

JOHN WESLEY DONALDSON

Alan Muchlinski

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This article is dedicated to John Wesley Donaldson upon his consideration for election into the American Baseball Hall of Fame. John was born in Glasgow, Missouri on February 20, 1892 and he died in Chicago, Illinois on April 14, 1970. John was survived by his wife Eleanor Watson Donaldson and at the time of his death John and Eleanor lived at 5612 South King Drive, Chicago, Illinois. John and Eleanor did not have any children. John is buried in Burr Oak Cemetery, Worth Township, Illinois.

John Wesley Donaldson played for several semi-professional baseball teams in Minnesota including the Bertha Fishermen in 1924, '25, and '27, the Lismore Gophers in 1926, the Melrose Legion All-Stars in 1928, the St. Cloud Saints in 1930, and Donaldson's All-Stars (Fairmont) in 1932. However, the history of John Donaldson's association with baseball in the Midwest states started in 1912 when John took over the first base position for J. L. Wilkinson's multiracial All Nations team. John was also one of the star pitchers for the All Nations team. Numerous barnstorming trips through the Midwest states from 1912 through 1917 made John Donaldson a household name to any player or fan of baseball.

John won his local debut 2 - 0 in an appearance at Sioux Falls, South Dakota with a 4 hit, 14-strikeout performance. He then continued with a 13 inning, 23 strikeout, 2 - 0 victory at Sioux Falls in August of 1912. John won three games in appearances at Sioux

Falls during 1913 and in 1914 he won a 13 inning, 1 hit game 1 - 0 after taking a no-hit game into the bottom of the 13th inning. John allowed one hit in the bottom of the 13th inning but with 26 strikeouts he won the game (1). Also in 1913 John struck out 27 batters in a 12 inning, 1 hit performance at Marshall, Minnesota (2). John pitched no-hitters against the Schmelzer team on May 2 and May 15, 1915. He also had 99 strikeouts over four games in 1915 including 25 at Kansas City, Missouri on May 23, 30 at Sioux Falls, South Dakota on June 6, 24 at Oakes, North Dakota on June 18, and 20 at Cando, North Dakota on June 22 (3). John's outgoing personality also made him an instant hit with baseball fans in the region.

John McGraw, manager of the old New York Giants professional baseball team is reported to have assessed Donaldson's value as a major league player at \$50,000 if he had been white. James Riley in his Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues stated, "Donaldson's drop and wide assortment of curves, combined with a good fastball and change-up, made him one of the best left-handers in the history of black baseball". At 6'3" and 185 pounds John was often the biggest player on his team. He was also a good sacrifice bunter, a fast runner, and a good hitter.

The color barrier present at that time in major league baseball prevented John from ever playing in a regular season major league game. However, John did play against a number of major league ballplayers including McGraw's New York Giants team. In 1918 John McGraw's New York Giants defeated John Donaldson's team 1 - 0 in a game played after the end of the regular season. In 1916 John pitched the All Nations to the Negro League Championship with series victories over both the Chicago American Giants and the Indianapolis ABCs, and at that time John was reported to be the best pitcher in black baseball (2).

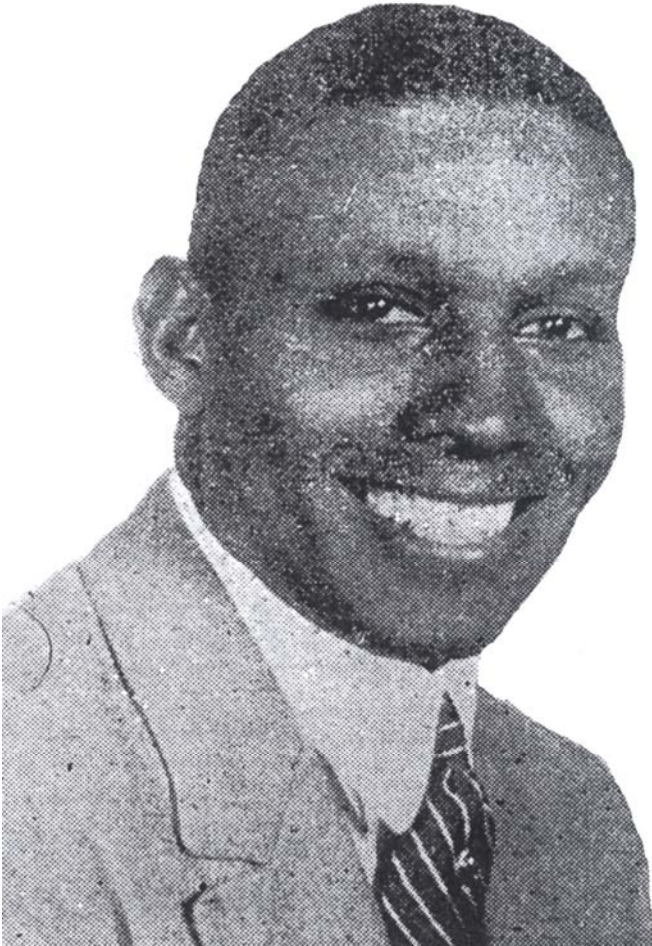
John played primarily for small town, independent, semi-professional baseball teams in Minnesota. The only time that John played for a team in a large city of that time was when he played for the team from St. Cloud, Minnesota in 1930. The people of these small towns and villages made John a real member of their community and from all accounts that have been made available to this author, John enjoyed his time with the people of these smaller towns. As you will notice in the narrative for the individual teams, John, and his wife Eleanor, were often covered in the society papers of the local newspapers. Also, the local newspapers always ended the baseball season with a hope that John would consider their town worthy enough to play for in the following year.

John was 32 years old when he accepted the offer from the village of Bertha, Minnesota to play for their team in 1924 and it is certain that John was past his prime baseball playing days by this time in his career. By 1932 when the team that went by the name of John Donaldson's All-Stars played out of Fairmont, Minnesota, John was 40 years old and his playing days as a pitcher were very limited.

Baseball teams from the small towns and villages of the 1920s and 1930s were often integrated teams in that there may have been one or two African-American players and maybe even a Native American player on the team. An example of this would be Ivanhoe, Minnesota (population approximately 750 people) in the late 1920s when an African-American and two Native American players were members of the local team. On the other hand it was somewhat unusual to find an integrated team that was formed in one of the larger cities.

There are many people who need to be thanked for all of the assistance they gave in helping put together the story of John Donaldson as a baseball player, and as an individual, in Minnesota. I have tried to acknowledge the people who gave assistance

within each individual section. Much appreciation is also given to my father, Floyd Muchlinski, for all of the information he provided to get this manuscript started.



Publicity photograph of John Wesley Donaldson from the Melrose, Minnesota Beacon Newspaper of May 17, 1928.

Bertha Minnesota 1924

The following information regarding John Donaldson and the baseball team from Bertha, Minnesota was gathered from various sources located in the Bertha Historical Society Museum and at the Minnesota State Historical Society in St. Paul. The sources included copies of the Bertha Herald newspaper from 1924, 1925 and 1926 (the newspapers from 1927 are missing and are presumed lost), the Long Prairie newspaper from 1924, 1925, and 1927, a baseball scorebook that contains 19 of the games from

1924, 19 of the games from 1925, and 6 of the games from 1927, several photographs, and baseball articles and summaries. Much appreciation is given to Mr. Glenn Johnson of Bertha who provided access to the material located in the Historical Society Museum at Bertha.

Baseball fans in Bertha knew of John Donaldson because the All Nations team had played the team from Bertha in previous years. Discussions took place in the early 1920s regarding the procurement of John's services for the hometown baseball team and in January of 1922 a committee of four townspeople was selected to obtain signers who would guarantee money for the hiring of John Donaldson. Another individual was put in charge of arranging dances, box socials, and other entertainment events to raise additional money for John's salary. For example, a dance held in late March of 1924 raised \$186 for the baseball association.

The money that was necessary to hire John was raised and on March 11, 1924, John Donaldson accepted the offer from the Bertha Baseball Association. The Bertha Herald of March 13, 1924 reported, "An enthusiastic baseball meeting was held in the Liberty Theatre last Friday evening. The meeting was called to consider the offer of John W. Donaldson, famous colored pitcher and to get the sentiment of the fans. It was then voted to wire Donaldson and on Tuesday morning we received word that the great pitcher had accepted. The news that Donaldson had accepted was heralded with great joy throughout the village for it was the general consensus of opinion that we would not get him. An extra good showing was made at the meeting when almost the entire amount required to start the season was subscribed in about ten minutes."

John's salary for the season was \$1,421.00. The newspaper from Long Prairie indicated John was to be paid \$325 per month and several other newspapers from

surrounding small towns ran articles about the huge salary that John was to be paid for the season. The Bertha Herald shot back that the Bertha team's share of the gate receipts for the first three games played in May was \$440 and there were still two more games to be played in the month.

In addition to his salary, John received a round-trip train ticket from Kansas City to Bertha (which was recorded in the Baseball Association financial report of 1924 as costing \$57.28) and housing for the season. At first John was provided with a room at one of the rooming houses in town but later he was provided with a house across the street from the baseball field. John's wife Eleanor lived with him in Bertha for part of the baseball season although she spent some portion of the summers in Minneapolis, as the Bertha Herald reported that she and John often traveled to Minneapolis to visit friends and family members.

At first there was a great deal of suspicion from people in other towns as to the true identity of this person who called himself John Donaldson. The Wadena Pioneer Journal reported, "Donaldson was one of the greatest Negro pitchers in baseball history and reports have it that the Donaldson who is pitching for Bertha today is one of the younger generation who has either adopted the name for the sake of baseball notoriety or by circumstances happens to be the proud possessor of that name and is basking in the light of the publicity gained by his more prominent name-sake." Another statement from the same newspaper read, "If reports are to be taken at face value, Donaldson is none other than the famous coal tar colored heaver who was denied entrance into the major leagues only because of his color."

Later in the season neighboring towns caught on to the fact that Bertha had the real, and original, John Donaldson playing for their team. A column in the Barnesville

Record-Review stated, “Mighty Donaldson, famous All-Nations and Cuban All-Stars pitcher, will be seen here in action with the fast Bertha team on July 13. The famous mounds man needs no introduction to the fans in this vicinity; in fact, he needs none to the baseball fans in this country. Every American fan who has followed the national game remembers the time when the Philadelphia Athletics, then champions of the world with the \$100,000 infield of McInnis, Collins, Barry and Home Run Baker, and their pitching staff of Chief Bender, Iron Man Coombs and Plank invaded Cuba for a series of games with the Almendares team. Donaldson, to the astonishment of the world, stood this famous team on their heads, beating them twice; one game being a shutout. Since then Donaldson has barnstormed throughout the country with the famous All-Nations, defeating all comers. We advise all fans to take in this game. Donaldson, a left-hander, is a combination of Eddie Plank and Rube Waddell. Blessed with Rube’s blinding speed and curves, he has Eddie’s control, brains and ability to keep in good condition.”

Local teams also learned that if they wanted to have a chance to beat the team from Bertha they also needed to load up with some hired talent. A comment from the Long Prairie newspaper was, “Wherever and whomever Bertha plays from now on, the fans will get their money’s worth for the slogan is “pick up a combination to beat Bertha”.” News of the exploits of John Donaldson was so important that even the Minneapolis and St. Paul daily newspapers carried information about the baseball games played by the team from Bertha.

The Bertha baseball team of 1924 was comprised of local talent with the exception of John Donaldson. Local players included George Johnson, W.K. Bottemiller, August Theis, Oscar Wagner, Gus Kassube, Abbot, Geithman, and Red Westergren. The team played 27 games during the season and John played in all 27 of

these games. John was used primarily as a pitcher during the season as he pitched in 25 of the 27 games for a total of 211 innings.



A photograph of the Bertha, Minnesota Fishermen baseball team of 1924. John Donaldson is third from the left in the back row. The photograph is provided courtesy of the Bertha Historical Society and Mr. Glenn Johnson.

John started and finished 23 of the 25 games in which he pitched and in the remaining 2 games he relieved the starting pitcher for 1 inning and 5 innings respectively. John struck out 318 batters, an average of 13.6 strikeouts per 9 innings, while giving up only 20 walks, an average of 0.8 walks per 9 innings. John pitched in 17 games in which he did not walk a single batter. John gave up 120 hits in the 211 innings pitched for an average of 5.1 hits per 9 innings and he gave up a total of 46 runs over the season for an average of 2.0 runs per 9 innings. The number of strikeouts, walks, runs and hits was determined from newspaper accounts and from information in the official

scorebook. John finished the season with a record of 20 wins and 3 losses for a .870 winning percentage.

John also had a good year at the plate during 1924. His year-end batting average was .438 with 48 hits in 112 official at-bats. John hit 6 triples, 8 doubles, and 34 singles during the year, and he scored 24 runs. John walked 5 times and struck out 2 times in the 19 games recorded in the scorebook, and he received 2 first base passes as a hit batter (both in one game). One measure of the respect shown by opposing teams for John's ability to hit the ball was a ninth inning, bases loaded, intentional walk given in a game against Alexandria when Alexandria was leading 8 to 5. Bertha ended up scoring 3 more runs in the ninth inning to defeat Alexandria by a score of 9 to 8.

Six hundred fans turned out on a cold and windy day to watch the first game of the season but by mid May, the team from Bertha was drawing around 1,000 fans to each game. For Decoration Day, 1,000 automobiles brought 2,500 fans to Bertha for a game against Park Rapids and by late in the season huge crowds were in attendance at many of the games. In the final game of the season at Browerville the newspaper from Long Prairie reported, "The game was played on the Browerville diamond before another crowd which taxed the capacity of the baseball yard. The writer arrived at the ground more than two hours before the game was scheduled to begin, hoping thus to find a desirable spot from which to sit back and enjoy the game. More than a hundred automobiles were parked about the side lines at that early hour and before Umpire Pleva sent the first batter up to the plate the cars were parked a dozen deep along the two side lines, and a solid circle of them entirely surrounded the outfield."

A highlight of the season included an overall team record of 21 wins versus 5 losses and 1 tie. John had two games with 20 strikeouts (including a no hit, no run game

versus the Minnesota Braves), two games with 19 strikeouts, and several games were reported to have attracted over 2,000 fans. Bertha claimed the baseball championship of Todd County and the independent championship of Central Minnesota, and as an important footnote, the team finished the year with a positive balance in the checkbook. The Bertha Baseball Association had a positive cash balance of \$1,283.08 at the end of the 1924 season compared to a negative cash balance of \$50.65 at the end of the 1923 season. Having John Donaldson as a drawing card for the Bertha baseball team certainly helped out in the financial column.

The newspapers from both Bertha and Long Prairie carried a local news column about people in Bertha. As John was now a member of the Bertha community he was fair game for the social column. The newspaper of July 3 from Long Prairie indicated that “Mrs. John W. Donaldson arrived here Monday for a visit with her husband, and now the great pitcher has his “better half” with him and is correspondingly proud and happy. And it certainly appears that he has good reasons for being proud and happy both.” The Bertha column in the Long Prairie newspaper of July 17 indicated that “Mrs. John W. Donaldson returned to the cities last week for a visit with her father and sister in Minneapolis.”

At the end of the season the Bertha newspaper said of John, “Not only has he left a record in baseball but he has made many friends here, who respect him and hope that he may again be with us in 1925. The only dissatisfactory part of the baseball season was the rotten treatment accorded Donaldson in a few of the towns we have played, and the only reason for this was, as some of them admitted, that they hated to be beat by “Niggers”. Bertha people know him to be a gentleman and would be glad to have him play with the local team next year.” John expressed himself to the newspaper writer as

“having enjoyed the summer here and he hoped he would be able to be with us again next year. He wishes to extend his sincere thanks to everyone in this community for the splendid treatment accorded him here and hopes that everyone will remember him as a friend.”

John wasn't finished playing baseball after he left Bertha for Kansas City, Missouri on September 16. The Bertha Herald related an article from the Daily News, a newspaper in Kansas City, which reported on a game between John Donaldson's All Stars and Lefty Meeker's major league post-season team. "John Donaldson's All Stars with John on the mound defeated Lefty Meeker of the Philadelphia American League team, and his all big league stars at Aristos Park, Sunday, October 19th, 5 to 4. Smiling John showed the boys that he can still pitch when he so chooses. In John's line-up were several Negro National League players, including Foreman, Joseph, a brother to Newt Tyres, and Harold Vaughn, all of Cleveland the past season." The Bertha Herald continued, "The game was won in the last inning after two were out. A man singled, the next one walked, John tripled and scored both men knotting the score 4 to 4. Foreman up got a hit and scored John with the winning run. Yes, old John can still pitch and if those who do not believe that Bertha had the real Donaldson last summer read this, all doubt will be dispelled from their minds. He is coming back again next year and local fans are assured of some more fast baseball."

The Financial Statement for the Bertha Team of 1924 was as follows:

Balance from year 1923	-\$ 50.65
Received from Dances	\$ 213.80
Received from Gate Receipts	\$5,508.48
Miscellaneous, balls sold, etc	\$ 3.25

1923 game percentage from Battle Lake	\$ 32.00
Pledges paid for season of 1924	\$ 823.26
Total Income	\$6,631.38
Paid to John W. Donaldson	\$1,421.00
Railroad fare, John Donaldson	\$ 57.28
Paid for Salaries for Other Players + Incidentals	\$1,524.23
Paid to Visiting Teams/Share of Gate Receipts	\$1,104.71
Certificate of Deposit	\$1,000.00
Paid Gifts to Players/Bonuses	\$ 229.77
Paid for Rain Insurance	\$ 128.48
Paid for Hotels	\$ 155.13
Paid for Telephones, Telegrams, and Postage	\$ 76.66
Merchandise purchased	\$ 281.15
Paid for Auto Hire and Incidentals	\$ 111.43
Dance Expenses Current Year	\$ 154.85
Paid for Printing	\$ 63.60
Paid for Labor	\$ 48.20
Donation for Staples Band	\$ 10.00
Cash on Hand at End of Season	\$ 505.69
Total	\$6,366.49
Total Receipts	\$6,631.38
Total Disbursements	\$6,366.49
Balance	\$ 264.89
Interest on Certificate	\$ 18.19

Certificate of Deposit \$1,000.00

Cash on Hand \$1,283.08

Games Played in 1924 - * Indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 4	vs Little Sauk at Bertha	Won 4 - 3 *	16 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 at bat (triple)
May 11	vs Wadena at Wadena	Won 4 - 1 *	15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)
May 18	vs St. Paul Patocks at Bertha	Won 7 - 0 *	16 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat
May 25	vs Wadena at Bertha	Won 4 - 1 *	15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (triple)
May 30	vs Minnesota Braves at Bertha	Won 13 - 0 *	20 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 0 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (no hit game)
June 1	vs Park Rapids at Bertha	Won 6 - 4	1 Strikeout, 0 Walks, 0 hits, 0 runs in 1 inning, 1f, 1 for 3 at bat
June 8	vs New York Mills at Bertha	Rainout after 1 inning	Strikeouts, Walks, hits, not included in season statistics
June 15	vs New York Mills at NY Mills	Lost 4 - 2 *	6 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 4 hits in 8 innings, 1 for 3 at bat (double)
June 22	vs Pelican Rapids at Pelican Rapids	Won 3 - 2 *	11 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 6 hits in 6 innings (call due to rain), 2 for 4 at bat
June 29	vs Alexandria at Bertha	Won 6 - 5 *	10 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 10 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 at bat (double) with 4 stolen bases in game

July 4	vs Alexandria at Alexandria	Won 6 - 1 *
	15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat	
July 6	vs Park Rapids at Park Rapids	Tie 2- 2
	6 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 1 hit and 0 runs in 5 innings pitched, 1 for 5 at bat (13 inning game), game called due to 6:00pm Sunday rule	
July 13	vs Barnesville at Barnesville	Lost 2 - 1 *
	15 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 8 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)	
July 17	vs Staples at Staples	Won 5 - 2 *
	19 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat	
July 20	vs Alexandria at Bertha	Won 9 - 8 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 9 hits in 9 innings, 4 for 4 at bat (double)	
July 23	vs Wadena at Bertha	Lost 3 – 0
	Did not pitch, lf, 2 for 4 at bat	
July 24	vs Staples at Verndale	Lost 4 – 3
	Rook pitched for Bertha, John was 2 for 4 at bat (triple)	
July 27	vs Pelican Rapids at Bertha	Lost 4 - 2 *
	20 Strikeouts (13 of 16 men who faced him in 2 nd through 6 th inning, 12 in a row), 0 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double and triple)	
July 30	vs Perham at Perham	Won 2 - 1 *
	12 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (triple)	
July 31	vs Staples at Verndale	Lost 4 – 3
	Did not pitch, lf, 2 for 4 at bat (triple) and 2 stolen bases	
August 3	vs Battle Lake at Bertha	Won 5 - 0 *
	15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings 0 for 4 at bat	

August 6	vs Barnesville at Bertha	Won 2 - 0 *
	11 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 at bat (double)	
August 10	vs Browerville at Browerville	Won 4 - 1 *
	11 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 5 at bat	
August 17	vs Battle Lake at Battle Lake	Won 1 - 0 *
	19 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat	
August 21	vs Staples at Long Praire	Won 8 - 5 *
	14 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 7 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat	
August 24	vs Gary at Detroit Lakes	Won 4 - 3 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 7 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)	
August 31	vs Browerville at Bertha	Won 3 - 2 *
	10 Strikeouts, 6 Walks, 2 hits in 10 innings, 1 for 4 at bat	
Sept 4	vs Pelican Rapids at Fergus Falls	Won 7 - 1 *
	13 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 5 at bat, \$300 purse for game	
Sept 14	vs Browerville at Browerville	Won 5 - 2 *
	14 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 10 hits in 11 innings, 2 for 5 at bat	

Games played for teams other than Bertha:

July 16 exhibition game at Gwinner ND on Wednesday 7/16

Bertha Fishermen 1925

John arrived in Bertha on Friday March 27 from his home in Kansas City, Missouri and the first practice session of the season was held on Sunday March 29. As evidence of a good carryover of interest in the baseball team a good-sized crowd was reported to be on hand to watch the first practice session, even though a chilly wind

swept across the field. An interesting comment from the Bertha newspaper was that John would be the coach for the Bertha team (the Manager of the team was V. E. Bartlett) and John would also help coach the high school and possibly the Legion baseball teams.

The team for the 1925 season was composed of John Donaldson, E.E. Corwin (catcher), Len Schroeder, Oscar Wagner, Ove Tangen, Gust Kassube, August Theis, Walter Bottemiller, Oscar Westergren, Elwyn Anderson, George Johnson, Milton Abbott and Geithman. Abbot and Geithman were from Parkers Prairie while George Johnson and Elwyn Anderson were referred to as Bertha boys. The Bertha team was named the home team for all of Todd County for the season and the admission price for games was again set at \$0.35 for adults. In the middle of the season the local newspapers pointed out what a favorable admission fee this was by indicating that Plentywood and Scobey Montana charged \$0.50 for general admission and \$0.75 for grandstand admission, while they also charged \$0.50 for each car that entered the grounds.

Bertha started the season on Sunday April 26 with a 16 to 1 win against the Colored Gophers team from St. Paul and they went on to win 10 of their first 11 games. The newspaper from Long Prairie indicated that the first game of the season was played before a record-breaking crowd and John was said to be in midseason form after a winter of pitching ball down south.

Large crowds were a usual occurrence during the season. Four thousand fans were reported to have attended two games played at Breckenridge, Minnesota and 3,300 fans were reported to have attended a game at Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The first game played at Breckenridge brought in \$2,850 in gate receipts while Battle Lake and Bertha played to split a \$700 purse (60% for the winner – 40% for the loser) in the game at Fergus Falls. A newspaper report on the game played in Bertha on the fourth of July

against St. Cloud stated, “The much advertised and more talked of baseball game between St. Cloud and Bertha on July Fourth was a record-breaker so far as attendance in Todd County is concerned. More people saw this game than have ever seen any game in Todd County at one time before, the Todd County Fair not excepted. All buses, both regular and special, stopped to look on and even the Great Northern flyer slowed down to take a good look at the immense throng of people at the game.” There were 10,000 people in town for the fourth of July celebration and gate receipts totaled \$1,400 at \$0.35/adult – children were admitted free, for a total of around 4,000 adult fans at the game. Several other games during the season drew at least 2,000 fans.

Many teams hired both a pitcher and a catcher for their roster and this particular team from Bertha had E.E. Corwin as the catcher. Mr. Corwin is described as the gentleman who caught some good games at the Todd County Fair of last year. Mr. Corwin went with John as his battery mate when John traveled to play for teams other than Bertha. The Bertha baseball team played more games against traveling teams and teams from larger towns in 1925 rather than the mainly local team competition of 1924.

In addition to pitching for Bertha, John pitched a number of games at a tournament in Moose Jaw, Manitoba, several games for Plentywood, Montana against the team from Scobey, Montana that had Swede Risberg and Happy Felsch as players, as well as for other teams in Minnesota. For example, John was hired by Minneota, Minnesota to pitch in several games. The baseball team from Minneota already had James Donaldson, John’s younger brother, on their roster. James died of meningitis during August of 1925 at age 26 and John returned to Glasgow, Missouri for the funeral. John pitched three games for Plentywood, Montana against Scobey and came away with 1 win and 2 losses.

The Bertha baseball team played 33 official games (not including a 2 inning rain-out game against New York Mills on June 24 which is counted as a win for Bertha in some summary statistics) and finished the season with a record of 24 wins, 9 losses and 1 tie. John played in 29 games for Bertha and he pitched in 26 of these games to earn a record of 20 wins and 5 losses. John pitched complete games in 21 of the 26 games in which he pitched. In the other five games John came in as a relief pitcher for 2, 3.1, 2, 6, and 5 innings.

John pitched a total of 205.1 innings for the Bertha team during the 1925 season. In these 205.1 innings John struck out 252 batters (an average of 11.0 strikeouts per 9 innings), he walked 30 batters (an average of 1.3 walks per 9 innings, and he gave up 129 total hits (an average of 5.6 hits per 9 innings). The number of strikeouts per 9 innings was down by about 3, while the number of walks and the number of hits per 9 innings were up just slightly from the previous season. The decrease in the number of strikeouts and the increase in the number of walks and hits per 9 innings would be expected if the Bertha team was scheduled to play more traveling teams and teams with better overall talent as compared to the 1924 season.

John pitched in 10 games for other teams during the season giving him a record of pitching in a total of 36 games for 297.1 innings. Two of the games for another team were for Radville, Saskatchewan in the Kiwanis Club baseball tournament held in Moose Jaw, Manitoba, Canada. John pitched in and won a 9-inning game on July 21 (the first game of the tournament) against a team from Climax, Saskatchewan and then he came back on July 22 to pitch a no-run, no-hit, 9-inning game (Radville's second game) against the Moose Jaw All-Stars team. In referring to the game pitched against Moose Jaw, the Regina Leader-Post newspaper stated, "The Moose Jaw All-Stars can scarcely be

considered “set ups” in view of the fact that the team which Donaldson set down without a run or a bingo is the same which defeated the Scobey, Montana, outlaws, 3 – 1 here June 12. Swede Risberg and Happy Felsch, of Black Sox fame, and Leo Selfert, formerly pitcher with the Winnipeg Western Canada League pros, were three of five ex-leaguers with the Scobey team on that occasion.” The pitching performance in the game for Radville against Moose Jaw was all the more impressive as this was the fourth complete game pitched by John over an 8-day period. The first two games were pitched for Plentywood, Montana (July 14 and 15) against Scobey while the last two games were pitched in the tournament at Moose Jaw. A good measure of John’s value to the Radville team is noted in that John did not play in the championship game of the tournament for Radville, and Radville lost the championship game to Scobey by a score of 14 to 0.

John ended the combined season with an overall pitching record of 24 wins, 9 losses, and 1 tie. Information on strikeouts, walks, and hits is not available from all of the games in which John pitched for teams other than Bertha so no attempt has been made to calculate summary statistics for these other games. The reader is encouraged to look at the games played list for specific information on each game.

John again had a good year at the plate for the team from Bertha. John had 118 at bats for the Bertha team and he got 45 hits for a .381 batting average. John had 4 home runs, 1 triple, 14 doubles, and 26 singles in the 29 official games played by the Bertha team. John also scored 25 runs for the Bertha team.

The social section of the Bertha and Long Prairie newspapers again carried information about John and Eleanor. The newspaper of May 28 indicated that “Mrs. John Donaldson arrived here last Monday from Kansas City to spend some time here with her husband, pitcher John Donaldson” while the newspaper of June 11 indicated that

“Mrs. John W. Donaldson left for Minneapolis Monday morning for a visit with her father and other relatives and friends.” The newspaper of August 8 reported, “Mr. and Mrs. John Donaldson left for the cities Monday, where Mrs. Donaldson will visit her father while John goes to Minneota to visit his brother.” The newspaper of August 27 reported, “John W. Donaldson, who was called to his home at Glasgow, Missouri, by his mother last week Tuesday because of the serious illness of his brother, James, wired last Saturday that his brother was better, but another message at 3:30 Sunday morning announced the death of the younger Donaldson, who played ball at Minneota this summer. John will return to Bertha this week in time to take part in the game at Battle Lake, Friday, August 28, and be on hand to pitch against “Swede” Risberg and his Scobey, Montana, team at Bertha Saturday afternoon, August 29, 1925.”

The newspaper of September 9 reported, “John W. Donaldson returned to Bertha from his home at Glasgow, Missouri, to which place he was called by the death of his brother. John reports that right after his brother played the last game at Minneota he went in swimming and then complained of a headache. He went home complaining of the headache, which grew worse after he got home, and resulted in his death, the doctors think from brain fever.”

Some teams really loaded up on hired players when their team was scheduled to play the team from Bertha. For example, the Long Prairie newspaper reported, “Crosby’s manager, John Schmidt, gathered together the mightiest aggregation of sluggers that Bertha has met this year. There was Delbern from Duluth, Anderson and Hill from Fairmont and Faribault, Hille, Lindahl and Cy Olson from Minneapolis, all mighty marksmen with the bat”. Verndale also loaded up with players as the newspaper

reported, “Verndale had a “loaded” team for that game, having gathered the cream of baseball talent from all over this section in order to give Donaldson a worth while battle.”

The team from Scobey, Montana had “Swede” Risberg and “Happy” Felsch, both ex-Chicago White Sox players and many other salaried players on the roster. The monthly payroll plus expenses for the Scobey team was reported to be over \$4000, and Risberg and Felsch each received \$600 per month plus expenses (Keith Whipple; as told to Dorothy Rustebakke, The Montana Journal; September-October 1989; page 21). The Scobey team was reported by the local newspapers to have “a wonderful record having played 45 games, winning 43 and losing 2; one of the losses being to John Donaldson at Scobey. They have booked 25 games on their trip through Canada, North and South Dakota and Minnesota.”

Some teams tried to lure John away from Bertha with offers of a better salary. In 1925 the team from Plentywood, Montana offered John \$650 per month plus expenses if he would get released from Bertha. The \$650 per month offer was \$50 more than Scobey was paying Swede Risberg that year. The Chip’s All-Stars team from Lone Rock, Iowa also tried to hire John away from Bertha in June of 1924. John said no to both offers and indicated that his word to a team was as good as his pitching.

Games Played in 1925 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

April 26	vs St. Paul Colored Gophers at Bertha	Won 13 - 1 *
	6 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 (home run and single)	
May 2	vs Elbow Lake at Elbow Lake	Won 8 - 5 *
	2 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits, 1 run in 2 innings, 1 for 5 (single)	
May 3	vs St. Cloud at St. Cloud	Won 7 - 5 *
	15 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 (single and walk)	

May 10	vs Elbow Lake at Bertha	Won 15 - 0 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 2 hits in 6 innings, 4 for 4 (3 double, triple), 1b	
May 17	vs New York Mills at Bertha	Won 10 - 1 *
	11 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 1 hit in 9 innings, 2 for 4 (single and double)	
May 24	vs Fargo-Moorhead at Moorhead	Lost 3 - 1 *
	16 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 4	
May 30	vs Moose Lake at Bertha	Won 3 - 2 *
	13 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 6 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 (double)	
May 31	vs Moose Lake at Bertha	Won 10 - 4 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 3 1/3 innings, 1 for 3 (single)	
June 5	vs Pelican Rapids at Detroit Lakes	Won 1 - 0 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 (home run)	
June 6	vs Pelican Rapids at Detroit Lakes	Won 4 - 3
	3 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, ? hits, 1 run in 2 innings, 0 for 4, cf	
June 7	vs Crosby at Bertha	Won 12 - 3 *
	8 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 4 for 5 (all singles)	
June 10	vs Crosby at Crosby	Lost 2 - 1 *
	9 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 (single)	
June 21	vs Park Rapids at Bertha	Won 3 - 2 *
	10 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4, 420' home run	
June 24	vs New York Mills at Bertha	Won 3 - 0 *
	Rain shortened game of 2 innings, 1 for 1 at bat (home run)	

Not an official game according to official rules so therefore not counted in season statistics

June 27	vs Verndale at Verndale	Lost 9 – 3 *	11 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 11 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 (single and double)
June 28	vs Park Rapids at Park Rapids	Won 3 – 1	Did not pitch, cf, 2 for 4 (single and double)
July 4	vs St. Cloud at Bertha	Won 7 - 6 *	7 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 11 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 (single, single, double)
July 5	vs St. Cloud at Bertha	Won 8 – 4	Did not pitch, cf, 3 for 4 (single, single, double)
July 12	vs Barnesville at Barnesville	Won 2 - 0 *	11 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 1 hit in 9 innings, 2 for 4 (single and single)
July 19	vs Long Prairie at Bertha	Lost 4 - 1	(Donaldson did not play)
July 26	vs Alexandria at Alexandria	Won 5 - 1 *	18 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 2 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 (single and double)
August 2	vs Wendell at Breckenridge	Won 6 - 1 *	11 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 2 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 (double)
August 7	vs Alexandria at Alexandria	Won 3 - 1 *	15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 (single)
August 16	vs Battle Lake at Fergus Falls	Won 11 - 2 *	17 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 6 (single)
August 22	vs Sebeka-Park Rapids at Wadena	Lost 2 – 1	(John did not play, attending funeral for brother James)

August 23	vs Barnsville-Pelican Rapids at Breckenridge	Won 2 – 0
	(John did not play, attending funeral for brother James)	
August 28	vs Battle Lake at Battle Lake	Lost 11 – 3
	John did not play	
August 29	vs Scobey MT at Bertha (vs Risberg and Felsch)	Lost 14 - 8 *
	7 Strikeouts, 2 walks, 10 hits, 8 runs in 6 innings, 1 for 4 (double)	
August 30	vs Scobey MT at Breckenridge	Won 12 - 10 *
	5 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 11 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 (walk, double, single)	
Sept 7	vs St Cloud at St Cloud	Lost 8 – 5
	3 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 3 hits, 1 run in 5 innings, 2 for 5 (singles)	
Sept 13	vs St. Paul Armours at Bertha	Won 1 - 0 *
	9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits in 10 innings, 2 for 4 (single and double)	
Sept 20	vs Cold Spring at St. Cloud	Won 5 - 4 *
	13 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 5 (single)	
October 5	vs St. Paul Saints American Association team at Bertha	Lost 4 - 1 *
	7 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 8 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 4	
October 6	vs St. Paul Saints American Association team at Breckenridge	Lost 5 – 1,
	John did not pitch, 1 for 3 (double)	

Games played for teams other than Bertha:

June 14	for Plentywood MT vs Scobey MT	Lost 4 - 1 *
	12 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 8 hits in 10 innings, 1 for 5 (single) (vs Swede Risberg at Plentywood)	
July 15	for Plentywood vs Scobey at Plentywood	Lost 9 - 3 *
	No Box Score Information	

July 17 for Plentywood vs Scobey at Scobey Won 10 - 7 *
? Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 10 hits in 9 innings

July 20 played for Radville SK vs Climax SK Won 5 - 3 *
11 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, John was 1 for 4 at bat
(double), no runs scored

July 22 played for Radville SK vs Moose Jaw Won 2 - 0 *
19 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 0 hits in 9 innings, no hit / no run game; John was
2 for 3 at bat (double, single), no runs scored

July 22 Radville played Scobey MT for the championship of the Regina
Tournament but John did not play in the game, Radville lost to Scobey 14
- 0

August 6 Minneota MN vs League of Nations, Lost 5 - 4
8 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 0 hits, 0 runs in 4 innings, 2 for 4 at bat, played with
his brother James,

Sept 6 played for Minneota MN vs Lismore Lost 3 - 1 *
14 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat; 2000 fans at
game

Sept 10 played for Lismore MN vs Tennessee Rats at Slayton, MN Lost 2 - 1 *
13 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 at bat (single, double), 1
run scored

Sept 30 played for Lismore MN vs Remsen IA at Lismore MN Tie 1 - 1 *
18 Strikeouts, 1 Walks, 4 hits in 13 innings, game called because of
darkness, 1 for 6 at bat (single), this game was billed as for the
championship of Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota, "Smokey" Joe

Lutz pitched for Remsen, only 500 people attended the game on a very cold and windy day.

October 10 vs Clarkfield MN for and at Madison MN Lost*

19 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 14 hits in 11 innings

Lismore Gophers 1926

John agreed to a contract with the Lismore Gophers semi-professional team three days before Bertha put in their bid for his services and he arrived in Lismore from Minneapolis on about April 20. John's received a salary \$450.00 per month for the 1926 baseball season and he was named captain of the team. Since John played in his first game for Lismore on May 2 and his last game was on October 6, his salary was approximately \$2,250.00 for the summer. John was also provided with a house as part of his contract and this house is still located in Lismore at 370 1st Street South. John's wife Eleanor again lived with him for at least part of the baseball season and his nephew Clifford Watson also lived with him for some period of time. Ms. Coletta Voss of Lismore indicated in an interview that her mother did laundry for John and his family.

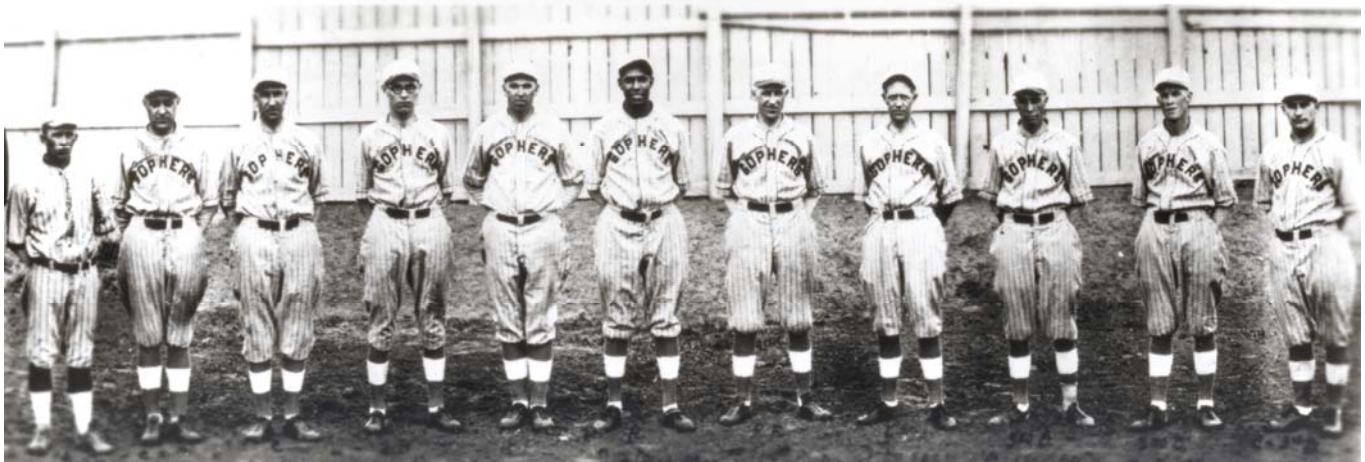


This is the house in Lismore, Minnesota in which John lived with his wife Eleanor and his nephew Clifford Watson. The address is 370 1st Street South.

The Lismore newspaper, along with newspapers from some of the other local communities, provides the only source of information about John's season with the Gophers. The team played 45 games (John played in 43 games) and ended the season with a record of 20 wins, 24 losses, and 1 tie.

As with the team from Bertha, John was utilized primarily as a pitcher for the Gophers and he appeared on the mound in 37 games. John pitched 25 complete games (including one 5 inning rain shortened game, one 10 inning game, one 11 inning game, and one 12 inning game) and he pitched 253 innings in his first 41 games (reports on the

last two games do not list innings pitched). Pitching data that can be obtained from the newspaper records include 295 strikeouts in 246 innings (an average of 10.8 strikeouts per 9 innings) and 179 hits given up in 253 innings (an average of 6.37 hits per 9 innings). John finished the season for Lismore with a record of 12 wins and 15 losses.



This photograph shows the Lismore, Minnesota Gophers baseball team of 1926. John Donaldson is shown in the middle of photograph. The photograph is courtesy of Ms. Coletta Voss of Lismore, Minnesota.

John pitched two games in a tournament at Moose Jaw Canada. John won the first game in Moose Jaw against Plentywood MT and Swede Risberg 2 to 1 (on a Thursday) but lost the second game 10 to 9 (on Saturday) in 11 innings. A very large headline on the sports page of the Moose Jaw newspaper from July 3, 1926, stated, “Donaldson Agrees to Throw for M.J. Big Tournament – Sensation Of 1925 Tournament, Who Shut Out Locals In No-Hit No-Run Game”. The newspaper article went on to state, “Weep over this, Fans! Mr. “Darky” Donaldson, baseball campaigner of many parts, hurler de luxe, hero of the 1925 baseball tournament, and personal producer of no hit, no run games, has agreed to be with Moose Jaw’s All-Stars in the Kiwanis Club’s feature tournament, July 7 to 10. For four days this year will games hold interest, and in that time such teams as Scobey (1925 winners), Plentywood, Regina

Balmorals, Climax, Moose Jaw All-Stars (featuring Mr. Donaldson), and three other teams battle for rewards well worth battle. Moose Jaw fans, nine players, and thousands of others, will readily recall the big blot, who, with ease and grace, genially whiffed 19 of 27 Moose Jaw batters, allowed no hits and no runs, to execute the smoothest shut-out in years and put Radville up where second money was a cinch as first possible. It was, indeed, a great piece of throwing, that memorable game, and equally great surprises are likely this years.”

Another newspaper article from the July 5th Moose Jaw newspaper stated, “John Donaldson, Fifteen Years A Hurler of Note – Major League Stars Of Years Ago Marveled At His Speed, Curves and Control – This is a brief tale of a Negro hurler who for years has been pitching sensational baseball, and has been kept out of major leagues only on account of the color line. Donaldson is a left-hand thrower, with terrific speed. He supplied the feature attraction of the 1925 tournament here, pitching a no-hit, no run game against Moose Jaw, and this year has been secured to play with the local entry.”

The article in the Moose Jaw newspaper quoted from an article written by Irvin Rudick for the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune. “Independent baseball in the northwest knows no bigger attraction than John Donaldson, the famous Negro pitcher. For wherever this flinger happens to toss his baseball glove, there thousands of fans gather where otherwise only a handful would turn out to see the town team play. Donaldson gained his large following in this neck of the woods not alone on his phenomenal performances of the last few years but through his brilliant exhibitions of years before, starting in 1912, when he first pitched independent baseball. During those early years when he twirled for the national Negro championship All-Nations team of Des Moines, Iowa, he was hailed as one of the pitching marvels of the era. Famous baseball

managers, major league sluggers against whom he had occasion to pitch, hailed him as a wonder. He was considered better than most of the mound stars pitching in the big show in his best days, yet he had to remain on the 'outside looking in' simply because of organized baseball's discrimination against Negro ball players.... It was common for him to whiff from 10 to 15 batsmen a game and turn teams back with a few widely scattered hits. He has pitched a number of hitless and runless games during his 15 years of baseball. Yet in all those years, according to Donaldson, who was in Minneapolis Saturday, stopping over on his way to Lismore, Minn., where he will play with and captain an independent team this year, he never has enjoyed the huge following that he won in Minnesota in the last few seasons."

"It was only natural that Donaldson, who had gained such an enviable reputation in baseball, should meet with instant success when he chose to cast his lot with independent teams in Minnesota. It was two years ago that he decided to invade the Gopher state. Bertha, Minn., a town of no more than 500 inhabitants, became baseball mad when Donaldson was hired to pitch for the town team in 1924. Spectators by the hundreds in close proximity to Bertha swelled the population of the town to five and ten times its size on Sundays to see the noted Negro in action. He burned them over the plate while in Bertha uniform and the town got behind Donaldson and made him a lucrative offer to pitch the following season. Donaldson accepted and had another very successful year." This season, however, he transferred his services to Lismore which town made him an exceedingly flattering offer to play and captain the team there. Just as Bertha became baseball mad with the coming of Donaldson, so is Lismore all excited."

John also pitched one game for Alexandria MN against the House of David team, losing a 2 to 1 decision. Therefore, John's total pitching record for 1926 was 13 wins and 17 losses.

John had a very good year at the plate for the Lismore team as he led all players in batting average. John had 78 hits in 174 official at bats for a .448 average, which was 145 points above than the next highest player, and much better than his batting average from 1925. John's hits included 2 home runs, 5 triples, 12 doubles, and 61 singles. Unfortunately the information provided by the Lismore newspaper is not detailed enough to give accurate estimates of the number of times John walked or struck out.

Highlights of the 1926 season included many "big" games and a number of games against traveling teams. Lismore played "Doc" Juel's Ellsworth Minnesota team 7 times during the season and won the series 4 games to 3. John won 1 game against "Doc" Juel plus one game against "Smokey" Joe Lutz, and lost 1 game against Doc Juel. In one win against the Ellsworth team John battled Lutz over 12 innings for an 18 strikeout, 6 to 3 win. John also went 4 for 5, including a double and a sacrifice, in this game.



John Donaldson is shown in this photograph from 1926 with “Smokey” Joe Lutz (left) and “Doc” Juel (right). Joe Lutz and “Doc” Juel played for Ellsworth, Minnesota against the Lismore Gophers. The photograph is courtesy of Ms. Coletta Voss of Lismore, Minnesota.

Five thousand people attended a game at Fairmont Minnesota when the Lismore team lost to Gilkerson's Union Giants team out of Chicago. "Lefty" Wilson (a.k.a. Dave Brown) pitched the game for the Giants while John pitched the last 4 innings for the Gophers. The Lismore team defeated the Pipestone Minnesota Black Sox (an all black

player ball team) three times during the season. The Gophers split a two game series with the all black player Tennessee Rats team and they lost a two game series to the all black player Chips All Stars team out of Lone Rock Iowa. Other major two game series were played against the semi-professional team from Watertown South Dakota and the St. Paul Saints American Association League team.

The Lismore team lost two close games to the Watertown South Dakota team that had "Swede" Risberg, the former Chicago White Sox player, on their roster and they lost one close and one not so close game to the St. Paul team that had George Pipgrass, the future New York Yankee pitcher, on their roster. Another interesting game took place at Slayton, Minnesota on July 29 against the Joliet, Illinois All-Star Champion Prison ball team supposedly composed of conditional parole men and trustees. John pitched in this 5-inning rainout 1 - 1 tie game and # 4086 pitched for the prison team.

Newspapers of the 1920s generally contained a section devoted to the activities of local residents and the Lismore paper carried news about the Donaldson's in this so called "Local People" column. The July 16th newspaper reported that, "J. W. Donaldson, accompanied by his adopted son, Clifford, returned here Tuesday. John was at Moose Jaw, Canada, where he pitched for Moose Jaw on Friday and Saturday." A paragraph from the August 27th edition stated, "Our pitcher, J. W. Donaldson, motored to Alexandria, Minn., Saturday where on Sunday Donaldson pitched ball for the Alexandria team against the House of David team and was defeated before a crowd of 4,000 fans, the score being 2 to 1. He returned home Tuesday afternoon." The September 3rd newspaper reported, "Clifton Watson was honored at a farewell party last Friday afternoon at the John Donaldson home when a number of his friends pleasantly surprised him. The merrymakers enjoyed an afternoon of fun after which light refreshments were

served. Clifton, who has been making his home with Mr. and Mrs. John Donaldson the past summer departed Saturday evening via Adrian for Kansas City where he will attend school." And finally, the October 8th newspaper reported, "Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Donaldson, the latter who has been pitching ball for the Lismore Gophers the past season, departed Friday for Minneapolis where they will make their home this winter."

The Lismore newspaper did not mention the financial status of the team for the year. The only note regarding finances comes from the Bertha Herald of December 2nd which reported the Lismore club "cashed in more than \$10,000 last year".

Games Played in 1926 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 2	vs Ellsworth at Lismore	Lost 6 - 5 *
	13 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 5 at bat	
May 13	vs Remsen IA at Lismore	Won 2 - 1 *
	12 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 11 innings, 2 for 4 at bat	
May 16	vs Sioux City Stockyards at Sioux City	Lost 6 - 2 *
	3 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 8 innings, 0 for 4 at bat	
May 23	vs Tracy at Tracy	Won 5 - 2 *
	5 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 6 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat	
May 30	vs Ellsworth at Ellsworth	Won 8 - 3 *
	10 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 at bat	
May 31	vs Chips All Stars at Fulda	Lost 9 - 2 *
	0 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 6 hits in 2 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)	
June 6	vs Clarkfield at Clarkfield`	Won 12 - 5 *
	10 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 10 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 3 at bat	
June 18	vs Clarkfield at Lismore	Lost 1 - 0 *

12 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 2 hits in 10 innings, 9 inning no-hitter, lost game
in 10th inning, 2 for 4 at bat

June 25 vs Spencer IA at Fox Lake IA Lost 11 - 9 *

7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 17 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (2 triples)

June 27 vs Merrill IA at Lismore Lost 3 - 2 *

8 Strikeouts, 1 Walks, 5 hits in 11 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (triple), 1 run
scored

July 3 vs Tracy at Fulda Won 8 - 3 *

? Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 2 hits in 5 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double), 1 run
scored, 2000 fans at game

July 4 vs Gilkerson's Union Giants at Fairmont Lost 6 - 1

2 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 3 hits in 4 innings, 0 for 4 at bat, Lefty Wilson
pitched for Union Giants

July 5 vs Pipestone Black Sox at Jasper Won 17 - 5

8 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 1 hit in 4 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (home run)

July 11 vs Spencer IA at Arnolds Park IA Lost 12 - 6

(John did not play)

July 14 vs Pipestone Black Sox at White SD Won 16 - 0

8 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 0 hits in 3 innings, ? for ? at bat

July 15 vs Ellsworth at Chandler Won 6 - 3 *

18 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 7 hits in 12 innings, 4 for 5 at bat (double)

July 17 vs Cherokee IA at Cherokee Won 5 - 2

John played center field, 2 for 4 at bat

July 18 vs Cherokee IA at Cherokee Lost 5 - 4 *

6 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 8 innings, 1 for 4 at bat

July 25 vs Merrill IA at Lismore Lost 5 - 1 *

14 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 11 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

July 29 vs Joliet Prison All-Stars at Slayton Tie 1 - 1 *

5 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 4 hits in 5 innings (rain out after 5 innings), 1 run scored, no box score detail, John got one triple

August 1 vs Clarkfield at Clarkfield Lost 3 - 1 *

7 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 10 hits in 8 innings, 0 for 3 at bat

August 4 vs Pipestone Black Sox at Lismore Won 9 - 0

(forfeit in 7th inning – both teams claimed victory)

August 8 vs Ellsworth at Ellsworth Lost 1 - 0 *

15 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 8 innings, 1 for 4 at bat, Doc Juel pitched for Ellsworth

August 15 vs Balaton at Lismore Won 2 - 0 *

17 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 3 at bat

August 18 vs Sioux City Stockyards at Garretson SD Lost 3 - 2 *

12 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 2 for ? at bat (triple, double)

August 19 vs Ellsworth at Wilmont Won 9 – 7

John played center field, 2 for 4 at bat (double)

August 20 vs LeMars IA at Edgerton Lost 3 – 1

2 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 1 hit in 3 innings, cf, 2 for 4 at bat, 1 run scored

August 22 vs Ivanhoe at Ivanhoe Lost 3 - 0

(John played at Alexandria)

August 25 vs Ellsworth at Luverne Lost 3 – 2

2 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 2 hits in 3 innings, 3 for 4 at bat (triple)

August 26 vs Watertown SD at Brookings SD Lost 11 - 8 *

7 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 11 hits in 8 innings, 4 for 5 at bat (3 doubles)
(Risberg for Watertown)

August 29 vs Tracy at Tracy Won 6 - 0 *

15 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat

Sept 2 vs Remsen IA at Remsen Won 7 - 1 *

8 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 2 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (double)

Sept 5 vs Ellsworth at Lismore Won 3 - 0

Did not pitch, left field, 1 for 4 at bat

Sept 6 vs Ivanhoe at Flandreau SD Won 8 - 0 *

8 Strikeouts, no information on Walks, 3 hits in 8 innings, 2 for 4 at bat
(double, triple)

Sept 8 vs Tennessee Rats at Brewster Won 14 - 4

Did not pitch

Sept 9 vs Tennessee Rats at Slayton Lost 2 - 1 *

8 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat

Sept 12 vs Chips All-Stars at Parker SD Lost 8 - 3

Did not pitch, 2 for 4 at bat (double)

Sept 14 vs Ellsworth at Garretson SD Lost 4 - 2 *

9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

Sept 17 vs Ellsworth at Worthington Won 5 - 2

5 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 4 innings, 3 for 4 at bat (double and triple)

Sept 21 vs Minneota All-Stars at Minneota Won 4 - 0 *

20 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 7 at bat

Sept 23 vs Ivanhoe at Pipestone Won 2 - 1 *

8 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 2 hits in 6 innings, 1 for 4 at bat

Sept 26 vs Watertown SD at Watertown Lost 1 - 0 *

11 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 4 hits in 8 innings, 1 for 4 at bat
(Risberg for Watertown)

October 7 vs St. Paul American Association Team at Flandreau Lost 4 - 2

? Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits in 5 innings, 0 for 4 at bat; 1 run scored, no
other information from Lismore or Flandreau papers

October 8 vs St. Paul American Association Team at Worthington Lost 14 - 6

? Strikeouts, ? Walks, ? hits in 4 innings, 1 for 5 at bat (double)

Games played for teams other than Lismore:

July 8 for Moose Jaw SK vs Plentywood MT Won 2 - 1 *

10 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 9 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat, (Risberg for
Plentywood)

July 10 for Moose Jaw vs Regina SK Lost 10 - 9 *

15 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 17 hits in 11 innings, 2 for 5 at bat

August 22 for Alexandria vs House of David Lost 2 - 1 *

12 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 8 innings, 2 for 3 at bat

Bertha Fishermen 1927

John arrived in Bertha during the second week in March of 1927. The local newspaper reported, “John W. Donaldson arrived home for the basketball tournament last week and will remain here until the latter part of the month before returning to Minneapolis to look up some baseball supplies for the Bertha baseballists.” The

newspaper of March 31 reported, “Pitcher John W. Donaldson, of the Bertha 1927 baseball team, left for the cities last Thursday and Manager Ernest A. Fisher went down Monday of this week to meet Donaldson and catcher Foreman, and the three will examine the new suits ordered and ready-made for shipment, and will purchase bats and other supplies so as to be ready to take the field against the St. Paul Armours on May 1, 1927.” John and Foreman returned to Bertha on April 11 and practices began with the team to prepare for the season opener on May 1.

The Bertha team of 1927 was an all-salaried team with John as the main pitcher, Sylvester “Hooks” Foreman (a former All-Nations player) as the catcher, Plummer 1b, Briere 2b, Wald ss, Stapleton 3b, with Weinke, Gregerson and Johnson in the outfield. Thies and Anderson were reserve players. As Glenn Johnson of Bertha indicated in an interview, it was very difficult to find a catcher who was good enough to catch a pitcher of major league caliber like John Donaldson. John brought along Sylvester Foreman, an individual with whom John had played before, to perform the catching duties for the Bertha team.

Bertha lost the first game of the season to the Armours team of St. Paul, Minnesota by the score of 7 to 5 but the Bertha team went on to win 22 of the remaining 25 games in the season. The Bertha team finished the season with a record of 22 wins against 4 losses and John’s pitching record for the Bertha baseball team was 20 wins against 4 losses. The Armours team of St. Paul was the state of Minnesota semi-professional baseball champion of 1926 so the Bertha team started out against some strong competition. Over 2,500 adults were in attendance at this first game giving gate receipts of \$988, which were split on a 60% for the winner - 40% for the loser basis.

Fans from as far away as New Ulm, Duluth, and Wahpeton, North Dakota were in attendance. One automobile in the crowd had a 1927 State of New York license tag.



This is a photograph of the Bertha, Minnesota Fishermen baseball team of 1927. John Donaldson is shown in the back row second from the right and Sylvester "Hooks" Foreman is shown in the first row, first on the left. The photograph is courtesy of the Bertha Historical Society and Mr. Glenn Johnson.

The Bertha baseball team was again a financial success. The newspapers do not give specific information about the profit that was made, but no doubt was left that money was made. The newspaper of October 13 from Long Prairie reported, "About fifty persons gathered at the Bertha creamery last week on Thursday evening to hear the financial report of the Bertha Baseball Committee. Reporters had to take the oath of keeping your mouth shut and hand from writing, but the rousing cheers that followed the

reading would give free exit to the fear of an assessment. That Bertha had a real baseball committee, which ran the affairs in real business fashion was known right along, but that they could have accumulated a good lump sum to start the 1928 season on was an uncertainty until the report had been read and the Ostrich Nest Egg shown. Let it not be forgotten that the entire 1927 Good-Will Guarantee Fund was returned to the donors, not in figures but in dollars, and the Ostrich Nest Egg was not touched.”

One big change for the Bertha team during the 1927 season was that the team only played 12 of its 26 games at Bertha. Some of the biggest games of the year (those against well know traveling teams) were actually played on neutral diamonds. For example, the Bertha team played one game with the Northern Pacific Railroad team at Breckenridge, Minnesota and another game was played at Melrose, Minnesota. Two games with the St. Paul Armourers were played at Whapeton, North Dakota, one game with Gilkerson’s Union Giants was played at Bemidji, Minnesota, and one game with the House of David team was played at Little Falls, Minnesota. It was a good business decision to play some of these games in larger towns but it must have been a little bit disheartening to baseball fans in Bertha that they would have to travel to other towns to see their team play.



This is a photograph of the Bertha, Minnesota Fishermen baseball team of 1927. John Donaldson is shown fifth from the left and Sylvester “Hooks” Foreman is shown third from the right. The photograph is courtesy of the Bertha Historical Society and Mr. Glenn Johnson.

John pitched in 27 of the 28 games that Bertha played during the 1927 season, for a total of 218 innings. John had 9-inning complete games in 22 of the 27 games in which he pitched. Another one of the complete games was a 12-inning contest and in the other four games in which John pitched he relieved the starting pitcher for 2 innings at the end of the game. Other pitchers used by the Bertha team included “Lefty” Henry, Lamson, William Ross, Thias, and “Lefty” Wilson. A report in the local newspaper stated, “Manager Ernie Fisher was relieved of considerable anxiety when he received a message this Wednesday morning that William Ross, colored, was coming to assist Donaldson in the two games with the Armours at Wahpeton, North Dakota, July 3 and 4. Ross, whose

home is in Cleveland, Ohio is one of the strong pitchers in the Colored League and is now playing with his team in Kansas City.”

John pitched a no hit, no run, one-walk game on September 5 against Fargo, North Dakota. Opposing teams scored 54 runs when John was pitching (average 2.2 runs per 9 innings).

One other interesting bit of baseball news regarding John Donaldson during the summer of 1927 involved a game played between Albany and Holdingford, Minnesota, on July 2 at the Stearns County Fair in Sauk Center, Minnesota. A large advertisement in the Long Prairie newspaper gave prominent notice that John Donaldson would be the umpire for this game. One could probably count on one hand the number of times a person of African-American background umpired a game between two teams of all Caucasian players in 1927. The fact that John was the featured umpire for this game says a great deal about how people felt about John as a person of integrity, and how much people trusted him as an individual.

Games Played in 1927 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 1	vs St. Paul Armour's at Bertha	Lost 7 - 5 *
	12 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 7 hits in 12 innings, 2 for 6 at bat (double), 1 run scored	
May 15	vs Battle Lake at Bertha	Won 7 - 2 *
	9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 8 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double), 2 runs scored	
May 22	vs Pelican Rapids at Pelican Rapids	Won 15 - 4 *
	14 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 11 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (all singles), 4 runs scored	

May 29	vs Skwere's Billiards of St. Paul at Bertha	Won 9 – 8
	4 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 0 hits in 2 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (double), 1 run scored	
May 30	vs Skwere's Billiards at Bertha	Won 10 - 3 *
	4 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat, (two singles), 1 run scored	
June 5	vs Battle Lake at Battle Lake	Won 6 - 4 *
	19 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 4 for 4 at bat (double), 1 run scored	
June 12	vs New York Mills at Bertha	Won 10 – 0 *
	11 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 2 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat (triple), 1 run scored	
June 23	vs Belle Plaine at Belle Plaine	Won 3 – 1 *
	10 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 3 at bat, 1 run scored	
June 26	vs Northern Pacific Team at Breckenridge	Won 1 – 0 *
	7 Strikeouts, ?Walks, ?hits in 9 innings, 2 hits, 1 run scored	
	Completed 43 innings with only 1 unearned run	
June 28	vs Northern Pacific Team at Melrose	Won 7 – 0 *
	8 Strikeouts, 1Walk, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 2 at bat (double), 1 run scored	
June 30	vs House of David at Bertha	Won 2 – 0 *
	7 Strikeouits, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 9 innings 1 for 3 at bat (single), 0 runs scored	
July 3	vs St. Paul Armour's at Wahpeton ND	Won 5 – 4

John played cf, 0 for 5 at bat, 11-inning game, Ross pitched for Bertha

July 4 vs St. Paul Armour's at Wahpeton ND Lost 4 – 3 *

8 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (singles), 1 run scored, over 3000 fans at game

July 10 vs McCoy-Nolan Colored Giants at Bertha Won 5 – 1 *

12 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat

July 17 vs McCoy-Nolan Colored Giants at Bertha Won 3 – 1 *

7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

July 24 vs St. Paul Armour's at Bertha Won 17 – 0*

6 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 9 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (2 doubles)

July 31 vs Alexandria at Alexandria Won 3 – 0*

12 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat (single)

August 7 vs Belle Plaine at Bertha Won 7 – 6*

7 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 6 at bat (single)

August 14 vs Gilkerson's Union Giants at Bertha Won 8 – 2*

5 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 8 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (singles)

August 21 vs Belle Plaine at Melrose Won 6 – 3*

3 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 1 hit, 0 runs in 2 innings, cf, 4 for 5 at bat (2 doubles)

August 24 vs Gilkerson's Union Giants at Bemidji Won 5 – 3*

14 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 10 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 at bat (singles)

August 27 vs House of David at Little Falls Won 1 – 0*

1 Strikeout, 0 Walks, 1 hit, 0 runs in 2 innings, 3 for 4 at bat (singles), Lefty Wilson pitched 7 innings for Bertha and earned the win for Bertha,

6000 people were at this game, a celebration for Charles Lindberg upon his return to Little Falls after the transatlantic flight.

- August 28 vs Alexandria at Alexandria Won 23 – 0*
11 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 4 for 6 at bat (2 doubles)
- September 4 vs Fargo-Moorhead Twins at Fargo Won 7 – 2
1 Strikeout, 0 Walks, 0 hits, 0 runs in 2 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (double)
- September 5 vs Fargo-Moorhead Twins at Fargo Won 1 – 0*
9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 0 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat (single)
- September 11 vs Southern Minnesota All-Stars at Long Prairie Lost 4 – 3*
7 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 12 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (singles), John pitched his third game in one week
- September 18 vs Hutchinson at Hutchinson Won 11 – 8*
9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 10 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (singles)
- September 25 vs Belle Plaine All-Stars at Bertha Lost 4 – 1*
12 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 7 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat (single)

Games for teams other than Bertha:

- July 19 for Moose Jaw vs Ponteix Won 9 – 2 *
6 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 4 at bat (double), 2 runs scored
- July 20 for Moose Jaw vs Gravelburg Won 7 – 2 *
John played 1st base in this game, 2 for 4 at bat (double), 2 runs scored
- July 20 for Moose Jaw vs Regina Won 4 – 3 *
2 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 2 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat (single), 1 run scored, Championship Game of Tournament

September 8 for Lismore vs Tracy at Slayton

Won 3 – 2*

10 Ks, 1 W, 4 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (singles)

Melrose Legion Team 1928

John started the 1928 season playing for Scobey, Montana and Scobey defeated Melrose 3 to 0 before approximately 2000 fans at Melrose on May 6. In the years that Scobey had an all-salaried club the team would start out in Minnesota and work their way west, playing games until they reached Scobey in late May. John did not remain with the Scobey team however and the May 17 Melrose newspaper carried an article indicating that John was coming to play with Melrose. No information is available regarding John's contract terms and the information presented here regarding the 1928 season comes only from the Melrose newspaper.

A letter to the editor in the May 17 Melrose newspaper, reprinted in part below, is very enlightening in regard to the drawing power of John Donaldson.

"Dear Editor: You had a very good, attractive base ball game at Melrose Sunday, May 6th. I say the game was attractive, for it had the great and mighty John Donaldson in it and, of course, he mowed down the Melrose batters fair, square and decisive. That is just what I thot would happen when I heard that Donaldson with his Montana tribe would appear at Melrose for a game. But I cannot see why the Melrose management did not hire Donaldson as the pitcher of the Melrose team. Even if they had to pay him big money for his services. Just look what a big attraction he is, the large crowd of people that turn out to see him. Why, I am sure this would have filled the money-drawers of the Melrose ball team to overflowing.

"For what good does an otherwise first class ball team do if it cannot draw the big crowds? Two-thirds of the attendance at Melrose wanted to see Donaldson, the great.

They did not come because they wanted to see the Melrose or Scobey ball teams, but they wanted to see Donaldson, the master of base ball.

"I saw him last year in both games played at Melrose by him and the Bertha team. In the second game when Lefty Henry pitched seven innings for the Bertha team, there sat alongside of me two men who motored all the way from North Dakota just to see Donaldson pitch, and they felt greatly disappointed when he did not pitch. Of course, they rejoiced when they saw him running the bases and playing centerfield in such grand, wonderful fashion. And when he finally in the eighth inning took the mound and pitched in his own masterful way, their joy knew no bounds nor end. They told me that this was the treat of their lifetime.

"I cannot see why the Melrose people let him go when they had the opportunity to hire him. For he is the master of the base ball game. I also saw him in the game at Sauk Centre last summer when he first let the opposing team forge ahead, but the Bertha team tied the score in the ninth inning. Then came the tenth inning. I shall never forget such pitching as he preformed then. Why, he just mowed down the first three batters up with his fast ball. The ball came so fast they could not see it coming, but swung their bats at it when the catcher held it in his glove already.

"And what a great centerfielder Donaldson is! Babe Ruth plays centerfield and, while he is a great centerfielder, yet he cannot run as speedy and cover so much ground as can John Donaldson. Anybody that saw both of them play will admit this. Those two North Dakota men said that he alone was worth the price of admission, that he alone played the whole game.

"I hope he will come again this summer to Melrose. We will turn out to see him again. Had he played with the Melrose Club, I am sure he would have been quite an inspiration to the young men and boys of Melrose. All great men and women are inspirations to the youths. Here is hoping that the American Legion boys of Melrose will

arrange another game with Donaldson's Scobey, Montana, team. Yours truly, Gustave Riedel.”

Melrose started the 1928 season in grand fashion after John became a member of the team. After losing their first two games prior to John's arrival, the team won 7 consecutive games after he joined the team. John pitched in 6 of the 7 consecutive wins and he was the winning pitcher in 5 of the games.

The season turned sour after the win streak however as the team won only 6 of the next 15 games. John compiled a record of 2 wins and 4 losses over this stretch but he only pitched in 8 of the 15 games. John was released from the Melrose team on August 27 and he played several games for Arlington, Minnesota, including one game against Melrose, until Arlington ended its season.

The Melrose team seems to have endured a significant amount of turmoil during the season as exemplified by the fact that 30 different players occupied a spot in the lineup at some point during the season. Only 3 players who started with the team finished out the season with Melrose. Although John compiled a record of 7 wins and 4 losses playing for Melrose, he was utilized on the mound only sparingly between July 16 and August 26, when he pitched only 22 innings over a 10-game span. Some of the newspaper articles indicated that John did not have much zip on his pitches and he did not look like the Donaldson of previous years. John did injure an ankle while warming up for a game on June 24 and it was after this game that John's pitching started to suffer. Any injury to the ankle, such as a sprain, would certainly affect a pitcher and at age 38 it could have taken a significant amount of time for a sprained ankle to heal and allow normal movement on the pitching mound.

In a game against Bertha on June 20 John pitched against “Lefty” Wilson (A.K.A. Dave “Lefty” Brown). James A. Riley indicates in his Biographical Encyclopedia of Negro League Baseball that the name "Lefty" Wilson was really an alias used by Dave "Lefty" Brown who pitched for the Chicago American Giants from 1918 to 1922 under manager Rube Foster and the New York Lincoln Giants in 1923 and 1924. Riley reports that Brown compiled regular season records of 10 - 2 in 1920, 11 - 3 in 1921, and 8 - 3 in 1922 while pitching the American Giants to the first three Negro National League championships. Playing for the Santa Clara team of the Cuban winter league in 1923-24 Brown posted a 7 - 3 won-loss record, for what Riley states some consider the greatest Cuban team of all time.

Dave Brown allegedly left New York just before the start of the 1925 season after becoming involved in an argument over cocaine and murdering a man during a barroom fight. With the FBI searching for him, Dave "Lefty" Brown came to the Minnesota - Iowa - South Dakota area where he went by the aliases of "Lefty" or “Smokey” Wilson, and plied his trade as a pitcher for hire to any team able to pay the price. Wilson played some games in 1926 for an all African-American player team out of Pipestone, Minnesota and in 1927 he played for a team from Wanda, Minnesota. The Melrose newspaper of June 21, 1928 indicated “opposed to Donaldson was “Smoky” Wilson and these two colored stars gave an exhibition of pitching skill such as is seen only in the big leagues.”

John’s pitching record for the Melrose team was 7 wins and 4 losses and his record for the season, including games with other teams, was 8 wins and 5 losses. John pitched 101 total innings for Melrose striking out 64 batters (5.7 per 9 innings), walking

14 (1.2 per 9 innings) and giving up 100 hits (8.9 per 9 innings). John got 28 hits for Melrose including 1 double and 2 triples in 78 at bats for a .359 batting average.

There is a report that John played for Gilkerson's Union Giants in the championship game of a baseball tournament at Rock Lake, North Dakota. Dave Shurry, President of the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame was kind enough to provide an article (Some Baseball around Climax, written by Gil Cosgrove) from a Saskatchewan Hall of Fame publication that referred to the 1928 International Peach (sic) Gardens Tournament at Rock Lake, North Dakota. Twenty-three teams were supposedly entered in the tournament. One of the teams, and the favorite in the tournament, was from Virden and this team was reported to have both Swede Risberg and Happy Felsch on the roster. Another team entered in the tournament was Gilkerson's Union Giants out of Chicago. The tournament had two brackets and Virden, which won all of its games by a wide margin and played nearly flawless ball, won the top bracket while the Union Giants, who committed a good number of errors and played just good enough to win their games, won the other bracket.

Cosgrove indicated that 15,000 people turned out to watch the championship game between Virden and the Union Giants and as the two owners talked about the upcoming game, Ralph Glass bet Gilkerson \$500 that Virden would win the championship game. As the teams warmed up before the game, the players from Virden noticed that there were two players on the Giants team that they had not seen in any of the previous games. Risberg and Felsch approached the Giants side of the field to see if they could recognize the new players and they then reported back to Ralph Glass that the new players were John Donaldson and LeRoy "Satchel" Paige. Paige reportedly pitched the first seven innings and Donaldson reportedly took over for the remaining two innings

and finished the game. Virden is said to have lost the game and the championship, 11 – 0, and therefore, Glass lost his bet.

A researcher has to wonder how accurate some of the reports are about baseball games that took place almost 80 years ago, and were being related by people who had to search their minds for 70-year old memories of these activities. In the case of the purported 1928 game at Rock Lake, North Dakota, no information on a tournament as described by Cosgrove could be located in the Cando, North Dakota, Record, the official newspaper of Towner County for 1928. Cando had a very good baseball team during the 1928 season. They played Gilkerson's Union Giants several times as well as the House of David team and the team from Scobey, Montana. If a tournament was held in the local area during 1928 then one would expect the Cando team would have been involved in the tournament and the Cando Record to have reported on the games as they did for all other games.

Donaldson was in the general area for some time during 1928 as the Melrose team played a four-game series against Plentywood, Montana at Winnipeg, Manitoba during the middle of July (July 10 through July 13). The Cando, North Dakota Record indicated that a tournament involving the Union Giants, Verdi, Manitoba, Rolette North Dakota, Omemee North Dakota, and Cando North Dakota was scheduled at Rock Lake, Manitoba (not Rock Lake, North Dakota) for July 23 and the Crystal City, Manitoba Courier reported that the Union Giants won this tournament by beating Virden in the championship game. The Crystal City newspaper of July 26, 1928 carried a short article about the game between the Union Giants and Virden. The article indicated that about 4,000 fans attended the game, it seemed to indicate that Virden had reached the championship game by winning their side of the tournament, and it indicated that more

teams were involved in the tournament that just the five teams reported by the Cando, North Dakota Record. However, the Courier did not provide any details about the score of the game or about any of the players for either team.

John played in a game at Melrose, Minnesota on July 22 so it would have been impossible for him to have played for the Union Giants at Rock Lake, Manitoba on July 23 (it is approximately 390 miles from Melrose, Minnesota to Rock Lake, Manitoba). Two other important points are that “Happy” Felsch was playing for the Plentywood, Montana team during the 1928 season so it was not until the 1929 season that Felsch and Risberg played together on the team from Virden, Manitoba, and the International Peace Gardens (not Peach Gardens as related in the Gosgrove article) was not dedicated until 1932. Personal communication with the International Peace Gardens indicated that no baseball fields were present on the property prior to establishment of the Gardens and there never have been baseball fields at the Gardens.

Was this tournament played during the 1929 season? Donaldson was playing for the Colored House of David during the 1929 season so he could have joined up with the Union Giants for a game or two. Again, the Cando Record, as well as the Cando Herald (yes, the small town of Cando did have two newspapers in the 1920s) did not carry any information about a baseball tournament at Rock Lake, North Dakota, and a reference to a baseball tournament at Rock Lake, Manitoba in late July, although referencing the Union Giants as the winner of the tournament, also indicated that only about 5 teams took part in the tournament and the Virden team was eliminated during the first game by Brandon, Manitoba.

The Union Giants won a tournament on July 11, 1929 that was hosted by Virden, but again the Virden team did not play against the Union Giants and in fact did not finish

in the money for the tournament. The Cando, North Dakota Record indicated that the Union Giants had won 3 other tournaments prior to the tournament at Rock Lake, Manitoba in 1929 but no information was given on either of these tournaments.

A game that has many similarities to the Virden – Union Giants game as reported by Cosgrove, and in fact probably is the game reported by Cosgrove, was held as part of the International Baseball Tournament in Virden, Manitoba in 1928. The team from Virden lost in the first round of this eight team tournament but the team from Plentywood, Montana, with “Happy” Felsch as the lead player for their team, did play against the Union Giants in the semi-final round of the tournament. The Virden newspaper reported, “We heard that the managers of these teams wagered a couple of hundred dollars on the outcome of this game just to give the players added interest. It was a great game, probably the best ever witnessed in western Canada. At time there was a great stillness as the vast crowd (estimated at over 7,000 people) was held tense and almost breathless, at other time brilliant plays were enthusiastically applauded.” The Union Giants won the game by a score of 6 to 4.

Swede could have joined Felsch and the team from Plentywood, Montana for this particular tournament. If Swede was playing for Lee Dellage’s Cubans at this time he would have played in a game against Felsch and the Plentywood team on July 22 at Plentywood. Swede could have joined the Plentywood team for the tournament in Virden and maybe for additional games as the team from Plentywood went on a barnstorming trip through North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa to end the season.

John Donaldson could have joined Gilkerson’s Union Giants for this game of the tournament as all of the games for the tournament were played on July 26. John played

for Melrose in an evening game against the Union Giants in Melrose, Minnesota on July 22 and the next game he played for Melrose was on July 29 at Lake Shetek, Minnesota. John could have traveled with the Union Giants to Virden, he could have played in the tournament game against the team from Plentwood, Montana on July 26, and then he could have returned to Minnesota to play for Melrose on July 29.

I believe that the scenario for the tournament on July 26, 1928 in Virden, Manitoba that I have outlined above, is in fact the most realistic scenario for Swede Risberg and “Happy” Felsch to have played in a game against John Donaldson and LeRoy “Satchel” Paige. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this time to document with certainty that Risberg, Felsch, Donaldson, and Paige did actually play in the same game. However, if these four individuals did play together in a game at Virden on July 26, 1928, what a game that must have been!

The Virden newspaper allows one to get a sense of the interest in baseball in Virden in 1928. A report on the tournament stated, “The weather was just right, warm, calm, with the sun shaded by fleeting clouds. The committee did not permit any cars to be parked in the grounds until the morning of the games. The ticket sale started at 7 a.m. and there was a line-up of autos several blocks long to greet the ticket takers when they went on duty. Some took their position the night before and slept in their cars, others took positions in the waiting line as early as 4 a.m. with the idea of getting places of advantage around the diamond. By 8 a.m. there were over one hundred cars on the grounds and by 6 p.m. the number of autos in the grounds was estimated at over 1,200. It was a wonderful crowd to gather in a town of less than 1,500. Over 4,000 paid admission at the gate, children went in free and there were many of them. A conservative estimate places the attendance at 7,000. The crowd came from all parts of the country including

our own province, Saskatchewan, North Dakota and Montana. We know some came 275 miles and expressed satisfaction in coming. They were here from Regina, Winnipeg and nearly all points in between as well as from points north and south.”

Games Played in 1928 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 13	vs Bertha at Melrose (w/o Donaldson)	Lost 7 – 1
	Did not play in game	
May 20	vs Scobey at Breckenridge	Won 7 - 3 *
	7 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 12 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat	
May 27	vs Fargo-Moorhead at Moorhead	Won 5 - 0 *
	2 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 8 hits in 9 innings, 80 total pitches, 1 for 5 at bat	
May 30	vs Fergus Falls at Melrose	Won 3 – 2
	3 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 6 hits, 2 runs in 6 innings, then 1b, 1 for 4 at bat	
June 3	vs New York Mills at Melrose	Won 6 - 0 *
	4 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 7 innings, 2 for 3 at bat (triple)	
June 10	vs Wadena at Melrose	Won 5 - 0 *
	9 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 9 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 4 at bat	
June 14	vs New York Mills at NY Mills	Won 4 – 1
	Did not pitch, 1b, 1 for 4 at bat	
June 17	vs Bertha at Bertha	Won 5 - 4 *
	12 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 3 at bat	
June 24	vs Fargo-Moorhead at Moorhead	Lost 2 – 0
	Did not pitch, Injured during pre-game warm-ups, entered game in bottom of the 6 th inning at 1b, 0 for 1 at bat	
June 30	vs Cold Spring at Melrose	Lost 6 - 4 *

7 Strikeouts, 6 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

July 4 vs Little Falls at Little Falls Lost 5 - 0 *

1 Strikeout, 1 Walk, 11 hits, 5 runs in 7 innings, 0 for 2 at bat

July 8 vs Little Falls at Melrose Won 5 - 2 *

1 Strikeout, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat

July 10 vs Plentywood MT at Winnipeg Canada Lost 4 - 0

1b, 2 for 4 at bat (singles), no runs scored

July 12 vs Plentywood at Winnipeg Lost 9 - 7

no decision in game, 2 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 3 hits, 4 runs in 3 innings, 1b,
cf, 1 for 4 at bat (single), 0 runs scored

July 13 vs Plentywood at Winnipeg Won 6 - 4

Did not pitch, rf, 2 for 4 at bat (double, single), 1 run scored

July 13 vs Plentywood at Winnipeg Lost 7 - 3

Did not pitch, 0 for 1 at bat, batted only in 9th inning as a pinch hitter

July 15 vs House of David at Melrose Won 11 - 10 *

2 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 5 hits, 2 runs in 4-2/3 innings, 1 for 2 at bat

July 22 vs Colored Giants at Melrose Won 27 - 3

Did not pitch, cf, 2 for 5 at bat

July 29 vs Lismore at Lake Shetek Won 7 - 3

Did not pitch, cf, 1 for 4 at bat (triple)

August 5 vs Little Falls at Melrose Lost 5 - 2 *

6 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 7 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 5 at bat

August 12 vs House of David at Melrose Lost 6 - 1 *

8 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 15 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

August 25 vs Bertha at Long Prairie Won 3 – 2
0 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 1 hit, 2 runs in 1 inning (1st), rf, 2 for 4 at bat, \$600
purse at Todd County Fair

August 26 vs Gilkerson's Union Giants at St. Cloud Lost 3 – 1
Did not pitch, lf, 1 for 4 at bat

Games for Teams Other Than Melrose

May 6 vs Melrose for Scobey MT at Melrose Won 3 - 0 *

5 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat

Sept 3 vs Melrose for Arlington MN at Melrose Lost 6 - 2 *

1 Strikeout, 0 Walks in 9 innings, 1 for 4 at bat

Colored House of David 1929

In 1929 John played with a team called the Colored House of David, supposedly out of Havana Cuba. In reality, none of the players were from Cuba and all had been playing for various Minnesota and Iowa ball clubs since the early 1920s. No detailed information is available at this time because the team did not have a hometown newspaper that provided game results.

St. Cloud Saints 1930

Although the St. Cloud newspaper of May 2nd indicated that the baseball team from Cold Spring was trying to work out a contract with Donaldson, the St. Cloud Saints team picked up John in early May. The newspaper of May 8th indicated that "Manager Tony Nystuen has signed the battery for his St. Cloud semi-pro team and today announced that John Donaldson had come to terms and had affixed his name to the papers." The paper continued, "In addition to being a first class twirler, Donaldson is a dangerous hitter. Last week he turned in a two hit game and has been doing considerable

pitching in independent circles this season. Toward the close of last season he turned in a victory over Little Falls, one of the few reversals for that club last year."

Almost immediately some conflicting stories regarding John's contract appeared in the local newspaper. An article in the May 14th newspaper stated, "Manager Nystuen has announced that John Donaldson, colored mound artist, has no contract with the St. Cloud team but is being hired by the week. He has been told that he must deliver the goods consistently if he wishes to remain on the payroll." The idea of "delivering the goods" did not just apply to Donaldson. An article in the May 20th newspaper stated, "Manager Nystuen has determined to give St. Cloud a winning ball club and has hired his players with the understanding that they will become free agents immediately if they cannot deliver the goods this city is entitled to. No season's contracts have been signed and there are possible changes in mind if the starting line-up appears weak in any department."

Other players initially signed to the St. Cloud team included Earl Plummer (1b), "Fats" Nordly (ss), "Turk" Eiffert (c), Petey Brier (2b), McLaughlin (cf), Scherohman (lf), Gray (rf), Anderson (3b), and Herman Woock (p). Earl Plummer had played for Bertha in previous years and he also played with Swede Risberg and Happy Felsch in 1929, while Nordly played with Risberg for the Rochester team in 1926. Brier and Eiffert had played for the St. Cloud semi-pro team in previous years and Eiffert was described by the local newspaper as "the only St. Cloud man in the lineup" and "one of the best obtainable catchers in the state". Herman "Mutt" Woock was a baseball coach at Crosby-Ironton high school who had previously pitched in both the Canadian and Eastern leagues. An article in the St. Cloud newspaper stated, "he is a former Carlton College star and gained his first organized baseball experience in the old Dakota league, chucking

for Aberdeen at the same time Al Simmons, now with the Philadelphia Athletics, was tending the outer gardens. He is a southpaw.” Fred Williams, from Clear Lake MN, but also a student at St. Cloud Teachers College, was added to the roster in early June as the new shortstop and “Fats” Nordly was released from the team.

St. Cloud initially started play in a four-team league during the 1930 season with St. Cloud, Little Falls, Cold Spring, and Melrose comprising the teams in the league. However, Melrose disbanded their semi-professional, all-salaried team on July 8 after playing only 2 games against St. Cloud and Cold Spring was reported to have dropped all of their paid players at the same time. St. Cloud ended up playing 4 games against Cold Spring and 6 games against Little Falls. Other teams played during the season included the House of David (1game), the Colored House of David (2games), the all black player Broadway Clowns (1 game), the Northern Pacific Railroad Team (1 game), Waverly MN (2 games), Holdingford MN (1 game), the St. Cloud Reformatory team (1 game), Virden Manitoba Canada (1 game), Mankato MN (1 game), Albert Lea MN (1 game), and the St. Paul American Association team (1 game). It is interesting to note that St. Cloud, Little Falls, and Cold Spring all had black players as their first string pitchers for the 1930 season, but only St. Cloud and Little Falls could carry an all-salaried team to the completion of the season. Freeman, an African-American who pitched for Cold Spring early in the season was picked up later in the season by the Colored House of David.

Although several newspaper articles prior to the opening game indicated that Manager Nystuen had not decided between Donaldson and Woock as the starting pitcher for opening day, John did start and finish the first game of the season. The Saints defeated Melrose 7 to 6 in front of approximately 1,500 fans, and an article in the St. Cloud newspaper stated, “St. Cloud is assured of a great baseball team this season. There

is a possibility that one or two positions may be altered but in general the club looks like a winner. John Donaldson showed the fans yesterday that he has lost none of his cunning, either on the hill or at bat. John's arm is in good condition and St. Cloud need not worry about the mound assignment being well cared for. The colored twirler still has his speed and his breaks and, although clouted fairly hard yesterday, was able to keep the blows pretty well scattered and several that went for hits would be checked off the books after his support has had a few games together. Herman "Mutt" Woock, advertised as a pitching possibility yesterday, did not appear and Donaldson was forced to go the entire route. Whether or not Woock is to appear here during the summer could not be determined yesterday." In fact, Woock did not play for the Saints during the season.

The second game of the season, scheduled for Memorial Day weekend, was against a very good team from Little Falls that included "Hooks" Forman (John's catcher during the 1927 season at Bertha) and Webster MacDonald (a very good African-American pitcher who played several years for Little Falls). A newspaper article during the lead up to this game stated, "John Donaldson will again do the chucking for the Saints and in spite of the fact that he gave up 14 safe blows last weekend, he's in great condition and should get down to real business by next Friday. He was faced by one of the greatest hitting clubs in this part of the state and the fact that he came out of several pinches demonstrates that he is still equal to any occasion. He should have a great year here and according to Turk Eiffert, his battery mate, the colored boy lacks none of his former skill or speed."

An article in the St. Cloud newspaper of May 30 stated, "Athletic park in this city will be the scene of the renewal of baseball rivalry between St. Cloud and Little Falls this afternoon at three o'clock when the two all-salaried clubs representing these cities, clash

in a holiday attraction. Both Little Falls and St. Cloud won the opening games in the Central Minnesota semi-pro group last Sunday and the winner of today's game will hold the undisputed lead until next Sunday at least. The Little Falls aggregation will be followed by a large delegation of fans, according to advance information reaching here yesterday. The Little Falls team is a slight favorite with the betting fraternity but John Donaldson, St. Cloud's colored pitcher, promises a better showing today since improvements have been made on the diamond to afford a regulation pitcher's mound."

St. Cloud lost the game to Little Falls but there was still a good feeling about the team. An article in the St. Cloud newspaper stated, "The St. Cloud baseball team dropped a 3 to 0 decision to Little Falls here yesterday afternoon in the first clash of the season between these clubs. The game was witnessed by 1,631 persons, the largest attendance on record here so far as present managers could learn."

"Little Falls has a great aggregation and a remarkable pitcher but St. Cloud's John Donaldson didn't deserve to drop yesterday's game. An error on a made-to-order double play cost St. Cloud three runs in the fifth inning after Donaldson had pitched great baseball up to that point. The Saints weren't hitting the size of their hats yesterday and McDonald's underhand delivery puzzled them from the very start. The Little Falls chucker was in his glory, striking out 10 St. Cloud batsmen, giving out no passes and limiting the Saints to three well-scattered hits, Donaldson beating out a pair of bunts. Donaldson pitched winning ball too, retiring Little Falls in order in four of the nine innings and pitching to only 35 men in the nine innings. He pulled himself out of some nice holes by cautious chucking and was tossing his fastball past the visiting batsmen in nice style. In the eighth inning Little Falls was retired on three pitched balls."

The third game of the season was played against the famous House of David team from Benton Harbor MI. Newspaper articles on three different days lead up to this much talked about game. An article from the June 3rd newspaper stated, “Every one of the 16 players on the House of David club permits his hair and beard to grow, according to the religion of their cult, which says that the hirsute adornment is a divine mark, since Christ had long hair and a beard when he was on earth, they believe. Some of the players, like Tommy Dewhurst, the Babe Ruth of the team, are too young to have beards, but all of them have long hair, which doesn’t apparently, hamper them greatly, as their record of 134 victories in 171 games last year shows.”

“A number of the House of David aces have had numerous offers from organized baseball. Among them is Percy Walker, pitcher, who has hair 38 inches long and a flowing beard. Walker has hurled five no-hit games for the Benton Harborites. William Heckman, versatile outfielder, first baseman and pitcher, who hit over .400 in 1928; H.V. Atherton, second sacker, a .375 hitter; Dave Harrison, spectacular third baseman, who has been called the best player at his position outside organized baseball; and Walter Faust, brilliant shortstop, are some of the others who have been sought by organized clubs. Fans are advised to be at the park before game time to see the “pepper game” put on by the three House of David players during the Chief’s workout. It is said that the whiskered trio pass the ball so fast that it is impossible to follow it. The act is a special attraction featured by the visitors.” John played center field in a win over the House of David team.

St. Cloud played three games during 1930 against all-black player teams. Two of the games were against the Colored House of David while the third was against the Broadway Clowns. The St. Cloud newspaper of June 21st gave a good lead in to the first

game against the Colored House of David. "Athletic Park will be the scene of another great baseball battle tomorrow afternoon when the Colored House of David from Havana, Cuba, takes on Tony Nystuen's Saints at 3 o'clock. The hirsute Negroes are playing at Cold Spring this afternoon, the game being held up until 5 o'clock in order to allow all to attend."

"The Colored House of David management boasts of one of the strongest teams it has ever gathered in. John Donaldson, now with the Saints, will face his former teammates tomorrow afternoon. Donaldson was rated as one of the best colored chuckers in the country and was heralded as the \$100,000 moundsman. This same Colored House of David team would be might pleased to see John back but John would be just as pleased to show the boys that he was the mainstay of their club."

"This years team boasts of a "murderers' row" that stacks up with any in the country. Charlie Hancock, left field, is the Babe Ruth of the club while Gabby Street, third sacker, and Manville Boldbridge, second baseman, follow him in one of the most dangerous hitting lineups the Saints will face this season. Nick Jones, while not as strong with the stick as this trio, is fast on the bases and is heralded as a trouble-maker for the catchers. Jack Ryan, scout for the St. Louis Cardinals, is quoted as saying that the colored House of David is the greatest traveling baseball aggregation he has ever seen. He is also quoted as saying that he would give \$50,000 for Charlie Hancock, the Babe Ruth of the team, if he was a white man."

"While the game will be called at 3 o'clock, the visitors have a sack of tricks to unpack for the amusement of the fans and their "pepper game" will start nearly an hour before the contest. This is said to be well worth the admission price."

The \$50,000 if he were white comment seems to have been tossed around a lot in the newspapers. The St. Cloud newspaper included that quote in its article about the Colored House of David team and it also include the quote in a subsequent article referring to the Broadway Clowns. In an article in the St. Cloud newspaper of June 26th it was stated, "In addition to being baseballers of note, the Clowns put on a series of feature attractions prior to the opening of the game and during off moments that is said to equal any ever seen with a circus. Each member of the team is a comedian and many of them are of big league caliber as well. Scouts for several of the league teams have told the management they would shoot as high as \$50,000 for some of the players if they were white-washed".

St. Cloud seemed to be going into baseball big time as an article in the local newspaper of July 18th indicated Manager Tony Nystuen was talking to Claude McQuillan, Manager of the Rochester Aces team, for the purchase of the Ace's night baseball plant. The article stated, "Night baseball in St. Cloud will probably be inaugurated next week. Backers of the project announced the cost of moving the equipment from Rochester to St. Cloud and installing it here were received yesterday afternoon together with an estimate of the operating cost and it was learned that it will not be as expensive a proposition as was at first thought. C.F. McQuillan who, with Fred Oesterreich of Rochester, owns the plant is in the city now working out the proposal with Manager Tony Nystuen of the Saints and it has been agreed to seek a popular subscription to raise part of the necessary funds and to stage the first night game as a benefit proposition to secure the balance. While definite plans for the benefit game have not been worked out as yet, it is probable that booster tickets will be sold in advance. Members of the St. Cloud baseball team have offered to donate their services for the

benefit tilt and if agreeable negotiations can be made with Little Falls it is more than likely that the club will be brought here for the opener.”

“One St. Germain Street businessman this morning, upon being informed of the project, immediately offered to donate the first \$50. While further efforts were to be made this afternoon toward raising a part of the necessary cash, it was not believe that there would be much difficulty in securing enough to assure the plant for this city. It is believed that the plant can be moved to St. Cloud and installed here within three days time, according to Mr. McQuillan. As soon as arrangements are made to meet the financial obligations, Mr. McQuillan will go to Rochester to arrange for a big crew of men to tear down and load the plant. It will be moved to St. Cloud by truck where another large force of men will start work installing it. McQuillan announced this morning that Manager Tony Nystuen would be at liberty to book games within a week from the time final work is given that the plant is to come here.”

“Backers of the project are planning a ticket selling contest in which some ten or twelve girls will compete for liberal cash prizes. The opening game attendance is not expected to fall below 3,000 persons basing predictions on what high class night baseball has drawn in other cities of this size and similarly situated. Immediately after the announcement was made this week regarding the plant, Nystuen was swamped by requests from some of the finest clubs in the northwest, seeking games here. If the plant is brought to this city, fans are assured of the best baseball Central Minnesota has ever enjoyed.”

Only one other newspaper article, about one week later, mentioned the prospect of night baseball in St. Cloud and the lighting system never made its way from Rochester

to St. Cloud. Apparently the \$10,000 cost of the system was too much for the St. Cloud team to manage.

Several other games during the season were of particular note. John pitched 5 games against the Little Falls team featuring Webster MacDonald and “Lefty” Wilson as pitchers, and John came out on the losing end in 4 of the 5 games. John also pitched one game against the Northern Pacific Railroad team winning that game 2 to 1, he pitched one game against Virden Manitoba Canada winning that game 7 to 3, and he pitched one game against the St. Paul American Association team losing that game 8 to 1. The game against Virden was noted as a particularly difficult game as a newspaper article stated, “The Canadian lineup included such men as Wally Mayer, former Minneapolis catcher who had his try with the big leagues, Dick Wade, one of the hardest sluggers Minneapolis ever had, Joe Lupe, an infielder who has been up to the big show, Lundell, the hard hitting first sacker who is well known in semi-pro circles, Warwa, former Little Falls garden tender, and others.”

The Saints played a tough schedule for the season and this can be attested to by looking at the play of the team from Little Falls. From the start of the 1928 season through August 28th of 1930, the team from Little Falls compiled a record of 54 wins, 7 losses, and 1 tie behind the masterful pitching of Webster MacDonald. The only teams to defeat Little Falls over this time period were the Colored House of David (1929 with Donaldson pitching), Melrose (1928 with Donaldson pitching), Bertha (with “Lefty” Wilson pitching), Rice Lake, St. Cloud (1930 with Donaldson pitching), and Gilkerson’s Union Giants.

Little Falls played a game against the Minneapolis Millers American Association team during 1930 and Webster MacDonald pitched the Little Falls team to a 4 to 3

victory over the Millers. The game was played at Little Falls before 4,000 fans, which, according to the St. Cloud newspaper, was “the largest baseball attendance recorded in central Minnesota”.

Several newspaper articles during the summer of 1930 mentioned that John Donaldson was now making his permanent home in St. Cloud. The hope of the city seemed to be that John would return to play for the Saints for the following season but unfortunately for St. Cloud, John returned to the Colored House of David and the Kansas City Monarchs for the 1931 season.

John had a good overall season for the Saints in 1930. The Saints played 25 games from May 25th through September 29th and John was the main pitcher for the team; pitching in 20 of the 25 games. John started and completed 16 of the 20 games and he pitched in a total of 157 innings. On his way to compiling a record of 12 wins and 6 losses for the Saints, John struck out 109 batters (6.25 per 9 innings), he walked 48 batters (2.75 per 9 innings) and he gave up 125 hits (7.17 per 9 innings). Counting John's two early season victories for another independent team his record for 1930 would be 14 wins and 6 losses.

John's hitting also improved slightly over his 1928 Melrose statistics. Although his average of .368 was still well below his average from the seasons with the teams from Bertha and Lismore, he did hit with more power in 1930 compared to 1928. John hit safely in 32 out of 87 official at-bats for the Saints and he hit 2 home runs, 2 triples, 4 doubles, and 24 singles.

John Donaldson was not the first black pitcher to play for a St. Cloud team. A report in the local newspaper of June 6, 1930 stated, “Saint Pitcher of 1903 Here – Walter Ball Renews Many Old Acquaintances—To Seek Games. Walter Ball, a pitcher for the

St. Cloud baseball teams during the 1903 and 1904 seasons, was in the city yesterday, renewing old acquaintances. At the time Ball was chucking for the Saints, J.B. Pattison was the manager of the club and Frank Thielman and O.H. Havill were members of the board of directors.”

“Ball had not been in St. Cloud for many years but yesterday walked into the Thielman Hardware store and asked “is the paymaster here?” Mr. Thielman immediately recognized Ball as the former chucker who was rated as high as any in the northwest 25 years ago. At present he has a ball club traveling through Canada. The manager was en route to Chicago on business yesterday but announced that he would seek games in this community later in the fall. Playing with Ball on the famous teams of 1903 and 1904 were John Bominik, now clerk of courts, and Louie Vossberg. Thielman was always known as the paymaster with the boys, handling the finances for the team.”

It is not know if Walter Ball and John Donaldson were able to meet during Ball’s brief visit to town. It is also interesting that the newspaper article did not make any mention of Ball being a “black” baseball player, even though it had been almost 30 years since Walter had played in St. Cloud and many people reading the article may not have known anything about him.

Games Played in 1930 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 25	vs Melrose at St. Cloud	Won 7 - 6 *
	5 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 14 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 3 at bat	
May 30	vs Little Falls at St. Cloud	Lost 3 - 0 *
	1 Strikeout, 1 Walk, 7 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat	
June 1	vs Cold Spring at Cold Spring	Lost 4 - 2
	Did not pitch, rf, 0 for 4 at bat	

June 7	vs House of David at St. Cloud	Won 4 – 0
	Did not pitch, cf, 2 for 4 at bat	
June 8	vs Cold Spring at St. Cloud	Won 2 - 1 *
	9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 4 hits in 10 innings, 2 for 5 at bat	
June 16	vs Melrose at Melrose	Won 13 - 4 *
	7 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 9 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 4 at bat (triple)	
June 22	vs Colored House of David at St. Cloud	Won 4 - 1*
	12 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 5 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat	
June 28	vs Broadway Clowns at St. Cloud	Won 10 – 8
	Did not play, rested on bench	
June 29	vs Northern Pacific Team at St. Cloud	Won 2 - 1 *
	4 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 5 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)	
July 4	vs Cold Spring at Cold Spring	Tie 4 – 4
	Did not play, rested on bench	
July 4	vs Little Falls at Little Falls	Lost 3 - 2 *
	4 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 7 hits in 8 innings, 1 for 4 at bat	
July 6	vs Cold Spring at St. Cloud	Won 4 – 3
	3 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 0 hits, pitched 8 th and 9 th innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)	
July 13	vs Waverly at St. Cloud	Won 10 - 5 *
	6 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 13 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat	
July 20	vs Little Falls at St. Cloud	Won 3 - 2 *
	6 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 2 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat (triple)	
August 3	vs Waverly at Waverly	Won 9 - 2 *

5 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 3 hits in 9 innings, 3 for 5 at bat (homerun and double)

August 10	vs Colored House of David at St. Cloud	Won	10 - 2 *
	10 Strikeouts, 4 Walks, 4 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 3 at bat		
August 16	vs St. Cloud Reformatory Team at Reformatory	Won	15 - 3
	Did not pitch, cf, 1 for 3 at bat		
August 17	vs Little Falls at Little Falls	Lost	3 - 1 *
	4 Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 6 hits in 8 innings, 0 for 4 at bat		
August 24	vs Virden Canada at St. Cloud	Won	7 - 3 *
	10 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 10 hits in 9 innings, 0 for 4 at bat		
August 31	vs Little Falls at Little Falls	Lost	5 - 2 *
	7 Strikeouts, 8 Walks, 10 hits in 8 innings, 0 for 4 at bat		
Sept 1	vs Little Falls at St. Cloud	Won	7 - 0
	0 Strikeouts, 0 Walks, 0 hits, pitched to one batter only, 1 for 4 at bat		
Sept 7	vs Mankato at Mankato	Won	4 - 3 *
	9 Strikeouts, 1 Walk, 10 hits in 9 innings, 1 for 3 at bat		
Sept 14	vs Albert Lea at St. Cloud	Lost	3 - 2 *
	2 Strikeouts, 5 Walks, 6 hits in 9 innings, 2 for 4 at bat (double)		
Sept 29	vs St. Paul American Association Team at St. Cloud	Lost	8 - 1 *
	5 Strikeouts, 3 Walks, 9 hits, 8 runs in 7 innings, 1 for 4 at bat		

Games for teams other than St. Cloud:

Early May	for Colored House of David against ?	Won game – shutout
Early May	for Colored House of David against?	Won game - shutout
August 15	for Holdingford vs St Cloud at Holdingford	Won 5 - 2 *

(John pitched for Holdingford and won the game) ? Strikeouts, 2 Walks, 1 hit in 6 innings, 3 for 4 at bat

John Donaldson's All-Stars 1932

John put together an all African-American player team for 1932 and he used Fairmont, Minnesota as the initial home base of his operation. The Fairmont Sentinel newspaper of May 9, 1932 stated, "John Donaldson and his All-Stars are scheduled to hold forth at Mr. Hand's ball yard this season. John has promised the fans a great ball club and from the lineup sent the column recently, he hasn't missed it much. E. R. Hand has given his ball diamond a going over and the old lot is almost like it was in the days when it was called the best ball yard in Southern Minnesota." The Sentinel of May 20th stated, "John Donaldson, the famed portside hurler, was procured to put a first class club into the park and John raised the ante by acquiring the park for his club. The famous chucker will run the ball park and his ball club."

The residents of Fairmont and the surrounding area were excited about having a team play at Hand's Park as the site had not seen baseball action for the previous 3 years. The local newspaper reported that the All-Stars left Kansas City at noon on Tuesday, May 10th and with a stopover that night in Des Moines, Iowa the team reached Fairmont during the evening of Wednesday May 11th. The team was slated for its first practice session on the afternoon of Thursday May 12th at Hand's Park at Silver Lake Resort. Two practice sessions were scheduled for each day over a 10-day period and fans were invited to "watch the boys in action". A comment from the Sentinel of May 24th indicated, "We're thinking that John Wesley Donaldson will do for Fairmont what he did for Bertha, Lismore and other towns that have acquired his services. That means a revival of baseball spirit in this section of Minnesota."

The depression was in full swing in 1932 however, and the Sentinel reported that, “baseball is really different this year, as all-salaried clubs are plenty scarce throughout the country.” The local newspaper also reported that John would only use his field for games on Sundays. In reality the All-Stars only played seven games at Fairmont. Most games were played in South Dakota, Iowa or Nebraska, a good distance away from Fairmont, where a number of all-salaried teams including the Cuban Stars, the Sioux City Stockyards Cowboys, and the Sioux Falls Canaries were playing. Sioux Falls is 120 miles distant from Fairmont and this setup did not allow for frequent visits back to the team’s home field.

The All-Stars team was composed of J. Moore Allen (rhp), Anderson (?), “Jellyroll” Barker (of), Buzz Boldridge (3b), Cunningham (1b – released in late May), John Donaldson (manager, lhp, of), Sylvester “Hooks” Foreman (c), Bill Freeman (rhp), Chappie Gray (c), Robert “Piggy” Hawkins (ss), Charley Hilton (2b), George Jones (rhp), Hurley McNair (field captain, of, lhp) and James Starks (1b – acquired in early June). Two catchers (Foreman and Gray) were carried as the team was scheduled to play so many weekday games that John indicated “the work would be too tough for one catcher”. The team carried 4 possible starting pitchers with Allen, Donaldson, Freeman, and Jones.

Fan interest seemed high and the Fairmont Sentinel gave very good coverage to the team in May and June of 1932. The All-Stars won their opening game at Hand’s Park against the Corwith, Iowa Nighthawks as John pitched the entire game for the All-Stars giving up only 4 hits. Freddie Sims, African American and the main pitcher for Jamestown, North Dakota in 1929 and 1930, pitched for the Nighthawks. Although the Sentinel reported, “the opening day crowd was not so hot”, an article in the June 14th Sentinel stated, “each Sunday’s business at Hand’s park has shown an increase and

there's every indication that John Donaldson will revive the baseball interest in this section." The article went on to state, "The All Stars play good clean, hard baseball. Off the field the boys are a quiet, gentlemenly (sic) aggregation and have acquired plenty of prestige by same. Every ball fan who knows John Wesley Donaldson personally, knows him as straight-forward in all his dealings. He doesn't allow the rough stuff to be pulled at any time. His personality, with plenty of baseball knowledge plus ability to impart it to his mates has done wonders for other communities and he seems destined to repeat in his new venture."

Only six other games were played by the All-Stars at Hand's park during the 1932 season. The All-Stars defeated the St. Cloud Ramblers on June 5th and June 12th, they lost a game to the Fairmont Travelers on June 19th, they won a game from the Travelers on July 3rd, and they beat Carter Lakes, Nebraska and Hampton, Iowa on July 4th and July 17th respectively. Articles from the local newspaper in August indicated a yearning for the All-Stars to return to Fairmont. An article in the August 3rd edition of the newspaper stated, "The local fans are missing the diamond capers of this colored aggregation", while an article from the August 17th edition stated, "The Donaldson All Stars slipped quietly into oblivion with a road tour....Donaldson and his crew of ball players were slated to return to Hands Park but it seems doubtful as nothing has been heard of the bunch."

Harry J. Earle wrote a "Sport Notes" column for the Fairmont newspaper and he reported on several visits with John and his teammates. In his May 17th column Mr. Earle reported, "The Donaldson all stars were hovered around an oil heater in one of their cottages at Hands Park Sunday night, and naturally baseball tales were in line. Chappie Gray, the strutting catcher, gave the boys plenty of laughter with his puns of experiences

when with the Bacharach Giants in New York, but Hurley McNair captain of the all stars told one on Chappie that went over with the bases loaded. Mac said Chappie was batting against Tom Sheehan, the veteran right hander. As Gray came to bat, he paused before entering the batter's box and exclaimed "Tom Sheehan, you are now about to pitch to one of the best colored hitters in the country—so beware". Tom proceeded to strike out the great Chappie, but the latter was not to be out done. As the next batter came forth Chappie yelled at Tom, "Tom Sheehan who have struck out a mighty batter". The big right-hander broke into a laugh at Gray's chatter. The next time up Chappie busted a double to left center. Chappie can talk, he can catch, and he can hit that agate, and hit it hard."

Three other columns are of particular interest to see how Mr. Earle interacted with the team. The Sport Notes column on May 24th stated, "The fans were talking baseball along the rialto yesterday and John was on deck, smiling and shaking hands with old acquaintances. There are not many fans who do not know the famous colored hurler. Donaldson possesses a great personality and on the field he is all business but after games, he is never too busy to discuss baseball or answer questions." Mr. Earle's column on June 14th stated, "The writer accepted an invitation to eat fried spring chicken with the Donaldson All Stars Sunday after the game and it was something to rave about. Mrs. John Donaldson is a real cook and she was at her best. John boards his club at the lake, where they occupy two cottages and we must say he feeds them well, as spring chicken and all the trimmings is quite a delicacy for the boys. The congenial Mrs. Donaldson has complete charge of that department of the All Stars' sojourn and deserves credit for the manner in which she handles the affairs."

Harry Earle traveled with the All Stars to a game in Sioux Falls with the Canaries. The Sport Notes column of July 15th stated, “The writer learned last Sunday that John percolated around Sioux Falls, Mitchell and other South Dakota cities in the days when that portside fast one was a menace to all good hitters, whether they be right or left handed swatters. It was the Sentinel writer’s pleasure to sit in the all stars dugout and during those two games it was more than interesting to note the strategy used by Hurley McNair, captain and left fielder, to win the second game and if you have any thought about this bunch not being able to bear down in the clinches, check them, for Donaldson’s athletes can do it up brown. During the course of that double header there were at least thirty ball players that visited the dugout to see John. Some he had played against when he was the mound ace of the famous all nations, others had played with him at various spots throughout the country. There were happy handshakes galore. Some were businessmen in surrounding towns. One fellow came all the way from Mitchell to see the veteran. There we saw athletes of other years visiting an old friend. They had – in most instances – given up the game and retired to private life. But John Donaldson, just 42 years of age, stepped on the rubber out there Sunday afternoon, and what an outburst of applause greeted him, to display enough of that old time zip on the ball to stand the Sioux Falls Canaries on their respective domes for a 5 to 3 win.”

Mr. Earle did a very colorful job of covering the All-Stars but unfortunately he was not an aficionado of baseball statistics. The Fairmont newspaper did not provide detailed box scores for any of the games nor did it give information on all of the games that were played. Therefore, it is not possible to calculate detailed statistical information for John during the 1932 season.

Games Played in 1932 - * indicates a pitching decision for John Donaldson

May 22	vs Corwith IA Nighthawks at Fairmont	Won 8 to 1*
	John pitched 9 innings, 11 Strikeouts, ? Walks, 4 hits	
May 29	vs Crookston MN at Crookston	Lost 10 to 2
	John played cf, 2 for 4 at bat (single, double, walk, 2 RBIs, no runs scored), the team from Crookston had a black pitcher and catcher	
May 30	vs Crookston MN at Crookston	Lost 3 to 1*
	John pitched in this game, gave up 7 hits, 0 for 3 at bat	
June 1	vs Twin Valley MN at Twin Valley	Won 3 to 1
	John did not play in this game according to box score from Twin Valley	
June 5	vs St. Cloud MN Ramblers at Fairmont	Won 5 to 4
	John did not pitch, had a home run, no other information from Fairmont or St. Cloud newspapers, the Ramblers were not a sanctioned team out of St. Cloud and the St. Cloud newspaper did not know of their existence	
June 7	vs ? at Garreston SD	
June 8	vs ? at ? IA	
June 9	vs Sioux Falls Canaries at Castlewood SD	Lost 12 to 5
	John was 1 for 5 at bat, played lf.	
June 12	vs St. Cloud Ramblers at Fairmont	Won 4 to 1*
	John pitched for team, 5 hits, no other information from Fairmont or St. Cloud newspapers	
June 14	vs Sioux City Stockyards at Round Lake MN	Won 1 to 0
	Luther McDonalds pitched for All-Stars, 800 fans in attendance, no other information from Round Lake newspaper	
June 16	vs Sioux Falls Canaries at Garretson SD	Won 2 to 1*

John pitched 5 innings, 1K, 1BB, 4 hits, 0 runs, went 1 for 3 at bat (single), 0 runs scored, 1 RBI.

June 19	vs Fairmont Travelers at Fairmont	Lost 6 to 5*
	John pitched 9 innings, 10 hits (afternoon game)	
June 19	vs Corwith IA at Corwith	Lost 6 to 5
	13-inning game, Bill Freeman pitched for All-Stars (evening game)	
June 26	vs Sioux City Stockyards team at Sioux City	Lost 9 – 6
June 26	vs Sioux City Stockyards team at Sioux City	Won 13 – 5
June 27	vs Fairmont Travelers at Comfrey MN	Lost 8 to 1*
	John pitched 9 innings, 9 strikeouts, 4 walks, 12 hits, no other information from Comfrey or Fairmont newspapers	
June 29	vs Mason City IA Bats at Mason City	Won 5 to 1
	John pitched the first 2 innings, 2 Ks, 2 BB, 1 hit, cf, 2 for 4 at bat (singles)	
July 3	vs Fairmont Travelers at Fairmont	Won 4 to 1
	Bill Freeman pitched for All-Stars	
July 4	vs Carter Lakes NE at Fairmont	Won *
	John pitched and got win,	
July 10	vs Sioux Fall Canaries at Sioux Falls (afternoon game)	Won 4 to 1
	John did not play in this game	
July 10	vs Sioux Fall Canaries at Sioux Falls (evening game)	Won 5 to 3*
	John pitched 9 innings, 6 Ks, 1 W, 7 hits, John was 1 for 3 at bat (single), Batted 9 th in lineup.	
July 11	vs Vermillion SD at Vermillion	Won 7 – 2

John did not play in game, 7-inning game by agreement so that the All-Stars could get to Sioux City for a night game

July 11	vs Cuban Stars at Sioux City IA	Lost 11 – 2	
July --	vs Cuban Stars at Omaha NE	Lost	
July --	vs Cuban Stars at Lincoln NE	Lost	
July --	vs Cuban Stars at ??? NE	Lost	
July 14	vs Cuban Stars at Woodbine IA	Won 5 – 3	
	Freeman and Foreman were the battery for the All-Stars		
July 17	vs Hampton Pirates at Fairmont	Won 9 – 8	
	John pitched 3 innings, 3 hits		
July 18	vs Nebraska All-Stars at Dakota City NE	Tie 5 – 5	
	Game called because of darkness at end of 9 th inning, John pitched 8.67 innings, 4 Ks, 3 BB, 4 hits, 2 runs; John was 1 for 3 at bat with one run scored.		
July 21	vs Corwith IA at Burt IA	Lost 14 – 13	
July 24	vs Sioux City Stockyards at Lake View Park, Sioux City IA?	Won	
July 25	vs Cuban Stars at Dakota City, NE		
August 7	vs ? at Holdredge NE	Won	
August 10	vs Nebraska All-Stars at Lyons NE	Won 4 – 3	
	11 inning game, John did not pitch		
August 11	vs Sioux City Stockyards Team at Onawa IA	Lost 7 – 5	
August 16	vs Nebraska All-Stars at Homer NE	???	
August 17	vs Mason City Bats at Clarion IA	Won 5 to 4	
	John pitched 2 innings.		

August 18	vs Sioux Falls Canaries at Winside NE	Lost 7 to 2.
	John played cf and went 2 for 4 at bat (singles) with 1 run scored.	
	2,000 fans at game.	
August 19	vs Sioux City Cowboys at Sioux City	Won 4 – 1
	cf, 0 for 5 at bat, no runs scored	
August 24	vs Sioux City Stockyard Cowboys at Lyons NE	Won 11 – 5
	John did not pitch in game	
August 25	vs Sioux City Stockyards at Dakota City NE	????
September 1	vs Sioux City Stockyards Team at Council Bluff	Lost 10 to 3
	cf, 0 for 2 at bat, only played part of game	
September 5	vs Sioux Falls Canaries at Sioux Falls,	Won 9 to 8*
	John pitched 9 innings, 5Ks, 2BB, 10 hits, John went 0 for 5 at bat.	
September 15	vs Sioux Falls Canaries at Bloomfield NE	Lost 6 to 5
	John played cf and went 3 for 4 at bat (singles).	

References:

- (1) the Color Line. David Kemp and Phil Dixon, SABR Minor League History Journal, Volume 2 pp. 21 – 23
- (2) The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues. James A Riley. Carroll and Graf Publishers, Inc. New York, 1994, p 242.
- (3) The Ultimate Kansas City Baseball Trivia Quiz Book. Phil S. Dixon. Bon A Tirer Publishing. 1992, p 185.

PostScript

John retired from baseball after the 1934 season and he went to Chicago where he worked in the U.S. Post Office. There are reports that John also worked as a scout for the Chicago White

Sox but the White Sox organization informed me that many individuals functioned as free-lance scouts for the team and no records were maintained on these individuals. John died on April 14, 1970, and according to a news article in the Wadena, Minnesota Pioneer Journal newspaper (written by Glenn Johnson of Bertha, Minnesota), the first news to Minnesota baseball fans about his death came from Halsey Hall during a Minnesota Twins – California Angeles game broadcast from California. Halsey had received a telephone call from Clifford Watson (John's nephew), who lived in Los Angeles, informing him of John's death.

Glenn Johnson's article quoted from a column in the Minneapolis Tribune of April 24, 1928. The column read, in part, "Independent baseball in the northwest knows no bigger attraction than John Donaldson, the famous Negro pitcher. He was considered better than most of the mound stars pitching in the big show in his best days, yet he had to remain on the 'outside looking in' simply because of organized baseball's discrimination against Negro baseball players. He dished up baseballs to Hal Chase, Bunny Brief, Earl Smith of the Pirates, Cotton Tierney, who now wears a Minneapolis uniform, Casey Stengel, home run hero for the 1922 World Series, and countless others with burning speed, remarkable control, and baffling curves, (John was a left hander.) According to Donaldson, he never has enjoyed the huge following that he has won in Minnesota the past few seasons at Bertha in 1924 and 1925. Donaldson, who is 34 years old, began his independent baseball career in 1912 after leaving George Smith College, Sedalia, Missouri, where he attended one year. He was graduated from Avon Grammar School of Glasgow, Missouri, his hometown. He joined the All-Nations team of Des Moines, Iowa, and pitched that team to the national Negro Championship. In 1918 he turned in a game which he is most proud. John McGraw's Giants defeated him 1 to 0. Snyder's triple with one on scoring the only run. John McGraw, manager of the old New York Giants once stated, he would have paid 100 grand if John Donaldson had been white. Stories prevailed that attempts were made to

declare him a Cuban to get around the ban of Negro baseball players. Since the announcement of the death of John Donaldson, there has been a great amount of reminiscing in Bertha among local residents who remember the large crowds and the feats of this great Negro player who could not receive his greatest acclaim due to his color.”

John, who resided at 5612 South King Drive, Chicago, Illinois was survived by his wife Eleanor Watson Donaldson. John is buried in Burr Oak Cemetery, Worth Township, Alsip, Illinois. During the writing of this article, I was contacted by Jeremy Krock, an anesthesiologist from Peoria, Illinois. Jeremy indicated that he had gone to Burr Oak Cemetery to visit the grave of Jimmie Crutchfield, a centerfielder who had played in the Negro Leagues beginning in 1930. Krock discovered that Crutchfield, a baseball player ranked by Bill James ([New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract](#)) as the seventh best center fielder in Negro Leagues history, had been put to rest in an unmarked grave.

Krock wrote a letter to the Negro League Committee of SABR (Society for American Baseball Research) informing them of the situation for Crutchfield at the Burr Oak Cemetery. Money was donated by many SABR members, people who had known Crutchfield, and even by former major league commissioner Fay Vincent. Enough money was raised to purchase a plaque for Crutchfield’s grave and then, Krock was informed by the Cemetery management that another Negro Leagues player, John Donaldson, also rested in an unmarked grave. A story by Tom McNamee of the Chicago Sun-Times told the story of Crutchfield and Donaldson and soon more money poured in, including a donation from the Chicago White Sox organization. With the extra funds Krock decided to purchase a similar marker for John Donaldson. The bronze markers, similar to those used to signify the players in the Baseball Hall of Fame, bear Crutchfield’s and Donaldson’s name, an image of the player, along with pertinent information about their life and baseball career.

