



## ESTEL "CRABBY" CRABTREE

Estel's father, Elisha age 53, was walking on the railroad tracks on his way to work at the Bannon Farm south of Lucasville as he always did. He felt safe because he knew the train schedules and which track they would be on. But this day there had been trouble with a freight train uncoupling at Davis Station so this train switched from its normal track. This was April, 1912. Elisha's son, Estel Crayton Crabtree, was eight going on nine years old having been born August 19, 1903 at Crabtree (near Rarden), Morgan Township, Ohio.

Sometime after he was 12, the family moved to Hocking County where he played ball. He then moved to the city league in Columbus where a scout spotted him. He was sent to Iowa, then Oklahoma, and then the Columbus Senators.

At age 26 standing five feet eleven inches tall and weighing 168 pounds, he began his major league baseball career as a pinch hitter with the Cincinnati Reds in 1929. He played that year then again in 1931-1932 then moved to the Saint Louis Cardinals for 1933. He spent much of his career with the Rochester, NY, Redwings beginning in 1933 until 1941. His career here was outstanding and he is in the Rochester Red Wings Hall of Fame. He is their all-time leader in hits 1 041, with 91 home runs, RBI 525 and games played 934. In 1939 the Red Wings were playing the Newark Bears (a Yankee farm team) for the Governor's Cup. The Bears had a 6-2 lead in the bottom of the ninth. The Red Wings first two batters went down, and then they got a run. Then two men got on base and "Crabby" came to bat. He hit a three run home run to tie the game which the Red Wings won in 12 innings and went on to win the cup. A Rochester newspaper polled their readers about the city's outstanding sports happenings of the century. "Crabby's" homer led the list.

After eight years, he returned to the major league playing first for St. Louis in 1941-1942 and the Cincinnati Reds in 1943-1944. This return was highly unusual. One article commented, "Playing in the thick of the pennant race between St. Louis and the Brooklyn Dodgers, Crabby has done as much as any of his fellow [younger] team mates to keep the Club in the running. Always known for his speed, batting eye, and all around hustle, he has of this writing collected 21 hits in 45 trips to the plate for a batting average of .467.

He hit left handed and threw right handed. He played outfield his whole career. His best season was in 1941 when he returned to the big leagues at age 37. He finished 32<sup>nd</sup> in voting for the most valuable player for playing in 77 games and having 167 at bats, 27 runs, 57 hits, 6 doubles, 3 triples, 5 home runs, 28 runs batted in, 26 walks, .341 batting average, .439 on base percentage.

While at St. Louis, he met and became a friend of Branch Rickey who had lived close to where "Crabby's" family had.

All agreed that he was a sensational pinch hitter and fielder. At one point, he was asked by his coach to help Stan “the man” Musial, adjust for different hitters. Stan was a first year player. Estel whose nickname was Crabby later recalled, “I didn’t have to help him. Everything he did, he did well right from the start.”

Another experience he had was asking Babe Ruth for pointers at the same time he was playing on the opposing team. The Bambino spent forty five minutes giving him pointers.

When he retired, he returned to Nelsonville where he did public relations work for the coal company there. He helped organize Little League baseball for youngsters in the area. He was also active in the band boosters serving as president, and was founder of the “Old-Timers Baseball Day” held each year during the Parade of the Hills Festival. Crabtree Field in Nelsonville is dedicated to him.

In 1947 after he retired, his mother, Mary Alice McCorkle Crabtree, died in Hocking County. Crabby brought his mother home to Lucasville for burial beside her husband who had died so tragically so long ago.

Estel Crayton Crabtree died at age 63 in 1967 and is buried in Nelsonville along with his wife, Mae, who died in 1976.

In 1980, he was posthumously inducted into the Ohio Baseball Hall of Fame. His daughter, Mrs. Diane Adams and his sister Sarepta Barber attended to hear his record read and join other Ohioans who will always be remembered in baseball.