



# Summer 2022 Newsletter



Volume 14 Issue 1

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## From "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" - by David Ward

"As early as the 1890's the game [of baseball] was being played in and around Martin County. One popular ballpark was on West Main Street in Williamston. Some players in this early league were Harry W. Stubbs, Dr. W. H. Harrell, Sam Harrell, John Harrell, Latham Thrower, and J. R. Robertson. The games had very high scores, and no one had heard of "no runs" or "no hit" games! One game they tell about was played in Everetts in 1927, lasted 54 innings, and the final score was 100-all! The game was never officially decided because it got dark and there were no lights on the playing field. The game was filled with great plays, a lot of fun, and several errors! Many different fans attended the game because no one group had the strength to sit through to the end of it. The players finished the game, but had to call frequent time-outs so that they could drink and relax.

The Windsor and Bertie County teams would often be brought over by Judge Frank Winston.

These games were often close, high scoring games. Around 1900, the Williamston team picked up a good catcher in Charlie Mizelle and a good pitcher named Todd. They won a lot of close games that year. Meanwhile, the town had been growing, and the need for a new ballpark arose. The field was moved to inside the fair grounds just outside Williamston.



The Martins, 1934, Front Row (left to right): John Gaddy, Leon Brodgen, Doc Kugler, Honey Johnson, Hack Gaylord, Howard Earp, Troy Goodman, Jim Uzzell. Back Row (left to right): Ray Goodman, Bill Spivey, Oscar Anderson, Cecil Brake, Slim Gardner, Sammy Taylor, Dick Cherry, E. P. Cunningham. Bat Boy: George Cunningham

In 1920, Williamston was in the old Eastern Carolina Baseball League, which was followed by the Coastal Plains League.

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## “Take Me Out To The Ballgame,” continued.

In the Coastal Plains League, according to old-time baseball standout Hack Gaylord, there were many great players back then. One of them, Slim Gardner, pitcher for the Martins, had more training, he could have been the best pitcher from Martin County, ever!

Playing on some of the teams, according to Mr. Gaylord, were three major league ballplayers. Claude Corbitt played shortstop and went to the Cincinnati Reds franchise in the Majors. Wes Livingood was a pitcher who also went to the Cincinnati organization. There was also Jimmy Brown who played third base. He started in the Coastal Plains League and ended up with the Boston Red Sox Major League team.

The league ran from June, when college let out, through August, when school started. There was a championship at the end of the season. The two top teams would play a 1st to win 3 out of 5 series. The teams would play alternate games at their home parks.”

When the Williamston team had away games, it needed transportation. Asa Tom Crawford, Harry Biggs, and Claude Leggett would drive. One interesting trip, according to Mr. Gaylord, came on a ride to New Bern. He and another player were riding down there with Mr. Asa Tom Crawford, and he said the drive was the fastest he had ever traveled there!

The players were responsible for carrying their own equipment on road trips, but the team would sometimes give Charlie Mack Johnson a quarter to care for their shoes. The uniforms were furnished by a local store. In turn, the uniforms had the name of the store printed on the back.

The managers in the league were working for people from the community. Except one year, Pea Head Walker coached when Mr. Gaylord played at Snow Hill. Pea Head Walker was the coach at Wake Forest at the time

At the Williamston field there was a grandstand beside the field. Mr. Eason and Sylvester Lilley owned and ran the grandstand separate from the team. It regularly cost 25 cents for adults to get into the games and 10 cents for the kids. It was an extra quarter for grandstand seats. In the grandstand they sold popcorn, peanuts, and cokes. It could seat 1500 people and was nearly filled for every game. All the money from the gate was use for operation expenses such as gas and baseballs.



At left, Cecil Brake of the Martins



At right, “Slim” Gardner up at bat for the Martins



When the league was in operation, there was one rule different from those now followed. The players were allowed to leave their gloves in the field after they went to bat. In fact, Mr. Gaylord, whom I interviewed, didn't own a glove until Mr. Asa Tom Crawford bought him one. He would simply use the visiting team's centerfielder's glove that he left in the field. I wonder what would have happened if the centerfielder of one team caught with a different hand than Mr. Gaylord did?

Many of the players were from the different universities in the area. They had to travel to get here, and to get back to their school. As it was, the university paid the expenses for the players to travel. Because of that, the college players had a big influence on the game.

Another interesting sidelight on expenses came when Mr. Gaylord went to Snow Hill to play. Pea Head Walker was coaching at the time, and he offered Mr. Gaylord twenty-five dollars a week to play ball for him. Mr. Gaylord was still in the Albemarle League at the time, but all he had to do was sign a Coastal Plains League contract to play for Snow Hill.

The Coastal Plains League went professional in 1937. The teams became farm teams for the major leagues. Mr. Gaylord did play one season of pro-ball for the Rocky Mount class D farm team. The Brooklyn Dodgers sponsored that team.

...In 1949 the Robersonville Rams won the Martin County championship and advanced to the state semipro tournament in Asheboro. They went all the way to the fourth round of the championship, finally losing to Greensboro. That was farther than any other Martin County team had gone in that league. Some players on their team were Wallace Reid Bullock, Tom Brown, J. H. Ross, and Ashley D. Wynn.

Baseball in this area started making headlines with Slim Gardner's pitching in the Coastal Plains League. It moved up to the Perry brothers in the majors. Martin County's soil is regarded as some of the most fertile in the world. Well, it seems to be a fertile ground for baseball players, too!"

- from the article originally published in **The Huskanaw** (v.1, n.1, 1984) produced by the Martin Monarchs Junior Historian Club, Elizabeth Roberson, Advisor and published by Williams and Co. Publishers, Washington, N.C. We have made minor alterations due to space constraints.



Pictured at left is the Coastal Plains League playing field at what is now Riverside Middle School

***Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!***

The Board wish to thank Jeff Lilley for contributing to the Martin County Historical Society by keeping our lawn maintained and looking nice.

We also wish to thank John Price for the new "Open" sign he donated for use on our front porch.





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**Meetings**

**General (Membership) Meetings** are held on the second Tuesday of the month., except June and July, 10:00am at the Biggs House. Annual membership dues are as follows:

Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$30.00
Business	\$50.00

*MCHS Officers 2022*

- **President - Jane Benson**
- **Vice President - Bonnie Robertson**
- **Recording Secretary - L. David Smith**
- **Treasurer & Book Sale Coordinator - Shirley Wilson**

Wayne Peel  
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Williamston, NC 27892-8719

**We welcome submissions and recommendations for future articles!**

**Stay tuned for programs we are planning regarding the Farm Life / Dymond City area of Martin County!**

**Come See us at Christmas in July at the Farmer's Market!**



**We now have a youtube channel!**

- **Check us out at [martincountynhistoricalsociety.com](http://martincountynhistoricalsociety.com) ! You can view "Before" pictures of the Asa Biggs House, watch oral history interviews about our county, and more! We also welcome submissions for this educational tool as well!**