

## **The Black Bats of Mason City and Beyond**

By Paul R. Spyhalski<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction and Abstract**

In 1932, Mason City formed an all-white semi-pro baseball team, intending to fill the schedule with top touring teams. At about the same time, Vern Klingaman, an Iowa native, set out from Mineola, Texas, for the Midwest with his barnstorming black baseball team, known both as the Mineola Black Spiders and the Texas Black Spiders.

Even with top traveling teams calling on the newly named Mason City Bats, fans were not turning the turnstiles in sufficient numbers to satisfy team management. Klingaman was also having money difficulties with his Spiders team, perhaps due to some rainouts or due to lack of quality bookings as a newer barnstorming team.

These two problems were resolved in late July of 1932 when the Mason City management “purchased” the Texas Black Spiders, apparently releasing the previously contracted white players. The newly named “Mason City Black Bats” played out the season in Mason City, attracting top talent including the John Donaldson All-Stars and Kansas City Monarchs.

This paper examines the 1932 pre-Black Bats season of the Mason City Bats and the Texas Black Spiders in Iowa. This paper then explores the remainder of the season of the Mason City Black Bats. This paper then discusses the Spiders team of 1933 and introduces the Spiders teams of 1934 to 1938.

### **The Mason City Bats**

For the 1932 season, Mason City formed an all-white independent semi-pro baseball team and carded some top semi-pro and barnstorming teams. Harry Dearmin was Secretary of the team and Muggsy Currant was the manager. Early teams carded included the Waterloo Hawks of the Mississippi Valley League; Gilkerson’s Union Giants, advertised as one of the outstanding Negro professional clubs touring this section of the country, and Daniels Brothers Club, semi-pro champions of Iowa.<sup>2</sup>

The *Globe-Gazette* sports department assisted in a name the team contest.<sup>3</sup> Out of the 112 entries, the three judges selected the name “Mason City Bats.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Paul R. Spyhalski is a practicing attorney in Austin, Minnesota. His interest in local baseball history was triggered by Austin’s sesquicentennial and his attempts to document the members of the Baseball Hall of Fame who had played in Austin. He located the references to the Mason City Black Bats while trying to find out whether Grover Cleveland Alexander pitched in Austin for the House of David while barnstorming through the Midwest.

<sup>2</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 18, 1932.

<sup>3</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 20, 1932.

<sup>4</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 25, 1932.

Opening with a seven to six home loss to Waterloo<sup>5</sup> and a twelve to nine win at home against the Union Giants,<sup>6</sup> the turnstiles were not singing a merry tune for the management. Cold weather may have played a part, but the team also reduced general admission to one price in hopes of drawing more to the games.<sup>7</sup>

The Bats then followed with a 13 to 6 pounding of Daniels Brothers,<sup>8</sup> a split with Johnny Meyers' Royal Canadians at home<sup>9</sup> and defeated Hampton at Hampton in a night game,<sup>10</sup> 15-2. After another Waterloo victory,<sup>11</sup> rumors of a general shake up in the Bats were prevalent.<sup>12</sup>

The Bats continued to card strong teams. The Van Dykes, the (western) House of David<sup>13</sup> and the Nebraska Indians<sup>14</sup> visited Mason City with the Bats continuing to play competitive ball, beating the Van Dykes, 8-7,<sup>15</sup> the House of David, 4-1,<sup>16</sup> the Hampton Pirates, 1-0,<sup>17</sup> the Corwith Hawks, 4-3,<sup>18</sup> and the Nebraska Indians, 9-1<sup>19</sup> in succession. One of their few defeats in the month of June was to John Donaldson's All-Stars at Mason City, 5-1.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May, 9, 1932.

<sup>6</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 16, 1932.

<sup>7</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 20, 1932.

<sup>8</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 23, 1932.

<sup>9</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 30, 1932 and May 31, 1932.

<sup>10</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 31, 1932.

<sup>11</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 6, 1932.

<sup>12</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 10, 1932.

<sup>13</sup>. The House of David bearded barnstorming baseball teams are likely the best known exports of the House of David religious colony of Benton Harbor, Michigan. The Davids are often credited with inventing the "pepper game" by which barnstorming teams would often be compared. In 1932, the Colony had three traveling teams: the Eastern team featuring Grover Cleveland Alexander, the Western team and the Central States Traveling Team. Imitation being flattery, the City of David, Spring Valley (Illinois) and the Colored House of David also featured teams mimicking the original bearded barnstormers. For more information on the House of David, see Joel Hawkins and Terry Bertolino, *The House of David Baseball Team*, Arcadia Publishing (2000).

<sup>14</sup>. The first Nebraska Indians team was founded by Guy W. Green in 1897. Recruiting primarily from the Genoa Industrial and Agricultural School, the Santee Normal School and the Omaha and Winnebago reservations, Green put together a twelve man team of nine Indian players and three non-Indian players and toured under the name Nebraska Indians. The players' Indian backgrounds were used to draw crowds to something like a Wild West show atmosphere. Nebraska Indians Baseball Team,

[http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/timeline/nebraska\\_indians\\_baseball.htm](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/timeline/nebraska_indians_baseball.htm)

Advance publicity in 1932 indicated that the Nebraska Indians had been touring for 20 years and put up a record of 93 victories against 41 losses in 1931. In addition to Chief Two Horse of the "Nebraska tribe", the Indians featured Dick McKay, a non-Indian juggler in the outfield and "Kewpie" Taylor of the Chippewa Tribe. Kewpie stood four feet seven inches on the mound. Mason City Globe Gazette, June 21, 1932.

The Indians lineup was advertised as including eight full blooded Indians including Lone Star, "Babe Ruth" Mandoka, Ray Canoe, Chief Two Horse, Chief Little Bear and Running Bear. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 23, 1932. Adding to the atmosphere, pre-game publicity featured pictures of Indians' players in "full regalia and promised that if not catching, coaches would appear on the coaching lines in full regalia and coach with "war whoops." Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 25, 1932.

See also Jeffrey Powers-Beck, *The American Indian Integration of Baseball*, University of Nebraska Press (December 2004).

<sup>15</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 13, 1932.

<sup>16</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 15, 1932.

<sup>17</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 20, 1932.

<sup>18</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 23, 1932.

<sup>19</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 27, 1932.

<sup>20</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 30, 1932.

The Bats split a Fourth of July doubleheader with Charles City and Rockford.<sup>21</sup> Syd Pollock's Cuban Stars, a strong negro team from the East-West Colored League came to call as well. Showing signs of weakening, the Bats dropped a game to the strong Cuban Stars, 9-3, but also lost to Corwith under the lights, 8-0.<sup>22</sup>

The Bats also carded the Texas Black Spiders but were rained out on July 6th. The Bats also lost at Northwood, failing to support Red Braga who struck out fifteen in eight innings.<sup>23</sup>

The Bats game with the Spiders on July 24<sup>th</sup> is the last published game for the all-white Mason City Bats. With the purchase of the Black Spiders by Manager Dearmin, the original Mason City Bats played no more games for Mason City in 1932.

Hobo Duncan, Rube Johnson, Eissler and O'Brian later joined the Hampton Pirates.<sup>24</sup> Pitchers Red Braga also landed with Hampton and Fred Larson landed with Charles City.

### **The Black Spiders of Mineola, Texas**

In 1932, Vernon "V.A." Klingaman and a team of black ballplayers departed Mineola, Texas for the Midwest. They left in a bus painted black with the team's name, "Black Spiders" on the side in white letters. On the back was a white cobweb, the painting being the work of a local artist.<sup>25</sup>

Vern, as his players called him, grew up in Iowa. He moved with his family to Texas in the late 1920's. Settling into Mineola, he worked odd jobs.<sup>26</sup>

His stepfather also owned a local café, giving him the appearance of some wealth, especially compared to that of his players. Like most towns in that time period, Mineola had a town baseball team. Mineola also had a black baseball team. The black team might draw only 200 fans to a home game<sup>27</sup>

Prior to Vern, the Mineola team was comprised primarily of local men and youths. Once Vern became involved, he expanded the team, changing the name to the Texas Black Spiders and opened the roster to outsiders.<sup>28</sup>

"He didn't know anybody" said 78 year old Lonnie Arthur of Dallas, a member of Vern's teams from 1932-1934.<sup>29</sup> Players came from all over East Texas for tryouts. Vern recruited based

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<sup>21</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 5, 1932.

<sup>22</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 11, 1932.

<sup>23</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 22, 1932.

<sup>24</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 13, 1932.

<sup>25</sup>. Kevin Sherrington, Barnstorming Black Spiders found their home on the road, The Dallas Morning News, June 24, 1990.

<sup>26</sup>. Id.

<sup>27</sup>. Id.

<sup>28</sup>. Id.

<sup>29</sup>. Id.

upon recommendations. Players came from Diboll, Terrell, Mott, Pittsburg and Tyler. Only a few locals made the team: Emery “Foots” Parker and Josh and Joe Epperson.<sup>30</sup>

Lonnie Arthur was playing in Rusk, Texas when he heard about the Texas Black Spiders from Frank Mitchell. Mitchell schooled him on the finer points of barnstorming: stay out of fights because you are always on foreign turf.<sup>31</sup>

It is unclear when Vern got the inspiration to form a barnstorming baseball team. We do know that his family was from Marshalltown, Iowa as he visited his grandparents when the Spiders came to Mason City in July of 1932.<sup>32</sup>

Every member of the team was a showman.<sup>33</sup> Mitchell, the first baseman, was so adept with the glove that he sometimes would tell other fielders to throw it bad. Arthur said that “He’d turn his back on the ball and catch it.”<sup>34</sup>

The Spiders built a reputation of being one of the fastest Negro ball teams of the south. They were advertised as holding a victory over Ben Hayos’ all-Indian club of Holdenville, Okla.<sup>35</sup> Other victories included Memphis, Tenn.; Little Rock, Ark.; Houston, Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas; Oklahoma City and the Milwaukee Giants. The strength of the club was demonstrated by only 9 losses in 46 games.<sup>36</sup> The club also advertised a shadow and slow motion “pepper” game.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>. Id.

<sup>31</sup>. Id.

<sup>32</sup>. Sherrington, supra; The Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 18, 1932

<sup>33</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 18, 1932.

<sup>34</sup>. Sherrington, supra.

<sup>35</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 6, 1932.

<sup>36</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 5, 1932.

<sup>37</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 6, 1932.

## The Spiders Enter Iowa

The Spiders suffered a rainout of their July 6<sup>th</sup> games scheduled against Mason City.<sup>38</sup> A return match up was carded for July 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Spiders defeated Ackley twice in their only other noted appearances in Iowa before the make up game.<sup>40</sup>

In the re-scheduled game, J.B. Griffin, a 20 year-old, left handed phenom, struck out 17 Bats batters in a 3-0 shutout of Mason City at the fairgrounds. Griffin allowed only 5 hits and walked 3.<sup>41</sup>

The Spiders scored their runs early with “Midge” Mitchell hitting a double. Griffin followed with a single and “Gip” Noble scored them both on a double. Jesse Bowen’s single scored Noble to complete all of the games’ scoring in the first inning.<sup>42</sup>

The Spiders were credited with a “snappy line of chatter.”<sup>43</sup> They closed their contest by gathering at the pitchers’ box and singing southern melodies, ending with a grand march of the club up to the grandstand singing “Beat ‘em Texas.”<sup>44</sup>



**Advertising Photo of the Texas Black Spiders from the Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 15, 1932.  
The Caption was “Spiders Come Back for Game with Bats”**

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<sup>38</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 15, 1932.

<sup>39</sup>. Id.; Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 16, 1932.

<sup>40</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 16, 1932. It is entirely possible that the Spiders played more games in Iowa but as a barnstorming team, there is no “home” paper to check.

<sup>41</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 18, 1932.

<sup>42</sup>. Id.

<sup>43</sup>. Id.

<sup>44</sup>. Id.

The Spiders followed up their success with a game at Corwith under the lights the following Tuesday.<sup>45</sup> Showing they could be beaten, the Corwith Night Hawks defeated the Spiders, 5-2. The Spiders defense committed three errors while the pitchers allowed seven hits.<sup>46</sup>

The Spiders again saw defeat in Rockford, Iowa. Showing early offense, the Spiders scored three runs in the opening frame. The Rockford Independents tied the score in the fifth on a walk and two hits. Shaw started for the Spiders, allowing 9 hits while walking four. The final score was 4 to 3.<sup>47</sup>

In pre-game publicity for a return game with Mason City, J.B. Griffin said he would make it 20 strikeouts if he took the mound against the Bats.<sup>48</sup> Pre-game publicity never hurt when playing for a percentage of the gate.<sup>49</sup>

Getting his chance, Griffin struck out “only” fourteen. It was more than enough as the Spiders pounded “Lefty” Marlenee who allowed seven runs in the opening frame for Mason City. The Spiders pushed across a run in the eighth when Freeman’s single scored Nobles. Two errors and a triple scored three more in the eighth with Griffin, Nobles and Derrick crossing the dish.<sup>50</sup>

The Spiders defeated Hampton that evening under the lights. Willie Jones threw the first seven innings for Texas, allowing no hits but three unearned runs on three errors. Griffin was again called to the mound in the eighth, giving up only one hit in two more innings of work.<sup>51</sup>

The Spiders were next carded to play Charles City on the North Iowa fairgrounds the following Tuesday. The Charles City team was to be the same team entered in the semipro tourney in Des Moines.<sup>52</sup>

### **Transformation into the Black Bats**

The *Mason City Globe Gazette* described the surprise at the Spiders appearing in Mason City uniforms for the Charles City match up as follows:

Well, well! The Bats have gobbled up the Spiders! Tuesday evening Mason City’s uniforms, filled out with the Texas club of Mineola, Texas, split a 5-5 decision with Charles City in a twilight game at the fairgrounds.

The Texas Black Spiders were advertised to meet Charles City’s state semipro club but instead 10 members of the Spiders, making up the new Mason City Bats, battled the Floyd County club. Three of the Spiders went back to Texas and the

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<sup>45</sup>. Id.; *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 19, 1932; *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 21, 1932.

<sup>46</sup>. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 21, 1932 (a box score has yet to be located).

<sup>47</sup>. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 25, 1932.

<sup>48</sup>. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 23, 1932.

<sup>49</sup>. Sherrington, *supra*.

<sup>50</sup>. *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, July 25, 1932.

<sup>51</sup>. Id.

<sup>52</sup>. Id.

remainder of the club will make Mason City its headquarters and play for Mason City for the rest of the season.

Manager Muggsy Currant and Secretary Harry Dearmin took over the club intact late Tuesday afternoon.<sup>53</sup>

The *Globe-Gazette* didn't describe why the Spiders were available for purchase. Lonnie Arthur, Spiders' pitcher and outfielder, indicates, however, that a dispute arose over player shares. A number of players voted to leave the team and stay in Iowa.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps it was too few games being played with apparently only six known games being scheduled in Iowa between the July 6<sup>th</sup> rainout in Mason City and the July 24<sup>th</sup> rematch.

As for why they would stay in Iowa, a player might be able to earn \$12 a week back home in Texas. On the road, salaries varied, but were estimated to be between \$15-20 per week depending on the size of the crowds as the Spiders generally played for the winner's percentage of the gate.<sup>55</sup>

Segregation was also generally less blatant in the Midwest. In the South, the players would have to enter a restaurant through the rear door and eat in the kitchen. In Iowa, they could eat in the main dining room. Arthur said "That's the first time I realized I was a human being."<sup>56</sup>

The players' treatment likely varied from town to town. Corwith featured its own Negro infield, made up of veterans of the Gilkerson Union Giants.<sup>57</sup> Corwith also featured Simms and Byas, an all Negro battery.<sup>58</sup> At other times, the editorial content such as follows likely illustrates the feeling of the crowds in some towns:

A peppery blackboy club, consisting of famous colored stars will present to the fans a bit of exceptionally fine baseball divided with clever antics that should draw laughs throughout.<sup>59</sup>

Dietz Smith and his Hormel baseball warriors are prepared to meet the black face boys from Texas with swinging bats when the Texas Black Spiders journey to the city for a return game tomorrow, to be played at Marcusen's lot at 4:15 pm. ...

Lefty Becker ... is slated to do the pitching. He gave a brilliant performance against the negroes after the damage had already been done. The darkies collected their six runs off the offerings of Urlick. ...

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<sup>53</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 27, 1932; Sherrington, supra (Sherrington indicates that two players returned with Vern.)

<sup>54</sup>. Sherrington, supra.

<sup>55</sup>. Id.

<sup>56</sup>. Id.

<sup>57</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, June 20, 1932.

<sup>58</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 19, 1932.

<sup>59</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, May 16, 1934.

The Black Spiders will give another “exhibition” with their exceptional play putting a lot of pep and ginger into the game. It is almost worth the price of admission alone to watch the darkies pull off their antics.<sup>60</sup>

Life as a barnstorming ballplayer could also be very difficult. Baseball Hall of Famer Willie Wells started the 1932 season with the Detroit Wolves. The depression soon took a toll on the teams in the East-West League and the Wolves combined personnel with the Homestead Grays with the combined team completing the schedule of both teams.<sup>61</sup>

Willie described the schedule as follows:

We played a game in Pittsburgh on Friday, and you know where we played the next day? Toronto, Canada. You know where we played the next day? Detroit, Michigan. Hell, I was in the clubhouse asleep and Posey said we had a game the next day in Detroit.<sup>62</sup>

Following this three day flurry of travel combined with sleeping on a bus, a game was booked 30-40 miles outside of Pittsburgh. When Cum Posey knocked on the door and said it was time to go, we’ve got a game tonight, Willie, a well traveled baseball veteran, knew it was time to move on from Detroit, the Grays and on to the next town.<sup>63</sup>

Although never explicitly stated, the Spiders’ players were used to playing for a percentage of the gate. The original Bats players were likely salaried, meaning they were expecting to be paid a certain amount whether fans turned the turnstiles or not. If they were willing to play for a percentage of the gate, the Black Bats may have been a cheaper proposition for Harry Dearmin.

## The Games

“Piker” Myers started the game for Charles City, lasting only three innings. He gave up four runs before yielding to Larson. Noble started for the Spiders and lasted only a third of an inning, yielding five runs on five hits. Griffin relieved, giving up only three hits over 6 and 2/3rds. The game was called after seven innings on account of darkness.<sup>64</sup>

The lineup for the Mason City Bats in their first game:

Derrick, ss  
Mitchell, 1b  
Griffin, rf, p  
Noble, p, rf  
I. Carpenter, c  
Brown, 2b

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<sup>60</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, May 22, 1934.

<sup>61</sup>. James A. Riley, *Dandy, Day and the Devil*, TK Publishers, 1987, p. 124

<sup>62</sup>. Id.

<sup>63</sup>. Id.

<sup>64</sup>. Id.

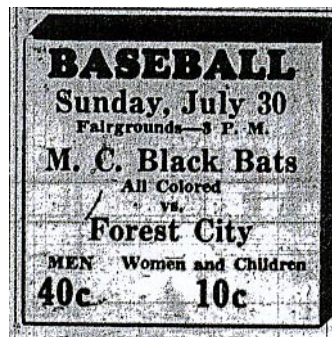


Bowens, cf  
Freeman, lf  
J. Carpenter, 3b  
Jones, cf (batted for Bowens in the fifth inning)<sup>65</sup>

Showing that the issue wasn't a willingness to play, the Bats played two games the following Thursday. The first game was a match up with a strong Rake, Iowa team. Until meeting the Bats, Rake's only other loss out of 18 starts was to John Donaldson's All Stars. The Bats lived up to their name with 2 homeruns. The battery for the Bats was Noble and Jones. The final score was 6-2.<sup>66</sup>

The evening game showcased J.B. Griffin under the lights in Corwith. Griffin struck out 15 while walking 2. Sims, for Corwith, struck out 11 while walking 2. Mason City connected for 6 singles and 2 doubles. Corwith connected for 1 single, a double and two triples. The final score was 3-2.<sup>67</sup>

The Bats next traveled to Forest City for an afternoon match up with the Cornhuskers. Willie Jones struck out eight in going the distance for the Bats. The final score was 5-4 in favor of the Bats.<sup>68</sup>



Advertisement from July 28, 1932 Mason City Globe-Gazette

Forest City traveled to Mason City for a return game the following Sunday. This time facing Griffin, the Cornhuskers failed to get beyond second in the game. Allowing only 4 hits while striking out 15, he and his mates shutout the Huskers 7 to 0.

Forest City featured "Lefty" Feeney, former Mississippi Valley leaguer. The Bats reached him 9 times including a triple and a pair of doubles. The entire game lasted one hour 33 minutes.

Following the victory, the Bats featured their victory song. The *Globe-Gazette* noted it was much more pleasing when sung for Mason City rather than against it. The Bats were also credited with adding a few bits to their shadowball game and slow motion baseball.

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<sup>65</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 27, 1932.

<sup>66</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 29, 1932.

<sup>67</sup>. Id.

<sup>68</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 30, 1932.

The evening game at Hampton was cancelled due to rain. The final three innings against Forest City were played with a steady drizzle.<sup>69</sup>

Starting a grueling stretch of baseball games, Corwith visited Mason City on Wednesday of that week. For Corwith, Kemp allowed only two hits and one run. Unfortunately for him, Griffin was even better in allowing no hits and no runs for the first no hit victory seen at Mason City that season.<sup>70</sup>

Corwith threatened but once when Sims cracked a liner between short and third that was scored an error when he reached. Sims stole second and third, but Griffin bore down and struck out two to finish the inning. The game lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes.<sup>71</sup>

The Bats were then carded to play at Britt on that Thursday.<sup>72</sup> The score has yet to be found.

On Friday, the Bats traveled to Austin, Minnesota. Austin was the winner of the first half of the Southern Minnesota League.<sup>73</sup>

The Austin Daily Herald credited the Bats with a “good clown act” in the pre-game warm up. The Bats “went through all the motions for five minutes without the use of a ball.”<sup>74</sup>

The Bats started the game with two runs on three hits with overly aggressive base running. Austin tied the score on an error followed by a circuit clout by Golberg.<sup>75</sup>

Austin took the lead in the second, scoring three runs to the Bats’ two. Exchanging runs through the fourth, Austin led nine to seven.<sup>76</sup>

In the fifth, Noble, the Bat starting pitcher, went to right field, exchanging places with Griffin. Griffin started his game with two strikeouts and a come back grounder. Griffin struck out the side in the sixth. Austin scored one run against Griffin in the seventh on a double and a single. Two more went down the route of the strike out.<sup>77</sup>

In the ninth, the Bats hit safely three times and scored four runs. Borans, credited as a star colored athlete in some of the Iowa schools, entered the game as a pinch hitter and got a double.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 1, 1932.

<sup>70</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 1, 1932.

<sup>71</sup>. Id.

<sup>72</sup>. Id.

<sup>73</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 6, 1932.

<sup>74</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 6, 1932.

<sup>75</sup>. Id.

<sup>76</sup>. Id.

<sup>77</sup>. Id.

<sup>78</sup>. Id.

Box scores indicate this was the first and only appearance for a “Borans” for the Spiders in 1932. Filling roster spots on the road was not uncommon.<sup>79</sup> With the emphasis placed on Borans recent addition to the lineup, it is unlikely, but possible, that the *Austin Daily Herald* was confusing Borans with Bowens who did not otherwise appear in the game.

Griffin finished the game by striking out the side in the ninth. The final score was 11-10 in favor of the Bats.<sup>80</sup>

The Bats next met Corwith in a home and away doubleheader on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Sims and Griffin’s rematch was truly a pitcher’s duel. Sims struck out 7 and allowed 7 hits. Griffin struck out 14 and allowed only 4 hits.<sup>81</sup>

Griffin was credited with winning his own game in the fifth when his single scored Derrick and Mitchell for the Bats only runs in the game. Corwith’s only run scored on Haley’s sacrifice, scoring Byas. With Sims reaching third on an error and two stolen bases, Griffin struck out the next two men.<sup>82</sup>

The game nearly ended in forfeit when Byas collided with I. Carpenter on a squeeze play and Corwith protested Byas’ ejection. Isaiah Carpenter finished the game, catching the final strike from Griffin. He was then carried from the field and taken to the hospital with internal injuries.<sup>83</sup>

Corwith won the nightcap nine to two with Lefty Kemp on the mound and Byas catching. Griffin and Jones threw for the Bats with Mitchell, Jones and Brown taking turns behind the dish. Seven of the nine members of the Corwith squad scored.<sup>84</sup>

The Bats then traveled to Carroll, Iowa to face the Sioux City Stock Yards. The Stock Yards won the game 7-5 behind the pitched of Smithson. Griffin toed the pitching rubber with Carpenter catching.<sup>85</sup>

Griffin was again on the mound for the Bats in a Tuesday match up with the Stock Yards at Sioux City. Despite being on the mound for four games in three days, the Stock Yards managed only five hits off of him. One of those hits, however, was a home run by Wilson. Errors on the Bats defense allowed four runs. The Bats were shutout, 5 to 0.<sup>86</sup>

Henry Kaiser’s All-Collegians game to the Mason City fairgrounds that Wednesday evening to face the bruised Black Bats. Billed as a collection of the star performers from the Chicago area schools, the Collegians held a number of victories over quality teams.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>. Sherrington, supra.

<sup>80</sup>. Id.

<sup>81</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 8, 1932.

<sup>82</sup>. Id.

<sup>83</sup>. Id.

<sup>84</sup>. Id.

<sup>85</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 9, 1932.

<sup>86</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 10, 1932.

<sup>87</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 6, 1932; Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 9, 1932.

With Griffin needing rest, Willie Jones went the route for the Bats, allowing but seven hits in the seven innings of the contest. Geiser, the Collegians starter, faired far worse, lasting only 2 and 1/3 innings. The Bats scored four runs in the opening frame without a hit.

Geiser was wild again in the third, giving up three straight hits. Tunney relieved and two more hits resulted in four more runs.

The highlight for the locals was bruised, bandaged and battered Isaiah Carpenter reaching first on a passed ball on strike three. Carpenter hobbled to first but stole second and reached third on a wild pitch. He scored on a passed ball. The final score was 11-2 in favor of the Black Bats.<sup>88</sup>

With injuries to players and “Midge” Mitchell needing to return to Texas due to a death in his family, the Bats signed two new players. John Hamilton, formerly of Dallas and Birmingham in the Southern Negro league, signed as a short stop. Al Hancock, formerly of the Cubans and the Donaldson’s All Stars, signed at first base.<sup>89</sup>

Hobo Duncan, Rube Johnson, Eissler and O’Brian greeted the Mason City fans as members of the Hampton nine when they called upon the Black Bats at the fairgrounds the next Sunday.<sup>90</sup> Each of these players had been with Mason City prior to the purchase of the Spiders.

Hopkins pitched for Hampton. His strikeout total of five was easily surpassed by Griffin’s sixteen.<sup>91</sup>

The Bats scored in the second on a double by Noble and an error at shortstop. Griffin knocked in Noble in the fourth for the second run. Griffin scored the final run on a triple by Freeman. The Bats won, 3-2<sup>92</sup>

Hampton evened up the day with a 10 to 3 pounding of Jones. Red Braga, also a former Mason City Bat, allowed only six hits to the Bats. Hampton hit ten safeties, including three baggers by Parks and Braga.<sup>93</sup>

The *Globe-Gazette* began featuring promotions on the Kansas City Monarchs on August 17<sup>th</sup>. These included articles and pictures<sup>94</sup> on the strength of the Monarchs nine. The *Globe-Gazette* noted that since being formed 11 years prior, the Monarchs had won four pennants, played in three Colored world series and won two of those series.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 11, 1932.

<sup>89</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 13, 1932.

<sup>90</sup>. Id.

<sup>91</sup>. Id.

<sup>92</sup>. Id.

<sup>93</sup>. Id.

<sup>94</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 17, 1932 (photo of Nat Hunter); Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 20, 1932 (photo of Frank Duncan).

<sup>95</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 17, 1932.

The August 20<sup>th</sup> *Globe-Gazette* announced that Bill Wells had been signed to join the great Monarchs infield of Mothel, Allen and Giles.<sup>96</sup> This “Bill” Wells was actually Willie Wells, formerly of the Detroit Wolves and Homestead Grays of 1932.<sup>97</sup>

The outfield potentially featured C. Bell, Harris and Stearnes.<sup>98</sup> Willie Wells and Turkey Stearnes were eventually elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame once that color line was broken.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, the Bats traveled to Clarion, Iowa to face John Donaldson’s All-Stars as part of Legion day in Clarion on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Facing the legendary left hander,<sup>100</sup> the Bats fell victim to his delivery as many teams had before.<sup>101</sup>

The aging Donaldson pitched the first two innings for the All-Stars. Jones and Fremont also pitched for the All-Stars. Griffin went the distance for the Bats, giving up twelve hits in ten innings. The All-Stars won the game in the tenth, 5-4.<sup>102</sup>

Following the game, the Bats traveled to Northwood, Iowa for an evening match up. Crimmings started for Northwood and struck out five Bats. Lande relieved him and struck out four men in the last four innings. Allen struck out five in going to the distance for the Bats.<sup>103</sup>

Each team tallied ten hits. Northwood got the better end of the hits, outscoring the Bats, 8-7.<sup>104</sup>

Corwith came to Mason City the following Sunday for the start of a home and away doubleheader. Griffin started for the Bats and maintained his mastery over the Night Hawks with another shutout. Griffin struck out 10 until giving way to Allen in the ninth.<sup>105</sup>

Barnes, first man up, reached third in the first for the only threat in the first three innings. Byas tripled in the fourth but was caught stealing home. A double play in the fifth ended that last real threat by Corwith. The Bats backed their aces with seven runs.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 20, 1932.

<sup>97</sup>. James A. Riley, Dandy, Day and the Devil at p. 124.

<sup>98</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 20, 1932.

<sup>99</sup>. Willie Wells was elected by the Veteran’s Committee in 1997 and Turkey Stearnes was elected in 2000.

<sup>100</sup>. The aging Donaldson started his baseball career perhaps as early as 1910 as parts of his early career have yet to be fully documented. At age 60, Donaldson was named as a first-team member of the 1952 *Pittsburgh Courier* player voted poll as one of the Negro Leagues best players ever. Donaldson was also selected for inclusion on a special pre-Negro League special ballot for players potentially worthy of admission to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006. For a flavor of Donaldson’s greatness, read *Swinging for the Fences: Black Baseball in Minnesota*, Steven R. Hofbeck, ed (Minnesota Historical Society Press 2005); John Wesley Donaldson by Alan Muchlinski at <http://instructional1.calstatela.edu/amuchli/Donaldson0.htm>; and Peter Gorton’s site at <http://www.johndonaldson.bravehost.com/index.htm>

<sup>101</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 18, 1932.

<sup>102</sup>. Id.

<sup>103</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 19, 1932.

<sup>104</sup>. Id.

<sup>105</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 22, 1932.

<sup>106</sup>. Id.

Allen started for the Bats in the night cap, allowing fourteen runs. The Bats managed only one run in support of him in dropping the second half of the double header.<sup>107</sup>

The Bats were no match for Kansas City as the Monarchs notched their forty-fourth victory at the Mason City fairgrounds. Early double plays kept the Bats in the game, but the Monarchs scored a single run in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth innings. Griffin struck out only six in the seven innings that light allowed. The final score favored the Monarchs, 6-3.<sup>108</sup>

Following the game, “Midge” Mitchell arrived from Texas. He was angry at the Bats first loss on the home grounds and promised to be in the lineup on Sunday.<sup>109</sup>

The Bats then traveled to Austin to face the Southern Minnesota league club. The Bats pushed out to an early 2-0 lead with runs in the fourth and fifth innings. Austin got on the board in the sixth with Mitchell committing an error, possibly showing rust from his time in Texas, and an error on Derrick at short. Golberg reached on a fielder’s choice and a long single by Hanson scored two. A sacrifice fly ended the scoring at 3-2.<sup>110</sup>

Golberg, pitching for Austin, and Allen, pitching for the Bats, each allowed five hits. Allen struck out twelve.<sup>111</sup>

A visit from John Donaldson and his All-Stars followed on Sunday. The rains fell the night before, creating a heavy field. Despite the conditions, the Bats turned three double plays to cut down on the scoring opportunities for the All-Stars.<sup>112</sup>

Griffin walked two and was pounded for four hits in the first inning, allowing four runs. He allowed only five hits and three runs over the remainder of the game. Donaldson, meanwhile, allowed four runs on seven hits for the All-Stars win, 9-7.<sup>113</sup>

A return engagement with the Monarchs was carded for September 1<sup>st</sup>. This Thursday game featured the Monarchs’ portable lighting system. This was the first night baseball game in Mason City history.<sup>114</sup>

Griffin again received the call to the mound in facing the Monarchs. This time Griffin was in better form, striking out 14 while allowing 11 hits. Troupe, starting for the Monarchs, struck out only 12 while allowing only two hits. Byas, borrowed from Corwith by the Bats, hit a triple in the third but died on the bases.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>. Id.

<sup>108</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 25, 1932.

<sup>109</sup>. Id.

<sup>110</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 27, 1932.

<sup>111</sup>. Id.

<sup>112</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 29, 1932.

<sup>113</sup>. Id.

<sup>114</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 31, 1932.

<sup>115</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 2, 1932.

The Monarchs, demonstrating their affinity for the lights, played errorless baseball. The Bats, meanwhile, committed five errors. The final score again favored the Monarchs, 11-0.<sup>116</sup>

The Bats then traveled to Marshalltown, Iowa for weekend games against Hampton and the Marshalltown M&StL team. Red Braga started the Saturday game against Hampton, allowing only two runs. The Bats won, 3-2.<sup>117</sup>

Jones started for the Bats on Sunday against M&Stl. Marshalltown connected for only six hits while Mason City pounded out ten. Mason City committed only two errors to Marshalltown's three. Jones also led in strikeouts 7-4. Unfortunately, the Bats lost in the scoring column, 3-2.<sup>118</sup>

For Charles City day at the North Iowa Free fair, the state semipro championship Charles City team came to Mason City to meet the Bats. Griffin was back on the mound for the Bats and even though he didn't lead in strikeouts, he allowed only three hits to the champions.

The Bats bunched their hits well in the third, scoring three runs. Despite the championship billing, Charles City committed five errors to Mason City's four. Byas was again playing with the Bats, this time at second.<sup>119</sup>

The Bats then traveled to Algona on Thursday to play Corwith at the Kossuth County fair. Griffin and Carpenter were the batteries for the Bats. Byas was back catching for the Night Hawks with Lefty Kemp pitching. The final score was 2-1 in favor of Corwith.<sup>120</sup>

The Nebraska Indians returned to Mason City for an afternoon matinee. Red Braga was signed by the Bats to save Griffin for an evening game at Corwith.<sup>121</sup>

Chief Two Horse, the ace of the Indians' pitching staff who once won 13 consecutive games, struck out eight and walked only three in winning the afternoon game, 6-4. Braga struck out five. Red pitched credible ball, but five errors contributed greatly to the Indians' scoring. Derrick at short was charged with three. The game at Corwith was called off.<sup>122</sup>

The Indians ended their season following this game. With the end of the Indian's season, Chief Two Horse and possibly one other player were going to be available against the Western House of David the following Thursday.<sup>123</sup>

### **Enter "Lefty" Claxton**

Chief Two Horse, listed as "Lefty" Claxton, in the *Globe-Gazette*, made his mound debut for Mason City the following Thursday. Interestingly, a left handed pitcher by the name of Jimmy

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<sup>116</sup>. Id.

<sup>117</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 5, 1932.

<sup>118</sup>. Id.

<sup>119</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 7, 1932.

<sup>120</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 9, 1932.

<sup>121</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 10, 1932.

<sup>122</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 12, 1932.

<sup>123</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 14, 1932.

Claxton is credited with breaking the color barrier in the Pacific Coast League in 1916, even if for a very short time.<sup>124</sup>

Claxton, born of European, African American and Native American ancestry, was introduced to the owner of the Oakland Oaks as a member of an Oklahoma Indian tribe.<sup>125</sup> Because of his success on the semi-pro lots, including a game in which he struck out 23 batters, he was signed to the Oaks under the assumption that he was Native American and could be signed without violating organized baseball's ban on signing of African Americans.<sup>126</sup>

He appeared in two games for the Oaks on May 28, 1915 before being released, presumably due to his African American ancestry violating organized baseball's ban. His appearances with the Oaks are memorialized on one baseball card produced by under the Zeenuts Candy name by the Collins-McCarthy Candy Co.<sup>127</sup>

He continued to appear in Negro, outlaw and semi-pro leagues. In 1932, he signed on with the Cuban Stars and apparently wound up coming full circle, being advertised as a full blooded Indian with the Nebraska Indians,<sup>128</sup> apparently using the name Chief Two Horse.

Claxton was credited with pitching a beautiful seven inning game against the Western House of David for the Black Bats. Unfortunately, the game lasted into the ninth with the bearded club pushing across two more runs to capture the final score of 4-3. The game also featured "Smith" at shortstop, likely an extra player from the Indians.<sup>129</sup>

The final game of the season was a final match up with Charles City. The Bats pushed out to an early two run lead on a triple by Noble that scored Mitchell and Claxton. The lead lasted until the fifth. Down seven to two in the seventh, the Bats began to rally.<sup>130</sup>

In the last of the seventh, Brown singled and scored on Smith's single for the Bats. The Bats picked up two more runs in the eighth off three hits. Charles City pushed two across in the ninth to extend their lead to 9-5. Those runs were needed as the Bats again rallied for three runs in the bottom of the inning, causing Fred Larson to relieve Marlenee.<sup>131</sup>

"Two Horse" Claxton allowed ten hits. The Black Bats' defense, allowed almost as many errors with Mitchell being charged with four, Carpenter three and Johnson and Brown each tallying one gaffe. The final score was 9-8 in favor of Charles City.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>. Tom Hawthorn, Black Pitcher Threw World a Curve, Black Athletes Sports Network published October 4, 2006 ([www.blackathlete.net/artman/publish/article\\_01933.shtml](http://www.blackathlete.net/artman/publish/article_01933.shtml)).

<sup>125</sup>. James A. Riley, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*, Carroll & Graf Publishers (1994), p. 177 (hereafter "Claxton entry").

<sup>126</sup>. Hawthorn, supra; see also Claxton entry.

<sup>127</sup>. Hawthorn, supra.

<sup>128</sup>. Hawthorn, supra; Claxton entry.

<sup>129</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 16, 1932.

<sup>130</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 19, 1932.

<sup>131</sup>. Id.

<sup>132</sup>. Id.



## After the Black Bats

It was assumed that all of the Black Bats' players returned to Texas. Gip Nobles and Joe Carpenter were, however, in Mason City when spring practice got underway.<sup>133</sup> Other "returning" players from the early part of the 1932 season were Eissler, Hobo Duncan and Fred Larson<sup>134</sup>

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, the *Globe-Gazette* announced the entry of the Mason City team into the newly formed Southern Minnesota – Iowa League.<sup>135</sup> In the first exhibition game of the season, Nobles went 2 for 4 with a double against Charles City, scoring Hobo Duncan on a long fly in the opening inning. Carpenter went 1 for 4 with a double his first time up.<sup>136</sup>

At a Thursday meeting of the league directors, the directors declared that "Any player will be eligible for the league."<sup>137</sup> Following the rules of organized baseball, however, "Negroes would not be eligible in the league."<sup>138</sup>

With Nobles and Carpenter now ineligible, Secretary Dearmin, unsurprisingly, announced two changes in his lineup. The Bats were now looking for a first baseman to replace Carpenter and a fielder to fill Nobles' spot in the garden.<sup>139</sup> By the time the League season started, Conley was at first base and Becker in right field.<sup>140</sup>

By July 7<sup>th</sup>, the Spiders were carded for a game with Mason City. A photo caption indicates that entry of the local club into the Southern Minnesota-Iowa League "caused the release here of the southerners."<sup>141</sup> It is unclear whether that any more players actually came back to Mason City to try out, but entry into the league certainly caused the release of Nobles and Joe Carpenter.

Whatever the source of the dispute in 1932, many of the Black Bats players were back on the road with the Spiders in 1933.<sup>142</sup> The *Globe-Gazette* noted that the Spiders were practically the same club as played in Mason City last year.

The Spiders were advertised as the Champions of Texas with J.B. Griffin expected to return to the mound in Mason City.<sup>143</sup> The probable lineup for the July 9<sup>th</sup> game follows:

Epperson, 2b  
Mitchell, 1b  
Anderson, rf

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<sup>133</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 17, 1933.

<sup>134</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 25, 1933.

<sup>135</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, April 26, 1933.

<sup>136</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 1, 1933.

<sup>137</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 6, 1933.

<sup>138</sup> . Id.

<sup>139</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 10, 1933.

<sup>140</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, May 13, 1933.

<sup>141</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 8, 1933.

<sup>142</sup> . Sherrington, supra; Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 8, 1933.

<sup>143</sup> . Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 8, 1933.

Carpenter, c  
 Griffin, p  
 Benson, lf  
 Arthur, cf  
 Wheeler, ss  
 Moore, 3b<sup>144</sup>

With the Spiders again being a road team, there is no single “home” paper to check for scores. The following is a summary of games located in Iowa and Minnesota so far:

Day	Month	Date	Opponent	Played at	Result	Starter	Relief	Relief
						(IP)	Special	K's
Sun	Jul	9	v. Mason City	at Mason City	W 10-8 <sup>145</sup>	Griffin		
		night	v. Mason City	at Corwith	W 14-8 <sup>146</sup>	Griffin (4)	Arthur (5)	
Mon	Jul	10						
Tue	Jul	11	v. Charles City	at Charles City	L 12-1 <sup>147</sup>			
Wed	Jul	12	v. Mason City	at Mason City	L 10-0 <sup>148</sup>	Benson (3)	Arthur (5)	
Thu	Jul	13	v. Forest City	at Forest City	??			
		Night	v. Northwood	at Northwood	W 6-4 <sup>149</sup>	Griffin (?)	Arthur	
Fri	Jul	14	v. Austin	at Austin	L 5-4 <sup>150</sup>	Wortham	Benson	Griffin
Sat	Jul	15						
Sun	Jul	16	v. Algona	at Algona	W 12-3 <sup>151</sup>			
Mon	Jul	17						
Tue	Jul	18	v. Charles City	at Charles City	W 4-3 <sup>152</sup>	Arthur		
Wed	Jul	19	Thompson	at Thompson	L 7-1 <sup>153</sup>	Benson		
Thu	Jul	20	Corwith	at Corwith	??			
			Albert Lea, MN	at Corwith	W 8-0 <sup>154</sup>	Griffin	(no hitter)	23 K
Fri	Jul	21	Iowa Falls	at Iowa Falls <sup>155</sup>				
Sat	Jul	22	Albert Lea, MN	at Albert Lea <sup>156</sup>				
Sun	Jul	23	Mason City	at Mason City	W 2-0 <sup>157</sup>	Griffin		
			Forest City	at Corwith	W 5-4 <sup>158</sup>			

<sup>144</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 8, 1933.

<sup>145</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 10, 1933.

<sup>146</sup>. Id.

<sup>147</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 12, 1933.

<sup>148</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 13, 1933.

<sup>149</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 14, 1933.

<sup>150</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, July 15, 1933.

<sup>151</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 17, 1933.

<sup>152</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 19, 1933.

<sup>153</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 21, 1933.

<sup>154</sup>. Id., The Evening Tribune, Albert Lea, Minn., July 24, 1933.

<sup>155</sup>. Game noted as carded but no score found yet. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 17, 1933.

<sup>156</sup>. Game noted as carded but not located. This game was likely not played at Albert Lea with the Tuesday game following. Noted as scheduled in Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 17, 1933.

<sup>157</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 24, 1933.

<sup>158</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 25, 1933.

Day	Month	Date	Opponent	Played at	Result	Starter	Relief	Relief
		Night						
Mon	Jul	24						
Tues	Jul	25	Albert Lea	at Albert Lea	W 8-2 <sup>159</sup>	Alexander		
Wed	Jul	26	Waverly	at Waverly fairgrounds				
Thu	Jul	27	Forest City	at Forest City or Corwith??	L 4-0 <sup>160</sup>			
Fri	Jul	28	Kiester, MN	at Kiester <sup>161</sup>				
Sat	Jul	29						
Sun	Jul	30						
Mon	Jul	31						
Tue	Aug	1	Charles City	at Charles City	L 2-1 <sup>162</sup>	Alexander		
Wed	Aug	2						
Thu	Aug	3						
Fri	Aug	4						
Sat	Aug	5						
Sun	Aug	6						
Mon	Aug	7						
Tue	Aug	8	Garner	at Garner	W 8-2 <sup>163</sup>	Jones		
Wed	Aug	9	Austin, MN	at Austin	W 3-0 <sup>164</sup>	Alexander		
Thu	Aug	10						
Fri	Aug	11						
Sat	Aug	12						
Sun	Aug	13	Swea City	at Corwith	L 4-3 <sup>165</sup>			
Mon	Aug	14						
Tues	Aug	15						
Wed	Aug	16						
Thu	Aug	17						
Fri	Aug	18						
Sat	Aug	19						
Sun	Aug	20						
Mon	Aug	21						
Tue	Aug	22						
Wed	Aug	23	Austin, MN	at Austin	W 4-0 <sup>166</sup>	Jones		
Thu	Aug	24						
Fri	Aug	25	Blooming Prairie, MN	at Blooming Prairie <sup>167</sup>				
Sat	Aug	26						

<sup>159</sup>. The Evening Tribune, Albert Lea (MN), July 26, 1933.

<sup>160</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 29, 1933. It is unclear whether a doubleheader was played with a game at Forest City and then a night match up at Corwith as well.

<sup>161</sup>. Game noted as carded but no score found as yet. Mason City Globe-Gazette, July 25, 1933.

<sup>162</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 2, 1933.

<sup>163</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 10, 1933.

<sup>164</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 10, 1933.

<sup>165</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, August 15, 1933.

<sup>166</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 24, 1933.

<sup>167</sup>. Noted as carded but no score located as yet. Austin Daily Herald, August 23, 1933.

Day	Month	Date	Opponent	Played at	Result	Starter	Relief	Relief
Sun	Aug	27						
Mon	Aug	28						
Tue	Aug	29						
Wed	Aug	30						
Thu	Aug	31						
Fri	Sep	1						
Sat	Sep	2						
Sun	Sep	3	Mason City	at Mason City	W 3-0 <sup>168</sup>	Griffin		
Mon	Sep	4						
Tue	Sep	5						
Wed	Sep	6						
Thu	Sep	7						
Fri	Sep	8						
Sat	Sep	9						

Players known to have played with the Spiders in 1933 based on located boxscores:

Eppeson (second and third base); Mitchell (first base); Griffin (pitcher, left field and center field); Alexander (pitcher and right field); Carpenter (catcher, second base, shortstop and third base); Benson (pitcher, right field and center field); Freeman (left field); Wheeler (shortstop and catcher); Moore (third base); Arthur (pitcher, centerfield and left field); Wortham (shortstop, catcher and pitcher); Jones, (pitcher and centerfield); Worthington (catcher); and Hayes (centerfield).

The 1934 Black Spiders put the following line up on the field in Austin, Minnesota on May 17<sup>th</sup>:

Texas Black Spiders

Cook, 2b	4	1	1	5	3	0
Johnson, 1b	3	1	0	8	0	0
Jackson, c	4	0	0	6	0	0
Tate, ss	4	2	2	3	6	0
Arthur, lf	4	1	1	2	0	0
Anderson, 3b	4	1	2	1	0	0
McQueen, cf	3	0	0	1	0	0
Bogan, rf	3	0	1	3	0	0
Jones, p	3	0	0	0	1	0
	32	6	7	27	10	0 <sup>169</sup>

During 1934, the Spiders met up with a fair-skinned teenager by the name of Bob Feller in Sidney, Iowa. Not yet having control of his legendary fastball, Arthur didn't "think we would have beat him" "[i]f he'd been throwing strikes."<sup>170</sup>

<sup>168</sup>. Mason City Globe-Gazette, September 4, 1933.

<sup>169</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, May 16, 1934.

<sup>170</sup>. Sherrington, supra.

In 1935, the Spiders added Baby Tilliford as a young female pitcher. The rest of the pitching staff included Doo Loo Foster, C.P. Columbus, Augusta “Speedy” Benson and Sargent Buckley in relief.<sup>171</sup>

The remainder of the regular lineup in 1935 was as follows: Curley Andrews, third base; O.C. Littleton, shortstop; Jean Harges, catcher; Carl Turner, second base; Frank Mitchell, first base; Charley Haverly, left field; Sonny Alexander, center field and Sargent Buckley, right field.<sup>172</sup>  
The line up used in Austin is as follows:

Texas Black Spiders						
Andrews, 2b	5	2	2	2	4	0
Littleton, ss	5	1	2	1	2	2
Alexander, 1b	4	1	1	8	0	0
Martin, cf	5	1	1	0	0	0
Benson, lf	5	1	2	1	0	0
Foster, rf	5	0	0	1	0	0
Columbus, 3b	5	0	2	0	2	0
Haverly, p	4	0	0	3	2	1
Harges, c	4	1	2	11	1	0
	42	7	12	27	11	2 <sup>173</sup>

The 1936 Spiders squad advertised a sterling record of 34 wins in 35 games on August 4th. Along with the Spiders came a one-arm tap dancer rumored to trip the light fantastic so as to be considered worth the price of admission on his own.<sup>174</sup>

In other starts that year, the Spiders nosed out Chisholm, Minnesota, 4-2. Then traveling to International Falls, the Spiders beat the Mandos, 5-1. The team again featured Benson, Ed Ligon and Lefty Griffin on the mound. The favorable reports were provided by H.L. Gross, Spider booking agent.<sup>175</sup>

The lineup used at Austin on August 6<sup>th</sup>:

Black Spiders  
Carter, 1b  
Martin, c  
Littleton, ss  
Alexander, rf, p  
Young, rf  
Andrews, 3b  
Brown,  
Jones, lf

<sup>171</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, July 19, 1935, p12.

<sup>172</sup>. Id.

<sup>173</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, July 20, 1935.

<sup>174</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 4, 1936.

<sup>175</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 5, 1936.

Benson, p  
Gibson, cf  
Liggins, c<sup>176</sup>

The Spiders were entered in the baseball tournament in Council Bluffs.<sup>177</sup> The results have yet to be located.

A return match with the Hormel Good Foods of Austin was delayed due to the Spiders thinking they actually had a rare day off. A Western Union telegraph found the Spiders resting in Charles City, Iowa.<sup>178</sup>

At the start of the game, the Spiders advertised an amazing 37-1 record this side of the Mason Dixon line<sup>179</sup> or 41-5.<sup>180</sup> The difference is likely due to the delays in pre-game advertising.

Due to the delay in the Spiders arriving, the game was called at 6:00 p.m. Unfortunately for the Spiders, they were leading, 4-1, when the game was called. With three of the runs scoring in the yet to be completed inning, the game was ruled a tie.<sup>181</sup>

The lineup for the Spiders:

Carter, 1b  
T. Jones, 3b  
Griffin, lf  
Martin, cf  
Andrews, 2b  
B. Jones, rf  
Young, rf  
Littleton, ss  
Lanford, c  
Gibson, p<sup>182</sup>

The Spiders returned to the Midwest in 1937. The lineup used in Austin that year demonstrates a substantial turnover in team personnel. The lack of pre-game publicity in 1937 was also in stark contrast to the 1936 season.

The Spiders' roster used in Austin is as follows:

Thomas, cf, p  
Daniel, lf  
Johnson, 2b

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<sup>176</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 7, 1936.

<sup>177</sup>. Id.

<sup>178</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 24, 1936.

<sup>179</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 20, 1936.

<sup>180</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, August 22, 1936.

<sup>181</sup>. Id.

<sup>182</sup>. Id.

Gipson, 1b  
McGowan, 2b  
Nears, c  
Brown, ss  
Robertson, rf  
G. Ligans, p, cf<sup>183</sup>

The Austin game ended with an 8 to 7 win for the Austin Packers. The game ended after eight innings by agreement as the Spiders had a night game in Iowa.<sup>184</sup>

Speedy Benson is known to have signed with the Washington Elite Giants of the Negro National League for the 1937 season.<sup>185</sup>

A review of the *Austin Daily Herald* in 1938 located no games played by the Spiders, although the editors clearly confused the San Antonio Black Missions for the Black Spiders.<sup>186</sup> Perhaps this was a bit of subterfuge on the part of San Antonio's promoters.

Mineola did, however, field a team in 1938 although the extent of their travels has yet to be determined. Players depicted in a photograph include G. Nears in catchers' gear, R. Ligon, G. McLemone, G. Ligon, Street, Fred McDaniels, T. Gipson, D. Thomas, J. Brown, C. Johnson, Norman Robinson, R. Jones as manager, B. Mansfield, D. McGown, and S. Smith along with E. Henneley in street clothes and "V.R." C. Limmon as owner.<sup>187</sup>

The 1938 season may well have been the last season for the Black Spiders.<sup>188</sup> Sherrington reports that the team disbanded shortly after a 1938 season that included William Blair on the roster.

Norman Robinson and Fred McDaniel went on to join the Satchel Paige's All-Stars, essentially the Kansas City Monarch's "B" team, in 1939. In addition to Paige, the pitching staff included John Donaldson, Ted Alexander, Dick Bradley, John Markham, Ivory Barnes and Monte Elmore.<sup>189</sup>

## Conclusion

Although certainly not the most famous of the black barnstorming baseball teams as Sherrington's Dallas Morning News article of 1990 appears to be one of the very few resources

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<sup>183</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, July 24, 1937.

<sup>184</sup>. Id.

<sup>185</sup>. Dick Clark & Larry Lester, eds., *The Negro Leagues Book*, Society for American Baseball Research (1994), p. 71.

<sup>186</sup>. Austin Daily Herald, June 14, 1938 ("The clever San Antonio Black Spiders of Texas, negro traveling team, will meet the Austin Packers."); Austin Daily Herald, June 15, 1938 ("Friday afternoon, the Packers meet the Texas Black Spiders in a non-league game."); Austin Daily Herald, June 17, 1938 ("Austin Packers to Meet Black Spiders Here Today.").

<sup>187</sup>. Frazier "Slow" Robinson with Paul Bauer, *Catching Dreams: My Life in the Negro Baseball Leagues*, p 22 (Syracuse University Press 1999).

<sup>188</sup>. Sherrington, *supra*.

<sup>189</sup>. Robinson, *supra* at p. 22-23.

published about the team, the Texas Black Spiders certainly were a fixture throughout Iowa and the Midwest in the 1930's. Their time as the Mason City Black Bats makes them fairly unique as an Iowa based black baseball team.

Certainly more research needs to be done to complete the Mineola / Texas Black Spiders story from 1933 to 1938. The author welcomes any contributions you can offer.