

Hollis Thurston, "Sloppy By Any Other Name"

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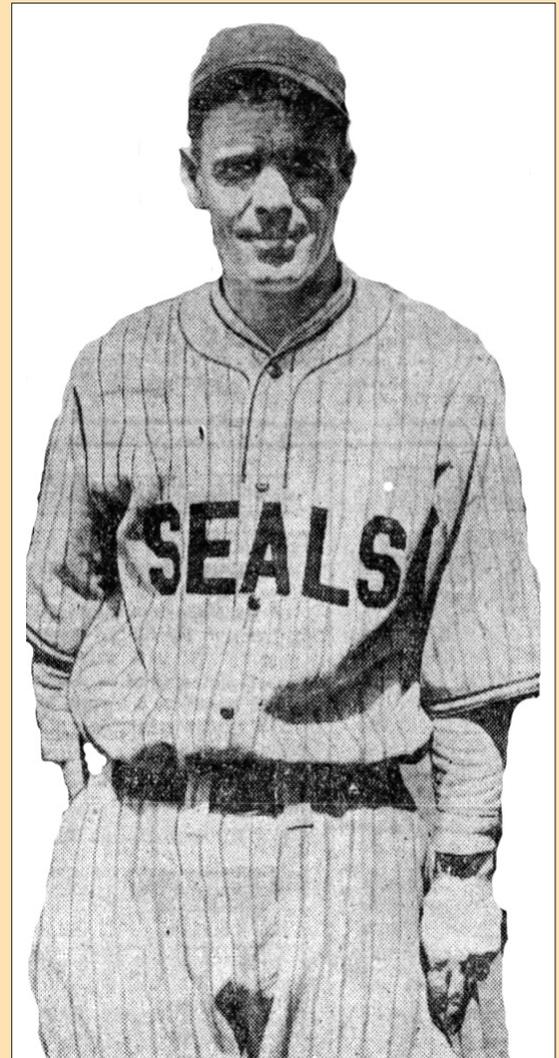
A right-handed pitcher noted for his sharp-breaking curveball and unique nickname, **Hollis John "Sloppy" Thurston** is 89-86 with a 4.24 ERA in nine major league seasons with the St. Louis Browns (1923), Chicago White Sox (1923-1926), Washington Senators (1927) and the Brooklyn Dodgers (1930-33).

There are several theories as to how Thurston came by his unique nickname. The most popular is that he was always "well groomed." Another says that he came by nickname from his parents because he was always spilling milk on himself. A third suggests that he inherits the nickname from his father's restaurant in Winslow, Arizona, that is known locally as "Sloppy Thurston's Place," because his father feeds free soup to tramps at the back door.

Born on June 2, 1899 (the first day of the Philippine-American War) in Fremont, Nebraska, to David and Katherine Thurston, the family first moves to Winslow, Arizona and then to Los Angeles. Thurston graduates from Polytechnic High School in 1916.

During World War I, he serves a two-year hitch in the Navy and is stationed at a submarine base in San Pedro, California, where he pitches on the weekends, first for the base's "B" team and then later for the varsity.

A 21-year-old Thurston makes his professional baseball debut with the Salt Lake City Bees on April 7, 1920, allowing two runs on three hits with two strikeouts and two walks in three innings of work in an 8-4 loss to the visiting Portland Beavers.



Sloppy "has no style"

In the May 24, 1923, issue of *The Sporting News*, John B. Sheridan in his "Back of the Plate" column takes Sloppy to task:

"I saw Hollis Thurston pitch an inning or two against Ty Cobb's team this spring. Any baseball player could see, as Thurston worked, with a man on base, that it was a cinch to steal on him and that he had an unfinished rough delivery that predicted wildness.

With a runner on, or with the bases unoccupied, Thurston took up his free foot two feet above the ground, let the foot swing him around out of position, gave the runner a big lead and meant wildness. Like (Grover) Lowdermilk, Thurston has no style.

His muscles and bones do not work in the smooth fashion essential to good control. Just how Thurston got by in the Coast League with such a delivery puzzles me."

In 10 minor league seasons spent entirely in the highly-competitive Pacific Coast League (he does appear one game in 1937 with the Tacoma Tigers of the Western International League), Thurston is 106-97 with a 4.47 ERA and allows 2,111 hits in 1,727 innings, an average of 11.0 hits per nine innings. Twice he allows over 300 hits, including 338 in 1929, when he wins a career-high 22 games with the San Francisco Seals.

Following a 15-16 season with Salt Lake in 1922, Thurston is purchased by the St. Louis Browns on December 13, 1922, for \$15,000.

Unfortunately, his stay in St. Louis is short-lived.

He makes his major league debut with the Browns on April 19, 1923, relieving Hub Pruett in the eighth inning of an 8-3 loss to Ty Cobb's Detroit Tigers. Four days later (April 23), Thurston makes his first major league start against the Chicago White Sox, allowing three runs (two earned) on six hits and a pair of walks in two innings as the two teams battle to a 7-7 tie in a game that is called on account of darkness after 14 innings.

Sloppy Thurston [2 of 5]:

On May 1, Thurston returns to St. Louis after manager Lee Fohl suspends him for refusing to pitch batting practice before a game in Detroit. Thurston claims he refused because of a sore arm.

Rather than send him back to Salt Lake City, the Browns release him to the Chicago White Sox via the waiver route. With the Pale Hose, Thurston is 7-8 with a 3.05 ERA in a 46 appearances.

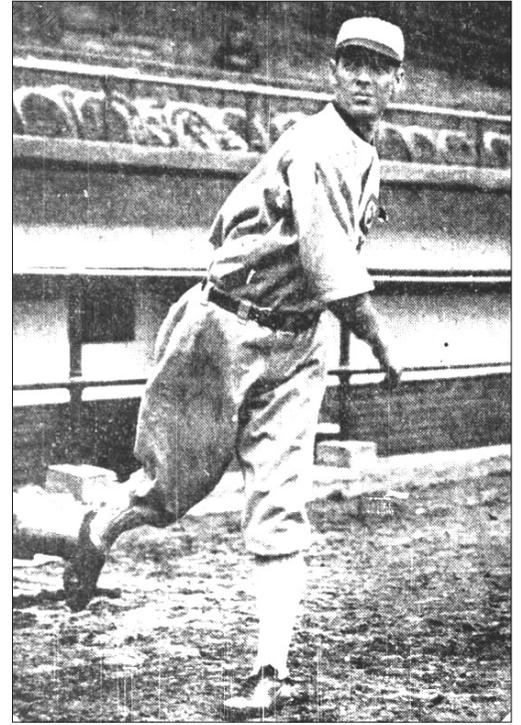
In 1924, he wins 20 games for the last-place White Sox and completes a league-leading 28 games in 36 starts.

In the offseason, he is surprised when his contract for 1925 does not contain a raise despite his 20 wins for a last place team. White Sox owner Charles Comiskey justifies the contract by saying, "we finished last with you and we would have finished last without you. So how do you think you deserve a raise?"

Coming off a disappointing season in 1926, where he is 6-8 with a 5.02 ERA, Thurston and pitcher Leo Mangum are traded to the Washington Senators on January 12, 1927, for shortstop Roger Peckinpaugh, the MVP of the American League in 1925.

In 1927, his only season with the Senators, Thurston is 13-13 with a 4.47 ERA

Sloppy Thurston
1924 Chicago White Sox



Sloppy Thurston Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Level	W-L	GP	INN	H	BB	SO	ERA
1916	Manual Arts High School	City League	HS	-	-	-	-	-	-	--
1916	Solomon's Penny Dance	Valley	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--
1918	San Pedro Sub Base	AForces	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	--
1920	Salt Lake City Bees	Pacific Coast	AA	9-13	39	220.0	260	50	76	4.38
1921	Salt Lake City Bees	Pacific Coast	AA	7-13	35	158.0	224	40	64	5.58
1922	Salt Lake City Bees	Pacific Coast	AA	15-16	49	255.0	301	44	69	3.92
1923	St. Louis Browns	AMERICAN	ML	0-0	2	4.0	8	2	0	6.75
1923	Chicago White Sox	AMERICAN	ML	7-8	46	191.2	223	36	55	3.05
1924	Chicago White Sox	AMERICAN	ML	20-14	38	291.0	330	60	37	3.80
1925	Chicago White Sox	AMERICAN	ML	10-14	36	183.0	250	47	35	5.95
1926	Chicago White Sox	AMERICAN	ML	6-8	31	134.1	164	36	35	5.02
1927	Washington Senators	AMERICAN	ML	13-13	29	205.1	254	60	38	4.47
1928	San Francisco Seals	Pacific Coast	AA	9-7	26	137.0	184	22	37	4.60
1929	San Francisco Seals	Pacific Coast	AA	22-11	37	282.0	338	45	78	4.40
1930	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	6-4	24	106.0	110	17	26	3.40
1931	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	9-9	24	143.0	175	39	23	3.97
1932	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	12-8	28	153.0	174	38	35	4.06
1933	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	6-8	32	131.1	171	34	22	4.52
1934	Mission Reds	Pacific Coast	AA	15-10	31	233.0	260	65	66	3.21
1935	Mission Reds	Pacific Coast	AA	15-10	29	201.0	244	49	46	4.79
1936	Mission Reds	Pacific Coast	AA	13-10	34	197.0	247	55	68	4.52
1937	Seattle Indians	Pacific Coast	AA	1-5	9	40.2	45	13	-	6.20
1937	Tacoma Tigers	Western International	B	0-1	1	2.0	4	0	-	18.00
1938	Oakland Oaks	Pacific Coast	AA	0-1	1	2.0	4	0	-	13.50
Major League Totals		9 Years		89-86	288	1,542	1,859	369	306	4.24
Minor League Totals		10 Years		106-97	291	1,727	2,111	383	504	4.47

Bold denotes led league

1924 - Led American League in complete games (28), hits (330) and home runs allowed (17)

ML Debut: April 19, 1923, at Sportsman Park, St. Louis: relieved Hub Pruett at the start of the eighth inning during an 8-3 loss to the Detroit Tigers; pitched two innings, allowing one run on two hits.

ML Debut: October 1, 1933 at Ebbets Field, Brooklyn: started and allowed two runs on five hits with one strikeout and no walks in a 5-2 win over the New York Giants.

and third in the American League in home runs allowed with 16, including three to Babe Ruth during his record-setting 60-home run season. Thurston also ties for second on the team in home runs (2) with Tris Speaker, Joe Judge and Sam Rice.

At the end of the season, the Senators sell Thurston to the Pacific Coast League's San Francisco Seals. In 1928, splitting time between first base and the mound, he hits .347 with 24 home runs and 98 RBIs and is 9-7 in 26 mound appearances and earns All-Star honors as the Seals capture the Pacific Coast League pennant.

A year later, he is 22-11 with a 4.40 ERA with the Seals, earning a return trip back to the major leagues when the Brooklyn Dodgers draft him in the Rule 5 draft. In his four seasons with the Dodgers (1930-1933), Thurston is 33-29, including a 6-8 mark in 1933, his final season in the majors.

Back in the minors, Thurston has back-to-back 15-10 seasons for the

Sloppy Thurston [3 of 5]:

Mission Reds. Over his last five seasons, Thurston pitches for the Reds, the Tacoma Tigers and the Oakland Oaks. In 1937, as a player/manager for the Tacoma Tigers of the Western International (B) League, Thurston, now the team's primary first baseman, hits .295 with eight doubles and six home runs and pilots the Tigers to the league championship.

Making his final appearance in professional baseball on Saturday, April 10, 1938, a 39-year-old Thurston relieves Oakland starter Floyd Newkirk in the sixth inning, allowing three runs on four hits in 1 2/3 innings in an 11-6 loss to the Seattle Rainers. Two days later, the 2-8 Oaks release Thurston, 35-year-old pitcher Laurie (Lefty) Vinci and 21-year-old shortstop Henry Martinez.

After his playing career, Thurston becomes a scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates (1939-1945), the Cleveland Indians (1948-1950) and the Chicago White Sox (1951-1967). Thurston is noted for signing Hall of Famer Ralph Kiner for a \$2,500 bonus and the highly-touted J.W. Porter to a \$65,000 bonus.

THURSTON CHRONOLOGY

April 10, 1912

Left home alone by their parents, Hollis and his brother Sherman lock a burglar in the downstairs closet ... scared, the brothers hide in their bedroom while the intruder batters down the closet door and makes good his escape.

April 27, 1912

Twelve-Year-old Hollis Thurston finishes second in the broad jump in the 36th Street School Meet.

BUSH PITCHER WINS 20 OUT OF 25 GAMES

Hollis Thurston, star hurler of the Solomon's Penny Dance nine of the Sunday semi-pro ranks, is making quite a name for himself among the Southern California bushers. In the last 25 games that he has pitched Thurston has won 20 of them, which is a good mark for any busher.

November 27, 1916

The *Los Angeles Evening Express* reports that the Solomon's Penny Dances' Hollis Thurston has won 20 of the 25 games he has pitched.

April 7, 1920

Thurston makes his professional baseball debut with the Salt Lake City

Bees, allowing two runs on three hits with two strikeouts and two walks in three innings of work in an 8-4 loss to the visiting Portland Beavers in a Pacific Coast (AA) League.

July 27, 1921▶▶

Thurston is 4-11 when the Bees announce that he has been traded to the National League's Chicago Cubs for three unnamed players ... before Thurston reports to the Cubs for the team's 1922 spring training, Salt Lake City manager Duffy Lewis tells the team's owners that Thurston is too valuable to lose and convinces them to call off the trade.

September 21, 1921

Afflicted with pneumonia, Thurston remains home when the Salt Lake City Bees leave on a road trip.

March 30, 1922

Thurston is suspended for two weeks by Lewis for "defiance of authority" ... Thurston claims that he has a tired arm while Lewis differs, saying "I can't stand for disobedience."

Anatomy of a Trade

On July 27, 1921, the Salt Lake City Bees announce that they have traded pitcher Hollis Thurston to the Chicago Cubs for three players to be named later.

Cubs' scout Jack Doyle and Salt Lake City President William Lane agree to a trade that sends Thurston to Chicago in exchange for three players to be named later. One of the players will be Don Brown, already with the Bees on a "call option." One of the other two is to be a pitcher and the third an infielder. The Chicago players are to be delivered to the Bees at once, or as soon as possible, and Thurston is to be turned over to the Cubs at the close of the present season.

There is a delay in completing the deal on account of Lane's regard for his pledged word. Lane earlier tells Detroit Tiger scout Eddie Herr that the Tigers will be given first chance to buy Thurston. Before completing the trade with the Cubs, Lane writes Detroit President Navin, mentioning his promise to Herr.

"So few of us in baseball," replies Navin, "keep our spoken word that you are deserving of the greatest praise and I want to get better acquainted with you."

Navin adds that as Detroit had no players to offer Salt Lake in exchange for Thurston, and releases Lane from his promise.

Sloppy Thurston [4 of 5]:

December 13, 1922

After winning 31 games in three seasons for the Bees, Thurston's contract is sold to the American League's St. Louis Browns for \$15,000.

April 19, 1923

Thurston makes his major league debut allowing two hits and one run in two innings of work as the Browns drop an 8-3 decision to the Detroit Tigers.

May 9, 1923

For the second time in 15 months, Thurston is suspended, this time by St. Louis manager Lee Fohl for refusing to pitch batting practice during a series in Detroit.

May 12, 1923

After pitching a total of four innings in two games with the Browns, Thurston is sold to the Chicago White Sox.

August 22, 1923

Philadelphia Athletics at Chicago White Sox
Comiskey Park, Chicago, Illinois

PHILA.—	AB.	R.	H.	PO.	A.	E.
McGowan, cf	4	0	0	1	0	0
Galloway, ss	5	1	3	5	3	1
Hale, 3b	5	0	1	0	4	0
Hauser, 1b	6	0	0	15	2	0
Miller, lf	5	1	1	9	0	0
Welch, rf	5	1	2	4	1	0
Scheer, 2b	6	0	1	2	3	0
Perkins, c	6	0	3	2	1	0
Rommell, p	5	0	0	1	5	0

Totals	47	3	11	29	19	1
CHICAGO—	AB.	R.	H.	PO.	A.	E.
Hooper, rf	5	0	0	3	0	0
McClellan, ss	6	1	4	4	3	1
Collins, 2b	3	0	0	3	2	0
Sheely, 1b	6	0	1	8	1	0
Falk, lf	5	0	0	8	1	1
Barrett, cf	5	0	2	1	0	0
Kamm, 3b	5	0	0	2	1	0
Schalk, c	4	1	0	10	0	0
Blankenship, p	3	0	0	0	2	0
Strung, z	1	0	1	0	0	0
Thurston, p	0	0	0	0	1	0

Totals43 2 8 39 11 2
z—Batted for Blankenship in tenth.
Philadelphia ...000 100 000 100 1—3
Chicago000 100 000 100 0—2
Summary—Two base hits: McClellan, Perkins, 2; Hale. Stolen bases: Miller. Double play: Falk to Collins. Bases on balls: Off Blankenship, 3; Rommell, 4. Hits: Off Blankenship 8 in 10; Thurston, 3 in 3. Struck out: By Blankenship, 4; Thurston, 6; Rommel, 1. Wild pitch: Blankenship. Losing pitcher: Thurston.

Thurston is the fifth pitcher in major league history to turn-in an "immaculate inning" when he strikes out three Philadelphia Athletics - Beauty McGowan, Chick Galloway, Sammy Hale - on nine pitches in the 12th inning.

◀◀ August 22, 1923

In the 12th inning of a 3-2, 13-inning loss to the Philadelphia Athletics, Thurston becomes the fifth pitcher to strike out the side on nine pitches ... Thurston's record drop to 5-4 when the A's Bing Miller drives home the go-ahead run with a single in the top of the 13th inning.

July 22, 1924

Thurston hurls a five-hit shutout and wins his 10th straight game as Chicago stops the Washington Senators, 4-0, in the first game of a doubleheader ... over a 12-game span, Thurston is 10-0 with one save and a 3.31 ERA.

September 14, 1924

Thurston caps off the best season of his major league career, beating the New York Yankees 5-2 for his 20th victory of the season ... finishes 20-14 with a 3.80 ERA for a last-place White Sox team.

January 15, 1927

After going 6-8 with a 5.02 ERA in 1926, White Sox manager Eddie Collins, opines that Thurston's arm is "dead" and trades him to Washington ... Thurston responds by going 13-13 with a 4.47 ERA for the third-place Senators.

October 10, 1927

Washington sells Thurston to the Pacific Coast League's San Francisco Seals.

October 7, 1929

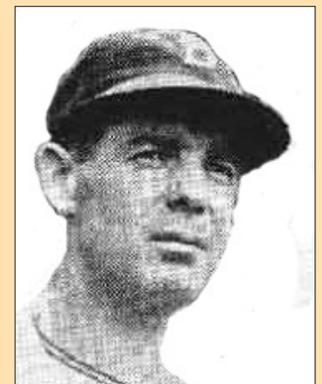
Thurston, the best screwball artist in the Pacific Coast League and a 20-game winner with the Chicago

White Sox in 1924, makes his return to the major leagues when the Brooklyn Dodgers select him in the Rule 5 draft.

Sloppy Thurston
1922 Salt Lake City Bees



One of seven pitchers on the Bees' opening day roster to be traded or sold by year's end, Thurston finishes 15-16 with a 3.92 ERA in his third pro season. On March 31, Thurston is suspended by manager Duffy Lewis for "loafing" in pre-season drills. Thurston claims he has a sore arm.



Sloppy Thurston [5 of 5]:

August 13, 1932 Brooklyn Dodgers at New York Giants Polo Grounds, New York, N.Y.

BROOKLYN.					NEW YORK.				
AB.	H.	P.O.	A.		AB.	H.	P.O.	A.	
Taylor,cf	5	1	7	0	J.Moore,lf	5	0	0	1
Stripp,3b	5	1	0	0	Critz,2b	5	0	6	5
Slade,3b	1	0	1	3	Terry,1b	5	4	8	0
O'Doul,lf	5	4	1	0	Ott,rf	5	3	5	0
Fred'ck,lf	1	1	0	0	Lindst'm,cf	5	2	4	0
Wilson,rf	5	3	1	0	Hogan,c	3	0	1	0
Rosen'ld,rf	1	0	1	0	O'Farr'l,c	1	1	1	0
Cucc'illo,2b	6	3	3	2	English,3b	4	1	1	3
Wright,ss	4	2	1	2	Marshall,ss	4	0	1	4
Clancy,1b	5	3	12	0	Mocney,p	1	0	0	1
Lopez,c	4	2	0	0	Luque,p	0	0	0	0
Picinic,h,c	1	0	0	0	*Fullis	1	0	0	0
Thurston,p	5	4	0	3	Schum'er,p	0	0	0	0
					Bell,p	0	0	0	0
Totals	48	24	27	10	Gibson,p	1	1	0	2
					Leslie	1	0	0	0
					Fitzsim's,p	0	0	0	0
					Totals	41	12	27	16

*Batted for Luque in fourth inning.
†Batted for Gibson in eighth inning.

Innings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Brooklyn	0	0	0	5	7	6	0	0	0-18
New York	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	3	2-9

Errors—Wright 3, Critz, Terry, Schumacher. Runs Batted In—Wilson 3, Cuccinello 3, Lopez 2, Thurston 2, Terry 3, Ott 2, Lindstrom 2, Wright, Taylor 3, Clancy, Stripp 2, O'Doul, O'Farrell, Marshall. Two-Base Hits—Lopez, Thurston, Cuccinello. Three-Base Hit—Wilson. Home Runs—Cuccinello, Terry 3, Ott 2, Lindstrom, Taylor, Wilson. Double Plays—English to Critz to Terry, 2; Marshall to Critz to Terry, 2. Left on Bases—Brooklyn 5; New York 5. Base on Balls—Off Mooney, 1. Hits—Off Mooney, 7 in 3½ innings; off Luque, 1 in ⅔ inning; off Schumacher, 4 in ⅔ inning; off Bell, 8 in 1 inning; off Gibson, 3 in 2½ innings; off Fitzsimmons, 1 in 1 inning. Hit by Pitcher—By Bell, Taylor. Wild Pitch—Luque. Losing Pitcher—Mooney. Umpires—Stark, Magerkurth and Rigler. Time of Game—2:15.

Thurston ties a major league record when he allows six home runs in an 18-9 win over the New York Giants. Thurston, 4-for-5 at the plate himself, allows three home runs to Bill Terry, two to Mel Ott and one to Freddie Lindstrom.

ous minor leagues on the West Coast.



Following his release by the Oaks, **Henry Martinez** is picked up by the Spokane Hawks of the Western International (B) League where he proceeds to hit .262 and steal 29 bases over the remainder of the 1938 season. A native of Honolulu of the Hawaiian Islands, Martinez will play four more years in the Western International and Pacific Coast Leagues, fashioning a .276 career batting average and earning Western International League All-Star status in 1940 and 1941.

In 1942, Martinez enters into military service with the US Navy. On January 5, 1945, Martinez is swept off the deck of a ship during action near the Philippines Islands. His body is never recovered.

September 14, 1973

Thurston passes away in Los Angeles, California at the age of 74.

◀◀ August 13, 1932

Pitching for Brooklyn, a less-than-effective Thurston runs his record to 10-5 despite allowing six home runs in the first game of a doubleheader with the New York Giants ... in the fourth inning, the Giants' Bill Terry, Mel Ott, and Freddie Lindstrom hit home runs on consecutive pitches ... Terry hits three home runs in the game and twice he and Ott hit back-to-back home runs but the Dodgers prevail 18-9.

July 9, 1937

Released by Seattle, Thurston is named manager of the Tacoma Tigers.

April 9, 1938

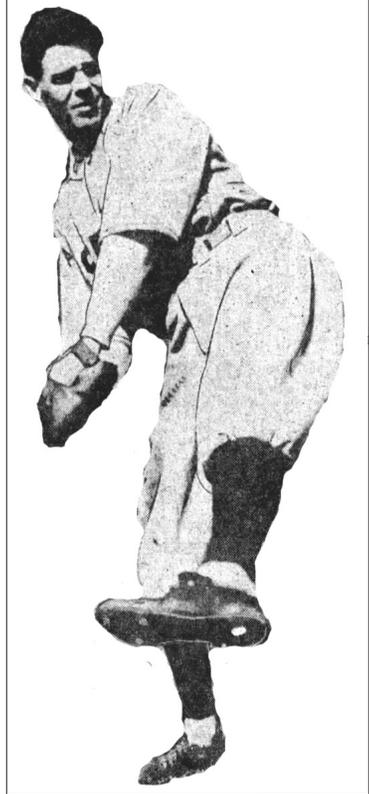
A 39-year-old Thurston makes his final appearance in professional baseball relieving Oakland Oaks starter Floyd Newkirk in the sixth inning of a tied game against the Seattle Rainiers.

April 11, 1938

Oakland, 2-8 and last place in the Pacific Coast League, releases Thurston, 35-year-old pitcher Laurie (Lefty) Vinci and 21-year-old shortstop Henry Martinez.

For Thurston and Vinci, the releases mark the end of their careers in professional baseball ... however, Martinez, who had collected only two hits in 23 at bats for the Oaks (.087), goes on to become standout infielder in vari-

Sloppy Thurston 1928 San Francisco Seals



One of the top players in the 1928 Pacific Coast League where he doubles as a pitcher and as an outfielder/first baseman. The versatile one is 9-7 with a 4.60 ERA in 26 mound appearances. He also hits .348 and is third on the team with 24 home runs and 98 RBIs.

THURSTON, 74, DIES; PITCHED IN MAJORS

Hollis (Sloppy) Thurston, 74, who gave up three of Babe Ruth's record 60 home runs in 1927 while pitching for the Washington Senators and who signed a kid shortstop named Ralph Kiner to a Pittsburgh Pirate contract for a \$2,500 bonus, died here Friday night.

Rosary will be recited Monday at 7:30 p.m. at Gates, Kingsley & Gates Mortuary, 1500 N. Sepulveda Blvd.

Mr. Thurston, a teammate of Fred Haney at Los Angeles Polytechnic High, broke into professional baseball as a pitcher-outfielder with Salt Lake City of the Pacific Coast League in 1920.

In his nine-year major league pitching career he played with the St. Louis Browns, Chicago White Sox, Senators and Brooklyn Dodgers. With the

Dodgers in 1930 he was a teammate of the legendary Casey Stengel, Lefty O'Doul and Babe Herman.

Mr. Thurston once was asked what variety of his pitches Ruth had hit for homers in the 1927 campaign.

"Everything I threw up there," he said.

Mr. Thurston was a 20-game winner for the last-place White Sox in 1924.

When he asked for a pay raise during the winter, he was turned down. "We could have finished eighth without you," Chisox owner Charles Comiskey told him.

Mr. Thurston, who resided in Mar Vista, concluded his active career with the Missions (PCL) in 1936, and after managing Tacoma of the Western International League he became a Pittsburgh scout in 1939.