

Traveling Down Winding Rhoades

Finding Pecky and Dusty

A player with the last name "Rhoades" pitched for Fargo-Moorhead and St. Boniface, Manitoba in the Northern League in 1915. Several factors complicated his identification. In addition to "Rhoades" contemporary newspaper accounts and box scores also spelled his name "Rhodes" and "Rhoads", and there were two other players, Dusty Rhodes and Henry H. (or Harry) Rhoades playing in the same league around the same time. In addition, many players with similar surnames picked up the nickname "Dusty" during their playing careers. Was the unknown Rhoades one of these men, or someone completely different?

First, I decided to track Henry Harrison Rhoades. Born November 2, 1888 in Minneapolis, he started out with amateur teams in his hometown as early as 1909 and may have played with an independent team in Milbank, South Dakota in 1910.¹ For reasons unknown, he soon picked up the nickname "Pecky" and based on his middle name, was also sometimes also called Harry.² He does not appear on any 1911 team rosters in Baseball-Reference, but began his professional career as a third baseman with Wausau of the Wisconsin-Illinois League in April 1911. Shortly thereafter he joined a semi-pro team in Jamestown, North Dakota (where he married Rose Blair of Minneapolis³) and in August of that year, he hooked on with Superior, Wisconsin of the Northern League where he played the rest of the 1911 season. Rhoades played with the same two clubs, Superior and Wausau, in 1912.

Henry started the 1913 season with Superior but in May was sold to Duluth. One early season highlight was a 2-1, 12-inning win over Virginia, Minnesota in which he outdueled the Ore Diggers star pitcher, future Hall of Famer Rube Waddell. To top it off he shutout Virginia 5-0 in the second game of the doubleheader. After the season the *Duluth News Tribune* referred to him as "...the Minneapolis boy who played ball with Superior last year." Henry Rhoades' Baseball-Reference page lists his birthplace at Minneapolis, so, so far, we can be confident we are tracking the same man.

This is where things got muddled. Pecky Rhoades' last name was usually spelled correctly in box scores and game accounts but sometimes it was also misspelled either "Rhodes" or "Rhoads". Early in the 1913 season a second player named Rhoades (different from Henry/Pecky) appeared in Duluth box scores as a third baseman, and to differentiate the two, he was usually referred to as "Dusty." In fact, in one June game the two switched positions as the box score listed "Rhoads, 3b & p" and Rhoades, p & 3b" To further confuse things, in late June it was announced "Dusty Rhoads will be relieved of his third base duties and will be added to the pitching staff".

Before completing the identification of Dusty, it was necessary to reconcile another group of players. There are three separate entries in Baseball-Reference for pitchers named Elton Rhoades, Elton Rhodes, and Elton E. Rhoads. The latter two men both played for the Macomb Potters of the Illinois-Missouri League, Rhodes in 1909 and Rhoads in 1910. The third, Rhoades, played in the Eastern Illinois League in 1908. All three had the same first, a variation of the same last name, played the same position (pitcher), played in the same part of the country (Illinois) and two played with the same team (Macomb) in consecutive seasons, making a strong case that all three were the same man.

In addition to playing for Macomb, Elton Rhoads also pitched for Lincoln, Illinois in 1910 and a report of a game that season referred to him as Dusty Rhodes.⁴ In addition, a Malcom roster prior to the 1911 season listed third baseman Dusty Rhoades of Macomb.⁵ A brief note about the 1913 Duluth, Minnesota team mentioned that “Pitcher Dusty Rhoades has been wintering in Macomb, Ill.”⁶, and that he would meet up with the Duluth team during spring training in Madison, Wisconsin. Despite the continued misspelling of the last name, the mystery was cleared up in another brief report from early in 1913 stating that Elton Rhoads, or “Dusty as he is better known among baseball fans” was now in Madison and that he had signed to play for the Duluth team.⁷

It seemed highly unlikely that it was a coincidence that both Dusty Rhodes and Elton Rhoads were both from Macomb, Illinois, so we can conclude that the three Eltons were the same player, and that he also was the same man as the second Rhoades that joined the Duluth squad in 1913. A Dusty Rhodes appears in Baseball-Reference as a pitcher and third baseman with Virginia (Minnesota) in 1913 and the Fort William/St. Boniface Northern league franchise in 1914. However, before he could take the mound Dusty was traded to Virginia where he finished the 1913 season playing mostly third base, but also pitching on occasion.

In May 1914 the Fargo club announced that they had acquired a right-handed pitcher named Dusty Rhodes and that he had played with both Duluth and Virginia the previous season, obviously the same man. In late May he was released by Fargo and joined the Winnipeg Maroons who later released him to Ft. William, again, except for the previously unknown stints in Fargo and Winnipeg, matching up with the Dusty Rhodes in Baseball-Reference, providing evidence that the Rhoades from 1915 with an unknown first name was the same man as Dusty Rhodes. So we can conclude that the following five players⁸ in the Baseball-Reference Minor League database were all the same man.

Elton Rhoades, Pitcher, 1908, Charleston, Pana/Linton, Ill/Eastern Illinois, (be126dd4)
Elton Rhodes, Pitcher, 1909 Galesburg, Macomb, Monmouth, Ill/Illinois-Missouri, (e6066f63)
Elton Rhoads, Pitcher, 1910-12, Illinois-Missouri, (4fb78442)
Dusty Rhodes, Pitcher/3B, 1913-14, Virginia, MN, Ft. William/Northern, (19995a750)
Rhoades, Pitcher, 1915 St. Boniface, MB, Fargo, ND/Northern, (48271ddb)

What is known of this player is that Elton Eugene Rhoads⁹ was born August 2, 1885, in Paris, Illinois. One report¹⁰ stated that he pitched for Depauw University in Greencastle, Indiana before beginning his professional career with Charleston in his home state in 1908. After pitching for various teams in Illinois through the 1912 season, he played in the Northern League from 1913 to 1915. According to census records, after leaving baseball he settled in his home state of Illinois where he worked for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. His obituary¹¹ stated he married Beatrice (Bee) Koch in St. Paul in 1914 (the couple later had two children) which is consistent with where he was playing ball at the time. His obituary also noted that he had been a professional baseball player, which also helped to confirm the identity of Elton/Dusty Rhoads.

Back to Henry/Pecky Rhoades. He stayed in the Northern League with Superior in 1914 and then signed with the Flint, Michigan Vehicles of the Southern Michigan League in April 1915. He pitched for that team until he was sold to Milwaukee of the American Association in June.¹² After the season Milwaukee traded him to Philadelphia of the National League and he went to spring training with the Phillies in 1916. However, citing the need for more seasoning, the Phillies turned him over to the Richmond (Virginia) Climbers of the International League. He spent most of the season with that club until being turned back to Philadelphia in August.¹³

A player named “Rhodes” appears on the roster of the Indianapolis Indians of the American Association in 1916. This was Henry/Pecky Rhoades. The minor league structure and affiliations with major league teams present today did not exist then, but major league teams worked out informal working agreement with minor league teams. In 1916 Philadelphia had such an agreement with Indianapolis. Apparently still the property of the Phillies, arrangements were made for him to stop off in Indianapolis to pitch in an exhibition game against the St. Louis Browns that September.¹⁴

He was expected back with the Indians in 1917 but when United States entered World War I Rhoads joined the military. Box scores show him umpiring games in the northern Minnesota towns of Chisholm and Virginia in 1918 and 1919 and for games in the Twin Ports Mesaba League, meaning he may have served at the with the Duluth shipyards during the war. At the time of the 1920 U. S. Census, he was living in Hibbing, Minnesota and employed as a policeman.

Pecky Rhoades’ career in baseball, according to Baseball-Reference, appears to have ended after pitching for Indianapolis in 1916 but in July of 1920 a pitcher by the name of H. H. Rhodes resurfaces with the Aberdeen Boosters of the Class D South Dakota League. Could this have been Henry, aka Pecky, Rhoades, and if not, who was H. H. Rhodes? Aberdeen newspapers called him “Dusty” in their game reports but offered no other clue as to his real first name. However, an end of season summary noted that Rhodes would “...go to Minneapolis to begin where he left off as an auto mechanic.”¹⁵ Although the evidence is circumstantial, the fact that he was a pitcher, had the same initials, (no other player in the database with a similar last name has a first and middle name beginning with an “H”) as Henry Rhoades, and that he, like Pecky, hailed from Minneapolis,

suggest that H. H. Rhodes was Henry, i. e. Pecky Rhoades. Therefore, we can make a reasonable assumption that all three of the following players were the same man.

Harry (Henry H.) Rhoades, Pitcher, 1912-16, (0fcd9b93)
Rhodes, 1916 Indianapolis/AA (8e6f15a6)
H.H. Rhodes, pitcher, 1920 Aberdeen/South Dakota, (1b8e9cd5)

Off-Rhode Exploring

Several other players with similar names needed to be explored to see if they had any connection to Dusty (Elton) Rhoads or Pecky (Henry) Rhoades. Two men, Bob Rhoads and Charlie Rhodes, both pitched in the major leagues during the first decade of the 20th century. Bob pitched in the National League for the Chicago Orphans in 1902 and the St. Louis Cardinals in 1903, and then the Cleveland Naps in the American League from 1904-1909. Charlie pitched for the Cardinals and Cincinnati Reds between 1906 and 1909. Because it was common at the time for players to kick around the minors after their major league careers ended, it was necessary to determine if either may have been Pecky, Dusty, or another unidentified Rhoades, Rhoads, or Rhodes.

Other than his eight-year major league career Bob Rhoads is not known to have played in Organized Baseball other than in 1901 with Memphis of the Southern Association. After his major league career ended Charlie Rhodes, a native of Kansas, pitched for Omaha from 1910 to 1912 and then in the Texas League in 1913 and 1914. An item from the *Caney* (Kansas *Chronicle* in 1917¹⁶ noted that a man named Rhodes was pitching for the local team and added, "...who was once with the St. Louis Nationals." As Charlie was a native of Caney, this was no doubt him. However, neither major leaguer appears to have any connection to other unidentified players.

In July 1906 a man identified only as Rhoades, and nicknamed "Dusty", was sent train transportation in La Salle, Illinois to come and play shortstop for the Green Bay club of the Wisconsin State League. One report stated he had played for amateur teams in Ottawa and Marseilles, small towns in La Salle County. His former team was apparently not disappointed at losing him, one report stating, "There are many things about baseball in Dusty's vocabulary, but he is not the cleanest player on earth", and "...was too often not in condition to play."¹⁷ He lasted a little over a month in Green Bay, batting .159, and that club apparently was also pleased to part ways with Dusty. When he and two teammates were released in August it was said, "The feature about the releases which is most gratifying to the club officials and will please the fans, is that the 'dissenting element' has gone from the team."¹⁸

Despite, or maybe because of, his troubles in the Midwest, Dusty went east to play in 1907. In May of that year *The Times* of Streator, Illinois (the La Salle County seat) reported, "Dusty

Rhodes, who played third for Ottawa several seasons, is with McKeesport, in the Pennsylvania State League this year.”¹⁹ Later that summer, the same newspaper provided an update saying, “We all remember Dusty Rhoades. He is now playing... in the Pennsylvania League”²⁰

Another separate “Rhoades” is shown on the roster of the Lynchburg Shoemakers of the Class C Virginia League in 1907. Baseball-Reference has a John Rhoades with McKeesport and a brief item that summer noted, “Third Baseman John Roades of McKeesport, late of the P.O.M. League, has joined the Lynchburg team, and will be given a trial by manager Grim.”²¹ This confirms that the Green Bay player, and the players in McKeesport and Lynchburg player were all the same man, John Rhoades, and can be linked together.

Rhoades, 1906, Green Bay/Wisconsin State, (6e3160b2)

John Rhoades, 1907 McKeesport, PA/Pennsylvania-Ohio-Maryland, (ce49b95f)

Rhoades, 1907 Lynchburg, VA/Virginia (3af69bba)

“Rhode” played for the Nebraska City Foresters of the Class D MINK (Missouri-Iowa-Nebraska-Kansas) League in 1912. He appeared as a pitcher in line scores in league newspapers as Rhode, but also as Rhodes, Rhoades, and Roads, but no first name was given. However, on June 21 the *Brown County World* of Hiawatha, Kansas reported that Rhode had been with Sioux City, Iowa earlier in the year. In April that city’s newspaper noted that pitcher Vinton Rhode had been farmed out (by Sioux City) to Nebraska City.²² This man was neither Pecky or Dusty, but his identify was confirmed and linked to Vinton Rhode who was with Regina, Saskatchewan of the Western Canada League two years later, apparently his only other appearance in Organized Baseball.

Rhode, 1912, Nebraska City, NE/MINK, (c4f789ab)

Vinton Rhode, Pitcher, 1914 Regina, SK/Western Canada, (4ed28fed)

A man named Rhode pitched briefly for the Columbus, Ohio club of the Interstate League in 1913. One of the local newspapers provided a first name stating, “...players signed to try out for places on the teams are...Bert Rhode of Nebraska.”²³ The reference to Nebraska provided another clue, but the Rhode who played in Nebraska City the previous season was already identified as Vinton, so apparently these were different men. There is no entry for a Bert or Albert Rhoades, Rhoads, Rhodes, or Rhode in Baseball-Reference, and no evidence could be found that he was connected in any way to the other players, but at least a first name is now known.

Rhode, 1913 Columbus, OH/Interstate (6a35465c) ID as Bert/Albert Rhode

Two other “Rhoades” taken proved to be dead ends, at least so far. One is listed as playing with Elizabeth City, North Carolina, in 1911 but no information could be found about his identity. Another pitched with Kearney in the Nebraska State League in 1914. When he arrived to join the team in July he was, of course, called “Dusty” and said to have come from Mason City, Iowa. He

only lasted about two weeks after posting a 0-2 record, and nothing more could be found about who this Rhoades was. As for these two fellows, and countless other mystery men, the search continues.

Rhoades, 1911, Elizabeth City, NC/Tidewater (bd3eb659)

Rhoades, Pitcher, 1914, Kearney, NE/Nebraska State (ac3cd031)

Endnotes

¹ "Harry (Pecky) Rhoades Writes a Letter", *Minneapolis (Minnesota)Tribune*, July 17, 1910

² Because his Baseball-Reference page lists him as Harry Rhoades, he will be referred to by the name throughout this narrative.

³ "Rhoades-Blair Nuptials", *Jamestown (North Dakota) Alert*, June 29, 1911.

⁴ "Mason City Cubs Lose, 6-2", *Daily Illinois State Register* (Springfield), September 17, 1910.

⁵ "Macomb Signs Twelve Men", *Decatur (Illinois) Daily Review*, January 12, 1911.

⁶ *Duluth (Minnesota) News-Tribune*, August 13, 1913.

⁷ "Will Play with Duluth", *Champaign (Illinois) Daily News*, April 19, 1913.

⁸ Each player is listed with their name, position played (if known) years, and team/league, along with their Chadwick ID, a unique identifier assigned by Baseball-Reference.

⁹ The correct spelling of his last name was Rhoads as per his obituary, gravestone, and World War I draft registration card found on ancestry.com.

¹⁰ "Charleston Gets Depauw Pitcher", *Decatur (Illinois) Herald & Review*, June 5, 1908.

¹¹ "Elton E. Rhoads", *Bloomington (Illinois) Pantagraph*, October 19, 1950.

¹² "Pecky Rhoades Sold To Milwaukee Club", *Flint (Michigan) Journal*, June 30, 1915

¹³ "Dusty Rhoades Goes Back To Philadelphia", *Richmond (Virginia) Times*, August 20, 1916.

¹⁴ "Rhoades Works Today", *Indianapolis (Indiana) Star*, September 5, 1916.

¹⁵ "Booster Players Leave for Winter", *Aberdeen (South Dakota) American*, September 13, 1920: 3.

¹⁶ "Blues Notes", *Caney (Kansas) Chronicle*, May 4, 1917.

¹⁷ "Dusty To Green Bay", *The Times* (Streator, Illinois), July 10, 1906.

¹⁸ *Green Bay (Wisconsin) Press-Gazette*, August 18, 1906

¹⁹ *The Times* (Streator, Illinois), May 23, 1907.

²⁰ *The Times* (Streator, Illinois), July 29, 1907.

²¹ *Richmond (Virginia) Times*, July 1, 1907.

²² *Sioux City (Iowa) Journal*, April 25, 1912.

²³ *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*, April 15, 1913.