

1934: The Chatham Coloured All Stars' Barrier Breaking Year by Heidi LM Jacobs

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nadian political biography. The content is more representative of English's work and legacy than an attempt to produce a comprehensive treatment of the field. Given that English was a prolific scholar, Member of Parliament for Kitchener, Ontario, and a professor always willing to "share the latest gossip from Queen's Park or Parliament Hill" with students at the University of Waterloo, it is fitting that the volume concludes with John Milloy's call for more permeable frontiers between academia, ac-

tivism, and policymaking (6).

People, Politics, and Purpose is quite simply a very good read. It embodies the best qualities of biography—a genre that presents myriad opportunities for historians to tell compelling stories—while showing no traces of the intellectual shallowness charged by the field's detractors.

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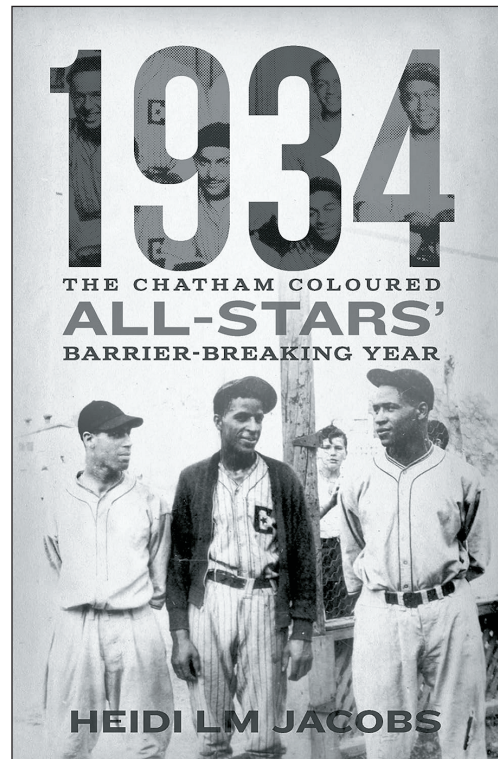
1934:

The Chatham Coloured All Stars' Barrier Breaking Year

By Heidi LM Jacobs

Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis, 2023. 281 pages. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN 978177196477 (biblioasis.com)

Heidi LM Jacobs' *1934: The Chatham Coloured All-Stars' Barrier-Breaking Year* paints a vibrant picture of a Black working-class neighbourhood in Chatham's East End that loves baseball. Entertainment and community life centre around Stirling Park where the All-Stars, the pride of the community innovated a fast paced, exciting brand of baseball. Jacobs utilizes oral histories and scrapbooks collected mostly by the women relatives of team members, the Shepherd's city directory, Jack Calder's vivid play-by-plays, portraits, and progress reports of All-Star team members in the *Chatham Daily News* to tell an important chapter in Canadian and sports history at the apex of the Great Depression. *1934* is a chronological account of a record and barrier breaking year for the Chatham All-Stars. Through close readings of local news reports and oral history interviews, Jacobs documents the pervasive nature of racial discrimination across Southwestern On-



tario in the 1930s. The All-Stars and their family members, for instance, experienced racial taunts and slurs at games, and experienced segregated accommodations during away games.

South of the border, African-Americans were excluded from major league play and created their own professional leagues colloquially known as Negro League baseball. Sports history in the North American context has often featured notable athletes such as Jackie Robinson and his historic debut in Major League Baseball in 1947. More than a decade before this milestone, the place and presence of the All-Stars as a Canadian team composed mostly of Black players from across the region positioned Black excellence on display. They inspired the upliftment of their community and a generational legacy of refusal and resistance in the face of adversity. The contributions of the All-Stars and Black Canadian baseball culture is noticeably missing from North American sports and baseball history. For example, Jacobs notes that Ferguson Jenkins Sr., a strong hitter for the All-Stars, inspired his son to play baseball professionally. Ferguson Jenkins Jr. was Canada's first inductee into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York and is the Black pitcher to this date to have broken the most records. The family and community of the 1934 All-Stars team were inspired by their winning mentality and continued to push for the betterment of themselves and community.

The book is organized into chapters covering each month of the All-Stars record-breaking year. It is a microhistory of the team's winning season. The preface and introduction detail how this book came to fruition and the collaborative relationships that made it possible. The last chapter *Post 1934:1935 and 1939* describe the legacy of the 1934 champion All-Stars and

the collective memory and pride carried by Chathamites in years to follow. Jacobs details the dissolution of the All-Stars and how the Second World War changed life trajectories. One of the most important contributions of this work is the exploration and acknowledgment of long interconnected histories and geographies of the region in the first chapter. Jacobs contends, "The story of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars is also the story of Black diaspora, with its connections to the Middle Passage, enslavement, the Underground Railroad, emancipation, and the Great Migration in the early twentieth century. In this way, the geographic triangle in this book is not merely a setting or a backdrop to this baseball story but an integral force that shaped the players, the community and legacy of this team" (40). The exhibition games that the All-Stars played against Detroit's Taylor Stars and the Walpole Island Team during Emancipation weekend in 1933 demonstrate the porousness of United States-Canadian border, and connection with the local First Nation community. Throughout the book, Jacobs pays particular attention to broader national myths that sought to erase the long-standing history of Black communities in Southwestern Ontario. The impact of the Chatham All-Stars is not simply that they were a sports team, but that they represented community cohesion, cross border linkages, and Black community building.

Jacobs is trained in the discipline of English, and her literary analysis of Jack Calder's sports columns demonstrates this expertise. Her interviews with team family members alongside interviews recorded by the Multicultural History Society amplify the voices of folks most often overlooked by official archives. Jacobs skillfully integrates historical analysis to address gaps and omissions in the historic record. For exam-

ple, the first championship game that the All-Stars played against Penetanguishene in early October 1934 ended prematurely and controversially, as it was said by officials to be too dark to safely continue play. This game was contested in recorded accounts; players recall that the opposing team used underhanded tactics to stop the All-Stars from their much-deserved victory. The All-Stars produced a definitive victory later in the series ending 18 October 1934 and were crowned the undeniable champions of the Ontario Baseball Association.

A microhistory of 1934 is a snapshot in time and does not encapsulate the longer history of sports and baseball culture in the region. While the author does mention a longer history of Black baseball teams in the region, a more detailed overview of the significance of baseball as an outlet for young Black men as an escape from racism and poverty would have better grounded the continuities of intergenerational pro-

gress and the significance of the 1934 Chatham All-Stars victory for the regions' historic Black communities.

1934: The Chatham Coloured All-Stars' Barrier-Breaking Year provides an important study of the ways in which oral and public histories can tell us about the complex lives of Black Canadians, and how historians record and amplify these local stories. Jacobs was invited to preserve and record family histories and worked with the University of Windsor, Black Mecca, and the Chatham Black Historical Society to expand the public reach of this history. Serving as an accessible microhistory of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, this book validates listening and placing a diverse range of sources to combat historical silences in Canadian sports history.

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Listening to the Fur Trade *Soundways and Music in the British North American Fur Trade, 1760-1840*

by Daniel Laxer

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 304 pages. ISBN 978-0-2280-0859-0

With his book, *Listening to the Fur Trade: Soundways and Music in the British North American Fur Trade, 1760-1840*, Daniel Laxer makes a profound contribution to the historiography of the Canadian fur trade in a way that helps to illuminate the power and influence of an often overlooked and disregarded element of human history; the sounds of the past. Through this lens, this work provides deep insight into the social and economic realities of the fur trade. Laxer explores the various ways in which music, and other

soundways—such as the sounds of muskets and canons—were integral to the lives of participants in the fur trade. He also demonstrates how this kind of activity can show how participants in the fur trade expressed, celebrated, and interacted with one another, and how they expressed both individual and collective identities. It helps to provide a new lens on the lives of those in the trade, and of how Europeans and Indigenous peoples shared their cultures and forged connections that were not limited to just their material exchange of goods and furs.