

Archie Persons, "From Badger to Bassano"

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It's not often that a player who is leading his respective league in hitting is traded, but on July 13, 1912, the Western Canada (D) League's Bassano Boosters do exactly that when in a "fire sale" of its best players, send outfielder Archie Persons and his "Twilight League" leading .379 batting average to the Vancouver Beavers of the Northwestern (B) League.

Two days, later the 31-year-old "crack gardener" makes his Beaver debut starting in center field in place of player/manager Kitty Brashear who is on the "sick" list. Batting third, Persons is hitless in three at bats against Seattle Giants' ace Cecil Thompson (23 wins) in a 6-0 loss. The setback drops Vancouver 2 and 1/2 games behind the front-running Giants.

Despite his departure, Persons is eventually crowned as the Western Canada League's leading hitter with his career-best .379 average, besting teammate Howard Guyn by five points.

Persons and Guyn's performance are even more impressive when you consider that Bassano and Red Deer, two of the league's expansion franchises, are forced to play almost three quarters of their games on the road. The Boosters' home park is 200-seat Berkeley Park Stadium, which is later torn down with several weeks remaining in the season and its lumber sold off to pay the team's debts and player's salaries.

Born on April 19, 1881, in Arkansaw, Wisconsin, Archie Lee Persons is not so different from many minor league players of his era, playing for 11 different teams (under two different spellings of his last name - Persons and Parsons) in eight seasons before having to retire after his breakout season of 1912 because of a broken ankle.

In addition to his abbreviated batting title north of the border, the speedy 5-11, 165-pound left-handed hitting outfielder will twice lead leagues - Iowa (61) in 1905, Southern (80) in 1909 - in steals.

Persons first achieves athletic prominence as a four-year starter at the University of Wisconsin from 1902 to 1905. A two-time team captain for the Badgers and a two-sport star in baseball and track, Persons leads the team in hitting as a sophomore in 1903 with a fairly impressive .776 average. In his four years at Madison, the multi-talented Persons earns seven varsity letters and a gold medal in 1903 as the *best gymnast* in the Western Conference (later the Big Ten Conference).

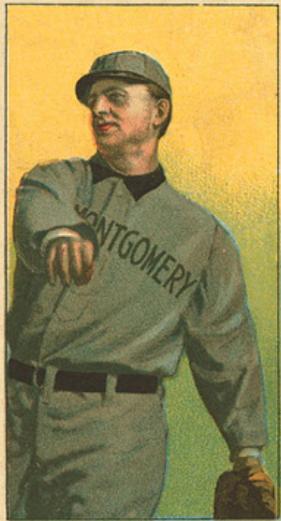
Following his graduation from Wisconsin in 1905, Persons signs his first professional baseball contract on June 1, 1905, with the Oskaloosa Quakers of the Iowa League of Professional Baseball Clubs. Under the guidance of manager, and former Wisconsin baseball standout Howdy Cassiboine, Persons has a solid if not spectacular rookie season leading the eight-team league in steals (61) and finishing second in hitting with a .304 average.



Archie Persons
1912 Bassano Boosters

Archie Persons Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Level	AB	R	HT	2B	3B	HR	SB	AVG	
1902	Wisconsin Badgers	Western	Coll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1903	Wisconsin Badgers	Western	Coll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1904	Wisconsin Badgers	Western	Coll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.776	
1905	Wisconsin Badgers	Western	Coll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1905	Oskaloosa Quakers	Iowa State	D	375	61	114	-	-	-	61	.304	
1906	Nashville Volunteers	Southern	A	499	48	142	-	-	-	31	.284	
1907	2 Teams	Southern	A	333	48	77	-	-	-	33	.231	
	Nashville Volunteers	Southern	A	330	48	77	-	-	-	33	.233	
	Montgomery Senators	Southern	A	3	-	0	0	0	0	0	.000	
1908	Montgomery Senators	Southern	A	447	65	125	-	-	-	34	.279	
1909	Montgomery/Little Rock	Southern	A	501	77	130	-	-	-	80	.259	
1910	2 Teams	2 Leagues	A	180	-	37	5	0	0	0	.206	
	Sacramento Sacts	Pacific Coast	A	117	10	25	4	0	0	6	.214	
	Omaha Rourkes	Western	A	63	-	12	1	0	0	-	.190	
1911	San Antonio/Oklahoma City	Texas	A	258	45	62	3	1	1	11	.240	
1912	3 Teams	2 Leagues	B/D	235	59	85	11	2	1	27	.362	
	Bassano Boosters	Western Canada	D	198	59	75	11	2	1	27	.379	
	Vancouver/Tacoma	Northwestern	B	33	8	8	-	-	-	4	.270	
Minor League Totals				8 Years	2824	421	770	19	3	2	287	.273



PERSONS, MONTGOMERY

Archie Persons' 1909 T206 White Borders card (No. 387 of 525) is worth \$710.00 with a PSA of 5.

Archie Persons [2 of 4]:

Fleet of foot (three varsity letters in track at Wisconsin), Persons finishes his career with 287 steals, including a career-best 80 playing for the Montgomery Climbers and the Little Rock Travelers in 1909.

Following his sale to Vancouver of the Northwestern League in the middle of the 1912 season, Persons is later sold to Tacoma Tigers in September, where he suffers a broken ankle sliding into second base, effectively ending his career.

PERSONS CHRONOLOGY

June 9, 1899 ▶▶

With Elam J. Raymond failing his physical for entrance into West Point, Wisconsin Republican Congressman John J. Jenkins (a Civil War veteran with the 6th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment) suggests that the state examiners should telegraph the alternate, Archie Persons of Rock Elm ... Persons passes the physical and is accepted into the United States Military Academy.

June 9, 1899

FAILS TO PASS

Chippewa Falls Candidate for West Point Rejected.

Chippewa Falls, Wis., June 9.—[Special.]—Word has just been received that Elam J. Raymond has failed to pass a physical examination at West Point and is thereby rejected. There is no question but what he did the mental examination successfully. On physical requirements they are very rigid and exact a high standard. When Congressman Jenkins was questioned in regard to the matter he stated that as yet he had received no official notification of the action of the board, but that the examiners might telegraph the alternate, Archie Persons of Rock Elm, to come at once to West Point.

July 1901

Following his sophomore year, Persons is one of three West Point Cadets to have been found "deficient in examinations" and is discharged from the Academy.

1901

Following his discharge from West Point, Persons enters the University of Wisconsin in the Fall of 1901 to renew his academic endeavors.

1903

As a sophomore, Persons leads the Badgers in hitting with a .776 batting average ... despite his efforts, the Badgers finish 3-9.

1905 University of Wisconsin Badgers



Archie Persons
1905 University of Wisconsin

In 1896 baseball becomes the first intercollegiate sport established at the University of Wisconsin, and the first to have African-American players on its roster, including Julian Ware who was selected team captain in 1902 ... the baseball program is discontinued following a 6-22 mark in 1991.

"PROFESH" ARE BARRED

MAY OUST UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS FROM
TEAM

◀◀ February 21, 1905

Persons, a three-year starter, is one of 40 "aspirants" trying out for Badger baseball team under head coach Bemis Pierce when news breaks that several members of the team are under investigation for "professionalism" having played with pro teams the past summer despite having done so with the "permission" of the university's faculty ... one of the Badgers who is said to have been paid is "Cy" Young, a "clever" pitcher

who says he can't see why he should not employ his summers in the "agreeable work" of playing baseball at \$75 a month rather than "pitching" hay for \$25.

June 1, 1905

A recently-graduated Persons signs his first professional baseball contract with the Oskaloosa Quakers of the Iowa League, an eight-team D level minor league ... Quaker manager Howdy Cassiboine is a former baseball player at the University of Wisconsin.

Archie Persons [3 of 4]:

October 15, 1905

Iowa League President Frank S. Norton confirms that Oskaloosa's Archie Persons led the Iowa League in steals "by a wide margin."

1909 Montgomery (Ala.) Climbers

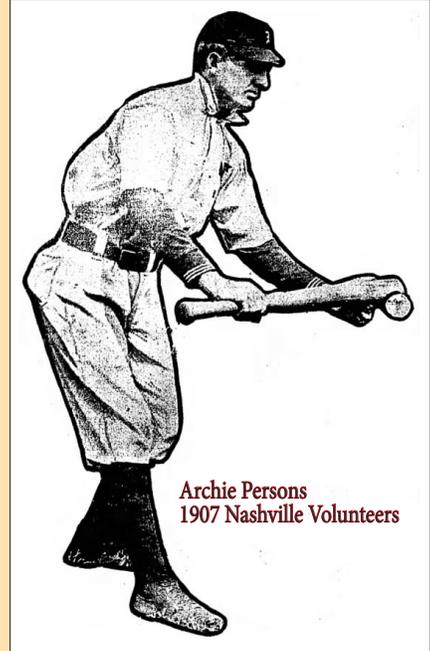


April 7, 1906

Persons is acquired by the Minneapolis Millers.

July 22, 1907

Acquired by Montgomery from the Nashville Volunteers, Persons is 0-for-3 in his debut for the Senators in a 4-1 loss to the Little Rock Travellers ... it's the only game Persons will play for Montgomery when the following morning Little Rock manager Mickey Finn announces that the Travellers have a prior claim on Persons before the Senators ... Persons returns to Nashville



Archie Persons
1907 Nashville Volunteers

to play out the remainder of the season ... a couple of months later Finn admits that he did not have a claim on Persons.

"Parsons was good in 1906, but poor in 1907"
- Columbia (S.C.) State

February 4, 1908

Persons is sold by Nashville to Montgomery.

May 3, 1908

Persons starts the season on a tear, hitting .431 with 19 hits in 15 games, including one home run.

The hold that Archie Persons has on local fans was shown by the applause that was given him when he went to bat, and when he beat out that infield hit to Lynch in the ninth."

- Montgomery Advisor, March 24, 1909

**March 23, 1909
Cramton Bowl
Montgomery, Alabama**

Athletics--	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Hoffman, lf..	4	0	1	5	0	1
Strunk, rf..	4	0	1	0	0	0
Burr, lb..	4	0	1	10	1	0
Collins, 2b..	4	0	1	3	0	0
Jackson, cf..	3	0	0	4	0	0
McInnis, ss..	3	0	1	1	6	0
Lynch, 3b..	2	0	0	0	2	1
Bliss, c..	1	0	0	1	0	0
Koehler, p..	2	0	0	2	2	1
Fetes, p..	1	0	0	1	3	0
Salve, p..	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals..	31	0	5	27	14	3

Montgomery--	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Daley, lf..	4	0	0	4	0	0
Whiteman, 3b..	3	0	1	2	2	0
Kerwin, rf..	4	0	0	2	0	0
Greminger, lb..	4	1	1	12	0	0
Persons, cf..	4	0	1	1	0	0
Rockenfeld, 2b..	4	1	1	3	1	0
Pepe, ss..	2	0	0	3	5	0
Hart, c..	1	0	0	1	1	0
Shannon, c..	2	0	0	1	1	0
Krebs, c..	1	0	0	0	0	0
DeBalt, p..	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lively, p..	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bliss, p..	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals..	31	2	4	27	14	1

Score by innings:
Montgomery 000 000 200--2
Philadelphia 000 000 000--0

Summary--Stolen bases, Strunk 1, Whiteman, 1. Innings pitched, Lively, 3, DeBalt, 3, Files, 3, Salve, 4, Erasm, 3 hits by opponents, Lively, 2, DeBalt 2; Files, 1, Salve, 3, Bliss, 1. Bases on balls, Files, 1; Salve, 1. Struck out, by Lively, 1, by Files, 2, by Salve, 1. Two base hits, Greminger, 1. Base on errors, Montgomery, 2, Philadelphia, 3. Double plays, Rockenfeld to Pepe to Greminger. Left on base, Montgomery 2 Philadelphia, 3. Passed balls, Koehler, 1. Time 1:35. Umpire Link Stickney

An eventful day for baseball fans of Alabama's capital city when the hometown Climbers hand Connie Mack's visiting Philadelphia Athletics a 2-0 defeat before an overflow crowd at the Cramton Bowl. Against a lineup that included Shoeless Joe Jackson and Hall of Famer Eddie Collins, three Montgomery pitchers - Jack Lively, Joseph DeBald, Elmer Bliss - combine on a 3-hit shutout ... Persons bats fifth and collects one hit in four at bats.

May 13, 1909

Persons is 4-for-4 with a run scored in Montgomery's 9-6 win over the homestanding Mobile Sea Gulls ... Montgomery's Jud Daly and Owen Shannon are ejected in the second inning by umpire Rudderham, who "seems to be badly off this year."

February 11, 1910

Coming off a disappointing fourth-place Pacific Coast (A) League finish in 1909, the Sacramento Sacts announce the signing of two outfielders - 39-year-old "Deacon" Van Buren and Archie Persons ... Van Buren, a former major leaguer with Brooklyn and Philadelphia in 1904, will hit only .238, while Persons contributes a meager .214 average in 36 games before being sent to Omaha in mid-June ... the Sacts will finish last in the six-team PCL with an 83-128 mark and a distant 39 games behind first-place Portland (118-85).



ARCHIE PERSONS

Archie Persons [4 of 4]:



Archie Persons
1904 University of Wisconsin

March 1910
Persons opens a general store in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, hiring a clerk to run the business while he is away playing ball.

July 2, 1910
Persons makes his debut for the Omaha Rourkes against the Denver Grizzlies.

July 3, 1910
In a key Western League doubleheader, Omaha center fielder Archie Persons goes 3-for-7 with a double as the Rourkes earn a split with second-place Denver ... Omaha's 6-3 win in the second

game prevents the Grizzlies (39-29) from moving into a tie with eventual champion Sioux City for first place (39-27).

March 1912
After signing with the Bassano Boosters during the off-season, Persons reports to the team's "spring" training.

Located on the Trans-Canada Highway, Bassano, a small town in Alberta, Canada, will host minor league baseball for only one season (1912) and despite a lack of success in terms of wins and losses, it proves to be a season worth remembering: ▶▶

September 12, 1912
Persons hurts his leg sliding into second base and is forced to return home to Minneapolis ... it is later determined that he has suffered a broken ankle, forcing his retirement from the game

June, 1913
Persons is hired to replace Dr. Dennis Sullivan as the head baseball coach at the University of Minnesota ... Sullivan, who had coached the Gophers to a 19-14-3 record the previous two years, recommends Persons to be his successor.

PERSONS BACKS OUT.

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., Jan. 20.— Archie Persons, once captain of the University of Wisconsin baseball team, engaged last June to coach the Minnesota team during 1914, has backed out. Persons had not been heard from since his engagement until today, when a letter was received saying he would be unable to fulfill his contract. He has been playing in the southern league since leaving Wisconsin.

boss ... Thomas accepts and directs the Gophers to a 13-6 in his only season at Minnesota.

October 11, 1959
Persons dies in Shawano, Wisconsin, at the age of 78.

Bassano booster Sam Whiting had big league dreams

by Jonathan Koch, *Prairie Post*; April 19, 2013

It was January 1912 and Sam Whiting was on a roll.

As mentioned in last month's column, the hotel supplier from Winnipeg had been elected Mayor of Bassano, mere weeks after orchestrating a real estate boom in the community. Looking to cultivate a big league reputation for the "Dam City"—and bigger profits for his well-heeled Calgary backers—Whiting, and associate, E.C. Ingram of Spokane, began seeking publicity opportunities for Bassano in the world of professional sports.

In the months following their arrival, Whiting and Ingram acquired a professional hockey team, arranged for a lightweight world championship fight to be contested in Bassano, and began making overtures to the professional Western Canada Baseball League (WCBL) about acquiring a franchise.

Bassano's interest came at a critical time for the WCBL. Four of the league's six franchises, including the league champion, had withdrawn following the 1911 season. Despite objections from Edmonton and a prospective Medicine Hat team, the Bassano "Boosters" and a Red Deer organization were admitted to the league, rounding out a four-team circuit with Calgary and Edmonton. The season was split into halves, with the top teams from each half to battle for the league championship.

The odds were stacked heavily against the expansion squads. Bassano and Red Deer were required to play three quarters of their games on the road. They were also forced to play eight "home" games against each other in Calgary and Edmonton's ballparks.

On the infrequent occasions when the Boosters played in Bassano, the venue would be Berkeley Park stadium—a mosquito-infested ballpark with seating for 200—erected at a cost of \$3000 in Whiting's residential subdivision, Berkeley Heights.

Not surprisingly, the Boosters started the season on the road. When Opening Day arrived at Bassano, a half-holiday was declared. Local school children were among the 500 fans at Berkeley Park to witness His Worship toss the ceremonial first pitch. Clad in amber and black, and managed by minor league journeyman and part-time vaudeville actor, Eugene "Chesty" Cox, the Boosters didn't disappoint, sweeping their first home series.

Boasting the league's top two hitters, Bassano continued their winning ways, and was soon battling Red Deer for the first half pennant. Holding the edge heading into the final day, the Boosters saw the title slip from their grasp in controversial fashion. Red Deer claimed the pennant after a mud soaked match against Edmonton that was convened in a downpour, and then called after six innings by the league president with Red Deer in the lead.

Bassano's luck didn't improve in the season's second half. While questionable calls had Chesty threatening to pull his team from the league, the club's inability to pay its bills soon made the threat a reality.

The season unraveled in comedic fashion. A fire sale of top talent began as the club scrambled to meet payroll. The Boosters sold their top pitcher for \$2000, only to discover he wasn't theirs to sell, with the proceeds going to another club. With players threatening to walk, Berkeley Park was dismantled board-by-board with weeks still remaining in the season, the lumber sold to cover debts to players and creditors.

Homeless, and out of contention, the Boosters ended the season on the road, finishing third. At season's end, Cox and crew dispersed, and the Boosters franchise was awarded to Saskatoon.

The Boosters collapse foreshadowed Whiting's demise. As 1912 drew to a close, Whiting was booted from the Mayor's chair, his empire in shambles. Despite offering assurances his club would return for the 1913 season, there would be no joy for Bassano baseball fans the following spring—the mighty Whiting had struck out.

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