

Sports

Our Baseball Team

Rhodes had a wonderful baseball team. They were noted all over the country. Those were the days and it didn't cost a nickle.

There was a negro, by the name of Hugh Blackburn who pitched for the team, I'm telling you he would have been in all the history books, but they didn't let negroes play back in those days on the big teams. He was really good.

Hugh had an Indian friend, who roomed with him. He played first base and never missed a ball and could hit like the dickens. Blackburn talked a lot but the Indian just said Ugh! Ugh!

Well anyway, two fellows from Clemons, one a catcher and another player were there with two main players from the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. They had heard about this negro and how he pitched. They wanted a post season game, they said they were bringing their team to play Rhodes.

Harold Hildreth ran the livery stable and when they came out with Ford cars, he got one so when the St. Louis team came to Melbourne on the train two of us went and picked them up.

They were talking together and said they could beat this negro because they played in the big league. Well you know what happened. Rhodes shut them out 2 to 0, can you imagine, they didn't get a hit.

Hugh had such big shoulders and small hips and legs like a piano, he came back long armed and threw them right past'em.

Well anyway, when the game was over, we were taking them back to the train, it was a different story. The St. Louis players all said they were glad they didn't have to hit against this negro in the big league cause how can you hit'em if you don't see'em.

They weren't so puffed up on the way back but I can tell you if Hugh could have played in the big leagues, he would have been the best. Jackie Robinson was the first Negro to play at Brooklyn. He played third base.



1915 Rhodes Baseball Club and Fans: from the left, front row: Jim Wallace (mascot), Wayne Hildreth, Carrie Ginter, Noble Mershon, Nina Hildreth, Lorretta Ginter, Grace Goodman, Gladys Hildreth, unknown and unknown; Second row: The Indian, Pete Crawford, Joe Goodman, George Goodman, unknown, Freeman Curtright, Charles Dewey, Hugh Blackburn, Clint Darling and J.H. Johnson (manager).



1915 Rhodes Baseball Club, from the left, front row: (mascot), George Goodman and Hugh Blackburn; Johnson (manager), Noble Mershon and Clint Darling. Miles and the Indian.

Joe Goodman, Freeman Curtright, James Wallace
Second row: Pete Crawford, Alvin Goodman, J.H.
Not pictured, Wayne Hildreth, Bert Girton, Walter

I remember Bert Girton was the catcher and he always had George Perry who ran the store, cut off a piece of beef steak, take the bone out and Bert put it in his catchers mitt. Hugh threw the ball so hard and fast his hand would swell up. Now Bert was a Mason and you know his hands were tough but he had to put that meat in there and when he took it out it was like hamburger.

The ball park was up there where Billy Hildreth lived, the former Bert Pike place. My Uncle John Perry owned that.

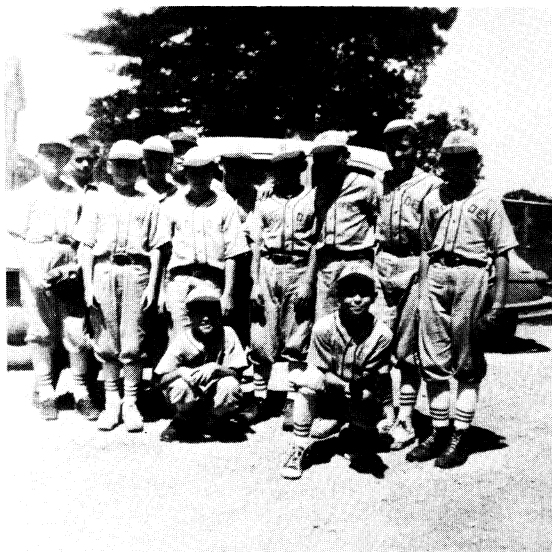
When I used to take chickens into Chicago for my Dad and Uncle Harry, it took a couple of days. The trains would leave at night. Well anyway, they'd ask me, "You want to see Cubs play or the White Sox." That's when the Cubs' Ty Cobb and all them old timers played.

They gave me five dollars, it would pay my way into the game and get me three meals and you always got more than you could eat.

*Memories by
Wayne Hildreth*



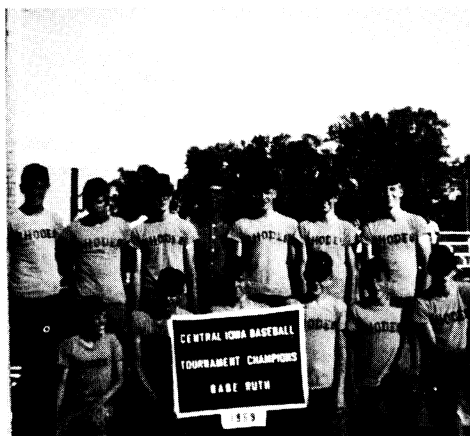
"Enjoyed Victory over Melbourne," May 1920, from the left; Amos Walters, Jud Benner, Paul Benner, Ralph Buck, Grainger Buck and Elmer Baie.



Little League team, coached by Howard Eldridge Sr., from the left, front row: Reggie Eldridge and Dan Good. Second row; Jerry Richeson, Howard Eldridge Jr., Dan Tuttle, Dan Clement, Jim Perin, Bill Hildreth, Lyle Eldridge, Jim Ficken, Ron Tuttle, James Foster and Phil Walker.

Rhodes Baseball Team

In 1955, Howard Eldridge Sr., Kenneth Haas, Kenneth Clement, Gerhart Ficken and other parents had a meeting to organize a baseball program for the young boys in the community. Howard Sr. coached the team from 1955 to 1961. They played leagues in Marshall and Story Counties.



1969 Babe Ruth County Champs: from the left, first row: Anthony Wright, Ken Buck, Bob Gibbs, Jim Guckert, Mick Malloy and Rick Karsjen; Second row: Greg Rhoads, Stan Gray, Dewaine Thomae, Coach - Marvin Gibbs, John Guckert, Dave Karsjen and Mike Malechek.

Rhodes Ball Association

In April of 1969, parents were called together to discuss a ball program for the young boys in the community. At this meeting the following Board of Directors were elected; John Guckert Jr., Robert Alexander, Bonnie Trowbridge, Marvin Klaas and Arvilla Goodman. Merlin Klaas was elected manager and Juanita Gibbs, Secretary-Treasurer. The name was to be Rhodes Little League which was later changed to the Rhodes Ball Association.

It was a struggle in the beginning, but the parents sold refreshments in order to help buy equipment. The town of Rhodes helped by paying the insurance.

Since this organization, they have been very active in the community affairs.



1971 Babe Ruth County Champs: from the left, front row: Bruce Buck, David Clausen, Mick Malloy, Charlie Bear and Greg Maxwell; Second row: Dave Klaas, Bob Gibbs, Dave Karsjen, Greg Rhoads, Brian Rohrer, Steve Karsjen, and Coach - Marvin Gibbs.

In 1973, they decided to have a food tent at the Central Iowa Fair for a fund raiser for the Ball program. It turned out to be very successful and they have been going back every year. The results can be seen at the Rhodes Community Park, as they have donated the following; a chain link fence and back stop, swing set, merry-go-round, enclosed concession stand, equipment shed, four sets of bleachers and four picnic tables.

In the spring of 1974 a group of girls came into the Rhodes cafe and asked, "Why can't we play softball, the boys always get all the breaks." So they organized with equipment borrowed from the boys, bats, and balls from home and a few new balls. They had two teams, the Pee Wee's, third to fifth grade and Minors, sixth thru eighth grades. In January of 1975 a special