

## LOST Great Falls Footnotes:

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### Electric City Club

The membership of the Electric city club is largely composed of the old members of the Rainbow club, and the following are its officers:

President—F.P. Atkinson.

Vice President—H.P. Brown.

Secretary and treasurer—F.F. Shur.

Trustees—Paris Gibson, H.P. Brown, W.S. Frary, F.P. Atkinson, L.G. Phelps, F.F. Shur, J.H. McKnight, E.G. Maclay, and A.M. Scott.

Steward—Ed Sims [sic, Simms]

The following will constitute the initial membership of the new club:

#### CITY MEMBERS: 57

W.D. Dickerson	A.E. Dickerman
O.F. Wadsworth, Jr.	W.H. Gelsthorpe
T.E. Collins	P. Kelly
A.G. Ladd	B.D. Townsend
J.F. McClellan	Frank Coombs
E.G. Hansen	G.H. Goodrich
R.S. Ford	Frank Kleptko
A.F. Longeway	B. Layeyre
John A. Sweat	W.T. Pigott
Robt Blankenbaker	J.H. Fairfield
Wm Roberts	H.P. Brown
C.N. Dickenson	Thos. E. Brady
J.F. Adams	W.J. Kennedy
B.B. Kelly	F.P. Atkinson
W.M. Cockrill	W.M. Albrecht
W.P. Wren	S.E. Atkinson
L.G. Phelps	Wm Silverman
Joseph Silverman	E.G. Maclay
J.H. McKnight	Gowan Ferguson
Ira Myers	Harry B. Hill
Jere B. Leslie	W.S. Frary
Paris Gibson	A.M. Scott
W.E. Chamberlin	A.W. Kingsbury
H.F. Collett	F.F. Shur
Frank M. Smith	James O'Grady
Gold T. Curtis	R.P.R. Gordon
E.W. King	Matt Dunn
L.R. Fortune	John J. Case

D.W. Bateman

#### OUT OF TOWN MEMBERS: 10

Dudley DuBose Fort Benton.

John Fleming, Chicago.

J.E. Bower, Stanford.  
George L. Tracy, Helena.  
P.B. Buchanan, Willow Creek.  
J.F. Weimescary, Helena.  
S.N. Dickey, Belt.  
John Lepley, Fort Benton.  
John D. Waite, Utica.

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## **Black Eagle Park**

### **“Pretty” Tinker and Great Falls Baseball in 1900**

**By Ken Robison**

Spring is here, and we welcome spring rains and the sounds of “Play Ball!” and the crack of a bat. Fans dust off memories of past players and teams that have brightened summer evenings. As we cheer on our Great Falls Voyagers this summer, remember the good years of the Dodgers, Giants, Electrics and Selectrics, we can pause to look back to the year 1900, when the Great Falls Indians first brought a pennant and a bright shining star to our city.

The Great Falls Indians won the Montana State League in 1900, well sort of, and they did it with a bunch of cast-offs led by legendary manager named “Honest John” McCloskey and a sparkling little youngster named “Pretty” Tinker. Yes, Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Tinker began his legendary career in none other than Great Falls, Montana in that exciting summer of 1900.

At age nineteen Joseph B. Tinker, was a good hitter and a spectacular fielder with exceptional speed. His start in Great Falls in 1900 propelled him within two years to the National League Chicago Cubs, where he anchored the famed double-play combination of “Tinker to Evers to Chance.” Today as we celebrate the start of another baseball season, we can remember Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, and Frank Chance, all now in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame and irascible manager “Honest John” McCloskey

The season started badly for the newly organized Great Falls Indians in May 1900, competing for the first time in the Montana League against Butte, Anaconda, and Helena. Manager John J. McCloskey had not yet arrived, and Joe Tinker was a rookie playing, mainly on the bench, for a Denver team. The Indians lost their first game narrowly to Helena 6-7 and the losses continued. By the seventh loss, a 12-25 shellacking by Helena that featured 13 errors by bumbling Indian fielders, local fans were losing patience. The Tribune sports reporter lamented, “The people of Great Falls will not object if the alleged ball players of the Great Falls club are called shepherders or any other old thing.”

McCloskey finally arrived the first week of June, just as the team absorbed its eighth loss, another drubbing to Helena. Honest John began to change the team as he hired and fired players with a vengeance. Loss number nine came at the hands of the Butte Smoke-eaters with eleven more Great Falls errors. Three new players, including highly regarded catcher Zearfoss arrived, but the Indians still lost in another slugfest. Loss number eleven in a row came in Butte, compliment of seventeen Indian errors.

By now, McCloskey had replaced all but two players, but he wasn’t done yet. The Indians won their first game of the season June 19<sup>th</sup> over Butte. The Tribune declared, “At last Great Falls has a baseball club” resulting from McCloskey’s training and the new talent. Win two came two days later against Anaconda. Friday June 15<sup>th</sup> 1,000 fans flocked to Black Eagle Park to watch “the best

game of baseball that has been played in the league this season.” Great Falls lost narrowly 4-5 because of clutch errors, but the game was exciting. The Indians won the next three straight, before dropping a game to Butte from sloppy fielding.

With a record of 5 wins and 14 losses, on a sunny day at Black Eagle Park before a thousand fans, the Indians took the field against Butte with 19 year-old Joe Tinker playing second base, a new position for him. Tinker had been released by Denver in Sioux City when he got the call from McCloskey offering a job. With just \$2 in his pocket and a ticket to Great Falls, Montana, “Pretty” Joe Tinker boarded the train. In his first game as an Indian, he drew rave reviews from the Tribune, “Tinker was the star,” and for the first time the box score read “double play Zearfoss to Tinker to McCloskey.” The Indians played their first error-free game that day, winning 7-6.

Sparked by McCloskey’s leadership and the sparkling play of Tinker and other new guys by mid July the Indians were playing good ball, the crowds were flocking to Black Eagle Park. The Tribune was celebrating with headlines like, “Great Falls is Victorious in a Magnificent Game.” The Indians were climbing in the standings.

The First Series (half) of the baseball season ended July 22, and the Indians stood at 15 wins, 20 losses. The Second Series got off to a fast start with the Indians winning five games in a row and beating their old nemesis Helena in four of those games.

But the Great Falls club was out of money, McCloskey’s free spending of the team’s meager budget had caught up and the club was in debt, so in a deal that will live in infamy to Great Falls fans, Honest John traded star rookie Joe Tinker to Helena! In Tinker’s own words, “ “When the second half of the season was pretty well advanced and Great Falls had climbed from the bottom to the top, the club was found to be \$195 in debt, and McCloskey sold me to Helena for \$200 and [infielder] Joe Marshall. Again I made good, for the Helena fans took a strong liking toward me, but our team was just nosed out at the finish by Great Falls, which necessitated a play off for the championship.”

Adding further insult, good hitting Joe Marshall was soon in the hospital with season ending typhoid fever. McCloskey’s response was to bring in more new players, and the Indians won the Second Series to qualify for a five-game playoff with Helena, winner of the First Series.

Joe Tinker tells the story of the wild and wooly playoffs: “The first two games we [Helena] played in Great Falls, and we broke even with them, and the next two games were to be played in Helena, and if the fifth was necessary a neutral point was to be chosen. We got off good in the first game on our home lot and defeated them, but in the fourth game we had the lead when Umpire Burke made several of the fiercest decisions ever rendered. He put me out of the game, and because I did not leave within one minute he forfeited the game to Great Falls. The fans rose en masse and chased him over the back fence to his hotel, and followed this up by having him arrested before he could leave town for Butte, where the fifth game was ordered played.”

Tinker continues, “McCloskey took the Great Falls team to Butte that night, and he had Miles McDonough, formerly a catcher, appointed umpire for the occasion. In the seventh inning we had the game won by a score of 5 to 2, but in the eighth, McDonough called four balls on seven straight Great Falls batsmen giving them the lead, and as soon as he had done this “Ducky” Pace, our catcher, deliberately threw the ball out of the lot, and McDonough forfeited the game to Great Falls.”

So, that is the story of baseball in Great Falls in 1900. The Indians were, sort of, “Champions of Montana.” They had, and then traded away sparkling young Joe Tinker. And Great Falls fans had a glimpse, however brief, of an amazing future hall of famer who within two years would become a star in the big leagues and anchor the most famous infield in history. That Cubs infield was

immortalized in this verse bitterly written by a New York Giants' fan in 1910 as his team lost year after year to the Cubs:

These are the saddest of possible words:  
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."  
Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds,  
Tinker and Evers and Chance.  
Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon bubble,  
Making a Giant hit into a double –  
Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:  
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."

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### **Luther's Hall**

#### **Montana State Champions**

In late spring of 1903, Fort Shaw Girls were crowned Montana State Champions and playing to jam-packed crowds in Luther's Hall. The *Leader* reported the action the night of June 8<sup>th</sup> with blazing headlines:

#### **Was Absolutely Nothing To It**

#### **Four Little Indians Play Rings Around Six Home Girls.**

#### **Just Like Shooting Fish. Nettie Wirth Makes Most Sensational Play Ever Recorded in Hall.**

There was a basketball game last evening at Luther's hall between four little Indian girls of the Fort Shaw school and six little girls of the Great Falls teams. It was to have been a contest, but there was absolutely nothing to it and the four little Indian girls made rings about the home team at the final footing of 45 to 1, the worst score ever put up in the city.

#### **Was Wrong Handicap.**

The game was intended to have been three little Indians against seven white girls, but Manager Hamill, of the home team felt that he would be taking too much advantage of the little Indians by allowing it to go that way and he made it six to four. It should have been seven to two. There were about 200 people present, and the little ladies all played with vim and dash, the only trouble with the home team being that they cannot play the game, while the Indians play like clockwork. It was one, two, three and a basket until the audience got tired of counting them and the Indians got tired of making them.

#### **Nettie Made Star Play.**

The only count secured by the home team was on a free throw by Miss Pontet, saving a shut out. The sensational play of the evening, and the greatest ever seen in the halls was made by Nettie Wirth on a throw up of the ball, she reaching up and striking it square into the basket from the umpire's hands, while her opponent gasped in astonishment.

[*Leader*, June 9, 1903.]

#### **An Entertainment Package**

Superintendent Campbell added to the attraction by showcasing Fort Shaw student talents in music and literature as part of a full entertainment package for the fans at the games as portrayed in the *Leader*:

Indian Girls' Basketball Team and Entertainment Tonight.

The Fort Shaw basketball team, together with other pupils of the Indian school, will this evening give an entertainment at Luther Hall.

The girls who will play and give much of the entertainment are the ten who will represent Montana at the World's Fair in St. Louis, and this is the last chance which Great Falls people have to see them together. The girls are Belle Johnson, Piegan; Genie Butch, Sioux; Nettie Wirth, Sioux; Minnie Burton, Shoshone; Emma Sansavere, Sioux; Geneveive Healy, Gros-ventres; Katie Snell, Sioux; Sarah Mitchell, Sioux; Rose LaRose, Arapaho. The girls will appear in the 'Famine' recitation, the dresses being the finest things of the kind ever seen in the city. <sup>13-1</sup> **[Photo of Emma's Dress]**

Besides the recitations, pantomine, musical selections, club swinging, barbell exercises . . . there will be a relay foot race, girls competing; a basketball game between teams of girls; and a dance for all.

The basketball game will be an exciting struggle. The two teams are expert, very evenly matched, and in their games thus far, have found it very difficult to score. They have become very accurate and fouls, except accidental, are very few.

The entertainment is one that has been prepared specially for the St. Louis exposition, and nothing like it will every again be seen in Great Falls.

The program is as follows:

Overture.....School orchestra (Miss Jardine and Miss Evans assisting.)  
Pantomine, 'Paradise and the Peri' .....Class of girls, Grecian costumes  
Violin solo, 'La Danubienne' .....Elsen  
Recitation, 'Nothin' 't All' .....Louis Youpee  
Recitation, 'Nebuchadnezzar' .....John Meinsinger  
Overture.....Orchestra  
Club swinging.....Girls  
Concert recitation. "The Famine" .....Class of girls, Indian costumes  
Alphabetical sermon.....John Meinsinger  
Bar-bell exercises.....Girls  
Calisthenics.....Class of Girls  
Basketball game.....Girls' teams  
Relay foot race.....Girls  
Dance.....Everybody  
Admission, 50 cents. Entertainment begins at 8:30. *Leader*, February 5, 1904.