

## **#1 Down East Baseball and Throwing Heat**

By Elmo Gaskill, Atlantic, NC

In the late 1930's, just about every community Down East and in the rest of the county, fielded a baseball team. All of these teams were very competitive and a number of them did what they had to, to try and win.

The Atlantic team was real good but to ensure that they would have a better chance to win they would import a few other good players to join them from time to time.

On one occasion they got Lester Babbit from Davis Shore, Julian Brown from Marshallberg and Jake Wade from Morehead City. It's unclear whether or not they paid these players cash or not.

I was told by Eugene Willis, Braxton Taylor and Clude Mason that Jake Wade threw the ball so hard to Lester Babbit, the catcher, that someone went to the store and got a piece of beef steak to go in Lester's glove to absorb some of the hard pitches that Jake was throwing.

This team of the late thirties was comprised of Brantly Morris at first base, Ralph Nelson at second base, Claude Brown at third, Irby Willis was the regular pitcher, Lennie Robinson, Allison "Pluck" Mason, Ernul Fulcher, and Lester Babbit were other team members.

The teams played on what is now the school's field, with a fence and a covered stand for the spectators. Eugene, Braxton, and Clyde Jr. related that the baseball stadium, fence and field had been built by the WPA between 1935-1937.

The teams played whenever they could, in many cases they played in cow pastures and fields. The field in Atlantic was notorious for being sandy and having a lot of sandspurs.

Competition came from all over. I have been told that teams from Wilmington, Jacksonville, New Bern, Trenton and even Greenville traveled to Carteret County to play on Sunday afternoons.

In the days before TV and radio, baseball was "the" entertainment of the day.

Jake Wade went on to play in the majors and was successful at all stages of his career. He played for Detroit, Cleveland, the Dodgers, and finished up with the Yankees.