

Baxter sole Chippewa native to play in MLB
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There have been nearly 17,000 players that have made it to the professional ranks of Major League Baseball. Of those, 232 were born in Wisconsin. Of those, one was born in Chippewa Falls — Wheaton to be exact. John Morris Baxter, was born July 27, 1876. There is no evidence that the 6'2" 200-pounder appropriately nicknamed "Moose" played ball in the area or surrounding towns. Baxter did however play for some pretty good teams in Ashland in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Moose did run into some trouble up there when he was jailed for robbing a woodsman of \$30.

Baxter who batted left and threw right resurfaced a few years later when he played for San Francisco of the Pacific Coast League. Always a fan favorite, he followed that up with trips to Butte, Spokane and Indianapolis, before catching the eye of John McCloskey, manager of the St. Louis Cardinals. The 30 year-old Baxter regarded as a power-hitting, sure-handed first baseman was signed in early April by the lowly Cardinals who would go on to lose 101 games that year, finishing 55.5 games behind the front running Chicago Cubs. Baxter performed atrociously; going 4-for-21 at the plate, while committing five errors in the field. He was released less than a week into his big-league career never to see the majors again. Shortly there after he was replaced by a slick-fielding LaCrosse native named Ed Konetchy who was tearing up the Wisconsin State League for the La Crosse Pinks, and who would go onto to set numerous records for the Cardinals.

Baxter didn't give up on baseball and simply moved on, heading to the Montgomery, Ala. club of the Southern League. In the winters he lived in Butte, Mont. and played on the city indoor baseball team. A few years later he joined a club in Edmonton, Alberta, in the off season running a Turkish bath hall in Calgary. After his playing days ended, Baxter moved to Portland, Ore. where he ran a hotel until his death on Aug. 8, 1926.