanwhile, as all of these events are taking place a search of Donaldson's hometown newspaper the Glasgow (MO) Missourian revealed this game. (Apologies for the quality of this scan... Microfilm from this era is often difficult to read when printed.)

The box score shows no-hits made by the Fayette, Missouri club and for Glasgow the Donaldson name can be made out.

The Donaldson Network's third consecutive no-hitter! An ironic feat that once again proves that our dogged pursuit of all things Donaldson can bring pretty astonishing results...**but wait!**

This box score shows a game played on Sunday May 7, 1922. We know that John Donaldson was playing with the Kansas City Monarchs of the organized Negro League that season. More investigation was needed and a quick look at the Donaldson Network files proved this case. In fact, John Donaldson was indeed with the Monarchs who were playing the Chicago American Giants in Kansas City, and this no-hitter was thrown in Glasgow, by Donaldson's brother James Donaldson, who was beginning quite a career of his own.

As a result... the streak of consecutive no-hitters continues at two. We are actively seeking the third. Oh, so close!

— got hit on 1 second base.

Fayette	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Gaines, cf	4	0	0	0	0	1
Broader, 2b	4	0	0	1	4	1
Gates, c	4	0	0	1	0	0
Tindall, 1b	4	0	0	11	0	0
Vivian, 2b	4	0	0	0	0	0
Leonard, lf	4	0	0	0	0	0
H. Barnett, cf	4	1	0	0	0	0
H. Barnett, ss	4	0	0	2	1	0
Wright, p	4	0	0	0	2	0
Total	36	1	0	14	12	2

Glasgow	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Snoddy, lf	4	1	1	0	0	0
L. Woods, cf	4	1	1	1	0	0
Morrison, rf	4	0	0	0	0	1
Donaldson, p	4	1	1	2	2	0
Cason, c	4	0	0	0	1	0
D. Woods, 2b	4	1	2	0	1	1
Jones, 3b	3	1	1	0	1	0
Scott, 2b	3	0	0	2	3	0
Collins, 1b	3	1	1	7	0	0
Total	33	6	6	12	6	2

Summary—Two base hits—D. Woods, M. Jones, R. Collins. Stolen bases—Glasgow 2, Fayette 2. Struck out—By Donaldson 12, by Wright 9.

A Glimpse of Greatness:



In 2006, when the Donaldson Network was made aware of the existence of film footage of John Donaldson pitching we knew it was something special. The Oxley film was captured in August of 1926 by photographer W.T. Oxley in Fergus Falls, Minnesota on his hand-cranked Kodak movie camera.

You can view the entire Donaldson section of the Oxley film here: [Donaldson Network Video Page](#)

Reporters who saw Donaldson pitch commented on his delivery with quotes like these:

“It is said that no man ever hit his delivery when he wanted to get a strike-out. Tall, long-armed, his overhand delivery was whipped to the plate with dazzling speed – and it was a pace he could maintain seemingly forever.”

“...his delivery is nearly as swift as lightning. Several times the batter was just preparing to swing the bat when the ball would already be tucked away in the catcher’s mitt.

“There are batsmen who swear that Ol’ John never throws the ball at all; that the catcher thumps his mitt on Donaldson’s motion.”

Often in the study of black and Negro League baseball we hear stories of greatness. How one player was great, or “you should have seen so-and-so, he was GREAT!” When the Donaldson footage emerged we had the opportunity to prove what made John Donaldson great. So we posed a series of questions to both former and current Major League baseball scouts who returned some astounding commentary. We continue to seek qualified opinions and comparisons to other players attempting to classify Donaldson’s abilities. The following is the result of our query:

Bill Clark - Former Major League Scout

Here's what I saw: He set up good. Had a short step backward, was straight up, with short, two-handed windup and good hip rotation, through not pronounced. He was stockier looking in the video than photos and drawings showed.

He showed very powerful legs and his rotation was less pronounced because of what seemed to be excellent hip and abdominal strength.

From this setup, he became a drop and drive pitcher with a long, quick arm action. He had good extension behind, was not a short-armed, thus reducing stress on the arm.

He had a fairly long stride toward the plate, but the arm stayed up with the body and the stride. His arm angle was between low $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$.

He didn't cut off his forward motion and the arm carried through at the end of the pitch -- very loose and quick. Thus, the loose follow thru reduced stress on the arm and shoulder, but took him off balance in his follow thru. He fell to the right, thus making it virtually impossible for him to field balls hit up the middle. One of the prices you pay for that pitching action.



Many who use such a long arm action run into troubles.

Like Satch Paige, he was long-arm, but not a slinger.

My guess would be that he was a two-seam pitcher primarily, but also used the four-seam delivery. I could visualize him having a mean sinker and a nasty breaking ball. By raising his arm angle slightly, becomes a power pitcher with a four seam fast-ball.

I would not hesitate to sign this pitcher because of his arm action.

There have been others worse who have gone on to the the Hall of Fame.

John Klima - www.baseballbeginnings.com

JOHN DONALDSON, LHP

Based off two-pitch video look (and years of experience)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Tall, lean and loose body type; appeared to possess durable frame. Looks like he was built for the long haul. Long and whippy body type, in freeze frame body reminds me of young Dwight Gooden but from LH side.

SUMMARY: Above-average arm speed from $\frac{3}{4}$ slot, FB appears to have arm-side run/sink, got on top of the ball, created downhill plane even from flat mound. Appears to possess above-average athletic action while pitching. Difficult to tell actual speed of delivery, but appears to have been able to generate power from lower-half torque with relative ease. Clearly threw hard, but was not a max-effort guy; can see body control as he falls off to third base side and keeps balance. Rangy arm action; created the "cross-bar T" as his body came across the rubber. Probably threw a hard curveball with tight rotation in his best years; which would have probably given him two above-average major league pitches. DNS (Did Not See) off-speed in two-pitch look; arm action lends to being type of pitcher who should have been able to throw a CH (change-up). Doubt he had much use for what we would call a SL (slider) in his prime years if his CB was as good as his arm speed indicated. Probably fielded position at above-average levels based on athleticism. Looks bored hitting, looks super-aggressive on the mound regardless of competition. Looks like he was a fast worker.



Lenny Yochim - Former Major League Scout

The speed of the film looks as if he is trying to get the game through five innings before they call the game because of rain.

What I see in this pitcher : He appears to be round shouldered, solid strong build, no fat, I would say he is a fairly young player at this stage.

His delivery is from a 3/4 arm action release point to fully define his release point. There is a high 3/4 release, 3/4 release and then side arm.

He rotates his left foot into the rubber, has a rather low leg kick throwing slightly across his body, I would say six to eight inches, causing him to throw across his body some falling off the mound somewhat to the third base line.

He looks to be very athletic, given him a chance to quickly come back to a fielding position something like a Bob Gibson.

Being athletic I would say he could have played another position as well as pitching.

The opinions expressed about Donaldson from the scouting community are vast. Donaldson's delivery was unique in his day. To view surviving footage of Major League pitchers who would have been contemporaries of Donaldson here click their boxes below:

[Christy Matthewson](#)
[Film Footage](#)



[Walter Johnson](#)
[Film Footage](#)



[Lefty Grove](#)
[Film Footage](#)



CURRENT AREAS OF FOCUS BY DONALDSON NETWORK MEMBERS



Photo by Jeremy Krock

BURR OAK CEMETERY UPDATE

An update to previous newsletter mentions regarding the situation surrounding Donaldson's resting place. It is filed by local Donaldson Network member Linda ([email](#)).

The Donaldson Network has seen hundreds of volunteer hours spent chronicling the career of John Donaldson, one of the greatest left-handers in black baseball history. When Donaldson passed in 1970, he was buried at Burr Oak Cemetery in Alsip, Illinois, south of Chicago. This historic African American cemetery was established in an era when many Chicago area cemeteries would not permit blacks to be interred.

Donaldson is not the only notable interred at Burr Oak. Other Negro League players include Jimmie Crutchfield and "Candy Jim" Taylor. One will also find the graves of Civil Rights figures, Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till Mobley; singer Dinah Washington; and a host of blues musicians, athletes, writers and politicians.

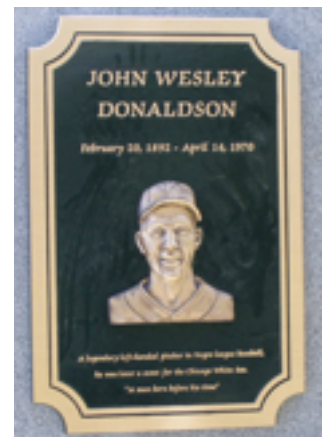
John Donaldson, as well as his wife Eleanor, who died in 1971, were both in unmarked graves. These were not isolated cases; of the approximately 140,000 interred at Burr Oak, only about 43,000 have markers because many families could not afford the expense.

In 2004, led by fund-raising efforts of Dr. Jeremy Krock, John Donaldson had a bronze marker purchased and installed at the previously unmarked grave site with a major contribution coming from Donaldson's former employer the Chicago White Sox.

Donaldson's final resting place, however, was anything but restful. A scheme was uncovered in mid-July whereby bodies allegedly were disinterred and the plots re-sold. Families were distraught at the thought that their loved ones were silent victims as four cemetery employees were charged with desecrating graves. Local media reported poor record-keeping, roads in poor condition, and mounds of debris including pieces of markers, vaults and bones.

Regulators stepped in and the cemetery was closed. Burr Oak and its owners, Perpetua Inc., filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The Cook County Sheriff's Department photographed all grave markers at Burr Oak and input them into a database, www.burroak.net. An image of John's marker would indicate that his grave lay undisturbed. The sheriff's database, however, did not include the unmarked graves such as Eleanor Donaldson's.

As a result of the bankruptcy filings, cemetery control was returned to Burr Oak management and a new team is in place. Cosmetic as well as infrastructure improvements have been made, and nearly 2,000 stakes were placed to facilitate locations of burial sites. A new database, www.burroakalsip.com incorporates all known burials at Burr Oak, both marked and unmarked. The cemetery plans to reopen in December of 2009.



STATE LEGISLATIVE MANUALS - SHARYL ([email](#))

Recently we became aware of the existence of Legislative Manuals also known as, State “Blue Books”.

State governments upon conclusion of Legislative sessions produce manuals for their states. These manuals, among their many useful lists generally include newspapers published in the state.

MINNESOTA NEWSPAPERS

BY COUNTIES

County.	Location.	Name of Paper.	Publisher.
Aitkin	Aitkin	Independent Age	F. E. Kresch.
Aitkin	Aitkin	The Aitkin Republican.	B. L. Hollister.
Aitkin	Hill City	Hill City News.....	Gay C. Huntley.
Anoka	Anoka	The Anoka Herald.....	R. G. Chase.
Anoka	Anoka	The Anoka Co. Union...	G. S. Pease.
Anoka	Bethel	Banner	J. F. Whitteker.

With John Donaldson known games numbering in the thousands it's sometimes vital to know what newspaper *could* have reported on contests he appeared in. Asking a volunteer to look for a specific paper provides a better chance that a game can be discovered. We have several instances where going to local courthouses asking for a specific title has proven successful. We currently have contemporary manuals from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa. We are seeking other manuals to help assist our ongoing efforts. If you can help by providing locations of your state's manual it would be greatly appreciated. We are continually seeking ways to redefine how research is conducted and are always looking for new and improved methods. If you have questions on our current practices please don't hesitate contact us, and we'll be glad to discuss ways to improve information gathering.

RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT! - SAM ([email](#))

It was said in the mid thirties on the pages of the Chicago Defender that John Donaldson's exploits as a pitcher broke many world records. The paper went as far as to state that cartoonist Robert Ripley chronicled Donaldson's career.

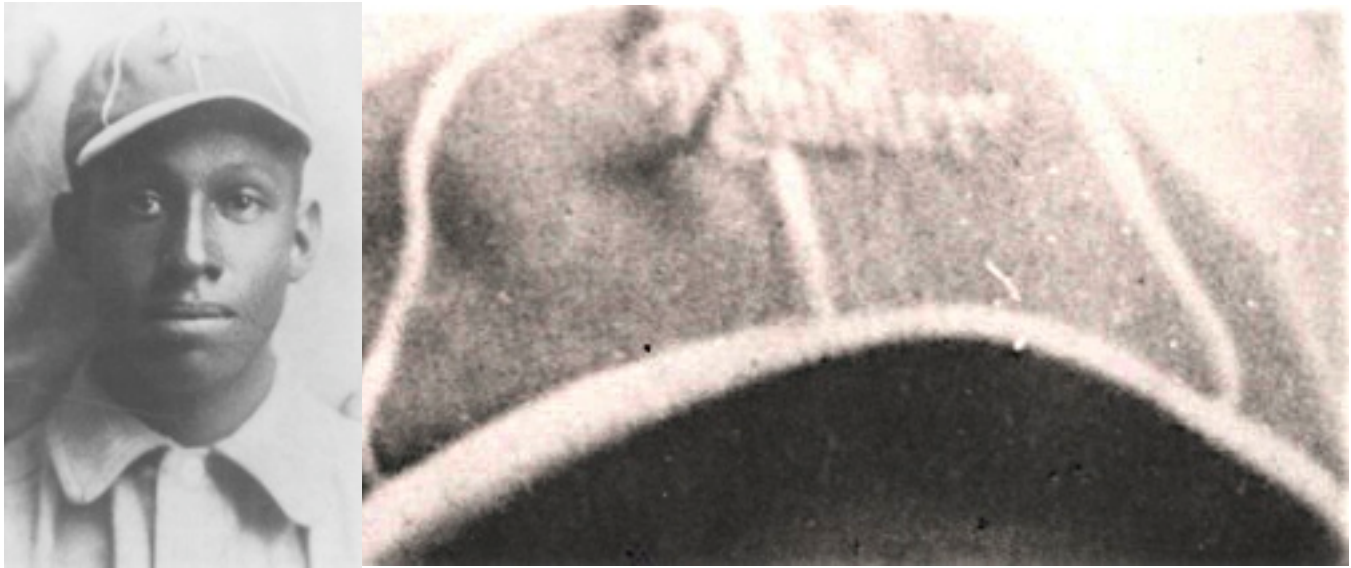
We are actively seeking validation of these claims.

An email exchange with the *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* museum has put the “experts” on the case. As digitization of newspapers continues, the possibility that the Donaldson sketches will become known.

We will report back if any cartoons surface.

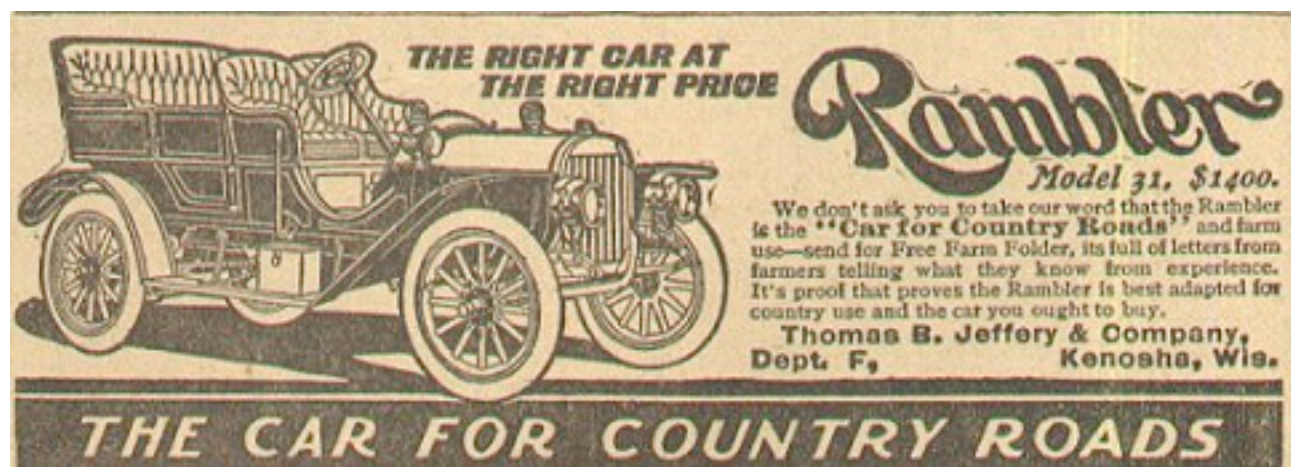
Which leads us to a previous Network Newsletter Mystery!

The Mysterious Hat...Solved?

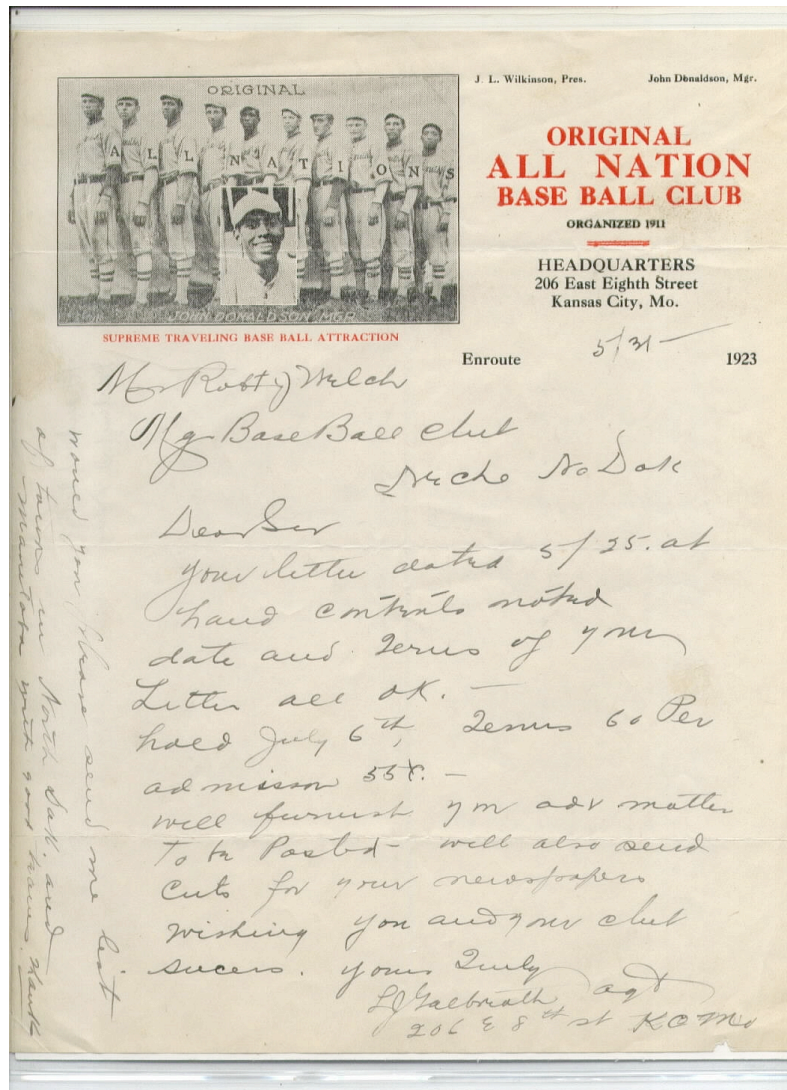


The last issue of the Donaldson Network Newsletter challenged our dedicated researchers and historians to attempt to shed light on the hat Donaldson is wearing in this 1911-1912 photograph. Several new attempts were submitted. We crosschecked the entrants and none had the staying power of the guess submitted by Dave ([email](#)) in recent weeks. He, although not the first, has speculated the logo is that of the “Rambler” a automobile manufactured by the Thomas B. Jeffery & Company of Kenosha, Wisconsin from 1902-1914. His speculation seems difficult to deny. We are now seeking more information from Wisconsin attempting to relate Donaldson to the “Rambler”. It is known that the Jeffery Company sponsored a baseball team. Does anyone know somebody in Kenosha, Wisconsin?

Great catch Dave!!! Now...Let's find out more!



Research Finds



ALL NATIONS CORRESPONDENCE - SCOTT ([email](#)) In recent weeks it was discovered a series of letters written on All Nation's letterhead from 1923. This letter is negotiating the particulars for a July 6, 1923 game between Donaldson's Original All Nation Base Ball Club and the Neche (ND) Internationals. The letters help shed light on how a barnstorming team filled its schedule, advertised games and sized up competition, among other revelations. The letterhead shows a photo that features an inset of John Donaldson. At the time it was quite a progressive statement, one that proves Donaldson's value as a drawing card.

NEW BOOK BY MEMBERS OF THE DONALDSON NETWORK -

BLACK BASEBALL PLAYERS
IN CANADA

-BY BARRY SWANTON AND JAY-DELL MAH
[McFarland](#), 2009

Q&A WITH THE CO-AUTHOR - JAY-
DELL MAH

Donaldson Network: When did you become aware of John Donaldson and his association with Western Canada baseball?:

Jay-Dell Mah: In flipping through James Riley's book [The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues] I happened to notice a reference to Moose Jaw in his entry on Donaldson. His note that Donaldson had compiled a 28-4 record with a Moose Jaw team piqued my interest, as it seemed so unusual to me that such a famous player would set down in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan for a summer. When I discovered he had pitched, not for Moose Jaw, but the tiny community of Radville it prompted even more questions (such as how the town could afford him). And, given I couldn't find any references to a 28-4 record in any league, let alone with Moose Jaw, it prompted me to try to dig out the real story on Donaldson. Not in the least to criticize Riley's effort, the experience had shown the difficulty in documenting the careers of such players. It's then I discovered your amazing effort to honor him and I couldn't resist becoming a member of the team.

DN: In your opinion has history and particularly "baseball history" been kind to John Donaldson?

JDM: Not by a long shot. A place in the Hall of Fame would begin to rectify it.

DN: From an individual researcher perspective, how would you directly address a member of the Donaldson Network, out sifting through ancient newspapers looking for evidence of Donaldson's career? Is this a worthwhile effort?

JDM: Ah man, this is marvelous work. I salute the dozens of dozens of researchers who dedicate considerable time and effort to set the record straight – whether in this particular search or hundreds of others in sports, politics, the arts, whatever.

DN: How would players chronicled in your book have viewed John Donaldson?

I can only guess, but I'd think it would be a very favorable viewpoint. I know players such as Curly Williams (whom, I believe, Donaldson signed for the White Sox) would have had high regard for Donaldson, not only for his talent, but in carving out his own career given the doors shut in his face along the way.