

## MSS. Collection #151

**Walter Hammersley Papers, ca. 1908-1920. 1 box (57 folders), ca. 235 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Walter Hammersley Papers contain personal letters, baseball statistics, and photographs, documenting the career of minor league baseball player, Walter Hammersley. The collection is small in size, but significant in documenting the history of minor league baseball in Greensboro and out of state during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Newspaper clippings and articles trace Hammersley's six years in the minor leagues, including the games he pitched as well as team standings. Researchers will also gain insight into male/female relationships through the personal letters of Hammersley written to his wife, Edna.

**Arrangement:** The Walter Hammersley Papers are organized into series according to document type. Each series is then arranged alphabetically and/or by date. The series are: **Correspondence, Miscellaneous, Photographs, and Printed Materials.**

**Provenance:** This collection was purchased from baseball artifact collector, Frank Keetz, Schenectady, New York, and accessioned under 2000.74.4. The GHM also has Hammersley's complete uniform (shirt, pants, belt, leggings, cleats, underwear, cap and catcher's mitt) and a sterling silver hatpin with a baseball finial that belonged to his wife. (Acc. no. 2000.74.1-3)

**Processing:** J. Stephen Catlett began organizing the collection prior to 2000. Christine A. Dumoulin, Archives Assistant completed the final arrangement and finding aid, March, 2002.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Walter James Hammersley was born in Tutbury, England on 9 November 1883, son of Hannah Carver. After the death of her first husband, Hannah married Charles James Hammersley. Charles & Hannah arrived in the US in 1888 with 8 children, including Walt and his older sister, Elizabeth Ann Carver. They settled on Peebles Island in Waterford, NY.

There is no further information about Hammersley prior to 1908. In 1908, he began his baseball career as a professional when he signed with Norfolk, Va. as a pitcher. He was released a short time later and signed on with the Greensboro Patriots, a minor league team with the Carolina Association, Eastern Carolina League. He remained on the Patriots roster until July, 1910. He returned to New York where he played for teams in Utica, Troy, and Binghamton. He quit playing baseball after the 1914 season at the age of 30, possibly from throwing his arm out. After leaving baseball, he worked as a lock operator on the Barge Canal, which connected to the

Erie Canal in New York. He died on October 25, 1921 at the age of 37 from pulmonary tuberculosis.

There is little information about Hammersley's personal life, though a newspaper article described him as a "quiet, modest, unobtrusive young man of excellent habits." He never smoked or drank, but had quite a sweet tooth and was nicknamed the "Kandy Kid." He was married to Edna Shufelt, whom he wrote many letters to while in Greensboro, often signing them, "with love and kisses from your own boy." The couple had no children. There is no additional information about Edna, except she had at least two siblings, Betty and Harold, as indicated by correspondence to her. Edna also married William Crotty after Walter's death.

### **Note on Early History of Professional Baseball in Greensboro**

The sport of professional baseball was introduced to Greensboro twice before it finally took hold in 1908. Promoters first began organizing a professional league in 1902, representing teams from Virginia and North Carolina, but were unsuccessful in establishing a permanent league. The inaugural season of the Greensboro Patriots started with a second to last finish in the first half, and despite making a comeback during the second half, were playing mediocre at best. In 1905, the Patriots were revived, but suffered another losing season, finishing last in the league. Aside from the player's inconsistent performances, the lack of community support for the team contributed to its eventual demise. In 1908, the Carolina Association of Professional Base Ball Clubs was formed and included teams from both North and South Carolina. The Greensboro Patriots were revived once again and finally achieved success as a ball club, winning the league pennant for that year. [This information is from the article "Professional Baseball in Greensboro, North Carolina: The Formative Years, 1902-1908." written by Francis D. Pitts III. GHM Archives, Vertical File.]

**Biographical Sources:** Most of the biographical information was pulled from newspaper clippings within the collection, as well as the article, "Beyond the pitcher's mound" written by Jim Schlosser, *Greensboro News & Record*, April 13, 2001; most of his information came from collector Frank Keetz. Additional information is available in "Found in a Trunk," an article written for the Society for American Baseball Research, by Frank Keetz.

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The types of materials in this collection include letters, stationary, photographs, and printed items such as newspaper clippings, game statistics and a notebook with pitching notes.

The correspondence is mostly of a personal nature, providing insight into not only the ups and downs of the minor leagues, but also the relationship between Walter and Edna. Of particular interest are the letters from Walter to Edna during his stint with the Greensboro Patriots. Although the Patriots won the pennant during their 1908 season, Walter mentions his frustration with the team in several letters. "[Beusse] is no manager for a baseball team," he complains (1:14). On a newspaper article sent to Edna he writes, "Can't win with this bunch behind me" (3:7). The Patriots never regained momentum after their first successful season. These letters also show the dynamics between Walter and Edna, especially the strain of being away from her. He writes, "I get so lonesome on Sunday afternoons...I near go crazy" (1:6).

The photographs consist of images of Hammersley and his teammates playing for the Greensboro Patriots. They include not only team photos but also individual images of Hammersley in uniform. There is also an interesting series of baseball cards with members of the Greensboro Patriots (3:1).

Newspaper clippings make up the bulk of the printed materials. They provide statistical data for a number of games that Hammersley pitched, as well as individual articles on Hammersley himself.

The main weaknesses of this collection are the lack of personal information about Hammersley and the limited scope.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Correspondence. 22 folders (22 items). 1900-1913.**

This series contains mostly personal letters to and from Edna Hammersley. The letters in folders 1:2-4 were written to Edna from friends and family members. Edna's friend Lulu describes her indignation about a child being buried without any formal funeral arrangements (1:3).

Folders 1:9-22 contain letters written from Walter to Edna while he played for the Greensboro Patriots, dated April 9, 1909, to September 17, 1910. He writes frequently about his team's wins and losses, who pitched, and other players. In a letter dated April 9<sup>th</sup> he says, "most of our team was drunk tonight- a wet town and they took advantage of it" (1:3). He also describes events surrounding the games. In an August 7<sup>th</sup> letter he writes, "Only 198 people came to see them play" (1:15). An April 28<sup>th</sup> letter describes the Patriots being driven to the field in an automobile parade (1:10). He also mentions getting skunk oil on the clothes in his trunk and a "nigger game," played between two African American teams, possibly from the local Negro League (1:7).

These letters also offer insights into the hardships caused by being away from his wife. Hammersley often groused about her absence and reluctance to visit him. In a letter dated April 19, he writes, "Edna dear, I'm tired of writing letters and you will have to come down"; he was suffering from a sore arm (1:8).

Also of interest is a 1913 letter from J.C. Calhoun that informs Hammersley that the Binghamton (NY) baseball club would not need him as a pitcher for the upcoming season (1:1).

There are only three letters from Edna to Walter, mostly discussing her daily activities back in New York. In reference to baseball standings, she wrote, "Winston on bottom now" (1:6).

### **2. Miscellaneous. 1 folder.**

This folder contains loose pages of stationary from the McAdoo Hotel. The majority of Hammersley's letters to his wife Edna were written on it. There is also an envelope addressed to Edna at 417 McAdoo Ave in Greensboro. The address may have been a boarding house.

**3. Photographs. 8 folders (46 items). 1908-1913.**

This is an interesting series that contains not only formal team portraits, but also a series of individual images of Hammersley and some of his teammates. Of particular interest is a series of baseball cards sporting individual players produced by Old Mill and Contentnea Cigarette companies; these collectibles were placed within the cigarette packs. The Old Mill baseball cards are Series #5 from the Greensboro Patriots and Contentnea were from the Virginia Carolina Association Eastern Carolina League. Each series contains the factory number and district where they were produced (3:1).

The photos of the Greensboro Patriots include formal team portraits as well as some “action” shots. There is one of Hammersley pitching (3:7) as well as individual images of him in uniform. Personal photos include Hammersley and two of his teammates on the beach and two group shots in everyday clothes (3:8).

Team portraits include the 1908 Greensboro Patriots, Greensboro Mill (?) workers, 1913 Bellows Falls (NY), and a postcard of the Flint (MI) Vehicles (3:3-6). The postcard was sent to Hammersley from one of his former teammates (3:4). [For additional group photos of the Greensboro Patriots, see photos #1421-1423 and #1689 in the Bernard Cone Photo Albums.](#)

**4. Printed Materials. 26 folders (ca. 160 items). 1908-1914.**

This series consists primarily of newspaper clippings with team and game statistics during Hammersley’s career. In addition to stats, some articles also include information about how Hammersley pitched during different games. Also of interest are two articles mentioning the “colored section of bleachers” during a 1909 double header (4:5). Note: full-size pages from the Greensboro and Charlotte papers are located in oversize flat storage. There is also a notebook with several addresses and pitching notes (4:26).

**FOLDER LISTING**

<b><u>Series</u></b>	<b><u>Folder</u></b>	<b><u>Contents</u></b>
<b>1</b>	1	Corresp. -- Calhoun, J.C. (1913)
	2	“ -- Hammersley, family. To Edna (May, 1910)
	3	“ -- “ “ “ “ (June, 1910)
	4	“ -- “ “ “ “ (July, 1910)
	5	“ -- “ Edna. To Walter (May 20, 1910)
	6	“ -- “ “ “ “ (May 21, 1910)
	7	“ -- “ “ “ “ (June 25, 1910)
	8	“ -- Hammersley, Walter. To mother. (May 25, 1900)
	9	“ -- “ , “ To Edna (April 9, 1909)
	10	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 8, 1910)
	11	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 10, 1910)
	12	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 18, 1910)
	13	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 19, 1910)
	14	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 26, 1910)
	15	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 28, 1910)
	16	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 29, 1910)
	17	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (May 16, 1910)
	18	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (May 17, 1910)
	19	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (May 19, 1910)
	20	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (Aug. 7, 1910)
	21	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (Sept. 17, 1910)
	22	“ -- “ , “ “ “ (April 26, 1910)
<b>2</b>	1	Miscellaneous
<b>3</b>	1	Photographs -- Baseball cards
	2	“ -- Baseball fields
	3	“ -- Portraits -- Flint Vehicles Baseball Team (MI) (1909)
	4	“ -- “ -- Bellows Falls Baseball Team (NY) (1913)
	5	“ -- “ -- Greensboro Mill Workers (?) (ca. 1910)
	6	“ -- “ -- Greensboro Patriots Baseball Team (ca. 1910)
	7	“ -- “ -- “ “ “ “ “
	8	“ -- “ -- Hammersley, Walter (ca. 1910)
<b>4</b>	1	Printed Materials -- News Clippings -- Greensboro (1908)
	2	“ “ -- “ “ -- <i>The Daily Industrial</i> - Greensboro (1908)
	3	“ “ -- “ “ -- Unidentified (1908)
	4	“ “ -- “ “ -- <i>Charlotte Observer</i> (1909)
	5	“ “ -- “ “ -- Unidentified (1909)
	6	“ “ -- “ “ -- <i>Charlotte Observer</i> (1910) (O'size, flat)
	7	“ “ -- “ “ -- Greensboro (1910) (O'size, flat)
	8	“ “ -- “ “ -- Utica, NY (1910)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
4	9	Printed Materials -- News Clippings -- Utica, NY (1910)
	10	“ “ -- “ “ -- Unidentified (1910)
	11	“ “ -- “ “ -- Berkshire, NY (1911)
	12	“ “ -- “ “ -- Troy, NY (1911)
	13	“ “ -- “ “ -- New York (1912)
	14	“ “ -- “ “ -- New York (1912)
	15	“ “ -- “ “ -- Troy, NY (1912)
	16	“ “ -- “ “ -- Unidentified (1912)
	17	“ “ -- “ “ -- Berkshire, NY (1913)
	18	“ “ -- “ “ -- Holyoke, MA (1913)
	19	“ “ -- “ “ -- Springfield, MA (1913)
	20	“ “ -- “ “ -- New York (1913) (O'size, flat)
	21	“ “ -- “ “ -- Troy, NY (1913)
	22	“ “ -- “ “ -- Philadelphia, PA (1914)
	23	“ “ -- “ “ -- Springfield, MA (1914)
	24	“ “ -- “ “ -- Hampshire, MA (1914)
	25	“ “ -- “ “ -- Unidentified (1914)
	26	“ “ -- Notebook

**Index to the Walter Hammersley Papers (ca. 1908-1920)**

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry – e.g. 1:1 – indicate in which Series#:Folder# (or, if no “:”, Series only) that name/subject can be found. Dates of the items are given in parentheses for an individual Series/Folder or, if at the end, for the entire subject/name entry.

**African Americans:** 1:7, 4:5 (1909-1910)

**Baseball:**

Fields: photos of, 3:2, 3:7-8 (1910, 1914?)

Statistics: 4:1-22 (1908-1914)

Teams:

Bellows Falls (NY): 3:4 (1913)

Flint (MI) Vehicles: postcard, 3:3 (1909)

Greensboro Patriots: 1:4-1:7, 1:10-22, 3:1, 3:6-8, 4:1-3, 4:7 (1908-1910)

Uniforms: photos of, 3:1, 3:3-8, 4:20 (1909-1913)

Berkshire, NY (baseball team): 4:11, 4:17 (1911, 1913)

Beusse, C.G.: 1:5, 1:12 (1910)

Binghamton, NY (baseball team): 1:1 (1913)

**Calhoun, J.C.:** 1:1 (1913)

*Charlotte Observer:* 4:4, 4:6 (1909-1910)

Contentnea Cigarettes: baseball cards, 3:1 (ca. 1910)

*The Daily Industrial* (Greensboro): 4:2 (1908)

**Eldridge, Rube:** 1:5, 1:12 (1910)

**Flint** (MI) Vehicles: postcard, 3:3 (1909)

**Greensboro** (NC) Patriots: 1:4-7, 1:10-22, 3:1, 3:6-8, 4:1-3, 4:7 (1908-1910)

**Hammersley, Edna:** 1:2-22 (1909-1910)

Hammersley, Walter: 1:1, 1:5-22, 3:1, 3:4, 3:6-8, 4:1-25 (1908-1914)

Hampshire, MA (baseball team): 4:24 (1914)

Harring, Nick: 1:13 (1910)

Hicks, Pug: 1:5, 1:11 (1910)

Holyoke, MA (baseball team): 4:18 (1913)

Hotels:

Hotel Jefferson (NY): business card, 4:26 (ca. 1911)

McAdoo Hotel (Greensboro): 2:1 (ca.1910)

**McAdoo** Hotel (Greensboro): 2:1 (ca. 1910)

**New York** (baseball teams): 1:1, 4:8-9, 4:11, 4:12-13, 4:15, 4:17, 4:20-21 (1910-1913)

**Old Mill Cigarettes:** baseball cards: 3:1 (ca. 1910)

**Parades:** 1:10 (1910)

Philadelphia, PA (baseball team) 4:22 (1914)

**Springfield,** MA (baseball team): 4:19, 4:23 (1913-1914)

Sternburgh, Mary: 1:1 (1910)

**Troy,** NY (baseball team): 4:12, 4:15, 4:21 (1911-1912)

**Utica,** NY (baseball team): 4:8-9 (1910)

**Walsh,** Martin: 1:6 (1910)