

The Courier

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"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"

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John Donaldson Special Issue, July 2020

GLASGOW EVENT TO RESTORE LEGACY OF NEGRO LEAGUES PITCHER JOHN DONALDSON STATUE & FIELD DEDICATION DAY

July 6, 2020

John Wesley Donaldson was a Negro Leagues baseball player who has more segregated wins (413) and strikeouts (5091) than any pitcher in the history of the game. His 32-year playing career witnessed 724 different cities in the US and Canada. Playing baseball outside of the "whites-only" leagues took incredible courage. From 1908 to 1940, John Donaldson navigated Jim Crow laws in America to record a career that left historians no clear path to document. He left a legacy scattered across the continent and ultimately into obscurity. Upon Donaldson's retirement from pitching he became the first Black scout in the history of Major League Baseball (MLB). He is known to have passed the torch of elite Negro Leagues pitching to Satchel Paige.

Newspapers from Donaldson's era described him as "The greatest pitcher in the world" often using glowing praise like, "John Donaldson is rated the leading twirler of the Black race and last season won sixty out of sixty-five games." or "John Donaldson is – and there is no one that is qualified to speak authoritatively that will dispute it – the greatest colored baseball player of today and of all time."

Join us at **John Donaldson Statue & Field Dedication Day** in Glasgow, Missouri on September 4, 2020 for the opening day of a state-of-the-art ballpark named for this local legend. The facility provides a home for community teams and youth sports programs insuring generations of players will remember his enduring legacy. Many of Glasgow's community organizations have expressed support of the effort to recognize Donaldson and pride in his being a son of Glasgow.

John Donaldson's larger-than-life statue was made by renowned sculptor Kwan Wu and will serve as a symbol of what Donaldson and other Negro Leagues players endured behind the walls of the "color line" and in our segregated society. His story has been hidden for decades, untaught due to lack of knowledge and appreciation. Ironically his statue is in plain view of a former plantation mansion from the 19th Century. John Donaldson's life defied convention and his example can serve as a unifier today.

In 1917, the white "major leagues" wanted John Donaldson. A scheme was developed to send him to Cuba then return to the United States as a light skinned, Spanish-speaking, blazing fastball throwing left-handed pitcher. Donaldson rebuffed an offer of \$10,000 and refused to be "something he was not." Donaldson said, "I was born Black and I was born American, and that's the way it's going to be."

Donaldson was a founding member of the Kansas City Monarchs, the most famous Negro League franchise ever and is credited with naming the franchise. Monarch owner J.L. Wilkinson (National Baseball Hall of Fame - 2006) said of Donaldson, "He was the best south-paw I ever saw, Black or White." Discussions of Donaldson's career eventually lead to comparisons of a much better remembered pitcher, Satchel Paige. Wilkinson said, "Paige is a great pitcher, all right . . . but Donaldson had more stuff. There never was a pitcher, Black or White, who could put more on the ball than Donaldson." Still others said Paige was "the only rival to the immortal John Donaldson."

Donaldson's career was all but forgotten as his final resting place remained unmarked for more than 30-years. In 2004, a proper marker was placed on the site and The Donaldson Network began searching for every instance of Donaldson's playing career. What was discovered over the next decade places John Donaldson in a category with the greatest baseball players in the history of the national sport.

In 2020 upon the Centennial of the founding of the first sustained Negro League, Donaldson was named to the "**All-Century Team**" and is celebrated across all levels of baseball.

John Donaldson Statue & Field Dedication Day is supported by institutions, individuals and corporate partners across the United States. The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, The Missouri Sports Hall of Fame, Bob Monnig Industries, The South Dakota Historical Society, The Center for Negro Leagues Baseball Research, The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, The Negro Southern League Museum, The Society for American Baseball Research - Negro Leagues Committee, TBC Video Productions, Glasgow Lions Club, Clyde Doepner - Curator for the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club, Dr. Leslie Heaphy - Editor, *Black Ball Journal of Black Baseball History* & Vice President of the Society for American Baseball Research, along with the Glasgow Knights of Columbus.

The rediscovery of John Donaldson as one of baseball's forgotten heroes and dedication of a statue & field in his honor are reason to celebrate! More information will be released as it becomes available.

I am not ashamed of my color. There is no woman whom I love more than my mother, I am light enough so that baseball men told me before I became known that I could be passed off as a Cuban. It would have meant renouncing my family. One of the agreements was that I was never again to visit my mother or have anything to do with colored people, I refused, I am clean morally and physically. I go to my church and contribute my share. I keep my body and mind clean. And yet when I go out there to play baseball it is not unusual to hear some fan cry out: 'Hit the dirty N*****.' That hurts. For I have no recourse. I am getting paid, I suppose, to take that. But why should fans become personal? If I act the part of a gentleman, am I not entitled to a little respect?



Media Advisory

John Donaldson Statue & Field Dedication Day – Negro League Superstar to be honored

Friday, September 4, 2020, Glasgow, Missouri

What: Negro League superstar, John Wesley Donaldson, is to be honored in his hometown of Glasgow, Missouri on September 4, 2020. A special dedication honoring Donaldson will take place at the site of **John Donaldson Field** beginning at 4:00 PM on Friday, September 4 on the grounds of the Glasgow High School. The city of Glasgow has proclaimed the day as John Wesley Donaldson Statue & Field Dedication Day. Baseball will celebrate the unveiling of a statue of Donaldson made by renowned sculptor **Kwan Wu**. The larger-than-life statue depicts Donaldson winding up to throw one of his signature pitches that left his opponents whiffing at the air as the ball passed. Baseball fans, Donaldson family members, local and national dignitaries will be joined by historians from across the country recognizing the significance of the career of John Donaldson. A local celebration surrounding the event is being organized.

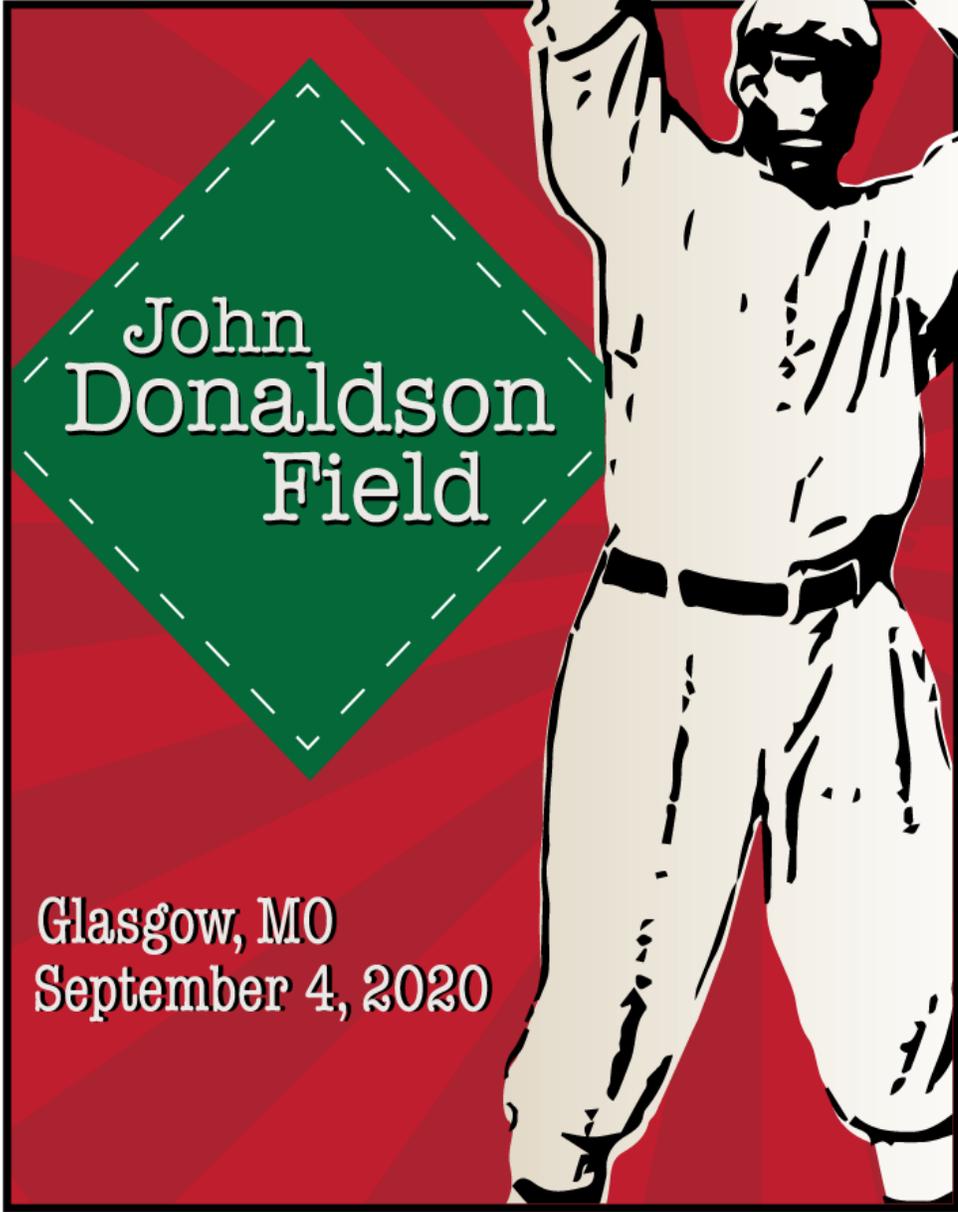
Who: John Wesley Donaldson was born in Glasgow, Missouri on February 20, 1891. John He attended Evans school, a segregated Black school where he led his school to a Donaldson: number of championships. After attending **George R. Smith College** in Sedalia for a short time, he began to pursue his baseball career in earnest and went on to play for a number of mixed race and all Black semi-pro teams including the renowned Kansas City Monarchs. For more information on Donaldson's baseball career, see the attached bio and media coverage. Donaldson died on April 14, 1970 and was buried in Chicago's historic **Burr Oak Cemetery** in an 'unmarked grave'. In 2004 a marker was placed at Donaldson's grave with contributions from around the country.

When: John Donaldson Statue & Field Dedication Day, September 4, 2020 4:00 P.M. CST.

Where: John Donaldson Field at Glasgow High School 860 Randolph St. Glasgow, MO.

Sponsors: Glasgow Public Schools, The Donaldson Network & The Glasgow Community Museum Board and the Friends of the Glasgow Museum

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John
Donaldson
Field

Glasgow, MO
September 4, 2020