

Collection #
P 0412

**INDIANAPOLIS HOOSIERS BASEBALL CARDS
1887–1889**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 box

COLLECTION DATES: 1887–1889

PROVENANCE: Shomberg card purchased from Robert Edward Auctions in New Jersey, 2019; all others unknown

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Indianapolis National League Baseball Team Record, 23 December 1886 (SC 2482)

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NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH

The earliest baseball cards appeared in the late 1860s. The Peck & Snyder sporting goods company of New York printed cards with pictures of baseball teams on one side and advertisements for their products on the other side. These trade cards were given away, rather than being sold with a product.

Tobacco companies started issuing baseball cards in the 1880s to promote sales. They were used to stiffen soft cigarette packages, but advertising was their primary purpose. Most of these cards measured 2 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches. Larger format cabinet cards were produced as premiums. These were albumen photographic prints measuring about 5 1/2 x 3 3/4 inches, mounted on thick cardstock about 4 1/4 x 7 inches. One had to collect coupons found in cigarette packs and redeem them for a cabinet card.

In 1886, Indianapolis businessman John T. Brush, who operated the old When Clothing Store on North Pennsylvania Street, bought a major league team from St. Louis. Known as the St. Louis Maroons in the Union Association league, the team played in the National League as the Indianapolis Hoosiers for the next three seasons.

The Indianapolis Hoosiers played in a large park, which is now the site of Methodist Hospital, at Capitol Avenue (then Tennessee Street) and Sixteenth Street (then Tinker Street, later renamed to Seventh Street). Mule-pulled streetcars provided transportation to the ballpark, which at that time was at the edge of town. One tradition of the time was fans throwing capfuls of nickels and dimes to anyone who hit a home run.

The Hoosiers were not a winning team. In 1887 they played 126 games, winning only 37, a .294 percentage. They finished in eighth place. That year's fan attendance was 84,000. In 1888 the team won 50 of the 135 games played, a .370 percentage, finishing in seventh place. That year's attendance was 78,000. The team's "best" year was its last. In 1889 the Hoosiers won 59 of 134 games, a .440 percentage, still ending up in seventh place. Attendance that year was 105,850.

The list of the team's players included catchers Dick Buckley, George Myers, Mert Hackett, and John "Tug" Arundel; pitchers Henry Boyle, Lev Shreve, John Healy, Sam Moffett, Amos "the Hoosier Thunderbolt" Rusie, Bill Burdick, and Charlie Getzein; first basemen Otto Shomberg, Tom "Dude" Esterbrook, and Lewis "Jumbo" Schoeneck; second baseman Charley Bassett; third baseman Jerry Denny; shortstop Jack Glasscock; and outfielders Emmett Seery, Paul Hines, John McGeachey, Mark Polhemus, Bill Johnson, Sam Moffett, Marty Sullivan, and Con Dailey. Otto Shomberg [sometimes spelled Schomberg] played first base in 1887 and right field in 1888.

Shortstop Jack Glasscock, born 22 July 1859, acquired the additional role of team manager during the latter part of the 1889 season. He was credited with the discovery of Amos Rusie, who was pitching for the Grand Avenues, a team in the Indianapolis Municipal League. Considered to be among the best players in the country at the time, Glasscock later played with the New York Giants and other teams in the National League. Later he managed the

Fort Wayne team in the old Central League. He spent a total of twenty-four years in organized baseball and died on 24 February 1947.

Amos Wilson Rusie, born 30 May 1871 in Mooresville, Indiana, was called the “Hoosier Thunderbolt” both for his fastball and his quick temper. The 6’1”, 200-pound right-hander threw the ball so hard that his catcher, Dick Buckley, lined his glove with lead to lessen the impact. After playing in Indianapolis in 1889, Rusie pitched for the New York Giants beginning in 1890. In 1893 the pitching mound was moved back from forty-five feet to its present distance of sixty feet and six inches from home plate because of the power of the Cyclone and the Thunderbolt – Cleveland’s Cy Young and the Giants’ Amos Rusie. Rusie led the league in strikeouts five times and led or tied for most shutouts five times. In eight seasons he won twenty or more games, winning more than *thirty* games a year five seasons in a row. As good as he was, he was also very wild, and led the league in walks from 1890 to 1894. He once knocked out a batter for a day with a wild pitch.

In 1895, Rusie won twenty-three games for the Giants and led the league in strikeouts and shutouts. But at the end of the season, his controversial manager, Andrew Freedman, deducted \$200 from his paycheck (which was then six dollars an inning) for not having tried hard enough. To protest, Rusie sat out the entire next season. Giants’ fans supported Rusie, with Wall Street brokers calling for a boycott of their games. One source says that eventually, to avoid a court test of baseball contracts, other club owners put up \$3,000 to get Rusie back in the game. Another source states that after the Giants dropped to sixth place, they met Rusie’s terms and paid him \$5,000 for the following season. Opposing players wanted to start a fund to pay him \$5,000 *not* to pitch. Regardless of how it ended, Rusie’s was the first successful player holdout in baseball history.

In 1899 Rusie held out again, but this time was unsuccessful. He was out of baseball for two years, during which time he drank heavily. In 1901 he was traded to Cincinnati for Christy Mathewson – a deal that is considered one of the worst trades in baseball history. Rusie pitched in only three games for the Red Stockings in 1901, and then retired from the game.

He returned to Indiana and worked in a pulp and paper mill until moving to Seattle to take a steamfitter’s job in 1911. From 1921 to 1929, Rusie worked as the superintendent of the Giants’ Polo Grounds in New York. He then returned to Seattle where he died on 6 December 1942.

Rusie’s lifetime win-loss record was 248-171, with a 3.07 earned run average. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1977, and into the Indiana Baseball Hall of Fame in 1979.

Sources:

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of fifteen baseball cards of Indianapolis Hoosiers team members. Fourteen are cabinet cards and the other one measures 2 5/8 x 1 3/8 inches. These cards were produced to advertise “Old Judge” cigarettes, a subsidiary brand of Goodwin and Company of New York. The cabinet cards in this collection have all had the “Old Judge” advertising cut off from the bottom of the cards, but the photographs of the baseball players are intact. The smaller card is encased in plastic.

The cards date from 1887 to 1889, the years of the team’s existence. All but one of the players have been identified.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Charley Bassett, second base, n.d.	Box 1
Henry Boyle, pitcher, 1888	Box 1
(Probably) Dick Buckley, catcher, 1888	Box 1
Jerry Denny, third base, 1887	Box 1
Charlie Getzein, pitcher, 1888	Box 1
Jack Glasscock, shortstop, 1888	Box 1
Paul Hines, outfielder, 1887	Box 1
Jack McGeachy, pitcher, 1888	Box 1
George D. Myers, catcher, 1888	Box 1
Amos Rusie, pitcher, 1889	Box 1
Otto Shomberg [sometimes spelled Schomberg], first base, 1887 [small card encased in plastic]	Box 1
Lev Shreve, pitcher, 1888	Box 1
Marty Sullivan, left field, 1887	Box 1
Jim Whitney, pitcher, 1887	Box 1
Unidentified, 1888. Shows a man about to catch a baseball with his ungloved hands.	Box 1

