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### The Chatham Coloured All-Stars 1933-34

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The Chatham Coloured All-Stars 1933-34

Submitted to:

Dr. J. Walker  
April 5, 1977  
University of Waterloo

Submitted by:

Daniel J. Kelly

## Preface

This paper has very little secondary source material to corroborate my opinions and views but I still feel it is valuable in the study of race relations in the 1930s. In connection with this, I would like to thank those gentlemen who aided in the completion of this paper by affording me the opportunity of having personal conversations with them and a special thanks to Mr. Wilfred Harding who allowed me to tape record an interview with him.

D.J.M. Kelly

## Introduction

Will racial discrimination ever end?

“They’ll always be some kind of discrimination. If they stop on colour, they’ll find something else.”

“I don’t think it’ll ever end. Human nature will be human nature. It’s an individual problem (in Canada). I don’t think it’s a society problem.”

Discussion Material: Dialogue on Race Relations in Canada. (OHRC, May 1975)

Racial discrimination, if not a problem, has been a major concern of society from biblical times to the present day. In the contemporary North American scene, it has been instrumental in the historical evolution of the republic to the south and, in recent years, has arisen as an integral factor in the remoulding of American history and folklore.

The institution of slavery, long since dead, continues to have far reaching ramifications in the present day. The struggle of the American Black is perhaps the most complicated and complex chapter in U.S. history, and in all probability, will continue to be for the time immemorial.

As with most things American, it has inevitably over stepped it’s boundaries, lending to Canada her own particular chapter of Canadian Black history and racial discrimination. In terms of degree and numbers, Canada’s history of the Black race is a mere microcosm of her American counterpart. Nevertheless, upon investigation, many common themes present themselves for comparison.

For example, the institution of slavery legally existed in Canada until 1833, at which time Britain saw fit to discontinue the practice. The humanitarian movement was in full swing at this time and no doubt it had some positive effect on the decision. However, it took thirty more

years before the States would abandon the institution and the reason was not so much the rise of a humanitarian consciousness, as it was political and economic expediency (Civil War 1861-1865) (Emancipation Proclamation 1863).

Until quite recently, Canadians have looked upon this chapter of American history with an air of self-righteousness, feeling smug in the fact that slavery, and in later years, racial discrimination was nearly non-existent north of the 49th parallel. By carrying the microcosm hypothesis one step further, it can quite effectively be argued that Canada's reaction to slavery and Black freedom in the nineteenth century was unfounded. In Canada, humanitarianism served as a shielding facade to the more potent factors of population and economics.

The Canadian ratio of blacks to whites in the nineteenth century was far less than it was in the United States. This, in turn, made the transition of slavery to freedom much easier for Canadian society to cope with since it only affected a very small portion of the overall population. Similarly, slavery was not as conducive to the Canadian economy as it was to the United States'; the need for slaves in the Canadian economy was less in comparative terms. Assuming that the Black "movement" for equality (the removal of racial barriers and restrictions) began immediately after the Civil War, there are several other comparable themes in the American and Canadian scenes.

The rising Black elite, in the few decades before the turn of the century, attempted to promote their various plans for Black development, accommodating the white society around them. In the United States, this diverse leadership and their respective "blueprints" for adaptations attracted sufficient numbers to make a positive impact on the American public generally. In Canada, again, due to the lack of numbers, a diverse Black elite failed to recruit a

large enough base of support to implement any unified vehicle for change. Thus, for the most part, the Canadian Black population coped and adapted, on an individual basis, with the society around them.

The Canadian story is one in which the accomplishments of individuals and small groups has had much more impact, and made many more inroads, than any nationally unified attempt. It has been because of numbers, or the lack of them, that the Canadian public has never felt threatened by an organized Black movement and as a result, racial discrimination in this country has never taken on any clearly defined pattern, as it has in the U.S. experience. Canada's racial discrimination, and fight against it, has developed on a more localized level, never having affected the Black race on a national level. Incidents of prejudice and discrimination are plentiful but they do not support any definite polarization of the races.<sup>1</sup> In the years following World War One;

Racism in Canada continued to be a confused issue, confounding even its victims. Unlike South Africa, the U.S., or Australia, no segregation or discrimination was permitted by law. However, 'de facto' segregation did exist in railroading, clerical employment, trades and so forth. And the KKK was functioning in various parts of the country. Racial barriers were shifting constantly.

Discriminatory incidents continued to occur during the 1930s and early 1940s, but as before World War One, without consistency or predictability.

Wilson A. Head, The Black Presence in the Canadian Mosaic pg. 15-16.

Thus, Canada has taken comfort in the myth that her race relations have been far more fair than in the American experience. Canada's self-righteous air rests in the fact that the mere lack of numbers has prevented the development of a blatantly violent form of racism, but whether violent or not, it is evident that racism and discrimination does exist. Racism, is as

deeply rooted in the Canadian hierarchy of ethnic inequality as it is in the American system, the only difference is that it is much more subtle.

Canadians, it appears, are “polite racists.” They politely move slightly away from a Black co-passenger on the subway; they politely refuse to rent to or hire a Black; they politely refer to Blacks as Negroes rather than “niggers,” and in general they politely continue to discriminate against and segregate themselves from all but the most impersonal, formal contacts with their Black fellow (or potential fellow) Canadian citizens.

D.R. Hughes and E. Kallen, The Anatomy of Racism: Canadian Dimensions pg. 214.

This brief introduction has served to draw out several of the generally comparable themes between the American and Canadian experiences of Black history. It has also sketched the differences in the development of racial discrimination to the decades immediately after the first World War. The following case study deals with endeavours of one localized Black Canadian group and their individual effort at “breaking the existing race barrier.” This study elaborates on the themes previously outlined and is illustrative of the Canadian Black experience generally, as well as implicating the discreet subtleties of Canadian racism and discrimination during the 1930s.

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Robin Winks, author of the definitive work on Canadian Black History, wrote that the Canadian Negro's problem of the 1930s stemmed primarily from a lack of organization and the improper utilization of opportunity. "To find opportunity, he (the Black) often had to go to the land of segregation (the United States). To combat discrimination, he stood alone, without effective national organizations, social cohesion, dynamic church leadership, full education, protective legislation, or a medium for making known achievements or grievances."<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking, this seems a reasonable assertion when one considers the historical development of the Black race on Canadian soil. This is particularly true of the Black Canadians in the area of Chatham, Ontario.

This relatively small Southwestern Ontario city approximately fifty miles from the American border and boasts in the present day, as do most towns and villages in the area, of being the terminus of the Underground Railroad of the nineteenth century. It was within a twenty miles radius of this city that Josiah Henson established the famous Dawn settlement for Fugitive slaves (1842) and the Rev. William King founded the Negro community of Buxton (1849).<sup>2</sup>

Superficially, the Chatham area exemplifies the present day Canadian myth of freedom and justice for all and basks in the unfounded notion that Canadian society of the nineteenth century upheld equality as the fundamental right of all Canadian citizens. Upon closer examination in various areas of black Canadian history, the "white" fallacious pride of Canadian society begins to turn a dull stony gray.



Any number of factors, including the nature of the Southwestern Ontario population in the nineteenth century, the ongoing debate of slavery, the British humanitarian movement, etc., precipitated the isolationist nature of the Black communities; hence, the establishment and growth of relatively distinct social institutions, e.g., the Black churches and schools. Where these institutions led to a social cohesion in the late nineteenth century, they failed to provide an unified and effective leadership among the Black elite. This, in turn, failed to supply the degree and means in which the Black population could intermingle and contribute to the “mainstream” of Canadian society. Thus, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the grassroots of the Black population learned to cope and adapt to their white neighbours, and society generally, on an individual level.<sup>3</sup>

Not discounting the fact that there were numerous incidents of racial discrimination still, “as in the decades before World War One, no clear pattern of discrimination emerged in the 1930s or early 1940s.”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, this decade supplies us with a means of examining the Black population in Chatham, Ontario, and determining the extent to which they were excepted as valuable members of the community and the degree to which they were accepted as equals in the eyes of their white counterparts.

If the media can correctly be called the “mirror of society,” then the newspaper accounts on the activities of the all Black baseball team from Chatham is invaluable in the precise gauging of the attributes that the community held for its minority population and baseball team. In 1934 this team gained Chatham provincial recognition as they won the (OBAA) Ontario Baseball Amateurs Association, Intermediate B-1, Championship. The reception and reaction of this team’s playing in other Ontario towns is important in evaluating the

prejudices of the provincial media generally, as well as the discriminatory practices of the local hotels, restaurants, and ball players. It is hoped that from this study the reader can personally judge the degree to which a pattern of discrimination was absent in Ontario during the 1930s.

Chatham's proximity to the border is reflected in the community's incessant love for America's national past time. Baseball has always been an important pre-occupation in the minds of Chatham's male population. Up to the 1930s and the days of the depression, Chatham's social life thrived on the activities of the Inter-City Softball League.

However, with the advent of high unemployment, brought on by the depression, and the resulting need for more social affairs, Chatham saw the formation of a city baseball league which was under the banner of the Ontario Baseball Association. 1933 witnessed the first season of the league composed of four teams, three of which were white, and one made up entirely of "coloured" players.<sup>5</sup>

It is of interest to note that the three white teams were continuously sponsored by local businessmen; their jerseys bore the name of their respective entrepreneurs. The coloured team, on the other hand, adopted the name of "The Chatham Coloured All-Stars" and were outfitted by several different oil and gasoline businesses throughout numerous seasons of play.<sup>6</sup>

In explaining the segregation of the teams, one might examine the words of Booker T. Washington, in an address given in Atlanta, in 1895: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." In Canada, as well as the United States, "Organized baseball was in step with the times as the new century began. There were no black players in the white leagues, but segregation in baseball

was not yet so deeply ingrained that the idea of Negroes playing with whites was unimaginable.”<sup>7</sup>

The inception of the black Chatham team in 1933 reflects several interesting factors concerning the city and the community itself. The majority of the urban black population lived within the boundaries set out by the Canadian National Railroad tracks, on the one extreme, and the Canadian Pacific tracks, on the other. Within this area, lay the major, fenced-in ball diamond in the city, Stirling Park. Baseball served as a social event, as well as an activity for the unemployed. In the words of one of the players for the All-Stars, “Stirling Park was handy. Then people came in from the country and everywhere else. It was just that everything was happening at Stirling Park. It was right in on the game and the closeness. It was always quite an evening.”<sup>8</sup>

With the depression, the love for baseball, and the empty park, the formation of the team was regarded as “something to do. It had branched out from city league and industrial league softball.” Many of the black players, “never played junior ball, they started right in baseball with the coloured boys,” in 1933. There was no cost involved because, “in those days, the city looked after the diamonds and it didn’t cost the team a penny. I don’t know how the city kept up the diamonds. It was just entertainment for the people as I see it.”<sup>9</sup>

In the city of Chatham, the Coloured All-Stars were accepted on “a matter of fact” basis, that is to say, they lived within the community, were able to man a team, and there was no reason why they shouldn’t be able to play. The Chatham Daily News of 1934 carried daily accounts on the baseball season and exhibited no definable patterns of discrimination. However, numerous sports write ups did lend to the re-enforcing of an existing stereotype.<sup>2</sup>

For example, in reporting on an exhibition game played between the Stars and the black hotel employees in London, the News story read:

Headline: Chatham Boys Win in London

Subtitle: Coloured Nine Trim Bell Hops in Six Inning Contest

The Chatham Canadian All-Stars coloured team rode into town (London) yesterday to hand the fast travelling Hotel London nine of the City Baseball League, their first defeat of the season, when they went home with a 7-5 score tucked under the belt, "hot, diggety-dawg."

... supporters of the local coloured lads saw their favourites DONE bow to the Chatham nine in a closely contested game.<sup>10</sup>

The reference to being "coloured" is totally acceptable in this context, since the official name of the team was "The Chatham Coloured All-Stars" and there was a wish on the part of the players to be cited as being so. However, in regard to the Stars, they are continuously referred to as "boys," whereas in the majority of accounts, when two white teams are playing, they are referred to as "mates," "lads" or "fellows." The average age of the Stars' players was twenty-three or twenty-four years.

Other subtle references to race in a derogatory manner came through the paper in the form of the Stars winning, or coming through, "with flying colours,"<sup>11</sup> or in reference to an upcoming contest, the News stated that it would be an exciting and "colourful game."<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most blatantly obvious reference to the racial composition of the team came in an article in the News dated September 27, 1934. Flat Chase, of the Stars organization was popularly proclaimed the star of the game. The article was headlined with "The Kolored King of Klout rapped a triple, a double, and a single in five attempts."<sup>13</sup> In these delicately skilled manners the sports writers of the News re-enforced the existing stereotype and reminded their

readers, on a daily basis, that the Stars were not of the same race as the other baseball teams in the city.

Despite, or in spite, of the papers attitude, the Stars continued through the 1934 season winning every game, save two. The first of these two was a protested game in which the opposing team called unfair play and unsportsman-like conduct. The news passage regarding a slight altercation read:

Ladd (of the Stars) singled through the short, Olbey (Stars) rounded the keystone sack and headed for third. Stevens (centre field for the opposition) threw to third to flag the runner but the ball went through Millen's (3<sup>rd</sup> base player) legs and rolled to the fence. Olbey shoved Millen, toppling him over and scored while Ladd pulled up at third.<sup>14</sup>

The sports editorial had this to say about the situation.

The action of city baseball executives regarding the deportment of players while on field will be appreciated by fans. Fellows can put plenty of fight in a game and still act like gentlemen.<sup>14</sup>

The only other loss suffered by the Stars ended in "a near riot. It started on one of the bleachers when two fans, each an ardent supporter of their respective teams, got into an altercation which resulted in one of them being shoved off the top of the stands. Several of the other fans showed a willingness to 'mix' but there was no damage. As the players left the diamond, some of them got into an argument and it looked as though there would be a general melee but peace was restored with no damage occasioned."<sup>15</sup>

When questioned on the regularity of such occurrences on the diamond in the 1930s, one ex-Star had this to say: "A lot of close pitching and spikes and most everything else. It was played pretty rough. We had to play it rough to get recognition for it." A lot of the white players

joked that they'd "rather play with us, than against us. On account of Flat throwing the ball at their head, or by them so fast they couldn't hit it. There were a lot of guys who wouldn't bat."<sup>16</sup>

Common to any competitive sports, a rivalry soon developed between the two best teams. In the case of Chatham, the two teams were the winners of the Inter-City League, the All-Stars, and the Chatham Merchants, the city's representative in the Essex County Baseball League. In preparation for a game between the two rivals, Jack Isber, local produce importer and Merchant's manager, arranged to have three outside "Ace" players on his roster. In this way he hoped to ensure a victory over the Stars. The Chatham paper reported, "So the ruler of import, so far as their city's baseball 'ivory' is concerned, has done nobly in his selection of players for an epic."<sup>17</sup>

The outcome of the game was reported in the sports page the following day.

Chatham Merchants, augmented by three Petrolia players capture yesterday's "crucial" exhibition game from the Stars by a 7-2 score at Athletic Park but left unsettled the question as to which of the two teams deserves the right to the term "Chatham's Best."<sup>18</sup>

This tactic, and others that were similar, were used against the Stars several times in the course of the 1934 season but primarily in exhibition games only. The Stars organization did not complain too loudly about these unorthodox tactics because their roster had also changed between the 1933 and 1934 season. They had added to their team the services of Ferguson Jenkins from the Windsor, Ontario, area and Don Washington from Detroit, Michigan.

The addition of Jenkins to the team was fine, but as the author was told in an interview, "Washington came from Detroit, but we passed him off as Windsor. It was kind of a sin (against OBA regulations) to play if he was from another country but from Windsor, that was just Canada."<sup>19</sup> The Stars knew the rules of the game and were playing them well.

Although the local newspaper continually reported with a racial bias, the sport's editor, Jack Calder, did respect the Stars' ability at playing the game of baseball.<sup>3</sup> On the Stars winning a berth in the OBAA provincial series, Calder wrote in his Sports in Short column, September 5, 1934:

Their eyes towards this city's first provincial baseball title in many years, Chatham's Stars, coloured baseball team of this city, will oppose Sarnia Red Sox.  
... They have set up a splendid record in exhibition contests both here and in games around South Western Ontario.<sup>20</sup>

On September 12, 1934, after the Stars had won their first game over Sarnia, Calder had this to say regarding the team:

Chatham Stars have been largely responsible for a revival of baseball interest in this city and they are making a name for themselves throughout Western Ontario. Before they finish their OBAA campaign they hope to extend their fame over the entire province and to widen their local reputation as, "Canada's foremost coloured team."<sup>21</sup>

The successful engagements of the Stars was definitely putting the city on the baseball map, drawing as many as 4000 spectators at any one contest. This is remarkable considering average attendance ranged from 100 to 400 people. Furthermore, the Stars began to play other all black teams from Michigan, drawing a capacity crowd to the Emancipation Day celebration game against Taylor, Michigan.

Characteristic of black American barnstorming teams, the Stars of Chatham assured the audience of humorous antics if the game in progress became too slow.<sup>22</sup> In the successful series against Sarnia, the Stars third base coach, Percy Parker, "put in a little floor show by himself during the game. Saturday, he held the Sarnia fans in high glee throughout the contest. He earned the name of "Feet" as he went through his own version of a highland fling."<sup>23</sup>

As a further attestation to the newspapers respecting the baseball ability of the black players, while at the same time, assuring their readers that these weren't orthodox ball players, take note of the following clip from the same game:

Flat Chase does something of a rumba every time he goes to bat, not quite the same as Dick Porter's classical toe dance. Chase's little act should have been set to the music of Ferde Grofe's Grand Canyon suite. It's good but there's something weird about it. BUT HOW CHASE CAN LEATHER THAT APPLE. HE IS THE HARDEST HITTER IN AMATEUR BASEBALL IN THIS PART OF THE PROVINCE. THAT'S COVERING SOME TERRITORY.<sup>24</sup>

After a clear cut decision over the Sarnia Red Sox, the Chatham Stars continued on their championship campaign, defeating the Welland Terriers in a best two out of three series. At this stage in the play offs, it seems odd that the Stars would have to wait to advance to a new tier in the competition. Perhaps not so strange, the newspaper in the city began to give full hearted support to the black All-Stars.

No one seems quite clear on just where the Stars stand right now but its probable that they'll be notified that they're in the finals. If so the Stars will have some long travelling to do on the meagerest of finances. Their share of the gate yesterday was one fin—five green dollars—not enough to pay the expenses of grooming the diamond for future play.<sup>25</sup>

Financed by a local gasoline station owner, the Stars proceeded to play Midland in their next bid for the championship of the province. Although they beat the Midland team they were subjected to that town's discriminatory practices. One of the Stars put it this way. "We couldn't stay in Midland. They were filled right up they claimed and it was raining; anything to provoke us because those were the days."<sup>26</sup>

Upon defeating the Midland team, the Stars entered the provincial championship games against the team from Penetang. The Chatham paper had this to say: "Now is the time to think about a civic reception for the Stars. They're the first Chatham team to ever reach the



provincial finals and as such deserve all the praise and honour we can give them. Plus a banquet.”<sup>27</sup>

It is curious that as the Stars proceeded further in their bid for the championship, the sports editorial, Sports in Short, began slowly to drop references to race and assert their full and undivided support behind the Chatham team. It is also curious that as the team went further afield in their endeavours they began to be subjected to the prejudices and discriminatory practices of other towns; the final series against Penetang exemplified this fact to its ultimate.

The Penetang baseball organization offered the Stars \$200.00 if they would play all three games of the series in Penetang. Despite the fact that the money could help outfit them for the next season, the Stars elected to refuse the offer. It was decided that the first game would be played in Penetang, the second in the city of Chatham, and the third on neutral ground.

The Chatham Stars defeated Penetang in the first game of the series and drove home that very night in preparation for the next game in Chatham, according to the Chatham newspaper account.<sup>28</sup> The next day an editorial appeared in the News, praising the team’s accomplishments, but at the same time, re-enforcing the omnipresent colour line.

On Thursday afternoon of this week, the Chatham Stars, clever team of local coloured boys, with one win to their credit, will play off the second, and it is hoped, final game, for the championship. ...they will have the sympathetic support of every follower of sport in Chatham. ...these boys have brought the name of Chatham to the front in the various playdowns, and now that they have reached the finals, with a championship within their grasp, people in all walks of life should get behind them and cheer them on to victory.<sup>29</sup>

The Stars lost the next game to the opposition on a closely contested battle which ended 10-9. In the next day's sports page, Jack Calder accurately reflected the fans attitudes, as well as, re-asserted his faith in the Stars.

That's right. You've got a cold. And you're sore! Sat there in all that fridity and watched the boys fiddle away and finally lose a ball game. They just aren't a ball team, you say.

All right. And now you'll tell how the Stars got where they are today up in the finals, further than any team from this city has ever gone in OBAA play!<sup>30</sup>

Setting the series at one and one, the deciding game was to be played in Guelph, but after eleven innings this game was called and the three to two score in favour of the stars was reverted to a two all tie. The Toronto Star, the Kitchener Record, the London Free Press, and the Chatham Daily News all reported that the game was called on account of darkness, but what they failed to report was that it was only five o'clock in the afternoon and the sun was shining.

The game had gone to the top of the eleventh inning with a two all tie, when Chatham managed to gain a run. Penetang was at bat, with one out, when the game was called. One of the players for the Stars recalls the game and the incident. "It's hard to believe but I can still see the two guys throwing up their arms in the air, they must have had a pre-arranged signal because they just took out running. There was no talking to them, they just jumped in their cars and were gone. There was no way we were going to win that game."<sup>6, 31</sup>

This game had culminated the Stars' experiences with the Penetang team from the start. Once again, a player reminisces, "they wouldn't have us in Penetang, they were very prejudiced, that was the only trouble. In Guelph on that day, we moved into the same hotel they were, and they moved out as soon as they found out we moved in."<sup>32</sup>

The following day the game was re-played and the Chatham Stars humbled the Penetang team 13-7, capturing the provincial title. The team returned to Chatham that night being greeted by more than 2000 people as they approached the down town area.

Amid much cheering, Happy Parker, manager of the team, spoke briefly thanking the council and people of the fine reception given the team. "We received a telegram from the mayor and we knew the people of Chatham were behind us," he stated.

Mayor Davis, in his address stated, the boys had brought distinction to their city.

"We started out to win and did. We cannot attribute the success to any one player. Every man was out there doing his best. The mayor told us to bring home the bacon and we did."<sup>33</sup>

One of the Stars remembers the recognition they received for their labours.

The city donated these jackets to us. I never wore mine once. I took the crest off it and got it hanging down stairs. I gave mine away, it was that poor of material, just a kind of washboard affair jacket, but it was something, a form of appreciation.

At the banquet, held in honour of the team;

Hap Parker, our manager, got up and thanked the council for giving us this banquet, for I think they made money; they made a lot of money because the place was filled and he said we brought baseball back to the city of Chatham, the first OBA championship, now give the boys some jobs, now some of the merchants, give the boys some jobs because all we had was hotel work, which was tips, shining shoes, working in garages, cleaning cars or something like that. It eventually opened up and some of us got jobs.<sup>34</sup>

The fanfare soon died, the city went back to depression day normalcy, the ball teams continued to play every season and the Chatham Coloured All-Stars annually attempted to repeat the feat of the 1934 baseball season, touring the province to capacity crowds until the outbreak of World War Two.

The accomplishments of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Star baseball team were important, not only as a tribute to the athletic ability of the individual members, but as a

contemporary means of gaining insight into race relations. “You didn’t use the word ‘Negro’ in Kent County in those baseball days of the early thirties. ‘Coloured’ was the way they wanted it, and that’s how they were identified. In the east end of Chatham there were about 175 coloured families; more in Dresden, 16 miles northeast, and in the village of North Buxton, 10 miles west.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the phenomena of an all-black baseball team in Chatham was not regarded as a surprise or a shock to the city’s residents. It seemed only a natural extension of what had always been. Historically, the black population and white had developed separate social institutions; but for the purposes of this study, the reasons for this development are not as important as their result. A relationship had developed between the two races where both knew what was expected of the other; the rules of the game were set, both races knew those rules, and played accordingly. Accommodation was the watch word; the races intermingled on all levels but coldly respected the rights and rules that were established.

This is not to say that discrimination did not exist because it did, and in a very definite way. It is merely to say that the rules of society were established and the relationship only changed when a vehicle of expression presented itself. In the early 1930s, that vehicle was the sport of baseball.

On an informal level, the races mixed freely in playing the game. For the most part, white and black players teamed up together in exhibition or sandlot ball games. However, with the formation of an organized league, the races tended to polarize because now the entire community, and the province, were involved and not just those people who “rubbed elbows” on a personal level. Granted, from the 1970s perspective the polarization of the races was

grossly unfair, but in the 1930s it appears that this sort of thing was the accepted norm; accepted by both the black and white people, it was the natural thing to do.

If the Chatham Daily News can be dubbed the “mirror of Society” then it did accurately reflect the biased attitudes of the white community. In the earlier part of the baseball season, the black team was reported on regularly, as were the other teams; but as was seen, the difference was that the reporters constantly reminded their readers, through various stereotype enforcing means, that the Stars were not composed of white players. In most newspaper accounts, the paper respected their ability to play the game, but the reporters could not help but qualify their remarks with racial bias.

Perhaps the one exception to this was the author of the Sports in Short column, Jack Calder. Of all the reports in the news, his column appeared the least biased. Even so, as it was explained in a conversation with an ex-Star player, Calder had to be careful of what he said, or it might cost him his job. For all intents and purposes, the reporting done in the Chatham Daily News seemed to re-enforce the existing status quo and racial biases of the white population in Chatham. It was not until the Stars had earned a berth in the provincial playoffs that the attitude of the newspaper began to change.

The Stars were then seen as representing the city and the eyes of sports fans throughout the province were upon the team and the city of Chatham. Undoubtedly, in these depression years, the Stars were regarded as a source of revenue. Each time they played it was certain that the capacity crowds would spend their money in local hotels, restaurants, and in the various shops and confectionaries; yet, as the team travelled farther afield in their quest for the provincial title, they were often denied this privilege.

There was one trip, an overnight event! After a number of refusals, the sponsor obtained sufficient cabins (forerunner of today's motel service) for the players. But the owner stipulated the team arrive late, when few, if any, could see who were using the cabins.

The same situation occurred at least twice the same year in restaurant accommodations. The All-Stars usually dined at some small out-of-the-way spot along the route.<sup>36</sup>

Quite often, they would play amidst local hostility. On a visit to Strathroy, "messages were scribbled on the park fence and sidewalks referring to the colour of the team and suggesting that they go home."<sup>37</sup> Despite such occurrences, the All-Stars continued to play throughout the province acquainting rural Ontario with the black race and the game of baseball.

In these present days of organization, militarism, and pan-isms, it is worthwhile to look back upon the endeavours of these men in the 1930s. In their own small way, they used the game of baseball to illuminate the injustices of their white counterparts in society, they served as a means to lessen the hard days of depression, and they advanced their stature as individuals and as a race in a society where the status quo remained hardened to any change in the established relationship of the races.<sup>8</sup> In those days, long before Jackie Robinson's breakthrough as the first player of his race in the major baseball league, the Chatham Coloured All-Stars fought long and hard to win recognition for themselves and their race.

## Endnotes

1. Robin Winks, Black in Canada, Montreal, 1972. p. 414.
2. See Winks, Ibid., 1972.  
J.K.A. Farrell, The History of the Negro Community in Chatham, Ontario, 1787-1865, unpublished M.A. thesis, Ottawa, 1955.
3. This is the opinion of the author derived from the reading of secondary sources, newspaper accounts, and private conversations with several Chathamites of both races who recalled their personal experiences during the 1930s.
4. Robin Winks, Ob. cit., 1972. p. 420.
5. Chatham Daily News, May 17, 1933. Sports Page.
6. Tape recorded interview with Wilfred Harding, all time player with the Chatham Stars throughout their existence. Mr. Harding's opinions were corroborated by articles dating from May 17 to the 25<sup>th</sup>, 1933.  
  
The teams involved were: The R.G. Dunns, The Chatham Merchants, The Chatham Juniors, and The Chatham Coloured All-Stars.
7. Robert Peterson, Only The Ball Was White, Englewood Cliffs, 1970. p. 53.
8. Tape recorded interview with Mr. Harding. Unless otherwise signified footnotes dealing with the interview with Mr. Harding will be referred to as, Interview.
9. Interview.
10. Chatham Daily News, July 14, 1933.
11. Chatham Daily News, August 13, 1934.
12. Chatham Daily News, August 9, 1934.
13. Chatham Daily News, September 27, 1934.
14. Chatham Daily News, June 5, 1934.
15. Chatham Daily News, June 8, 1934.
16. Interview.
17. Chatham Daily News, August 24, 1934.
18. Chatham Daily News, August 24, 1934.
19. Interview.
20. Chatham Daily News, September 5, 1934.
21. Chatham Daily News, September 12, 1934.

22. See Robert Peterson, *Op. cit.*, 1970.
23. Chatham Daily News, September 12, 1934.
24. Chatham Daily News, September 12, 1934.
25. Chatham Daily News, September 27, 1934.
26. Interview.
27. Chatham Daily News, October 12, 1934.
28. Interview. Views were corroborated by Chatham Daily News accounts dated October 13, 1934.
29. Chatham Daily News, October 17, 1934.
30. Chatham Daily News, October 19, 1934.
31. Toronto Star, October 24, 1934.  
Kitchener Daily News, October 24, 1934.  
London Free Press, October 24, 1934.  
Chatham Daily News, October 23, 1934.  
Interview.
32. Interview.
33. Chatham Daily News, October 24, 1934.
34. Interview.
35. London Free Press, June 6, 1968.
36. London Free Press, June 6, 1968.
37. London Free Press, June 6, 1968.



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#### Chatham Daily News 1933

Articles were taken from May to September all inclusive with special reference to:

May 17, 1933	July 4, 1933
" 19, 1933	" 5, 1933
" 20, 1933	" 7, 1933
" 25, 1933	" 11, 1933
" 26, 1933	" 12, 1933
" 30, 1933	" 13, 1933
" 31, 1933	" 14, 1933
	" 15, 1933
June 2, 1933	" 18, 1933
" 6, 1933	" 20, 1933
" 7, 1933	" 26, 1933
" 9, 1933	
" 10, 1933	August 8, 1933
" 13, 1933	" 14, 1933
" 16, 1933	" 25, 1933
" 17, 1933	" 28, 1933
" 20, 1933	" 31, 1933
" 21, 1933	
" 24, 1933	September 6, 1933
" 25, 1933	" 9, 1933
" 28, 1933	" 18, 1933
" 30, 1933	

#### Chatham Daily News 1934

Articles were taken from May to October all inclusive with special reference to:

May 18, 1934	June 3, 1934
" 22, 1934	" 4, 1934
" 23, 1934	" 8, 1934
" 25, 1934	" 12, 1934
" 30, 1934	" 16, 1934
	" 21, 1934
	" 27, 1934
	" 28, 1934
	" 29, 1934

(Chatham Daily News 1943 cont.)

July 9, 1934

" 11, 1934

" 17, 1934

" 20, 1934

" 21, 1934

" 31, 1934

August 2, 1934

" 7, 1934

" 8, 1934

" 9, 1934

" 10, 1934

" 13, 1934

" 15, 1934

" 17, 1934

" 20, 1934

" 24, 1934

September 4, 1934

" 5, 1934

" 10, 1934

" 12, 1934

" 14, 1934

" 17, 1934

" 21, 1934

" 24, 1934

" 27, 1934

October 1, 1934

" 2, 1934

" 5, 1934

" 9, 1934

" 11, 1934

" 12, 1934

" 13, 1934

" 15, 1934

" 16, 1934

" 17, 1934

" 19, 1934

" 23, 1934

" 24, 1934

Kitchener Daily Record October 23, 1934

October 24, 1934

Toronto Globe October 24, 1934

London Free Press October 16, 1934 June 6, 1968

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