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Arthur Irwin: A Complete Career



Source: NYC 6/11/81

Presented by Brian Marshall

Saturday, November 12, 2016



Source: baseball-ref.com



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Irwin Particulars

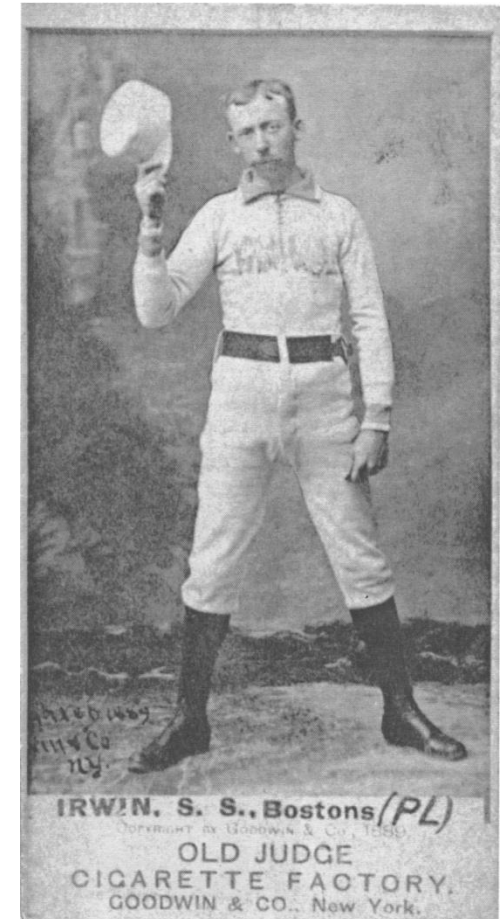
Born on February 14, 1858 in Toronto, Ontario
The Irwin family moved to the Boston area while Arthur was still quite young

Irwin was described as follows by Edward Achorn in his book *Fifty-nine in '84*, p222:

“A scrawny man who had thinning light hair, pale beady eyes and stick out ears, Irwin was far from a slugger.”

Irwin's career involved multiple roles both on and off the field and playing with and against some of the greatest players in baseball history

William Akin said “Irwin is rated the finest Canadian-born shortstop to play the game” in the SABR book entitled *Nineteenth Century Stars*, p138



Source: Greatness in Waiting book
by Istorico, p154



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Irwin Early Career Highlights

At the age of 15 Irwin was playing baseball for local Boston area teams

It was when Irwin was with the “amateur Aetnas” of Boston, in 1879, that Irwin, a third baseman, signed on with the Worcester Grays, managed by Frank Bancroft*, of the National Association on, or about, June 2 [per NY Clipper June 14, 1879, p93]

Worcester wasn't in the NL at that point but they played the Chicago White Stockings on June 2, 1879; pitcher Lee Richmond had 8 SOs and no-hit Chicago during the 7 inning game, Worcester won 11 - 0 (see boxscore)

Irwin had, in 1878, witnessed the disputed Hines' unassisted triple play and considered it the greatest play he had ever seen [see the 1894 Reach Guide p84]

*Frank Bancroft was one of the greatest baseball minds in the 19th century

	AB	R	H	TB	PO	A	E
Worcester							
Brady, 2b	5	2	4	6	1	2	0
Knight, rf	5	1	1	1	0	0	0
Bennett, 1b	2	2	1	3	12	0	0
Sullivan, cf	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bushong, lf	4	1	2	3	0	0	0
Richmond, p	2	1	1	3	0	8	0
Winslow, cf	3	1	2	3	6	2	0
Irwin, 3b	3	2	1	1	1	2	0
Nichols, ss	3	1	0	0	1	4	0
	31	11	12	20	21	18	0
Chicago							
Dalrymple, lf	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gore, cf	3	0	0	0	2	0	1
Anson, 1b	3	0	0	0	6	0	0
Shafer, rf	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Peters, ss	2	0	0	0	1	2	2
Quest, 2b	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Hankinson, p	2	0	0	0	0	6	3
Williamson, 3b	2	0	0	0	4	1	0
Harbridge, cf	2	0	0	0	6	0	3
	21	0	0	0	21	10	11

Worcester 301 340 0-7

Chicago 000 000 0-0

Runs earned: Worcesters 5. Three-base hits: Brady, Bennett, Richmond. Two-base hits: Winslow, Bushong. 1st on errors: Worcesters 1, Chicagos 0. 1st on balls: Worcesters 5, Chicagos 1. Left on bases: Worcesters 5, Chicagos 1. Struck out: Dalrymple, Gore 3, Shafer 3, Harbridge, Knight, Sullivan, Nichols 2. Balls called on: Richmond 56, Hankinson 111. Strikes called off: Richmond 14, Hankinson 12. Strikes missed off: Richmond 23, Hankinson 23. Fouls struck off: Richmond 11, Hankinson 21. Double play: Williamson. Time of game: 2:10. Umpire: William McLean of Philadelphia.

Source: SABR book; Inventing Baseball



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Irwin On Field Career Highlights

First Perfect Game

Irwin was at shortstop for the first perfect game in MLB history; by Lee Richmond on June 12, 1880 (see boxscore). The catcher for Worcester was Charlie Bennett, considered one of the greatest in the 19th century

On July 24, 1880 Irwin, while playing for the NL Worcester Ruby Legs vs Chicago White Stockings, had a 4 for 4 day, including 3 EBHs (or “long hits” as they were known at the time), 8 TBs; Irwin played shortstop and also at catcher during the game.

Notes: the 4 hit performance was one of at least three 4 hit games during his career and the 3 EBHs was 1 shy of the NL record at the time

Irwin had at least two 5 hit games, both in 1883, during his career

	AB	R	H	TB	PO	A	E
Worcester							
Wood, lf	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond, p	3	0	1	1	0	6	0
Knight, rf	3	0	0	0	1	1	0
Irwin, ss	3	1	2	2	2	3	0
Bennett, c	2	0	0	0	8	0	0
Whitney, 3b	3	0	0	0	1	2	0
Sullivan, 1b	3	0	0	0	14	0	0
Corey, cf	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
Creamer, 2b	3	0	0	0	0	4	0
	27	1	3	3	17	16	0
Cleveland							
Dunlap, 2b	3	0	0	0	4	2	2
Hankinson, 3b	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kennedy, c	3	0	0	0	9	1	0
Phillips, 1b	3	0	0	0	7	0	0
Shaffer, rf	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
McCormick, p	3	0	0	0	0	8	0
Gilligan, cf	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
Glasscock, ss	3	0	0	0	0	2	0
Hanlon, lf	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
	27	0	0	0	24	13	2

Cleveland 000 000 000 - 0
 Worcester 000 010 00x - 1

Runs earned, 0; first base on errors, 0; first base on balls, Worcesters 1; left on bases, Worcesters 2; struck out, Richmond 2, Corey 2, Sullivan, Wood, Bennett, Shaffer, Hanlon, Dunlap, Phillips, Glasscock; balls called, on Richmond 44, McCormick 79; strikes called, on Richmond 9, on McCormick 15; wild pitches 0; double plays, Glasscock, Dunlap, and Phillips. Time - 1:26; umpire, Bradley. Attendance: 700
 Game delayed by rain in eighth inning

Source: SABR book; Inventing Baseball



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Irwin On Field Career Highlights

On August 12, 1880 the Worcester Ruby Legs managed 4 DPs (NL record) vs Cleveland Blues of which Irwin, playing shortstop, was involved with 3 of them and that very likely either equaled or set the NL record at the time

Irwin, playing shortstop, had 13 As and 2 POs for 15 chances accepted in the 14 inning game on August 31, 1880 vs Cincinnati Reds. The 13As, and very likely the 15 chances accepted, was an NL record at the time, albeit in a 14 inning game. Danny Richardson recorded 13 As in a 9 inning game on June 20, 1892 (1)

Irwin, playing third base, had 8As on August 10, 1882 vs the Buffalo Bisons which very likely equaled the NL record at the time. Ned Williamson, playing third base, had 8As in a game on July 19, 1879 vs the Providence Grays

On September 20, 1882 Irwin, while playing third base for the NL Worcester Ruby Legs vs Chicago White Stockings, witnessed Chicago's Larry Corcoran pitch a no-hitter against Worcester; Chicago won 5 – 0, Frank Mountain pitched for Worcester



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Irwin On Field Career Highlights

In 1883 Irwin was with the Providence Grays and was on the field when Old Hoss Radbourne pitched a no-hitter on July 25 vs the Cleveland Blues

In 1884 Irwin was reunited with Frank Bancroft at Providence Grays (Harry Wright managed Providence during the 1883 season). The 1884 season was magical for Providence for a number of reasons not the least of which was the fact it was the season that Old Hoss Radbourne won 60 (or 59) games, including 18 in consecutive starts, Providence won 20 straight, Providence led the NL and won the US Championship, as it was known at the time, vs the New York Metropolitans of the AA

Irwin's HR won the game on August 9, 1884 vs the Boston Beaneaters, the game was an 11 inning affair and the final score was 1 – 0. Irwin played shortstop and the HR was unique in that the ball shot through a hole in the right field fence allowing Irwin to circle the bases for a HR and the game winning run. The Boston outfielders were expecting the ball to bounce off the fence allowing them to field it and throw it in to hold Irwin to no more than a double but the bounce never came

Irwin pitched 3 innings in a game on October 6, 1884 vs the Buffalo Bisons



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Confusion regarding the time of the Irwin injury that led to the “Irwin glove”

Direct quote from the *Trenton True American* newspaper dated Wednesday, June 16, 1909, p.7:

“It was in 1883 that Arthur Irwin, playing shortstop for Providence, broke the third, and fourth fingers of his left hand—and revolutionized the fielding game, writes Will Irwin in *Collier’s*.”

The above is not correct since in the 1883 season Irwin was playing for Providence, who played a total of 98 games and Irwin played in all 98.

Irwin did break a finger, the “little finger”, in his left hand during the 1885 season, on July 3, causing him to miss 28 games; Irwin next played on August 12, 1885

Interesting Comments Regarding Irwin’s Play

Edward Achorn in his book *Fifty-nine in '84*, p232 stated the following; “Irwin had been doing “the grandest shortstopping in the League,” the *Sporting Life* contended, grabbing hot grounders other men could not reach because his strong arm permitted him to play unusually deep.”

The *Chicago Tribune* stated the following on September 28, 1889; “Irwin was never known to originate anything except the scheme of “wetting down” short field every day so that balls hit to him would lose speed.”



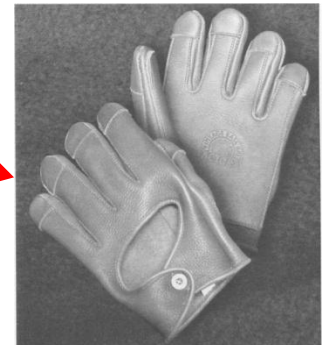
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1887 Kalamazoo Bats Cards of Arthur Irwin, while with the Philadelphia Quakers



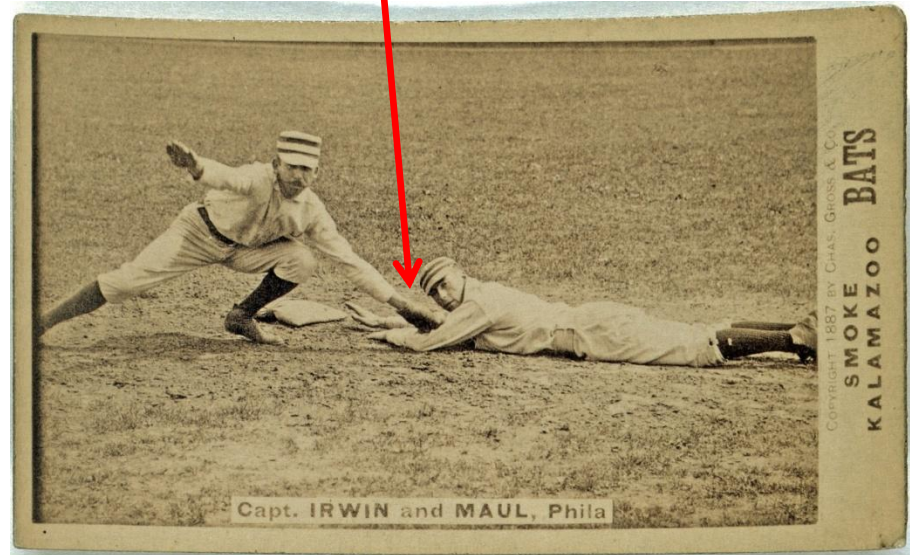
Source: Internet

Note glove on Irwin's left hand



Source: Greatness in Waiting book by Istorico, p153

Source: Internet





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Examples of “Irwin Glove” Ads in Sporting Life

IRWIN'S
Infielders' and Catchers' Gloves
FOR 1889.

These very popular gloves have been wonderfully improved and are now absolutely perfect. They have been used very largely by many of the Professionals in the country. As an illustration of this would say that the Infielders' Gloves were worn last year by the following players in the National League:

Boston—Morrill, Nash, Ray, Higgins, Brown, Kelly, Quinn.
New York, Philadelphia and Indianapolis—Every Infielder and Outfielder wore these gloves.
Detroit—Richardson, Rowe, Twitchell, Brouthers, Thompson, Ganzel, Nicholson, Campau.
Pittsburg—Beckley, Dunlap, Sunday, Kuehne, Miller, Dalrymple.
Washington—Daly, Wilmot, Donnelly, Meyers, Mack, O'Brien, Irwin.

Source: Sporting Life, April 3, 1889

Chicago—Several of the players, including Capt. Anson, who for the first time in his life wore any glove, and whose wonderful fielding average he acknowledges was owing largely to the help that this wonderful glove gave him.

Regarding Catchers' Gloves a long list could be presented of the leading professionals in the country who use these Gloves.

Price per pair for Catchers' Gloves, \$5.00.

Price for one single Infielders' Glove, \$3.50

I make the Infielders' Glove for either right or left-handed players.

ARTHUR A. IRWIN,
Manufacturer.

I have appointed
A. G. Spalding & Bros.,
241 Broadway, 108 Madison St.
New York. Chicago.
sole agents for the sale of these gloves and any orders sent to them will receive prompt attention.

IRWIN'S GLOVES,
as used by the Leading Catchers and Infielders.

No. 25—Irwin's Catchers' Gloves. Either full right or left hand. Per pair, \$5.00.

No. 25A—Irwin's Infielders' Glove. Either right or left. Each \$3.50.

Mailed prepaid upon receipt of price.

A. G. Spalding & Bros.,
241 Broadway, 108 Madison St.
New York. Chicago.

Source: Sporting Life, June 19, 1889



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Irwin On Field Career Highlights con't

Irwin was a member of the Boston Reds who won the PL Championship in 1890; the team featured such greats as Dan Brouthers and Harry Stovey. Stovey had also played on the Worcester team with Irwin

Irwin Career Highlights

Irwin's managerial career began in 1889 when he managed the NL Washington Nationals for part of the season then in 1891 he managed the Boston Reds of the AA to the championship

After coaching the University of Pennsylvania nine in 1893, Irwin was called on to manage the Philadelphia Phillies in 1894, a team that featured the likes of Ed Delahanty, Sam Thompson and Billy Hamilton. The 1894 Philadelphia Phillies averaged 13.485 hits/gm

Note: the 1921 Detroit Tigers averaged 11.188 hits/gm, the 1930 New York Yankees averaged 10.929 hits/gm and the 1927 New York Yankees averaged 10.606 hits/gm



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Irwin Career Highlights

After managing the NL New York Giants for 89 games in 1896 Irwin managed the Toronto Canucks of the Eastern League during the 1897 and 1898 seasons and for a portion of the season in both 1903 (the team was known as the Toronto Maple Leafs at that point) and 1904

Irwin owned a minority interest in the Toronto franchise in the Eastern League (apparently 25% per the book Ed Barrow by Levitt p37). The ballpark was located on the island and not so coincidentally the majority owner was the Toronto Ferry Company

Irwin hired Barrow to manage the Toronto team in 1900 and when Toronto won the Eastern League championship in 1902 they were managed by Barrow.

Irwin umpired 50 games in the NL during the 1902 season; Irwin had umpired 3 games during the 1881 season

Irwin's next important career segment involved his time with the New York Americans aka Highlanders/Yankees



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Irwin Career Highlights

In 1908 Irwin was coaching the University of Pennsylvania team when it was announced that he would manage the Washington franchise of the outlaw Union League. The Washington team disbanded in early June although a couple months later Irwin managed to get on with the NY Highlanders as a scout

The NY Highlanders 1913 season was significant in that Irwin was named Business Manager in early January 1913, Frank Chance (of Chicago Cubs fame) was hired to manage the team and the name changed to the Yankees

Two years later in early January 1915 the Yankees were purchased by Col. Ruppert and Capt. Huston and the writing was on the wall; Harry Sparrow was named as Business Manager and Joe Kelley* was named as scout; Irwin was out

Irwin managed the Rochester Hustlers of the International League from 1918 through 1920 and the Hartford Senators of the Eastern League in 1921

*Joe Kelley had been the manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs for a number of seasons including 1914



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Irwin Career Highlights con't

It was while Irwin was with Hartford that he became aware of a collegian that would later become baseball's iron man. The process involved John McGraw of the New York Giants and the collegian was none other than Lou Gehrig who played under the alias Lou Lewis at Hartford

Arthur Irwin; the Final Chapter

The final chapter was written when Irwin "suffering from abdominal trouble, attended by severe nervous attacks", an illness of long standing, was forced to relinquish his role with the Hartford club and mysteriously disappeared while onboard the Calvin Austin steamer bound from New York to Boston

His suspected suicide in the late evening/early morning hours on or about July 16, 1921 exposed his "dual life" with a "legal wife" in Boston and a "common-law" wife in New York



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Arthur Irwin had one of the most complete careers in the history of baseball, having participated in almost every aspect of the game and having played alongside, managed and been associated with some of the greatest names ever to participate in the game.

Questions