

A Sunday Afternoon in Martin County – 76 Years Ago

Sunday afternoon entertainment today might consist of watching sporting events on TV, attending a Twins game, golfing, going to a movie, swimming at the Aquatic Park, shopping at your favorite mall, surfing the internet, or other options too numerous to mention. Many of those previously mentioned entertainment options were not available to our Martin County residents three-quarters of a century ago. However, perhaps the entertainment options of that era long ago were in fact as much, and maybe more, satisfying than the multitude of choices we have at our disposal today. The following is an example of a Sunday afternoon at Hand's Park and the entertainment it provided to county residents of that time.

The year was 1932 and Harry J. Earle, perhaps one of the few black residents of Martin County at that time, was the sports reporter for the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*. A story in the sports section of the June 10th edition of that newspaper featured an article that the Donaldson All Stars, a noted and skilled black baseball team, would be playing against the St. Cloud Ramblers on the following Sunday afternoon at Hand's Park. Game time was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. The cost of a ticket was \$0.40, and Grand Stand seating was free.

Harry Earle stated in his column, entitled "Sports Notes," that "Friendly enemies is the term we'd apply to Harry Strong, the pilot of the St. Cloud Ramblers and John Donaldson, manager and star flinger of the Donaldson All Stars, the two clubs that are slated to tangle at Hand's Park Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock." The two managers were apparently veterans of numerous diamond battles and they in turn made a fifty dollar wager as to the outcome of the upcoming game. The bet came up after the All Stars won the previous game against the Ramblers in the tenth inning. Apparently many of the fans watching believed that the All Stars simply became tired of playing and decided to win in the tenth. This did not bode well with the Ramblers and was said to "get Harry Strong's goat."

As there appeared to be no ill will from either team toward the other, the wager suggests a bit of "theatrics" on the part of the teams of that era in an attempt to create additional fan interest in the game. The article further stated that "Unlike the wrestling show ballyhoo, the players are not going to run around the field shaking their fists in each other's face and telling the world how good they are." Earle went on to state that "Win or lose, there will not be any ill feeling, that's a cinch."

The Donaldson All Stars were due at Hand's Park following a trip in which they played in Iowa and Garrison, South Dakota.

So, how did the game turn out? The headline read: "Ramblers Lose to Donaldsons." Sports reporter Earle stated the following in his column after the game: "The Ramblers are having their troubles these days. Last week the city of St. Cloud emphatically refused to own the Ramblers and left them – just plain 'Rambling Orphans,' but they were still happy. Yesterday they came to Hand's Park with blood in their eyes, all set to atone for

their defeat of the previous week.” “So sure were they of winning, Harry Strong, the manager, made a little wager and had the check half spent,” stated Earle.

However, it wasn't to be. The Donaldson All Stars once again prevailed as John Donaldson, manager and pitcher for the All Stars, held the Ramblers to five singles and a shutout until there were two out in the eighth inning when the Ramblers scored their lone run.

The following Sunday's game featured Elmer Miller's Fairmont Travelers in a game against Donaldson's All Stars at Hand's Park. And, guess what? From Harry Earle's column, "Sports Notes," that appeared in the June 20, 1932, edition of the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*, he wrote the following: "Elmer Miller's peppery bunch of youngsters known as the Fairmont Travelers invaded Hand's Park yesterday afternoon and truly upset the dope pot by returning to the City of Lakes with a 6 to 5 victory over John Donaldson and his All-Stars. To make the win cherished all the more, it was the famous John who took the walloping."

And so it goes, the perception of "good entertainment" evolves from generation to generation. Was baseball and Donaldson's All Stars enjoyed by many at Hand's Park in the 1930's? There is little doubt that they were enjoyed immensely by county residents! They were also likely the talk of the county sporting enthusiasts regarding their last game played, besides much anticipation about upcoming games, regardless of the teams playing! In addition, Harry J. Earle added a great deal to the flavor of the sports section of that era with his ability to inject commentary that in and of itself created entertainment and interest in his column, "Sports Notes."

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