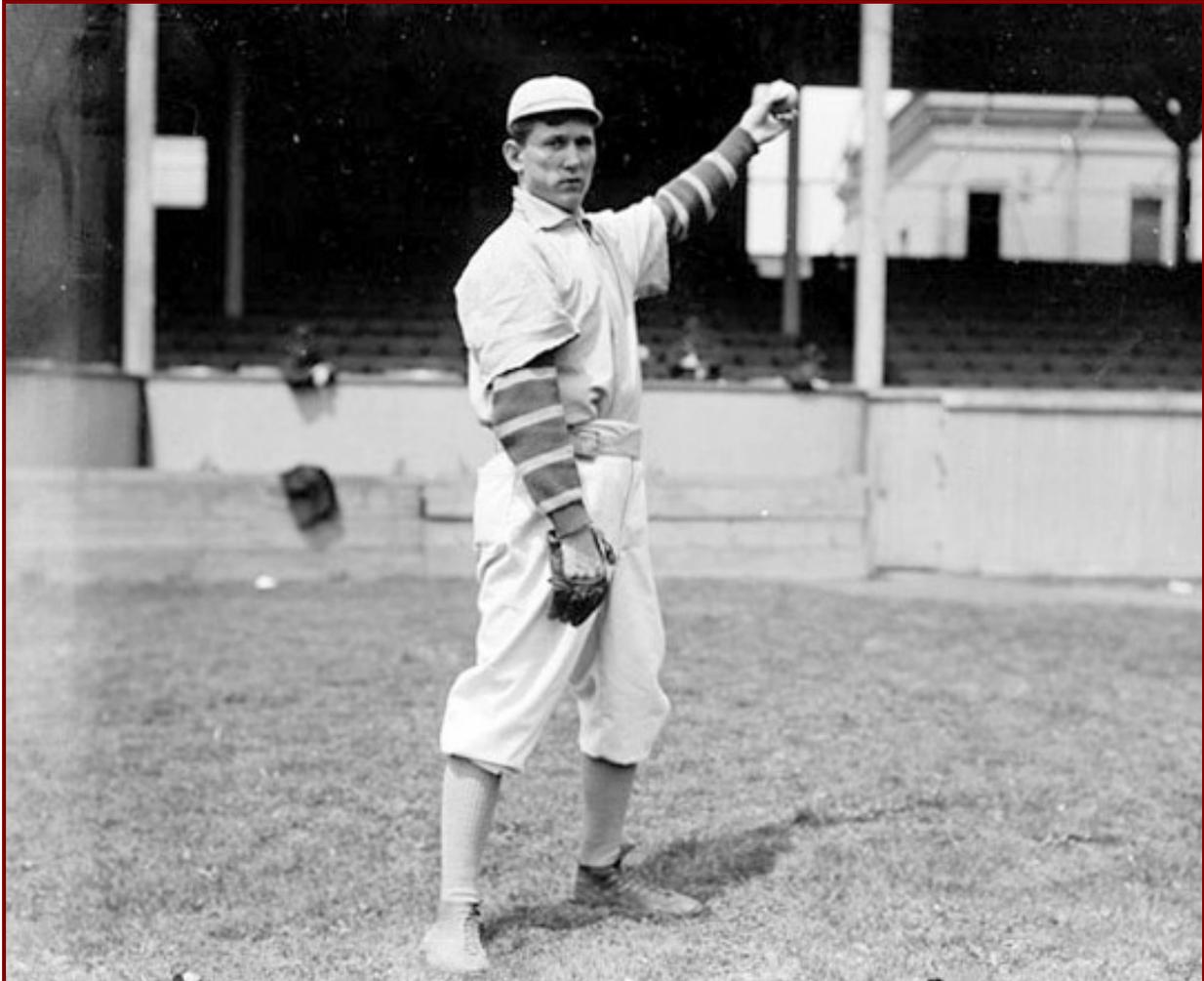


for October 12, 2008

Distillery Workers **Alex “Dooney” Hardy, pitcher & driver**



“Dooney” Hardy strikes a pose for the *Chicago Daily News* photographer, 1903
Chicago Historical Society SDN-001354

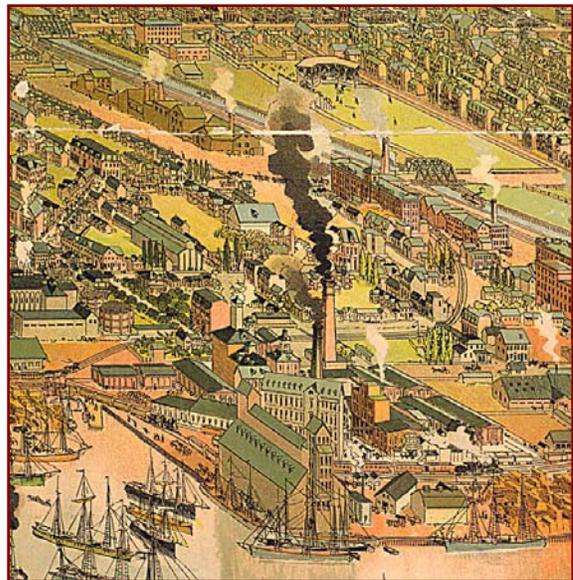
*D*avid Alexander Hardy (1877-1940) had two passions in life: professional baseball, which came to Toronto in 1885, and Gooderham & Worts, where his father, his grandfather, and then he himself worked ... for nearly 50 years.

“Dooney” lived just north of the distillery at 53 Eastern Avenue. No doubt he grew up visiting his relatives, perhaps even helping his grandfather gather rushes in Ashbridges Bay. These wetland grasses were then taken to the cooperage and packed between the staves of barrels to make them extra tight. When Dooney reached 15 in 1892, he started working at the distillery where two of his brothers and a succession of descendants worked right until Gooderham & Worts closed in 1990. The Hardys constituted one of several

multi-generation Gooderham & Worts families and for many years, “Dooney” was considered its dean.

As for baseball, Dooney was young when professional baseball was young in Toronto. The hometown team, *Torontos* (aka *Toronto Canucks*), was established in 1885, when lacrosse was king. Early promoters hoped to equal the crowds then swarming to Canada’s national game. A huge crowd did attend the *Torontos*’ home opener at the fine old Lacrosse Grounds on the northwest corner of Jarvis and Wellesley streets. Hope ran high. But when the *Torontos* “only” placed third in the Canadian League of five Ontario teams, locals regarded the result as a disgrace. “The people of Toronto are not accustomed to this sort of thing,” grumped *The Toronto Globe* on October 2, 1885. Well, perhaps not in the late nineteenth century.

The team was a financial success, so the following year, team-owners heightened their ambitions and joined the newly created International League. Although there are no specifics, we can imagine Dooney and his pals heading across the Don River to watch their heroes play at the new Toronto Baseball Grounds. This purpose-built park, located just west of Broadview and south of Queen Street, was surrounded by a high, smooth-board fence that (supposedly) would “tax the acrobatic talent of the smartest youth to surmount,” according to a local reporter. Perhaps the still diminutive Dooney and company actually had to pay 10-cents to get in. Again, disappointment. Another third place finish.



Toronto Baseball Grounds (top right) & Gooderham & Worts distillery, 1893 TPL

But the following year, 1887, the *Torontos* won their first International League Championship when young Dooney was 10 years old. The perfect age to dream of becoming a professional baseball player. Especially when Ned “Cannonball” Crane took the mound and won 33 games for his team - including both ends of a double-header on the final day of the season – and also hit .428 for the year. Dooney devoted his teenage years to working at the distillery and improving his hitting, running, and especially his hurling

In 1899, the 5’11”, 164-pound southpaw, Alex “Dooney” Hardy, broke into minor-league baseball as a pitcher. His debut for Toronto against Rochester was not auspicious, losing 8 to 12. The *Toronto Star* reporter was distinctly underwhelmed by the July 3rd away-game results:

Rochester again defeated Toronto on Monday in a tedious game. Sam [Wise?] made his first appearance as an umpire, and Hardy, late of the Canadian League, as a Toronto pitcher. Neither of them did very well.

It got worse before it got better. On July 20th the *Toronto Star* sub-headline announced “Hardy Knocked Out of Box” against Springfield at the Toronto Island Stadium:

Hardy pitched five innings for Toronto. He allowed seven hits, gave three bases on balls, lost his head in the tight corners, and failed to hold his position; so he was benched.

Ouch.

In 1902, however, Toronto won the Eastern League championship and Dooney did his part. After “twirling with much success in the New York League,” the *Toronto Star* reported on June 20th, Dooney took the mound for Toronto. By the time Toronto won its pennant, however, Dooney had departed for greener pastures south of the border. More specifically, Chicago’s West Side Grounds.

Undoubtedly, the peak of Dooney’s career was playing part of two seasons of major-league baseball with the Chicago *Cubs*. He broke into the majors on September 4, 1902, when the Chicago club was known as the Orphans, because the *Cubs*’ hugely successful player-manager, Cap Anson, had retired, leaving the team capless and hapless. As a rookie, Dooney apparently had a moment of near greatness when he debuted in Brooklyn, New York. There he made a major impression on hitting great, Willie keep-your-eye-clear-and-hit-em-where-they-ain’t Keeler. According to the account published in the *Globe* of April 23, 1940, just after Dooney died:



1902 Cubs logo

After watching him break in at Brooklyn by setting the Giants down with three hits, Willie Keeler called him the best-looking young southpaw he’d seen in years.

High praise indeed.

Unfortunately, Dooney didn’t live up to expectations, and pitched his last major-league game on May 9, 1903. During his short stint with the *Cubbies*, Dooney compiled a 3 and 3 record. He also had 20 at-bats, even hitting one double in 1902. Nevertheless, he got the major-league treatment, including posing for player photographs such as the one at the top of this article.

Dooney also played with some of the top players of his generation, notably the all-star double-play trio of short-stop Joe Tinker, second-baseman Johnny

Evers and first-baseman Frank Chance. These talented *Cubs* later inspired a 1910 poem by disappointed New York *Giant* fan, Franklin Pierce Adams:

These are the saddest of possible words:
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."
Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds,
Tinker and Evers and Chance.
Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon bubble,
Making a Giant hit into a double --
Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."

After leaving Chicago, Dooney played several more years of pro-ball, with only modest success. Frankly, he bumped around the minors for a half-dozen years, playing in Montreal and Hamilton; Troy, Binghamton and Buffalo; Atlanta, Oakland and Scranton. He even rejoined Toronto – now known as the *Maple Leafs* – for a period in 1903. No doubt cheered on by his buddies from Gooderham & Worts, Dooney hurled his way to a modest-but-honourable record of 8-8.

The low-point of his career was probably a toss-up between being shot by a jealous husband on July 3, 1905 when pitching for the Troy *Trojans*, and contracting malaria in New Orleans while playing for the Atlanta *Crackers*. Although shot in July 1905, Dooney obviously recovered and continued playing for the *Trojans* in 1906 and 1907. But the bout of malaria had a lasting impact and likely shortened his playing days.



**Dooney poses with the 1906 Troy Trojans
from 1907 Spalding Guide**

After laying down his professional glove, Dooney continued playing amateur baseball in and around Toronto. He also appears to have been a well-known sportsman-about-town. For example, in her "No Man's Land of Sport" column in the *Star* of February 20, 1935, Alexandrina Gibb reported with warmth and a touch of hyperbole:

At this gathering [Ladies Night at the Native Sons of Canada] was one athlete of the days gone by who would warrant notice in any sport convention. His name is Dooney Hardy. He was the first Canadian baseball player to make the big leagues way back when.... He was rated as one of the best pitchers while he was up there, and every Torontonians who knows his baseball remembers Dooney Hardy. His favorite story is of the time he pitched a win

with a crowd of 10,000 people present. When the game was over he got two bananas for his efforts. “So I gave the skins back,” he tells his friends.

Dooney was far from the first Canadian baseball player to make the big leagues, but he was the first and only worker from Gooderham & Worts to make the leap.

Throughout, Dooney maintained strong connections with Gooderham & Worts. During his professional playing years, he worked at the distillery during the off season. After retiring from the professional field, he continued playing ball for G&W where even a minor major-league arm would likely have blown away the opposition. In 1925, he coached the G&W team to victory in the Industrial Association Intermediate league. Whether team members drank champagne or something else from their huge trophy goes unrecorded. But the names of team members *are* recorded on it. For the record, they include:



Industrial Champs 1925

Ross Wilson	1st Base
C. Woods	2nd Base
Fred Smith	SS
M. Kerfot	3rd Base
J. R. Wills	Pitcher
A Armstrong	C
N. Hardy	CF
D. Brough	RF
W. Begley	LF
Substitutes	
G. Platt	LF
K. Dunsmore	
G. Hardy	
B. Crump	
A. Hardy	Coach
A.J. Bowden	Manager

Fifty years after his death in 1940, Dooney was still remembered fondly by the Gooderham & Worts “family.” Former company president H. Clifford Hatch reminisced about the four-generation Hardy family, and especially about Dooney:

“Dooney,” the dean, drove one of the trucks. He had pitched in the big leagues and was described as the million dollar arm and the ten cent head. There was no pension plan in those days and he worked until a ripe old age [of 63].

He also posed on Trinity Street in February 1937 with other Long-Service Employees, including some who had played on the 1925 championship team.



In February 1937, Dooney Hardy posed with other Long-Service G&W Employees DHD

Many thanks to Scott Crawford, Director of Operations at the [Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame](#), for providing terrific help in tracking down Dooney Hardy's professional baseball career, including statistics, photographs, and explanations. For more about the history of baseball in Toronto, see Louis Cauz's 1977 *Baseball's Back in Town: from the Don to the Blue Jays*, which provided information about the very early days of baseball cited in this article.

Not surprisingly, there are uncertainties in the information about Dooney's baseball career. Before his formal minor-league debut in 1899, he seems to have played in the "unclassified" Canadian League for a year or two. Toronto newspapers also have reports of his playing for Toronto, as well as in the New York League, in 1902, the year he went up to the Majors.

Correction to Isaac Doran, Miller (October 5, 2008): Thanks to John Court, archivist at the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Archives](#), for correcting my spelling of the wharf where Irish, and other immigrants, landed. It should be Rees Wharf after the doctor who built it in 1837.

Please send your comments or questions to Manager of Heritage Services, Sally Gibson, sg@thedistillerydistrict.com.

For more about the history of the Distillery District, visit www.distilleryheritage.com

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, contact sg@thedistillerydistrict.com