

The Donaldson Network

This just in...

More new and exciting information about the

Most Prolific Black Pitcher In Baseball History

The rediscovery of the “Greatest Colored Pitcher in the World” continues. We at the Donaldson Network push forward on a daily basis. Several “fronts” in the search for John Donaldson are being worked on. This newsletter will highlight areas of interest our effort needs assistance with and some of the current research areas spearheaded to return John Donaldson to his place in baseball history. One game at a time.....



350th Win Discovered!

After several attempts turned out to be duplicates, together we have discovered the 350th documented win in the career of John Wesley Donaldson. When the last Donaldson Network newsletter went out in November of 2008 we stood a mere 4 victories from the 350 milestone. We are happy to report that the intense drive for 350 has resulted in a re-examination of “[Missing Dates](#)” section at johndonaldson.bravehost.com. We continued to pore over the entries and made this very important discovery. In fact we’ve since added 5 more wins! Newspaper accounts still remain undiscovered. To date Donaldson Network researchers have uncovered an astounding 355 victories. We are convinced hundreds of wins remain waiting to be discovered. Read on to discover how you might help add to this legendary total.



CURRENT AREAS OF FOCUS BY DONALDSON NETWORK MEMBERS

ELEANOR DONALDSON'S GRAVE DISCOVERY - RICHARD

Richard ([email](#)) with assistance from other stalwart members of the Donaldson Network, took a couple of vital documents related to the final days of John Donaldson's life and was able to connect the dots to find Eleanor (Watson) Donaldson. After years of searching for leads as to when and where Eleanor could have gone after John's death in 1970. We didn't know where to begin looking until information arrived that Eleanor passed away the year after John, pointing to a search of Chicago's Burr Oak Cemetery. We were able to locate her exact location. Eleanor Donaldson is currently resting in an unmarked grave.



GORO MIKAMI IDENTIFIED- STEVE

Steve ([email](#)) is working on the translation of *The Mystery of Jap Mikado: First Japanese in America professional Baseball* by Kazou Sayama. Continuing efforts to profile the influential "All Nations" club. Donaldson became the drawing card for the All Nations, but he was not the only player that would become the focus of researchers today. We have a great deal to learn about each of the players who shared the diamond with John Donaldson, and each is a part of his story.

CALLING SOUTH DAKOTANS – ASSISTANCE NEEDED

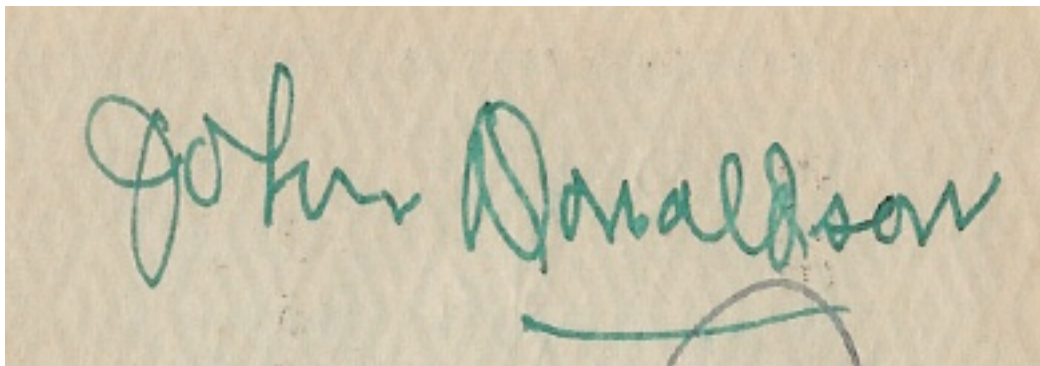
The Donaldson Network is seeking to expand its ranks particularly in South Dakota. Currently listed on the "Missing Games" list are nearly 30 instances of Donaldson games that need to be re-discovered. If you, or someone you know has access to the South Dakota State Archives in Pierre please let us know. We are always looking for help at local institutions. Or perhaps a Donaldson Network road trip through the Rushmore State can be arranged. If you, or someone you know can help please let us know.



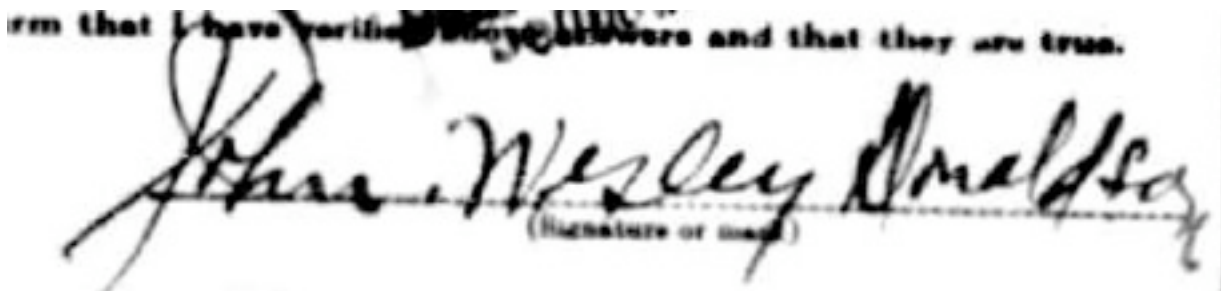
SPREADING THE WORD - PETE

A visit to Carondelet Catholic School in south Minneapolis, to speak to the fifth grade classes about how John Donaldson helped change attitudes about the color line in baseball. Nearly 60 students took part in exercises designed to shed light on how history has treated men like John Donaldson. Hopefully more than a few kids learned how following their passions can help to right injustices, no matter how long and how difficult they may be.

PHOTOS OF INTEREST



1950



1917

1950 CANCELLED CHECK - LARRY

Esteemed Donaldson Network member Larry ([email](#)) provided us with this cancelled check made out to John Donaldson in 1950 from the Kansas City Monarchs. Donaldson's signature is clearly visible on the back of the check detailed in the first signature. When compared to the other known signatures of John Donaldson it appears to be the same. Here is another Donaldson "John Hancock" from his WWI draft registration card from 1917, 33 years earlier.

CARTOON -LINDA

Linda ([email](#)) reminded us of this cartoon from the Aberdeen Daily News it describes a "typical" Donaldson pitching performance. This appeared in 1915, the same year that Donaldson is reported to have thrown 3 consecutive no-hitters. This game occurred only seven days after Donaldson hurled an 18-inning, 30 strikeout game in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Cartoons & Caricatures are featured at johndonaldson.bravehost.com. [Click here](#) to see what's being done to find the origins of some incredible baseball cartoons.



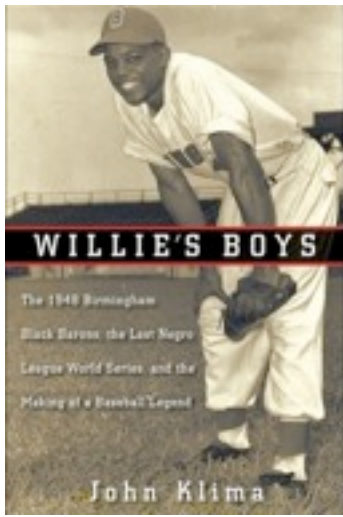
Pitcher Donaldson had those Cubs guessing and sent 17 by the strike-out route. Many were left dead with their bats on their shoulders.

PHOTO ROGER & HERMAN



This photo was recently discovered and contributed by Roger ([email](#)) and Herman ([email](#)) they point out that this grandstand, from Melrose, Minn., saw many of Donaldson's slants while he was a member of the Melrose Legion All-Stars in 1928. The packed stands would have been typical of a Donaldson pitching performance. Surviving accounts say the largest crowd that season was nearly 2000 people.

BOOKS COMING SOON:



WILLIE'S BOYS: THE 1948 BIRMINGHAM BLACK BARONS, THE LAST NEGRO LEAGUE WORLD SERIES AND THE MAKING OF A BASEBALL LEGEND - BY - JOHN KLIMA
WILEY & SONS - DUE AUGUST 7, 2009

Q&A WITH THE AUTHOR - John Klima,

Donaldson Network: When did you become aware of John Donaldson and his association with Willie Mays?

John Klima: Early in the research for *Willie's Boys: The 1948 Birmingham Black Barons, The Last Negro League World Series and The Making of a Baseball Legend*, I realized that the basic story the New York Giants told about how they discovered and signed Mays was deliberately false. As I started to assemble the paper trail, I began to figure out which teams were also on Mays.

To fully understand what teams were really on him, I had to figure out which scouts were. When I came to the White Sox portion of it, I mentioned it to Rod Nelson, the SABR scouting guru. Rod told me about John Donaldson. I had heard the name in passing but I never knew anything about him. That led me to The Donaldson Network and I went from there. Donaldson actually became a character in *Willie's Boys* and I was able to breathe some life into him and introduce him to readers. I discovered a pair of hand-written letters from Donaldson discussing his pursuit of Willie Mays.

DN: Has history and particularly "baseball history" been kind to John Donaldson?

Klima: Not even close. I'm younger, but I've been reading baseball stuff forever. I'm from California, so he may as well have never existed out here. I was having a talk with a writer much more known than I am and he was thinking about some book about the all-time best pitchers. I threw Donaldson at him and got a blank look. This writer is decades older than I am and has tons more credits than I do. That says a lot. In my book, I called Donaldson 'Satchel Paige before there was a Satchel Paige,' which is a good way to introduce him to a general audience. I think the similarities stop with the fame. Satchel was a right-hander; John was a lefty; Satchel was a character and John was a pretty humble guy. Both got fed up with baseball discrimination.

DN: From an individual researchers 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?

Klima: There's no easy way to get what you want out of historical research, especially about the Negro Leagues. I came from the sports writing field where "research" is often defined by googling something. That's true of a lot of things today. I sat in my newspaper office with binders full of newspaper clips and people thought I was insane. They couldn't see past two minutes in front or behind them. I also came from an academic discipline in college, anthropology, and so to me, digging through old newspapers is a lot like archaeology.

As far as Donaldson goes, if he's ever going to be in the Hall of Fame, where he should be, there needs to be data. I don't understand why he hasn't been introduced to the public. If you're going to have Paige, Rogan and Smith, you should have Donaldson.

I don't understand why Buck O'Neil never bothered to talk about Donaldson in public the way he talked about Satchel Paige or Hilton Smith. It basically leads me to the conclusion that he was taking care of his own guys more than he was taking care of other guys in general. He advocated two of his former teammates, Willard Brown and Hilton Smith, and got them both in the Hall of Fame. If Buck liked Smith for the Hall of Fame, I don't know how he couldn't bother with Donaldson. I don't buy the arguments that Donaldson was before his time; he wanted Rogan and Willie Foster in, both pitchers whose best days were before his best years.

I would take an educated guess and say there's old factions of Kansas City Baseball in there. I can't believe O'Neil lacked knowledge of Donaldson. He spoke well of Wilkinson, and Wilkinson seems to have retained a great deal of admiration for Donaldson stemming from his early days with the pre-Monarchs All-Nations team.

If Willie Foster is a Hall of Fame left-hander, how is Donaldson not? I wish the older players were alive to vouch for him. Ballplayers aren't political when it comes to each other. It's the guy can play or the guy can't play. I'm certain they would have been glad to tell us how effective he was on the mound.

DN: How does a great player like Mays view a fellow black ballplayer like Donaldson?

Klima: Willie didn't know much about Donaldson scouting him. He may have heard of him growing up. I'm convinced that Mays was a teenage ballplayer who was terrified that he might never get out of segregated Birmingham. To that extent, he was just another ballplayer. Ballplayers by nature generally are not in tune to who is watching them and when. It would be one thing if Donaldson would have approached Mays in person, which is certainly not out of the question. But if he did, Mays might not remember, and if he does, might not tell. When we spoke, Donaldson was one of the names I brought up. He didn't go down that road with me. I wasn't mad; that's his choice. That's another part of ballplayer nature, pre-draft: everyone was signed under the table and everyone concealed the details. Even white players of that era are secretive, so you can imagine how a black southerner of that generation might instinctively cover his tracks. I do have proof in the book that Donaldson knew about Mays, told the White Sox front office, and tried to get him signed. The White Sox didn't go for it. Like Quincy Troupe later became frustrated that the Cardinals weren't listening to him about black players, Donaldson later became so tired of watching one player after another he wanted get away that he resigned his position and left organized baseball.

John Klima's work can be viewed at www.baseballbeginnings.com we anxiously await the publication's release. He is a valued member of the Donaldson Network and a gracious contributor.

Research Finds

Until recently it was believed the first reference to the “All Nations” team occurred on May 6, 1912. Since the last newsletter we have discovered another article that appeared more than a month earlier. On March 28, the Des Moines Register reported this:

WILKINSON BACK FROM SAN ANTONIO

Manager Wilkinson of the Hopkins Bros. baseball club returned yesterday from San Antonio Tex., where he went to procure some Mexican players for his proposed “team of all nations.”

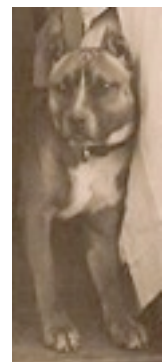
The importance of the All Nations team as an integrated model for generations to come is relevant here. Attitudes about people with different nationalities were not as they are today. It was once thought that players of different ethnic origins could not co-exist with one another, much less form the “team” necessary for a successful baseball organization. Wilkinson’s “example” helped land him in the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.

1917 Indianapolis Freeman ‘All-Black Team’ discovered

John Donaldson called “the Iowa Wonder” is listed as a top pitcher of the year along with Dick “Cannonball” Redding, Louis Padrone, “Smokey” Joe Williams (HOF 1999) and Andrew “Beans” Williams. Article says each man “would have all the essentials of greatness.”

Everyones Best Friend?

The All Nation’s team (1912-1917) had a mascot. References show that J.L. Wilkinson had a pet that traveled in the Pullman car with the team. He was a brown dog named Buster. And this is a photo believed to be Buster himself!!



1952 Pittsburgh Courier Poll

EXPERTS' 'DREAM TEAM'		
'All-Time . . . All-American'		
FIRST BASE	BUCK LEONARD	HOMESTEAD GRAYS <i>left-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
SECOND BASE	JACKIE ROBINSON	BROOKLYN DODGERS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
SHORTSTOP	JOHN HENRY LLOYD	LINCOLN GTS., BACHARACHS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
THIRD BASE	OLIVER MARCELL	LINCOLN GIANTS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
LEFT FIELD	MONTE IRVIN	NEWARK, N. Y. GIANTS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
CENTER FIELD	OSCAR CHARLESTON	ABC'S, PITTSBURGH CRAWFORDS <i>left-handed hitter—left-handed thrower</i>
RIGHT FIELD	CHRISTOBAL TORRIENTI	CUBANS, AMERICAN GIANTS <i>left-handed hitter—left-handed thrower</i>
CATCHER	JOSH GIBSON	PGH. CRAWFORDS, HOMESTEAD GRAYS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
CATCHER	BIZZ MACKKEY	HILLDALE <i>right-handed thrower—switch hitter</i>
PITCHER	"SMOKY JOE" WILLIAMS	HOMESTEAD GRAYS <i>right-handed thrower</i>
PITCHER	LEROY (SACHEL) PAIGE	CRAWFORDS, KC MONARCHS <i>right-handed thrower</i>
PITCHER	BULLET ROGAN	KANSAS CITY MONARCHS <i>right-handed thrower</i>
PITCHER	JOHN DONALDSON	ALL NATIONS, KC MONARCHS <i>southpaw</i>
PITCHER	WILLIE FOSTER	CHICAGO AMERICAN GIANTS <i>southpaw</i>
UTILITY INFILDER	MARTIN DIHIGO	NEW YORK CUBANS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
UTILITY INFILDER	SAM BANKHEAD	HOMESTEAD GRAYS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
UTILITY OUTFILDER	MARTIN DIHIGO	NEW YORK CUBANS <i>right-handed hitter—right-handed thrower</i>
MANAGER	ANDREW (RUBE) FOSTER	AMERICAN GIANTS <i>was also a great southpaw</i>
COACH	WM. (DIZZY) DISMUKES	BUS. MGR., MONARCHS <i>former face pitcher with ABC's</i>
COACH	DANNY McCLELLAND	PHILADELPHIA GIANTS

Analysis of the 1952 Pittsburgh Courier Poll continues. John Donaldson remains the only pitcher listed in the poll NOT in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. Members of the Donaldson Network are analyzing the poll and it's significance to the study of black baseball. This poll is widely considered the benchmark poll for historians.

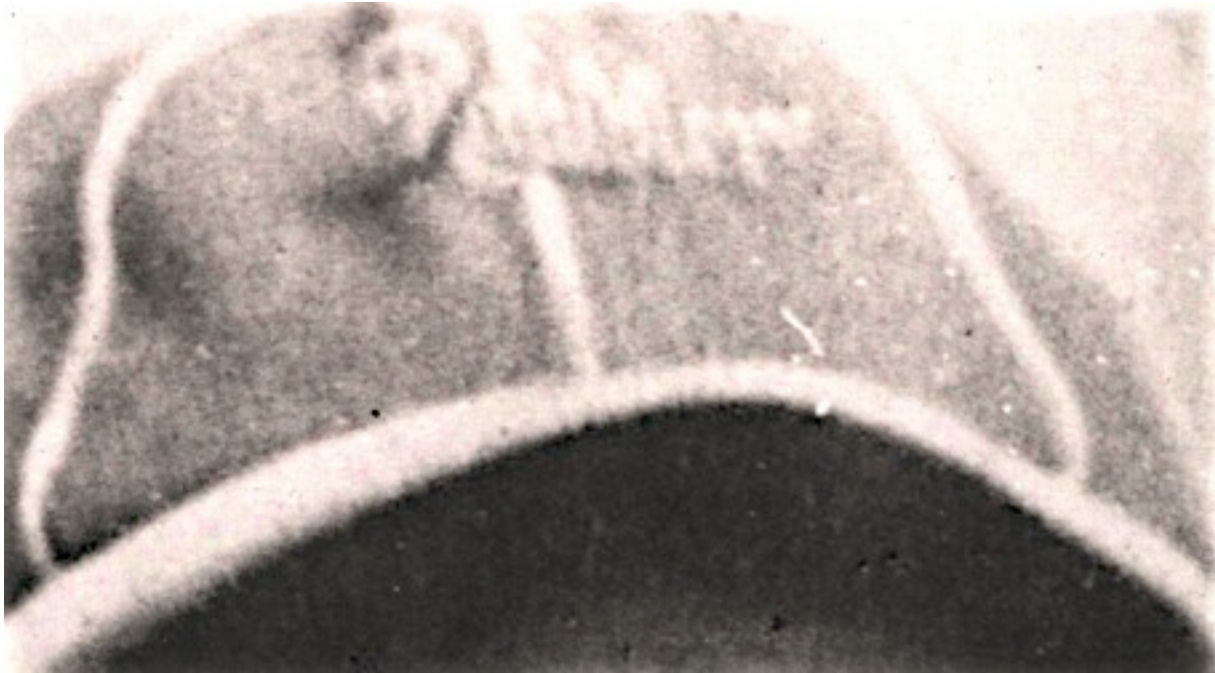
The pursuit of games played by John Donaldson will not slow down until we have rediscovered his entire career!!

The Mysterious Hat



1 9 1 2 H o p k i n s B r o t h e r s

A regular entrant in the Des Moines, Iowa City League was the Hopkins Brothers sporting goods store. In the spring of 1912 J.L. Wilkinson, manager of the club, traveled south looking for players to fill a roster of the team that would become World's All Nations. John Donaldson is seated in the center. Nearly 100 years after this photo was snapped the Donaldson Network seeks more information about it. We wonder what or if there is a logo emblazoned on Donaldson's hat. Included here is an enhancement of Donaldson's hat taken from this photograph.



Many attempts have been made to shed light as to what is written on Donaldson's cap. One theory is it's the name of the George Smith College team. Another is that the cap reads the obvious "Brother's" for the Hopkins club.

Detailed analysis continues.

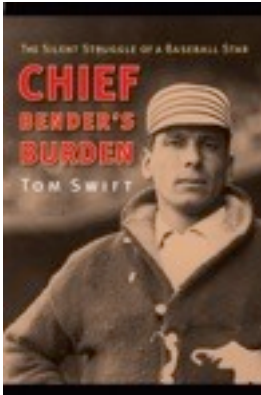
What IS known are some of the teams Donaldson played with prior to this photograph. 1908, 1909 and 1910 seasons were spent primarily with Glasgow Missouri's Hannaca Blues. One other team he is known to have played with in 1908 & 1909 was the Higbee, MO Black Tigers. In 1911 Donaldson traveled with W. A. Brown's Tennessee Rats.

Let us know if you have any guesses to help solve this mystery.

[Click here to offer any advice](#)

Baseball Books by Donaldson Network Members:

One of the great aspects of the Donaldson Network is collaborating with fellow authors, researchers and historians who share passion for our National Game. Here are just a few examples of recent publications by Donaldson Network members.



CHIEF BENDER'S BURDEN - [TOM SWIFT](#)

[UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS](#)

With a journalist's eye for detail and a novelist's feel for storytelling, Tom Swift takes readers on Bender's improbable journey—from his early years on the White Earth Reservation, to his development at the Carlisle Indian School, to his big break and eventual rise to the pinnacle of baseball. The story of a paradoxical American sports hero, one who achieved a once-unfathomable celebrity while suffering the harsh injustices of a racially intolerant world, *Chief Bender's Burden* is an eye-opening and inspiring narrative of a unique American life.

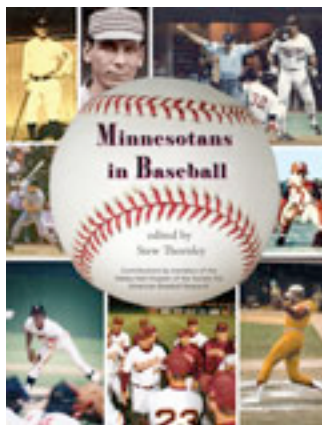
2009 Seymour Medal, sponsored by the Society for American Baseball Research, winner
2009 Larry Ritter Award, finalist

SPIRITS IN THE GRASS - [BILL MEISSNER](#)

[UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS](#)

In *Spirits in the Grass* we meet Luke Tanner, a thirty-something baseball player helping to build a new baseball field in his beloved hometown of Clearwater, Wisconsin. Luke looks forward to trying out for the local amateur team as soon as possible. His chance discovery of a small bone fragment on the field sets in motion a series of events and discoveries that will involve his neighbors, local politicians, and the nearby Native American reservation. Luke's life, most of all, will be transformed. His growing obsession with the ball field and what's beneath it threatens his still fragile relationship with his partner, Louise, and challenges Luke's assumptions about everyone, especially himself.

In this beautiful and haunting novel, baseball serves as a metaphor for life itself, with its losses and defeats, its glories and triumphs.



MINNESOTANS IN BASEBALL - EDITED BY [STEW THORNLEY](#) - [NODIN PRESS](#)

In 2007, the Halsey Hall Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) embarked on a collaborative project to research and write biographies of Minnesotans who had distinguished themselves in baseball. The entries include Paul Molitor, Kent Hrbek, and Dave Winfield, Charles Albert "Chief" Bender, Johnny Blanchard, Joe Brinkman, Tom Burgmeier, Blix Donnelly, Paul Giel, Halsey Hall, Angelo Giuliani, Jean Ann Havlish, Jerry Kindall, Mike Kingery, Jerry Koosman, Jack Morris, Rip Repulski, and Joe Mauer. With plenty of photographs and copious notes and references in the back.