

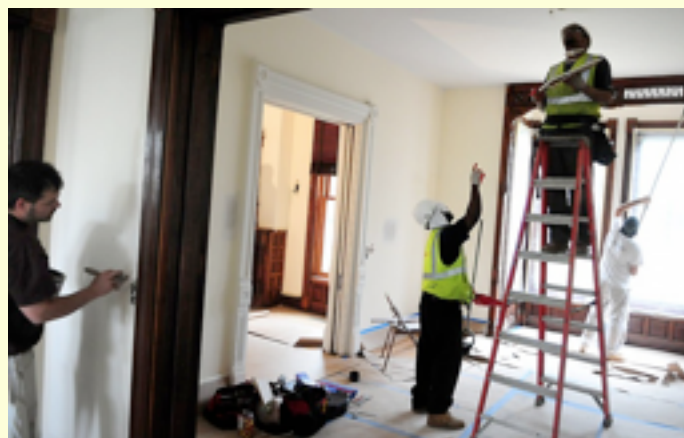
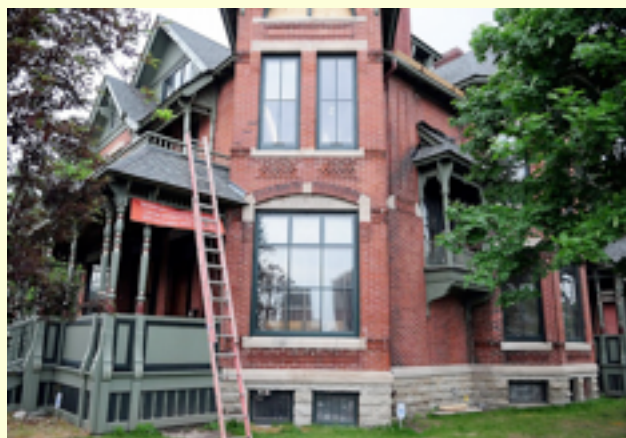
The Donaldson Network



Minnesota African American Museum

The Donaldson Network and The Minnesota African American Museum have just completed the first museum exhibit ever dedicated to *The Greatest Colored Pitcher in the World*, John Wesley Donaldson. A major portion of the exhibit, “Bringing It Home: A Retrospective of Black ‘n Brown Baseball in Minnesota,” documents information about John Donaldson and his role in the baseball history of the state. Also covered within the exhibit are the African American legacies of both the Minneapolis Millers and St. Paul Saints along with other local ties to the Gopher State.

This issue will highlight the Donaldson portion of the MAAM exhibit with more information on its contents along with more information on how The Donaldson Network continues to re-discover the lost legacy of John Wesley Donaldson.



The MAAM is located within the historic Coe Mansion, an 1880's Queen Ann-style building located in the Stevens Square neighborhood of Minneapolis. During renovation workers prepare the space that would eventually house the John Donaldson exhibit. (Photos Courtesy St. Paul Pioneer Press)

1912 Hopkins Brothers Team

Courtesy NoirTech Research



The Hopkins Brothers sporting goods store in Des Moines, Iowa sponsored their own baseball team. In 1912, under the direction of J.L. Wilkinson, they hired a young John Donaldson. The photo in the exhibit is similar to the one on the left that appeared in hundreds of newspapers across the Midwest. This is the first known photograph of the All Nations team. They changed uniforms before the above photo was taken.

1925 Oxley Film

Courtesy of Rich Oxley - The Donaldson Network



Walter Thomas Oxley

Photographer W.T. Oxley used a hand-cranked Kodak 16-mm movie camera to capture historic scenes of pitcher John Donaldson on August 16, 1925, in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. A crowd of over 3,000 fans packed the stadium, located at the Otter Tail County Fairgrounds, to see the game between the town teams of Battle Lake Battlers and Bertha Fishermen. Both ball clubs brought impressive records into the game as each team tried to claim the winner's prize of \$700 from the game's organizers. The Bertha Fishermen team sent its ace pitcher to the mound that day--John Donaldson.

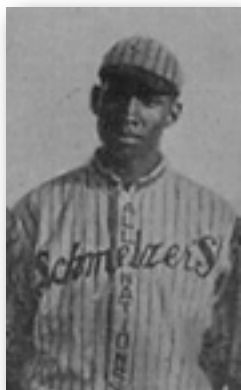
The Battlers were, "demoralized at the plate," by the 34 year-old Donaldson who was asked after the game how a player at his age can continue such dominance, "I leave booze and tobacco alone, diet a little and pay my debts; when I leave Bertha I won't owe anything to anybody," he said.

1916 All Nations Broadside

Courtesy of David Miller - The Donaldson Network

A broadside print was a typical form of advertising used in the early Twentieth Century to

promote almost all traveling forms of entertainment. These posters were glued to sign boards in every town across the Midwest where shows were to be played. Base Ball was no exception.



Using a flour-based paste these posters were literally glued to nearly any surface that could be seen by the local ticket-buying public.

The advertising technique grew from, among others, the traveling circus. Traveling ahead of the main event by several days, the advance men would cover the towns in ads and move on to the next location. They used the paper posters and flour paste to hang the ads. It was a very inexpensive and effective way to spread the word in the days prior to what we know as mass advertising.

**SPECIAL
BASE BALL
ATTRACTION**

Schmelzer Arms Co.
KANSAS CITY, MO.

World's All Nations

Star Players of Every Nation in the World

BEACH. 3-00. P.M. WED. JULY. 7.

JOHN DONALDSON, without doubt, the greatest Colored pitcher in the world
JAP JACOBS, Oriental pitcher, who won nineteen out of twenty-one games for Japan University
BLUEKOU, the giant Hawaiian, considered by critics to be the best all-around player on this club
 Now touring the United States in their own private car, Jeanette
WILKINSON & GAUL, Managers

REGISTER AND LEADER Daw Motion, Iowa

1920 Kansas City Monarchs

Courtesy NoirTech Research



In February of 1920, delegates representing eight proposed franchises and members of the Black press gathered in Kansas City, Missouri to ratify what would become the Negro National League. The Kansas City Monarchs would eventually become the greatest franchise in Negro League history. Not only was John Donaldson a key member of the Monarchs, his teammates included future Hall of Fame players Jose Mendez and Joe Rogan and Oscar Johnson. The team is said to have been composed of a merger between the All Nations team and the Army's 25th Infantry club. The all-black U.S. Army club was formed during World War I. (pictured below courtesy of Hakes.com)



1925 Bertha Poster

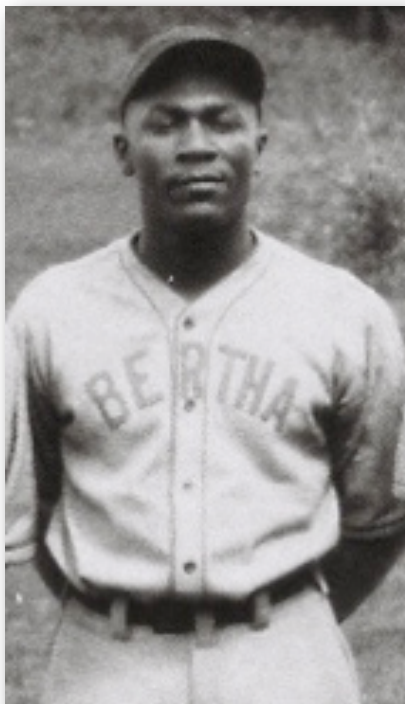
Courtesy The Bertha Historical Society - The Donaldson Network



Similar to the 1916 Broadside Print detailed earlier, a rare poster was found from 1925, advertising John Donaldson and his team from Bertha, Minnesota and the Fargo-Moorhead club. The poster shows the Bertha Fishermen (managed by the local restaurant owner Ernie Fisher) who were coming off the 1924 Semi-Professional Championship of Minnesota. John Donaldson played in Bertha for three complete seasons compiling a pitching record of 66-12. Donaldson's first season in Bertha, 1924, he played on a team composed entirely of local players. In the subsequent years of 1925 and 1927 other semi-pro players were added to the roster at the expense of the hometown team. Bertha was an incredibly successful baseball team and John Donaldson was their star both on the diamond and at the gate.

1927 Bertha Team Photo

Photo Courtesy Bertha Historical Society



After playing two seasons for Bertha, John Donaldson's third would be notably different. Donaldson's contract required that he be hired (at a higher sum than the previous season) and would include the battery mate of his choice. In 1927 Sylvester "Hooks" Foreman became John Donaldson's full-time personal catcher. The special clause became necessary as the hometown catchers were having difficulty catching and holding the pitches of John Donaldson. At the time, Foreman was the everyday catcher of the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro National League. When Donaldson called him to join the "little town in the Big Woods," he jumped at the chance to be reunited with the historic left-hander.

1928 Melrose Photos

Courtesy Melrose Area Historical Society - The Donaldson Network

In 1928, the Melrose American Legion Post 101 in Melrose, Minnesota erected a 800-seat grandstand called Legion Park. The plan was to provide the local rooting public with an outstanding semi-professional club. When they had the opportunity to land John Donaldson to front their pitching staff, they jumped at the



chance. Donaldson signed with Melrose after beginning the 1928 season with the Scobey, Montana club. When Donaldson realized that Scobey was both unable to pay his salary and that they would become exclusively a barnstorming

team, he chose to play for Melrose. These photos show the ballpark with its new grandstand surrounded by cars and fans. Although in subsequent years he visited often, 1928 would be the only season Donaldson played for Melrose.

1932 John Donaldson's All Stars

Courtesy The Martin County Historical Society - The Donaldson Network

DONALDSON AND HIS ALL-STARS SNAPPED AT HAND'S PARK



John Donaldson, noted colored pitcher, lined up his baseball team before the camera at Hand's Park the other day, and this is the result. Donaldson's team is headquartering at the park this summer, and providing good baseball, as usual. The St. Cloud team, with Harry Strong featured, comes for a second game here Sunday. In their first clash, a week ago, the Donaldson nine squeezed out a 5 to 4 victory. The boys in the picture, are: Front row, left to right: McNaughton, Jones, Gray, Hutton, Anderson; back row, Donaldson, Allen, Cunningham, Hawkins, Freeman, Barker, Boldridge.

In the depths of the Great Depression, black baseball struggled to maintain its audience and paying fans. The financial crisis that gripped America forced everyone to re-evaluate how to live within their means. John Donaldson formed the Donaldson's All Stars and relocated them to Hand's Park, a thriving resort located just

south of Fairmont, Minnesota. The ball club was composed of several veterans of the Negro National League and a few promising young stars. Donaldson's club began the season at Hand's Park and eventually, as the resort crowds dwindled, were forced to resume a barnstorming schedule. Donaldson owned and operated this club and used the tremendous popularity of his name to draw crowds across the Midwest, eventually challenging the Kansas City Monarchs in a late-season duel.



Hands Park Courtesy of Shelly Abitz

John Donaldson Scouting Collage

Photos Courtesy Andrew Remm, The Brainerd Daily Dispatch - The Donaldson Network



JOHN PRO TEAM—Three favorites of Brainerd baseball fans await a place at the Brainerd-Corn Wing county airport which transported them to Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., and an opportunity to make their mark in professional baseball. Mitchell June, Willie Harris and Ralph Sims joined the club for its series with Peoria on Tuesday night under instructions from the Chicago White Sox.



If you were a black ball-player in the late 1940's and you were given a business card from a major league club it was potentially your ticket to the show. When John Donaldson became the first black talent scout in organized baseball he transcended another color barrier, a line that implied leadership to the African American community. Donaldson's stature within the Black community and within baseball circles made him the perfect fit to assess future professional ballplayers.

The photo on the left shows three players who were under John Donaldson's wing. Two of the men, Mitchell June and Willie Harris, were young black players who were

looking for their chance to prove to white baseball that they had the ability to succeed at the highest level of the national pastime. Donaldson discovered both, one in Alabama the other in Chicago, signed them to contracts and sent them to Brainerd, Minnesota to play with the local semi-professional club. This photo shows both June and Harris with their bags packed, eager to join the White Sox affiliate at Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. John Donaldson's contribution to the fabric of baseball in the Gopher State cannot be overlooked. Donaldson began his career in Minnesota and long after his retirement he still affected the game.



THE DONALDSON NETWORK - YOU CAN HELP

The Donaldson Network is a group of over 500 contributing researchers, authors and historians dedicated to the rediscovery of John Wesley Donaldson. Throughout Donaldson's 30-plus year career in segregated baseball he was known as "The Greatest Colored Pitcher in the World," and we are working daily on restoring his legacy. To date we have uncovered over 390 verified wins and over 5000 reported strikeouts ranking Donaldson as the **all-time** leader in black baseball history. More information can be found on our Web site johndonaldson.bravehost.com

If you are interested in how you can contribute to our effort visit the site or send a note to the address listed at the bottom of each page of this handout.

There is a tremendous amount of information about John Donaldson that remains to be discovered. If you are interested in following the effort or contributing to it contact us and we'll help you add to the legendary career of John Donaldson!