



PELICAN BRIEFS

by

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Jules Pujol

Born in New Orleans on December 12, 1864, Jules Pujol was an infielder and outfielder for several professional teams in and around New Orleans during the 1880s.

Year	Team	League
1886	New Orleans	Gulf League
1886	Mobile	Gulf League
1887	New Orleans Pelicans	Southern League
1888	Galveston Giants	Texas League
1888	Houston Babies	Texas-Southern League
1888	Galveston Giants	Texas-Southern League
1889	Mobile	Southern League

Pujol caught the eye of businessman Toby Hart, who had been unsuccessful in securing a franchise for New Orleans in the newly formed Southern League in 1885. Hart and Conrad Leithman arranged for two teams from New Orleans to face off against two teams from Mobile in the Gulf League – New Orleans, Mobile, the Acid Iron Earths, and the Robert E. Lee's.

Among his teammates on the New Orleans club were Joe Dowie and Mike Shea.

Baseball being a tenuous endeavor at this time, particularly as a start-up league, Pujol played for both New Orleans and Mobile in 1886. Information regarding the games played and player statistics are nearly non-existent.

In 1887 New Orleans was admitted to the Southern League and Pujol was a member of the New Orleans Pelicans. He played 51 games in center field, 29 games at third base, 3 games in right field, and 1 game at shortstop. He even appeared as pitcher in a single game, giving up five hits and two earned runs in the one inning in which he appeared.

His offensive production was better than average, compiling a .314 batting average for the pennant winning Pelicans in their inaugural season in the Southern League.

The next season saw Pujol in the Texas-Southern League with both the Galveston Giants and the Houston Babies. The fragile league was up and down and finally collapsed after less than 24 games. Pujol managed to post a .175 batting average, but clearly the 16 games in which we played was not enough to be representative.

Pujol played eight games for the Mobile franchise in 1889 before returning home and retiring from professional baseball. His heart was no longer in the game and he felt a higher calling.

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Pujol had been a non-paid member (volunteer) of the New Orleans Fire Department while playing baseball. Along with his brother Louis, he joined Pelican Hook & Ladder Company No. 4 on April 3, 1883 first as a Ladderman and later as a Tillerman. He is shown second from the left in the photograph below. His brother Louis was a Driver of Pelican Hook & Ladder Company No. 4, and is shown at the far right in the photograph below.



HOOK & LADDER CO. NO. 4.
J. Rady, Ladderman. J. Pujol, Lieut. and Tillerman. H. J. Lucchesi, Ladderman. E. D. Baybi, Ladderman. A. Schlesinger, Ladderman. Oscar Fredricks, Captain. Fred. Brown, Ladderman. Louis Pujol, Driver.

Photograph from *The History of the Fire Department of New Orleans* by Thomas O'Connor (Publisher Unknown, 1895) page 478. Pelican Hook & Ladder Company No. 4 was located at the corner of Conti and Basin Streets.

In the early morning hours of October 31, 1892, Pelican Hook & Ladder No. 4 responded to a tremendous fire at Baronne and Canal Streets which was consuming a building known as Grunwald Hall. The ground floor served as a piano warehouse while the upper floors were occupied by the families of Louis Hess and Joseph Mutz.

Cut off from escape by the smoke and flames, there were nine people from the Hess and Mutz families who seemed destined to perish in the blaze. Realizing that their ladders were too short to affect a rescue by conventional means, Pujol and four other firemen ascended the fire escape on the adjoining Chess, Checkers and Whist Club. From that vantage point they swung by rope to the roof of the burning building, hauling a ladder over to bridge from one building to the other and passed the nine endangered persons across the ladder bridge one-by-one to safety.

For their courage and resourcefulness, Pujol and four other firefighters, including his brother Louis, were awarded the department's highest honor and were feted with a parade through downtown New Orleans.

Pujol rose through the ranks of the department and was an Assistant Chief on February 23, 1924, when he responded to an early morning fire at the Marks-Isaacs warehouse on Canal Street. The 59-year old Pujol died after being trapped in the building when the floors and walls collapsed. Five other firefighters were seriously injured.

Pujol is interred at Greenwood Cemetery in New Orleans.

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