

Lewiston
History
Mysteries

One of the Greatest Baseball Players of All Time Found Dead at Bottom of Falls Swept Over Niagara Falls, Mystery Surrounds Ed Delahanty's 1903 Death Over a Century Ago

Despite Success on the Field, Baseball Icon Was Plagued with Personal Issues

When Babe Ruth was born in 1895, "Big Ed" Delahanty had already been playing professional baseball for seven years, primarily for the Philadelphia Phillies.

The circumstances of his death remain one of the strangest stories in baseball history, and to this day, the truth is still clouded in mystery and conjecture.

In 1902 he switched from Philadelphia to the

Washington Senators in the new American League, hitting .376 his first season and winning the AL batting title.

But Ed wasn't thrilled playing for the Senators and he started drinking too much and placed heavy bets on the horses. He asked his teammates for help with his debt and even threatened to kill himself.

In July 1903, the Detroit Tigers hosted the Senators,

defeating the Senators 1-0. Ed had enough. He hopped on a train bound for New York City in an attempt to

see his estranged wife, and to see if he could get back into the National League. It was a long train ride through Ontario and Ed had plenty of time to drown his sorrows at the bar. He soon became intoxicated and railroad conductors were unable to subdue him.

His behavior was erratic and became dangerous. He slammed himself into an emergency tool cabinet, breaking the glass. He pulled other passengers out of their sleeping berths and then threatened passengers with a razor.

The conductor finally stopped the train in Bridgeburg, Ontario, just across the river from Black Rock in Buffalo, and told Ed to get off the train, with a warning not to cause trouble because he was still in Canada. Ed replied, "I don't care whether I'm in Canada or dead."

With no where to go, he walked across the International Railway Bridge, toward the United States. However, night watchman Sam Kingston stopped him and they got into a scuffle high above the swift currents of the Upper Niagara River. Ed broke loose and either fell or jumped into the river below.

Kingston testified it was too dark to say exactly what happened. While some accused Kingston of murder, others blamed Ed's drunken stupor and his suicidal tendencies. His body was discovered a week later at the base of Niagara Falls. He was 35 and was buried in Cleveland. A song was recently released about his life and mysterious death.



Ed Delahanty was arguably the best pro baseball player in the 1890's. He was a legend then and remains one today. However, he is mostly known for the strange circumstances surrounding his death. His body was found at the bottom of Niagara Falls in 1903.

Why Was "Big Ed" Delahanty Such a Baseball Superstar?

- Fourth highest lifetime batting average (.346) in major league history. Babe Ruth was .342
- First player in major league history to hit over .400 three times.
- Led National League (NL) in home runs twice in 1893, 1896.
- NL runs batted in leader three times in 1893, 1896, 1899.
- NL stolen base leader in 1898.
- Hit four home runs in one game in 1896.
- Went six-for-six in one game, nine-for-nine in a doubleheader.
- 2598 hits, 101 home runs, 1464 runs batted in, 456 stolen bases.
- Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1945.

Played major league baseball from 1888 to 1903

- Philadelphia Quakers (1888-1889)
- Cleveland Infants (1890)
- Philadelphia Phillies (1891-1901)
- Washington Senators (1902-1903)

Lewiston Artist Releases Song on Delahanty

Local singer-songwriter EC Palmer recently released the critically acclaimed folk album "Invisible Tourist" which includes a track entitled, "Big Ed Delahanty." You can download it at iTunes, Spotify and other music venues.



Delahanty's rookie card sells for about \$12,000 — if you can find one.

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