In 1915, Emmett “Hick” Munsell has one of greatest turnarounds in minor league history, winning 29 games for the San Antonio Bronchos and Salt Lake City Bees, a year after losing 27 games with the Bronchos and the Austin Senators.

That accomplishment earns the angular one his first and only shot at the major leagues the following spring, where during the New York Giants’ training camp, he gains notoriety and national headlines for challenging New York Giants’ manager John McGraw and being banished to the minor leagues, never to return.

Born on March 1, 1889, in Eminence, Missouri, the 6-foot-1, 190-pound, right-hander has a 17-year minor-league career primarily as pitcher, but also on occasion, as a first baseman and outfielder.

A 122-game winner, Munsell will twice lead the vaunted Texas League in losses and innings pitched, while pacing the league once in wins. A durable slabster, he will pitch more than 200 innings five times, including a career-high 444 in 1915, while splitting time between San Antonio and Salt Lake City.

Known as a curveball specialist, Munsell’s success with that pitch may have been as a result to a broken finger from his youth that never heals properly, causing the index finger on his right hand to curve like a hook, significantly aiding in its' effectiveness.

In 1911, he is 4-9 with the Waco Navigators before “jumping” his contract on the last day of May to join an independent teams in Sulpher Springs and Longview. The erstwhile Munsell returns to the Dallas Giants at the close of the season where he is 4-1 in six starts.

Munsell turns it up a notch in 1911, starting 44 games for fourth-place Dallas, finishing 20-20 with five shutouts. On three occasions, he will start both ends of a doubleheader and will end up leading the league with 326 2/3 innings pitched and his 215 strikeouts are third behind Oklahoma City’s Harley Young (245) and Fort Worth’s Rube Robinson (243).

In 1908 and 1909, he merits attention from pro scouts while toiling for the Longview Cannibals and Nacogdoches Missionaries, a pair of noted Lone Star State semipro teams.

On August 7, 1909, Munsell clinches the Texas semi-pro championship for Longview with a 2-1 complete game win over McKinney. Sixteen days later, he makes his professional debut with the Dallas Giants of the Texas League, lasting all of four batters in a 6-3 loss to Fort Worth.

In 1910, he is 4-9 with the Waco Navigators before “jumping” his contract on the last day of May to join an independent teams in Sulpher Springs and Longview. The erstwhile Munsell returns to the Dallas Giants at the close of the season where he is 4-1 in six starts.

Broken Digit

Sacramento pitcher “Judge” Munsell, has one of the widest curves in pro baseball, which he owes to a finger broken when he fell off his father’s barn as a youth in Longview, Texas. When the bones knitted, the finger was stiff and just fitted the contour of the ball. It looks more like a claw than a finger, but he finds it a great aid in pitching.
Returning to familiar haunts, Munsell is purchased by the Texas League’s Austin Senators three days after the start of the 1914 season. Munsell is 4-10 for the Senators when he is traded to the San Antonio Bronchos for pitcher Ted Bowen and cash consideration on June 9. Munsell leaves Austin just in time as the Senators begin a 31-game, 28-day losing streak five days later (June 14), a minor league record for its time, and will go on to lose 116 games, a Texas League record.

Pitching for two teams - Austin and San Antonio - that lose over 100 games each, and combine for a 77-217 (.261) mark, Munsell finishes 9-27, first in the circuit in innings pitched (325 2/3) and losses (27), second in walks (136) and fifth in strikeouts (190).

Looking to rebound from a miserable 1914 campaign, Munsell starts 1915 with two shutouts in his first five starts en route to a breakout year, finishing 25-11 with San Antonio and 4-1 with Salt Lake City. His 25 wins lead the Texas League and his 381 2/3 innings are second and his 193 strikeouts third.

Three days before the end of the season and as a “reward for his hard work,” San Antonio gives Munsell permission to finish out the season with the Salt Lake City Bees of the Pacific Coast League. The Bronchos make it clear that this not a loan to the Bees, but simply a reward to Munsell and a way for him to make a “couple of extra dollars”.

Meanwhile, out in the Beehive State, Salt Lake City manager Cliff Blankenship, in an effort to bolster his pitching staff with a left-handed starter for the remainder of the season and to replace eventual 33-game winner and Black Sox conspirator Claude “Lefty” Williams, is pleased to acquire a talented left-handed pitcher. The Salt Lake City Telegram also reports that Munsell is left-handed, thus earning the hurler the moniker “Lefty.” Blankenship says later that he is pleased to have Munsell, but “disappointed” to find out he is right-handed.

Unfortunately for Munsell, his 29-win season is the pinnacle of his career. Over the next eight years he will toil for 10 different teams, winning more than eight games only once.

However, he does have one last hurrah in 1922, finishing 14-4 in 23 starts as a 33-year-old with the Muskogee Mets of the Southwestern (C) League.

Hick Munsell [2 of 8]:

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Emmett “Hick” Munsell Year by Year:

- 1911 - Led Texas League in losses (20), innings pitched (326.2).
- 1914 - Led Texas League in losses (27), innings pitched (325.2).
- 1915 - Led Texas League in wins (25).
Hick Munsell [3 of 8]:

Munsell stays in the game over the next couple of years, returning as a player/manager with the Longview Cannibals and several stints with semipro teams.

Munsell calls it quits in 1931, after managing the Henderson Oilers for half a season.

Or does he?

A linescore from a Marshall versus Jacksonville game on June 1, 1938, lists a “Munsell” pitching for Marshall. He would have been 49 years old, but it is possible. Following his playing days, he remains in Longview as a surveyor and contractor. On December 31, 1974, Emmett Eugene Munsell, after a lengthy illness, dies of lung cancer in Longview at the age of 85.

MUNSELL CHRONOLOGY

June 29, 1908
Pitching for the Longview Cannibals, Munsell has five strikeouts in the first five innings when Henderson’s Charles Flanagan lays down a bunt along the first base line ... Longview claims Henderson touches the ball, but umpire Chamberlain disagrees and calls Flanagan safe, whereupon the Cannibal team leaves the grounds, forfeiting the game.

January 11, 1909
Munsell signs his first professional contract with the Dallas Giants of the Texas League.

August 7, 1909
Munsell clinches the Texas semipro championship for Longview with a 2-1 complete game win over McKinney.

Munsell’s pro baseball debut lasts a total of four batters in a 6-3 loss to Fort Worth. After Jack Fillman and John Kinnally reach base on errors (one by Munsell), Munsell hits Dred Cavender and is relieved by Hatton Ogle.

May 30, 1910
For Waco, mired in last place in the Texas League with a 12-30 record, the news goes from bad to worse, when it learns that Munsell has jumped the team to play independent ball for a club in Sulpher Springs.

June 8, 1910
Munsell plays for his third team in less than 10 days when he agrees to play for the Longview Cannibals.

July 30, 1910
Munsell returns to the Texas signing with Dallas ... in his Giants’ debut, Munsell pitches a five-hit complete game 5-1 win over San Antonio.

August 11, 1910
Munsell picks up his first career shutout, whitewashing Galveston 4-0 on five hits.

August 19, 1910
Eight days after pitching a five-hit shutout of Galveston, Munsell is sold to the New York Giants for $750 and is told to report to the National League team as soon as the Texas League season ends.

Munsell’s 1910 Old Mill Series 3 Card No. 62
while in the uniform of the Waco Navigators is worth up to $110 in good-excellent condition.
Hick Munsell [4 of 8]:

September 21, 1910
Munsell is released by the New York Giants back to the Dallas Giants.

March 10, 1911
All of the Dallas players are in camp with the exception of Munsell, who is holding out.

April 19, 1911
Munsell allows seven hits and strikes out eight in a 10-1 complete game victory over Oklahoma City.

April 21, 1911
On one day's rest, Munsell strikes out 10 and shuts out Fort Worth 1-0 on three hits.

May 1, 1911
Munsell turns in the season's first one-hitter in a 6-0 win over Fort Worth.

June 14, 1911
Pitching both games of a doubleheader for the second time in a month, Munsell earns a split ... in the first game, Munsell allows only three hits en route to 5-0 win over Waco for his third shutout of the season.

June 25, 1911
Munsell turns in his fourth shutout of the year, whitewashing Houston 4-0 on four hits ... in his "iron man" role, Munsell has pitched three times in five days.

July 9, 1911
Munsell's single with one out in the bottom of the 10th inning gives Dallas a 1-0 win over visiting Austin and notches Munsell his fifth shutout of the season.

July 23, 1911
For the third time this season, Munsell pitches both ends of a doubleheader ... in the opener, he allows only four hits in a 9-1 win over Austin ... in the second game he loses a 1-0 decision in 10 innings ... totals for the day, 19 innings, two runs on nine hits.

Munity on the Buffaloes

Houston Players Reported to Commission for Mutiny

August 16, 1911 - Seven Houston players are turned into the National Commission for consideration of permanent suspension. Gil Briton, Roger Edmundson, Reeves McKay, Pat Newman, Robbie Riggs, Charlie Rose and George Whiteman refuse to go to Fort Worth with the team following the suspension and $100 fine levied against team captain Hunter Hill by team owner Otto Sens. The Buffaloes, 66-59 and in third place at the time of the suspensions, win only five of their remaining 20 games and drop to sixth place with a 71-74 mark.

August 24, 1911
Munsell picks up shutout No. 6, a 3-0 six-hit whitewashing of visiting Houston.

August 26, 1911
Munsell is sold to the New York Giants.

January 15, 1912
Munsell is on the New York Giants' list of players to report to Marlin, Texas by February 17.

April 1, 1912
Noted sportswriter Damon Runyon opines of Munsell, "Of the recruit pitchers, this right-hander "Hickory" Munsell has demonstrated that he has about as much as any pitcher in the business; whether he will be able to control it is another question. There is a chance that McGraw will go along with him for a time."

April 12, 1912
Munsell and 18-year-old shortstop Milton Stock are sold to the Buffalo Bisons ... Stock will join the New York Giants in 1913 and go on to play 14 seasons in the major leagues.
April 23, 1912
Munsell is Buffalo’s opening day pitcher but lasts only one inning, allowing two runs on one hit, one walk and a hit batter in the first inning before being relieved by Sailor Stroud who picks up the win as the Bisons beat Baltimore 9-7.

April 28, 1912
Scheduled to start against Jersey City, Munsell is unable to take the mound after earlier falling against a red hot pipe in the club house sustaining burns about the neck and arms.

July 27, 1912
Munsell is 3-4 in 14 games with Buffalo, when the last-place Sacramento Senators of the Pacific Coast League purchase his contract.

August 2, 1912
Munsell pitches well in his Sacramento debut, but drops a 2-1 decision to the Los Angeles Angels ... Munsell allows seven hits and strikes out eight, but a fifth inning home run by Heine Heitmuller is the difference.

September 1, 1912
Sacramento, behind a complete-game seven-hitter by Munsell, snaps a 10-game losing streak with a 4-1 win over the Los Angeles Angels.

September 5, 1912
More woes for last-place Sacramento, as Munsell, who is responsible for the only two wins in the last 19 games for the Senators, is recalled by the New York Giants.

September 8, 1912
On the same day that New York sells Munsell back to the Buffalo Bisons for $500, Munsell picks up a win the hard way for Sacramento, allowing 11 runs on 17 hits and four walks, in a 12-11 complete game win over Portland.

December 20, 1912
Munsell is involved in a championship controversy in California’s Valley League when it is revealed that he pitched a couple of the games for Maryville in their battle with Chico for league honors.

Posthumous Batting Champion

HEITMULLER IS DEAD

Six weeks after hitting the game-winning home run against Munsell, 29-year-old Los Angeles Angels outfielder Heine Heitmuller will play in the final game of his career. On October 8, 1912, Heitmuller succumbs to typhoid fever and dies at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. At the time of his death, Heitmuller has a career-high 15 home runs and is second in the PCL batting race with a .335 average to teammate Pete Daley (.338). Over the remaining 22 games, Daley’s average eventually slips to .332 and Heitmuller becomes the only player in professional baseball history to win a league batting title posthumously.

McGraw Calls Munsell
San Francisco, Sept. 6.—Pitcher Munsell, who hasn’t had much success in his short stay with Sacramento in the Coast League, has been recalled by the New York Giants. Munsell came to Sacramento from Buffalo, but the Buffalo club held him only under an optional agreement with New York.
Hick Munsell [6 of 8]:

February 1913
Wilbert Robinson on Munsell: “There was one youngster with the squad last Spring who would have been a wonder if he had control. This was “Hickory” Munsell, who had an enormous amount of natural stuff, but no idea of what to do with it. McGraw sent him to Buffalo, and Buffalo sent him to Sacramento, where he started out to astonish the natives, but got hurt.”

April 24, 1913
Portland’s Hi West tops Sacramento’s “Judge” Munsell 1-0 in a Pacific Coast League pitcher’s dual ... Munsell allows only three hits but his errant throw on West’s sacrifice bunt in the eighth inning leads to the game’s lone tally ... the loss drops Munsell’s record to 1-3 on the year.

February 16, 1914
Coming a 6-14 season with Sacramento, it is rumored that Munsell is a holdout and may be “flirting” with the Federal League.

February 26, 1914
Munsell will not join Sacramento for at least two months after having a finger on his pitching hand “badly mashed.”

April 11, 1914
The Texas League’s Austin Senators are 1-2 on the young season when they acquire Munsell from Sacramento.

June 9, 1914
Munsell is 4-10 when Austin trades him to San Antonio for pitcher Ted Bowen and cash consideration.

June 10, 1914
Munsell wins his first game for San Antonio, allowing Waco five hits in an 8-2 win.

“Lefty” Munsell

“Smack” Your Lip Because We Are Going to Have a Real Series; “Lefty” Munsell, Who, By the Way, Is a Right-Hander, Reported to Blankenship Today.

September 7, 1915 - In an effort to bolster his pitching staff with a left-handed starter for the remainder of the season and to replace eventual 33-game winner and Black Sox conspirator Claude “Lefty” Williams, Salt Lake City manager Cliff Blankenship acquires “Lefty” Munsell from the Texas League’s San Antonio Bronchos. Following a complete game 2-1 victory against Beaumont on the final day of the season, Munsell is sent to the Bees a 30-day trial basis. The Salt Lake City Telegram reports that Munsell is left-handed, thus earning the hurler the moniker “Lefty.” Blankenship is both pleased to have Munsell and “disappointed” to find out he is right-handed. A sterling 25-11 for the Bronchos before the trade, Munsell finishes 4-1 for Salt Lake City.

September 6, 1914
Munsell ends a forgettable season, dropping an 8-3 decision to Houston in the second game of a doubleheader ... the loss drops his record to 9-27 on the year while playing for two worst teams in the Texas League.

April 12, 1915
Munsell takes a no-hitter against Houston into the seventh inning before settling for a three-hit shutout of the Buffaloes ... Munsell strikes out eight in a 3-0 win.

April 17, 1915
For the second-straight game, Munsell pitches a complete game victory over the Houston Buffaloes, allowing only three hits and striking out seven en route to a 6-1 win ... in the two games, Munsell allows only six hits in 18 innings.

Math - Strong Suit Not

TEXAS LEAGUE AVERAGES

July 10, 1915 - The Texas League releases its statistics through the first half of the season and Dallas Giants’ right-hander Tod Sloan leads all pitchers with 213 innings in 18 games, an average of 11 2/3rd innings per game. Opps.

September 2, 1915
As a “reward for his hard work” the San Antonio management gives Munsell permission to finish out the season with the Salt Lake City Bees of the Pacific Coast League ... the Bronchos make it clear that this not a loan, but simply a reward to Munsell and a way to make a couple of extra dollars.

If they ever increase the width of the plate about two feet, Gene Munsell ought to be the greatest pitcher in the world.
Hick Munsell [7 of 8]:

September 8, 1915
Following a complete game 2-1 victory for San Antonio against Beaumont on the final day of the Texas League season, the Bronchos sell Munsell to the Salt Lake City Bees of the Pacific Coast League on a 30-day trial basis ... the Salt Lake City papers report that Munsell is left-handed, thus earning the hurler the moniker “Lefty” ... Bees manager Blankenship is both pleased to have Munsell and “disappointed” to find out he is left-handed, as he was counting on Munsell to replace “Lefty” Williams in next year’s rotation.

September 11, 1915
Munsell, “wild as a March hare” hits Vernon Tiger Gus Gleichmann in the face with a pitch, fracturing several bones in the second baseman’s cheek ... Gleichmann has surgery to repair the broken bones on September 15 ... feared lost for the season, Gleichmann returns to the lineup on October 20.

May 2, 1916
Saddled with a 1-3 record in seven appearances, Munsell becomes an “outlaw” when he is sold to Tacoma but refuses to report, preferring to choose a berth with Hayden in the Tri-Copper League instead.

May 3, 1916
Munsell makes his Hayden Smelter debut pitching a scoreless ninth inning in a 7-3 loss to Ray Mines in the opening game of the Tri-Copper League season.

May 7, 1916
Munsell is thrown out of the game in the seventh inning with Hayden Smelter leading the Hayden Mill team 2-1 ... Smelter pushes across a run in the bottom of the ninth for a 3-2 win.

May 9, 1916
San Antonio president Benson is trying to work out a deal with Salt Lake City to “straighten out” some financial matters and get Munsell to return to the Bronchos ... Benson’s efforts prove unsuccessful.

June 18, 1916
Hayden Smelter beats Hayden Mill 3-2 on the strength of Munsell’s seven-hitter.

July 8, 1916
Tri-Copper League players are starting to leave for greener pastures ... Millers’ outfielder Dick Bayless and infielder Fred Carisch sign with Salt Lake ... Millers’ outfielder Nick Schilz signs with an undisclosed team ... Mines third baseman Downey starts for Salt Lake.

February 9, 1917
Munsell make his return to the Texas League, signing with the Beaumont Oilers.

1916 Hayden Smelters
Back Row: 1-Miller, 2-Munsell, 3-Whaling, 4-Hughes, 5-Flick, 6-Boeckel, 7-MacMurdo, Front Row: 8-Pierce, 9-Duddy, 10-Bender, 11-Stadelli, 12-Callan.

1916 Tri-Copper League

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1916 Hayden Smelters
May 18, 1917
Munsell is 2-4 with Beaumont, when the Oilers and the Galveston Pirates are dropped from the Texas League by the other four members ... Munsell is assigned to Dallas in a player dispersal draft.

May 29, 1917
Munsell pitches a three-hit shutout and drives in the game’s only run with a eighth inning double in a 1-0 win over Waco.

April 15, 1918
Shreveport’s Munsell picks up his 70th and final Texas League victory with a 7-3 win over the Dallas Giants.

July 31, 1922
Muskogee’s “Lank” Munsell, the premier twirler in the Southwestern League, wins his 12th straight game to open the season over the Hutchinson Wheat Shockers, 11-1 ... Munsell’s streak will come to an end at an even dozen three days later with a 6-1 loss to the Salina Millers.

February 12, 1923
Munsell organizes a five-team semi-pro league with teams in Greenville, Longview, Marshall, Mt. Pleasant, Paris and Sulpher Springs ... each club is to purchase two cars for travel, home teams to guarantee $50 per day, except for Sundays and holidays where the receipts are to be split equally.

On December 31, 1974
After a lengthy illness, Emmett Eugene Munsell, dies of lung cancer in Longview at the age of 85.