

= Bobby Lowe =

Robert Lincoln " Bobby " Lowe (July 10 , 1865 ? December 8 , 1951) , nicknamed " Link " , was an American Major League Baseball (MLB) player , coach and scout . He played for the Boston Beaneaters (1890 ? 1901) , Chicago Cubs (1902 ? 1903) , Pittsburgh Pirates (1904) , and Detroit Tigers (1904 ? 1907) . Lowe was the first player in Major League history to hit four home runs in a game , a feat which he accomplished in May 1894 . He also tied or set Major League records with 17 total bases in a single game and six hits in a single game . Lowe was a versatile player who played at every position but was principally known as a second baseman . When he retired in 1907 , his career fielding average of .953 at second base was the highest in Major League history .

Lowe also worked as a baseball manager , coach and scout . He was the player @-@ manager of the Detroit Tigers during the last half of the 1904 season . He was also a player @-@ manager for the Grand Rapids Wolverines in 1908 , and coached college baseball in 1907 for the University of Michigan and from 1909 to 1910 for Washington & Jefferson College . Lowe was a scout for the Detroit Tigers in 1911 and 1912 .

= = Early years = =

Lowe was born in Pittsburgh , Pennsylvania in July 1865 , two months after the end of the American Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln . His middle name " Lincoln " likely derives from the historic circumstances immediately preceding his birth . Lowe 's father , Robert L. Lowe , was a Pennsylvania native and a railroad engineer . His mother , Jane (or Jennie) Lowe was an immigrant from Ireland . At the time of the 1870 U.S. Census , at age five , he was living with his parents and four siblings Mary , Eliza (or Lida) , John Charles and Olive B. , in Union Township , Lawrence County , Pennsylvania , approximately 50 miles north of Pittsburgh , a township adjoining the city of New Castle . By 1880 , Lowe 's father had died and at age 15 he was living with his mother and three siblings in Union Township .

= = Amateur and minor league baseball = =

In 1881 , Lowe was working as an " office devil " at the Newcastle Courant , a newspaper in New Castle , Pennsylvania . In the summer of 1881 , at age 16 , he played in a baseball game between the printers and the doctors of New Castle . Charley Powers , who played minor league baseball , was working as a compositor at the Courant and was selected as the captain of the printers . Lowe pleaded for a place on the team , and Powers stationed him in right field . He later recalled that " the kid carried off the honors both in the field and at the bat . I saw at once that he was a born ballplayer . "

In 1882 , Lowe played with the Archie Reeds , an amateur baseball club in New Castle . He left his job with the Courant in 1883 and , at age 18 , took a job as a machinist at Witherow & Co . , the largest manufacturing establishment in New Castle . He was the sole support at the time for his mother and youngest sister , Olive , and gave up baseball for several years . Some accounts indicate he also played for Witherow 's plant baseball team and for the Neshannocks of New Castle .

In 1886 , Charley Powers organized a baseball club in New Castle and persuaded Lowe 's employer to allow him to play with the club occasionally . He played catcher and third base for New Castle in 1886 and led the team in batting and baserunning .

Powers and Lowe both signed to play with the Eau Claire , Wisconsin team in the Northwestern League during the summer of 1887 . Powers later recalled that the manager of the Eau Claire club , Abe Devine , ran a saloon and refused to use Lowe because he refused to patronize his saloon . Devine sent him back to New Castle , declaring , " That boy can 't play ball , " but brought him back to Eau Claire after the team 's starting third baseman , Charlie Levis , was injured . Lowe was put into the lineup in a game against Milwaukee and drew cheers from the crowd for his defensive play

at third base . In his first at bat , he hit a long home run off Varney Anderson that " sailed far over the center field fence . " He appeared in 108 games for Eau Claire in 1887 , batting .294 with 47 extra base hits , 61 stolen bases , 100 runs scored and 240 total bases . He also demonstrated his versatility in the field , playing 51 games in left field , 21 games at shortstop , 17 games in right field , 11 games at third base , 6 games as catcher and 5 games in center field .

During the 1888 and 1889 baseball season , Lowe played for the Milwaukee Brewers of the Western Association . He hit .246 in 114 games in 1888 , and hit .315 in 99 games in 1889 .

= = Major League Baseball = =

= = = Boston Beaneaters = = =

After the 1889 baseball season , the Boston Beaneaters purchased Lowe from the Milwaukee Brewers for \$ 700 in a deal that has been described as " one of baseball 's biggest bargains . " He made his Major League Baseball debut with the Beaneaters on April 19 , 1890 , and remained with the Beaneaters for 12 years through 1901 .

During his years in Boston , Lowe developed a reputation both as a hitter and a fielder . Listed at 5 ft 10 in (1 @. @ 78 m) , 150 pounds (68 kg) , he hit right @-@ handed and was considered one of the best second baseman of the 19th century . He was one of only three (along with Kid Nichols and Herman Long) to play on all five of the Beaneaters teams that won pennants in the 1890s .

In 1891 , Lowe tied a then major league record with six hits (four singles , a double and a home run) in six at bats . Having played mostly in the outfield in 1891 and 1892 , he replaced Joe Quinn at second base in 1893 and was the Beaneaters ' starting second baseman for eight straight years , from 1893 to 1900 .

On May 30 , 1894 , Lowe became the first major leaguer to hit four home runs in one game , including two home runs in the third inning . He accomplished the feat in front of a Decoration Day crowd of 8 @, @ 500 spectators against Elton " Ice Box " Chamberlain of the Cincinnati Reds at Boston 's Congress Street Grounds . The Boston Daily Globe reported on the game as follows :

" Bobby Lowe broke all league records with four home runs in succession , and then tied the record for total bases by adding a single , making a total of 17 bases . The hitting of Lowe has never been surpassed in a game . His home runs were on line drives far over the fence , and would be good for four bases on an open prairie . The crowd cheered Bobby every time he came up , and when he responded with a home run even the visitors had to join in the good @-@ natured smile . "

After the game , fans " showered \$ 160 worth of silver on the plate for Lowe . " In 1894 , he led the National League with 613 at bats and was among the leaders in fielding and particularly in batting , with 319 total bases (2nd in the league) , 17 home runs (2nd in the league) , 345 putouts as a second baseman (2nd in the league) , 212 hits (4th in the league) , 402 assists as a second baseman (4th in the league) , and 158 runs scored (5th in the league) .

He was part of a Beaneater infield that included Fred Tenney at first base , Lowe at second base , Herman Long at shortstop and Jimmy Collins at third base , and has been rated by some as " the greatest infield of all time . " John McGraw reportedly called Lowe and Long the greatest double play combination he had seen .

In December 1895 the Boston Daily Globe published a lengthy biography of Lowe , whom the paper described as Boston 's " quiet , unassuming but phenomenal second baseman . " The Globe noted that the ease with which Lowe played the game led many to understate his value to the club :

" For a grand player , Lowe is seldom given the credit often dished out to his inferiors . His work does not appeal to the bleachers and grandstand like the less natural and clumsy player who is often seen floundering around like a fish out of water , while the crowd enjoy the effort and go home to tell what great playing they saw . ' He is a hard worker , ' you will hear them say . Bobby Lowe is not only a hard worker but a conscientious player and an artist of the first magnitude . "

His annual salary while playing for Boston never exceeded \$ 3 @, @ 000 .

== = Chicago Cubs == =

On December 16 , 1901 , Lowe was purchased by the Chicago Orphans from the Beaneaters . In April 1902 , manager Frank Selee named him team captain . He played for the Orphans , renamed the Cubs later that season , for two years . He was the starting second baseman in 1902 . Although his batting statistics declined that year (.248 batting average) , his .956 fielding percentage , 328 putouts and 412 assists each ranked second among National League second basemen . In 1903 , he became a backup to Johnny Evers at second base , appearing in only 32 games for the Cubs . He was paid a salary of \$ 3 @ , @ 500 per year for his two years in Chicago .

== = Detroit Tigers == =

On April 20 , 1904 , Lowe was purchased by the Pittsburgh Pirates from the Cubs . He appeared in only one game for the Pirates before being sold to the Detroit Tigers on April 30 . He was the Tigers ' starting second baseman in 140 games that season . His .964 fielding percentage and 328 assists in 1904 were the second highest among American League second basemen . Halfway through the season , he also became the manager . In 74 games as a player @ - @ manager , he led the Tigers to a 30 @ - @ 44 record . Despite solid fielding in 1904 , Lowe 's offensive output continued to decline as his batting average dropped to .207 , 66 points below his career average of .273 .

In 1905 , Bill Armour took over as Tiger manager and Lowe stayed on as a part @ - @ time player . He was a utility player for the next three seasons , playing all four infield positions and in the outfield . In August 1906 , he sustained a broken nose and a fractured jaw after being struck by a foul tip from his own bat during a game in Philadelphia . After the injury , Lowe missed the remainder of the 1906 season and appeared in only 17 games (with 37 at bats) in 1907 , his final year in the major leagues . After that season , The Detroit News wrote that Lowe at age 42 " has not lost his batting eye nor his speed . His arm is just as good as ever and he is a much stronger ball player than many who held down regular jobs in the league this past season . "

== = Career statistics and legacy == =

In his 18 @ - @ season career in Major League Baseball , Lowe batted .273 , with 71 home runs , 984 RBIs , 1 @ , @ 131 runs , 1 @ , @ 929 hits , 230 doubles , 85 triples , and 302 stolen bases in 1 @ , @ 818 games .

At the time of his retirement , his career fielding average of .953 was the highest for a second baseman , and his totals of 3 @ , @ 336 putouts and 4 @ , @ 171 assists also ranked among the top ten of all @ - @ time among second basemen .

In 1911 , Fred Tenney wrote a series of articles for The New York Times selecting the greatest player in baseball history at each position . Having picked Johnny Evers at second base , Tenney chose Lowe as the best utility player of all time . He wrote : " Lowe of Boston was one of those baseball phenomeons [sic] who could play any position on the team in first @ - @ class style . "

In 1932 , syndicated sports writer Whitney Martin wrote a column arguing that Lowe ranked with Bobby Doerr , Joe Gordon , Nap Lajoie and Eddie Collins as the greatest second basemen of all time . Martin argued that Lowe 's accomplishments were overlooked because he played " at a time when the ball had more turtle in it than rabbit . " He catalogued a number of Lowe 's accomplishments to support the argument :

Hit four home runs and a single in one game for 17 total bases .

Batted over .300 from 1893 to 1897 " with the dead ball . "

Made six hits in six at bats for 10 total bases in another game .

Scored six runs in one game on May 3 , 1895 .

Played 34 consecutive games without an error , accepting 165 chances .

Lowe also won a reputation as gentleman in an era of rough play . Whitney Martin noted that , in his 18 @ - @ year career , Lowe " never once was fined or thumbed out of a game . " At the conclusion of his playing career , The Detroit News wrote : " Lowe was one of the greatest and is today one of

the most popular ball players ever in the game . There is no better type of the gentleman in baseball and no one ever heard ought but words of praise for him . "

In 1936 , the Baseball Hall of Fame appointed a Veteran 's Committee to consider candidates from baseball 's early years . Lowe ranked 34th in the voting by the Veteran 's Committee , trailing Nap Lajoie and Dan Brouthers by a half vote . Of the 33 players who finished ahead of him in the voting , 24 have been inducted into the Hall of Fame , and several players who finished behind Lowe in the voting (including Bobby Wallace , Jesse Burkett , Jake Beckley , Tommy McCarthy , Tim Keefe and Candy Cummings) have also been inducted into the Hall of Fame .

= = Coaching career = =

In addition to his having been the manager of the Tigers for the last half of the 1904 season , Lowe also coached baseball at the college and minor league level . In 1907 , he was hired as the baseball coach for the University of Michigan Wolverines baseball team . In April 1907 , a newspaper reported : " Mr. Lowe is the idol of the students at the university and has received the highest possible praise from the college for the excellent manner in which he handles the team . " Lowe led the Wolverines to a record of 11 @-@ 4 @-@ 1 in 1907 .

After his career as a Major League player ended in 1907 , Lowe was actively pursued by several minor league teams for coaching positions . He ultimately signed with Grand Rapids Wolverines of the Central League . In March 1908 , Lowe expressed optimism that " there is more interest being taken in baseball in different league towns than ever before . "

Lowe 's final coaching position was as the baseball coach at Washington & Jefferson College in 1909 and 1910 .

= = Later years = =

After retiring as a player and coach , Lowe continued his affiliation with the game as a scout for the Detroit Tigers in the early 1910s . In February 1912 , a syndicated newspaper story reported that Lowe had traveled 20 @,@ 000 miles as a scout during the prior year , and noted that his itinerary " reads like a cross between a railroad guide and an atlas . " Lowe 's destinations in 1911 included Hattiesburg , Mississippi , Macon , Georgia , Yazoo City , Mississippi , Montgomery , Alabama , New Orleans , Chicago , Memphis , Atlanta , Oklahoma City , Tulsa , Hannibal , Missouri , Denver , Butte , Montana , Boise , Idaho , Kansas City , Minneapolis , Waterloo , Iowa , Green Bay , Wisconsin , Calgary and Moose Jaw .

Lowe was married to Harriet Hughes , whose father operated the Leslie Hotel in New Castle . They had no children . After retiring from baseball , Lowe remained in Detroit . In 1920 , he was living with his wife and was employed as a " dealer " in real estate . Later , he became an inspector for the City of Detroit Department of Public Works . In 1930 , he was living with his wife at the Case De Vine Apartments and was employed as an inspector for the City of Detroit .

Lowe remained " a student and ardent patron of baseball . " In 1922 , he returned to Boston to play in a veterans baseball game to benefit Boston Children 's Hospital . After Lou Gehrig hit four home runs in a game in 1932 , Lowe , wearing his old Beaneaters uniform , posed with Gehrig . Lowe said , " I feel complimented to share the record with so grand a boy . " He was 38 years older than Gehrig , but outlived him by 10 years .

In December 1951 , Lowe died at his home in Detroit at the age of 86 . He was posthumously inducted into the Lawrence County Sports Hall of Fame in 1995 .