

The Donaldson Network



Greetings from the effort to return John Donaldson to his rightful place in baseball history. The summer update is here and we have some exciting new developments to report and hope to spark even more discovery with this document.

Thanks again to all who have helped the effort since our last correspondence. Some of you are new to the game and others remain here providing support at every turn.

Take a moment to see what new and exciting information has been found, and think of ways that you can continue to contribute to the effort. Write a story of when Donaldson visited your town (we'd be glad to help), find a lost game that could help restore Donaldson's legacy or just send an email to encourage others to continue the searches. There are many areas that need assistance and skills of our outstanding membership.

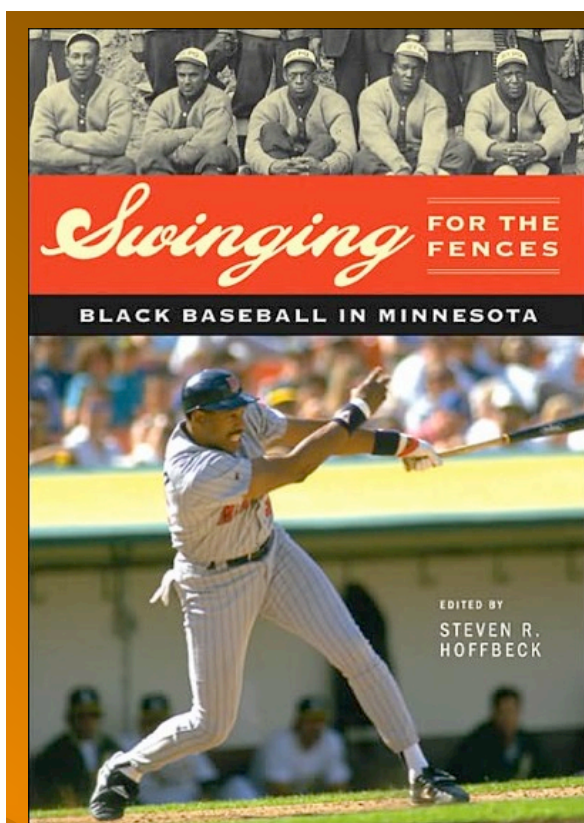


2010 Jerry Malloy Negro Leagues Conference!

Sam Sinke and Pete Gorton had an opportunity to speak at the annual meeting of the SABR Negro Leagues Committee. They delivered a speech called *The Donaldson Network: Creating Content Using Emerging Technologies*. The entire speech can be viewed by going [here](#). The event was a wonderful opportunity to update the black baseball enthusiasts within the Society of American Baseball Researchers (SABR) and to hear how others are working within the genre.

More work needs to be done!

John Wesley Donaldson, a Great Mound Artist Re-Released!



John Wesley Donaldson, a Great Mound Artist

Peter W. Gorton

The decade of the 1920s brought new ideas and new heroes to Minnesota. The First World War redefined the United States as it became a world power. Prohibition of alcohol challenged the moral values of the populace; radio carried information and conveyed a sense of connection from ocean to ocean. Racial lines were blurred with the introduction of the new "jazz" music, originally American and originally black, while at the same time Ku Klux Klan sympathizers flourished. Spectator sports appealed to the masses. More people had more money than ever before, spending it on consumer goods—radios, refrigerators, and cars. Others freed up time for vacations and disposed of their disposable income. Business boomed and investors brought a bull market to Wall Street.

The age of the million-dollar drawing card dawned. Babe Ruth rose as the greatest national sporting icon, revolutionizing baseball with his home runs and his uppercutting swing. The Babe had risen from poverty in his boyhood in Baltimore to star status. Henry Ford, renowned for producing the affordable Model T, became so well known that some people urged him to seek the presidency in 1924. Minnesota's own Charles Lindbergh, Jr., became an aviation celebrity and an international hero.¹

Lindbergh was a symbol of the Roaring Twenties. When Lucky Lindy flew his single-engine airplane across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927, Minnesotans cheered with delight. They adored the Little Falls man for his daring feat. The nation honored him with a ticker-tape parade down the avenues of New York City. Lindbergh had redefined how Minnesotans, and Americans, would view themselves throughout the world. He was truly Minnesota's pride and joy, and Little Falls meant to do him proud by hosting a Lindbergh Homecoming Festival in August.

Fifty thousand people came to the central Minnesota town for the all-day event that featured band concerts, a street dance, and a magnificent parade consisting of nearly more bands than floats. The parade included a float

The chapter from 2005's *Swinging for the Fences: Black Baseball in Minnesota* Edited by Steven Hoffbeck (Minnesota Historical Society Press) was re-released in a digital form. The chapter which started the Donaldson Network is now available to everyone on-line. It is a major development to be able to freely access the first chapter ever published devoted exclusively to the career of John Donaldson. The digital age allows people to bring books with them on portable devices, and it's crucial to our effort to get the story out to all who will listen. So...when Oprah tells you to buy a Kindle, or you pick up a reader app for your new iPad, or when you get that special someone a Nook for Christmas, be sure it includes a copy of the chapter.

Network Research Finds: The Forest City Summit

"KEEP YOUR EYE ON FOREST CITY"

FORTY-FIFTH YEAR

FOREST CITY, IOWA, THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1912

NUMBER 35

Forest City Base Ball Tournament September 10--11--12

Competing Teams: Estherville, Emmetsburg, Lehigh and Fairmont. Purses \$625.00 Wrestlers: Jud Thompson vs. Harry Ingersoll, Sept. 11. Harvey-McPeak vs. Helmer Myre, Sept. 12. Come on Boys

DONALDSON TOURNAMENT DETAILS UNCOVERED, SAM, ([email](#))-

New information has surfaced about a baseball tournament that John Donaldson played in Iowa during September of 1912. New accounts of the games were submitted and we want to highlight them here.

Donaldson pitched on three consecutive days throwing at least 34 strikeouts for the Lehigh, Iowa club. During the 1912 season with the All Nations, Donaldson was establishing himself as a force. After the All Nations disbanded for the season, he was hired by Lehigh for a couple of games. Noteworthy in the accounts is how Donaldson dominated the competition while "proving to be a perfect gentleman, on and off the field." Articles suggest that the Lehigh club would have easily won the tournament had the regular catcher for the team not been absent for the championship game. The paper said "Donaldson, Lehigh's famous colored south paw could not let loose on his speed, as the two substitute catchers were entirely too weak to hold his speedy ones...." It should be remembered that John Donaldson's career statistics were directly impacted by the clubs' selection of catchers. Primitive catching equipment and techniques have held down Donaldson's already all-time great numbers.

1919 SEASON TOTALS AMENDED, GARY ([email](#))

We are always trying to find new information about John Donaldson even when we are pretty confident to have discovered everything from a particular season. Research on the 1919 season that Donaldson spent with the Detroit Stars was thought to have been completed a few years ago. We opened a dialog with Gary after reading his tremendous piece in

[Outsider Baseball Bulletin](#) about Donaldson teammate (and Hall of Fame member) Pete Hill. We wanted to make sure that Gary was aware of all the games we had uncovered about the Detroit Stars' season and circle back to verify any we may have missed. It turned out that we were unaware of at least two games that Donaldson pitched in that season and Gary graciously submitted them. It never hurts to go back and collaborate with others to verify information. Thanks Gary!

**Beat Dayton Marcos in First
Game of Series, Donaldson
Allowing Three Hits.**

Research Finds: (Continued)

1911 WIN UNCOVERED, ACKLEY, IOWA HERITAGE CENTER ([email](#))

We knew that Donaldson's team played a game in Ackley, Iowa on August 12, 1911. Our references were from regional and statewide sources like the one listed on our "[Calendars](#)" page from the web site. ([here](#)) We seek all games that Donaldson appeared in, even those we don't think he pitched. We emailed the Ackley Heritage Center to ask if a more local source might be found, understanding that local researchers know of sources that we have never heard of. AHC replied, stating that indeed a copy of the *Inter-County Journal* of Ackley existed, complete with a game account. We requested a copy of the actual newspaper, which was promptly mailed in. Reviewing the article, we learned that Donaldson pitched in the latter half of the game. A classic "Line Score" was included and it was clear that indeed Donaldson entered with the game tied. A late rally by the Tennessee Rats won the game 4-2. It is our practice to track down the most local account of a game available and use its numbers in Donaldson's career totals. So, together we added a win to John Donaldson's career.

COONS WERE A HOODOO

**LOCALS WINNING STREAK BROKEN IN
GAME WITH TENNESSE RATS**

Features:

In May, Kansas City artist Steve Willaredt decided to use an image he penned of John Donaldson in his blog. (battlerooyalwithcheeze.com)

Willaredt selects a different theme each month and May's theme was the Negro Leagues. After hearing of this we contacted him immediately, asking if he'd be interested in sketching John Donaldson. On May 25, this outstanding likeness of Donaldson graced his web site.

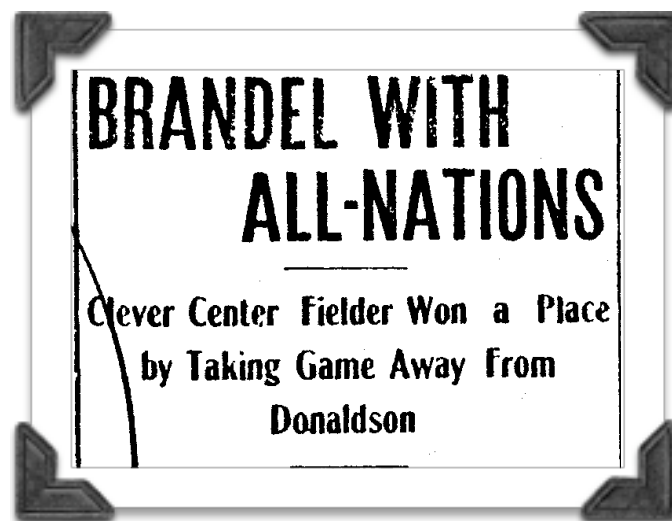


Donaldson Teammate Profile:

Elmer Brandell



On a bright sunny day in August of 1914 John Donaldson and his "All Nations" team had just finished playing a pesky local club from Anoka, Minnesota. That day the powerful cosmopolitan club was handed its first loss in its last 25 games at Riverside Park, a ball field built on an eddy of sediment where the Rum River meets the mighty Mississippi. A local farm-boy with the nickname "Brunny" nearly single-handedly out hit the semiprofessional barnstormers in the game. In fact, his 3-for-3 performance, which included a bottom-of-the-tenth 2-out two-run single off John Donaldson, changed his life.



Elmer had been playing semi-pro ball for a couple of seasons prior to his date with the All Nations. He was building quite a reputation within local circles as a "fast" ballplayer, one who could hit and was unusually fast on the bases, with a fine throwing arm, and who "uses his head at every stage of the game." After two doubles earlier in the game off of the starting pitcher Jackson, Brandell found his club in the bottom of the 11th with two on and two out against the famed John Donaldson. Brandell worked the count to three and two when Donaldson began moving slowly, trying to strikeout Brunny and preserve the win. Donaldson's curve hovered over the outside of the plate just enough for Brandell to line a solid single to left scoring two and winning the game. Elmer was the hitting star that day and it was said the All Nations management hired him on the spot. Little did the outfielder know the direction his life would turn. Already on the club were several great players that would help shape Elmer's career. Besides John Donaldson the team had Jose Mendez (Baseball Hall of

All Nations
Mendez s
Crow 3b
Brandell cf
Donaldson p
Blatnier 2b
Dunbar 1b
Jackson lf
Mikami rf
Schoenburg c

Fame, 2006) minor league Native American third baseman Sam Crowe, flame-throwing Black ball star “Cannonball” Joe Jackson, future Negro Leaguer Frank Blattner and Goro Mikami, known as the first professional Japanese baseball player in history. So the team was stacked with talent and they brought in Elmer to provide the team some speed and versatility. The kid was just over a year removed from High School and was now a full time ballplayer with the famous All Nations Team. He finished the 1914 season with the club but it was just the beginning of his relationship with John Donaldson and what would turn out to be a very interesting career.



Elmer Brandell with George Sisler
photo [University of Michigan](#)

In 1915, Elmer Brandell enrolled at the University of Michigan where the Wolverines baseball team was coached by Carl Lundgren, who had taken over for Branch Rickey just a year earlier. The Wolverines were a powerhouse club that was

led by future Hall-of-Famer George Sisler. Brandell played at the “U” for three seasons, ascending to its captaincy only to have the 1917 season cancelled by World War I.



Elmer Brandell, Captain 1912.

Brandell answered his country’s call to service in February of 1918 and was assigned to the 18th Photo Section of the American Expeditionary Forces, working as a topographic draftsman, a position that was responsible for performing “scout” duties on battlefields. Out ahead of advancing troops, draftsman studied the terrain and recommended the best places to move heavy equipment, soldiers and supplies. Brandell was quick, smart and filled the role perfectly. Stricken with pneumonia, probably resulting from the influenza pandemic of 1918, Brandell was discharged. He returned to Minnesota and his baseball career.

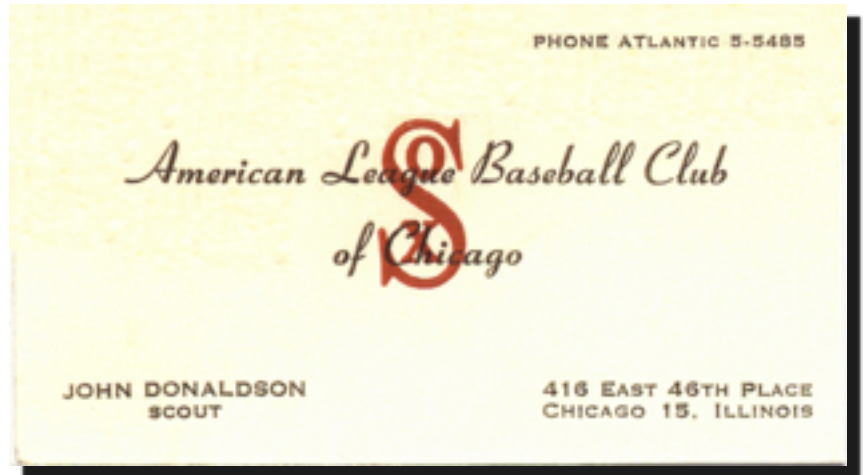
In mid-season of 1924 John Donaldson called on Brandell again, this time to join the Bertha Fishermen in Minnesota. The two were reunited where they played together at different times for the next few seasons.

Special thanks to Donaldson Network members Richard Adler and Dick Clark for assistance with this article.

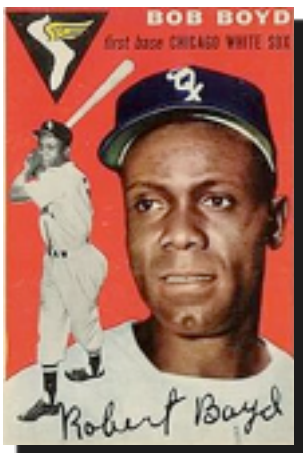
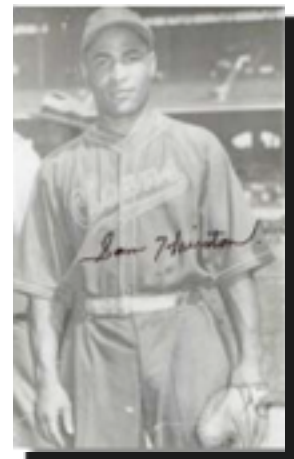
CURRENT AREAS OF FOCUS BY DONALDSON NETWORK MEMBERS

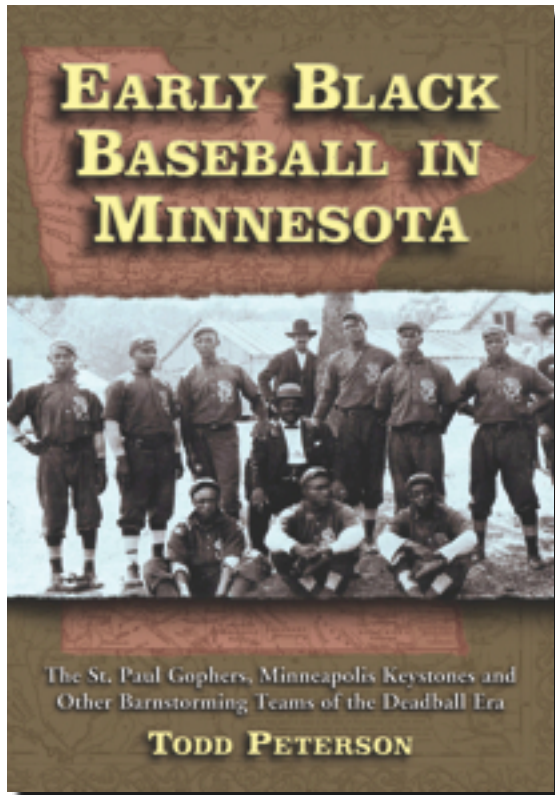
DONALDSON SIGNEES IDENTIFIED: ROD ([email](#)) & JOHN ([email](#))

A growing list of players who were targets of John Donaldson as he scouted for the Chicago White Sox is being cultivated. As the first black scout in major league baseball, Donaldson was assigned the "Negro Leagues" by John Rigney, the head scout of the pale-hose. A typical scout would be assigned a geographical area such as an individual state or a cluster of states. Adding fuel to an already-growing fire with regards to how serious the Sox were in pursuit of black talent, Donaldson was expected to report on players across the country. A difficult task. Donaldson was known to have pursued the best that black ball had to offer. He was expected to "beat the bushes" looking for the most talented players or future stars. Some of the greatest to ever play the game were known John Donaldson pursuits...Mays...Aaron...Banks...and many more.



Here are a few of "Big Jawn's" known targets where he hit a bulls-eye.

**Bob Boyd****Connie Johnson****Sam Hairston**



NEW BOOK BY MEMBERS OF THE DONALDSON NETWORK -

EARLY BLACK BASEBALL IN MINNESOTA: THE ST. PAUL GOPHERS, MINNEAPOLIS KEYSTONES AND OTHER BARNSTORMING TEAMS OF THE DEADBALL ERA.

-BY TODD PETERSON

[McFarland](#), 2010.

Q&A WITH THE AUTHOR - TODD PETERSON

Donaldson Network: When did you become aware of John Donaldson:

Todd Peterson: I first ran across John Donaldson while researching the St. Paul Gophers 1910 season. A pitcher named Donaldson was mentioned as being one of the Gophers pitching prospects for that season. Unfortunately for the Gophers they couldn't convince the future master of the situation to come north. I've always wondered though about a Wesley (first named unknown) who played second base and outfield for the Gophers in the spring and early summer of 1910. Was this John Donaldson using his middle name as an alias? Was this player Edgar Wesley, the great Texas slugger? Probably not, but the mind boggles as they say.

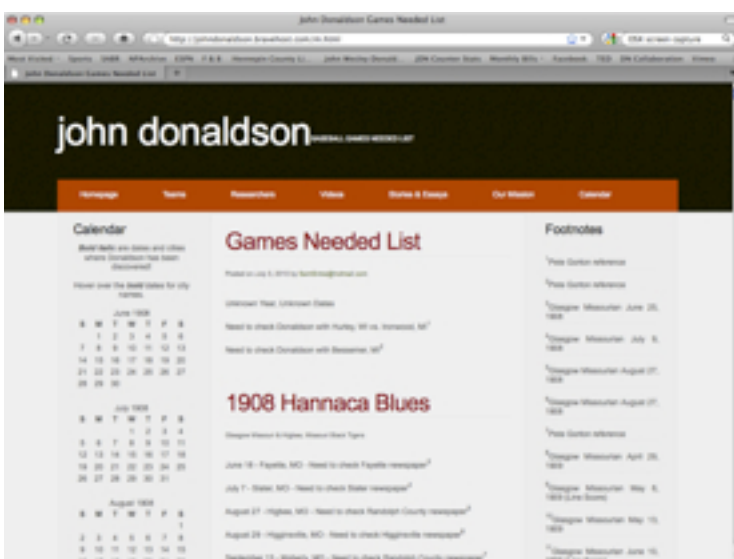
DN: In your opinion has history and particularly "baseball history" been kind to John Donaldson? TP: Not until he is inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame will John Donaldson receive his rightful due. It will certainly make his autograph more valuable.

DN: From an individual researcher perspective, how would you directly address a member of the Donaldson Network, out sifting through ancient newspapers looking for evidence of Donaldson's career? Is this a worthwhile effort? TP: It is a very worthwhile effort, with a very tangible goal of ensuring Donaldson's eventual induction into the HOF. I mean it's not finding the cure for cancer, but I think it is rare to be provided with such an obvious historical oversight and a means to correct it. Find the strikeouts and the bust will come!

DN: How would players chronicled in your book have viewed John Donaldson? TP: A pitcher they would like to avoid! Tommy Means, a Gophers pitcher, was a teammate of Donaldson in 1912, and I know the great Bobby Marshall faced him on a few occasions. One of the big baseball historical what ifs is what would have happened if the Gophers could have landed Donaldson in 1910 or 1911. The club, riddled by player defections, would have almost certainly maintained its status as a blackball power, and probably would not have gone out of business after the 1911 season.

Web Site Update

We have been very busy improving our web site johndonaldson.bravehost.com. The digital revolution has begun! The Donaldson Network hopes to lead the charge into a new way to do black baseball research by using technology to tell the Donaldson story. Our website is the cornerstone to this initiative. This segment of the Newsletter will highlight some of the changes. We invite suggestions as to any improvements we could make. It is helpful to know what people think of our web presence.



We have updated the [Missing Games](#) page to show the current holes in our research in a calendar-type format. John Donaldson in his early career played at least once a day nearly year-round, necessitating assembly of a detail calendar.

Also added is a [Calendars](#) page that show results of each known game that John Donaldson played in from 1911 to 1913. The three-season collection is just the beginning of our effort. Soon we will add the 1914 season. This project is designed to show the incredible number of games we as a group have collected and how many games Donaldson played in.

