

# Eau Claire Baseball Hall of Fame 2011 Nomination Form

*(Please read Hall of Fame Induction Guidelines before filling out.)*

**Nominee's given name** (include nickname if applicable): Russell Claude "Russ" Bailey

**Birthdate, birthplace, death:** B: January 26, 1879 in Sparta/D: December 4, 1951 in Eau Claire

**Connection to Eau Claire baseball** (attach documentation, dates, statistics, awards if available):

- Amateur ball player beginning in 1901 (possibly earlier) for a team in Shawtown.
- Continued as a star amateur until 1906, when he was an easy choice to be the center fielder for the Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls professional team.
- Played nearly his entire professional career in Eau Claire. He was out of pro ball in 1908 when Eau Claire didn't have a team, but he stayed in Eau Claire to play for a local team. Additionally, he played 31 games for Milwaukee in 1910 before injuring an ankle and finishing out the season in Eau Claire. He also played half a season in Wausau.
- Named player-manager of the professional team in 1912. The team finished 25-16 before having to fold.
- When club president Henry Davis unexpectedly resigned in April, 1912, Bailey was also given that title.
- That season, he secured a player for Eau Claire from tiny Clear Lake, WI—Burleigh Grimes.
- Also gave future major leaguer Happy Felsch a shot at making the club, but Grimes beat him out for the last spot on the roster.
- Had the unenviable task of pulling the plug on professional baseball in Eau Claire due to poor fan support.
- Played for Wausau following the demise of the Eau Claire club and apparently did very well (though likely not as well as his obituary reads).
- Was a clothing store owner that played in small industrial leagues in Eau Claire. Cursory search shows a box score in 1919 (Bailey was 40 at the time) where he dominated on the mound.
- Art Roach's father recalled seeing Bailey play very well at Chappell Field—Bailey would be in his 40's or 50's by this time.
- In 1949, he was named Commissioner of the 11<sup>th</sup> District of the Wisconsin Semi-Pro Baseball Congress. He organized a tournament in which the top teams of the six-county area competed for a chance at the state tournament in Milwaukee.
- Art recalls Russ working at Carson Park as a ticket taker in his later years. This would put Bailey as likely the only person to have connections to the last three major baseball parks in the City of Eau Claire: Driving Park, Chappell Field, and Carson Park.

Professional statistics:

Year	Age	Tm	Lg	Lev	Aff	G	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	BA	SLG
1906	28	Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls	WISL	D	none	112	433	103	28	7	0	.238	.335
1907	29	Eau Claire	WISL	D	none	92	328	76				.232	
1909	31	Eau Claire	MNWI	D	none	121	465	143	24	9	3	.308	.417
1910	32	2 Teams	2 Lgs	D-A	none	98	345	99	20	8	3	.287	.417
1910	32	Eau Claire	MNWI	D	none	67	253	82	18	7	3	.324	.486
1910	32	Milwaukee	AA	A	none	31	92	17	2	1	0	.185	.228
1911	33	Eau Claire	MNWI	C	none	55	208	58	10	6	0	.279	.385
1912	34	Eau Claire	MNWI	C	none	26	100	35	7	5	0	.350	.520
1912	34	Wausau-Stats not available											

**TOTALS:**

5 Seasons						504	1879	514	89	35	6	.274	.358
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(Note: SLG percentage assumes all hits in 1907 were singles.)

A whiz in the outfield, he could also handle the bat very well. He had nearly 1,900 professional at bats and hit .274 for his career. His 1907 extra base hit statistics are missing, but if you were to remove the season completely his career slugging percentage would be close to .400 (if you consider all of his 76 hits in 1907 to be singles, his slugging was still .358). He was having his best season in 1912 but due to financial constraints he elected to stay behind on a few road trips to save expenses.

**Biography** (include personal, high school, college, family, career background and significant achievements, honors involving city baseball or in the world of baseball; attach documentation if available):

Russ Bailey was born in Sparta in 1879 but moved to Eau Claire at an early age. A Corporal in the Spanish American War at the tender age of 19, Bailey's first games in Eau Claire can be traced in box scores of the Eau Claire Leader beginning three years later as an amateur in 1901. He continued to play for Eau Claire teams until 1906, when he was considered a no-brainer choice to be on the first professional baseball club in Eau Claire since 1887. He continued to play professionally for Eau Claire through 1912, with the only interruptions coming in 1908 (when the city didn't have a pro team) and a brief, 31-game call up to Milwaukee in 1910. In 1912, he was not only named player-manager of the club (he secured a young man from Western Wisconsin named Burleigh Grimes to play for the team), but he also was given the unenviable task of being team president. He was so well liked, the directors reasoned, that he would be able to easily raise much-needed cash for the team. Bailey did what he could, but just couldn't make a go of it. After a scant 177 spectators watched him hit two triples on a glorious Sunday afternoon at the Driving Park, Bailey had to make the gut-wrenching decision to throw in the towel for professional baseball in Eau Claire. The Leader did not blame him. Instead, the following day it took the opportunity to bash the people of Eau Claire—the paper's own customers—for not supporting Bailey and the team. A professional game would not be played in Eau Claire for 21 years.

After Eau Claire folded, Bailey was a very popular "free agent", and though he was playing for Wausau, Superior claimed he had signed him to a contract as well. The National Association briefly suspended him until the contract situation was resolved, but it appears he finished the season in Wausau. Bailey's obituary reads that he hit 16 home runs for Wausau in what amounted to half a season. That claim seems unlikely at best, but he probably still had some power and speed. After the 1912 season, he hung up his professional spikes but continued playing on an amateur level until at least 1919 (and likely longer), suiting up for the teams sponsored by his clothing stores. Art Roach's father said he recalled watching Bailey play at a high level at Chappell Field—which would put Bailey in at least his 40's at the time. In 1949, Bailey was named Commissioner of the 11<sup>th</sup> District of the Wisconsin Semi-Pro Baseball Congress. Art also related that Bailey was a ticket taker at Carson Park in his later years.

**In your words, summarize why this person should be in the Hall of Fame:**

Based on the above information, I think we can all agree that for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russ Bailey was a fixture of baseball in Eau Claire. And yet, prior to the last few weeks, many of us on the Hall of Fame Committee had never heard of the man. The fact that his 50 years of accomplishments in local baseball have been largely forgotten is somewhat unfortunate. He never played in the major leagues, but I have to wonder if that was ever really his ambition.

I unsuccessfully spent considerable time trying to track down Russ' family to help solidify this nomination. I figured they might be able to fill in the blanks of his life that the newspaper missed. It would also be nice to know that his family would appreciate the posthumous honor. After all, if we were to honor a person, but no one was around to know it, are they really honored? I discussed the search for Bailey's family with my wife. She made an excellent point by saying this is EXACTLY the type of person we need to recognize. He doesn't appear to have any close relatives in the area to speak for him, so I believe it is up to the Committee to tell his story.

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*Return to the Eau Claire Baseball History Committee, c/o Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department.  
Upon verification, nominations will be considered for inclusion on a Hall of Fame ballot.*