

= Jimmy McAleer =

James Robert " Loafer " McAleer (July 10 , 1864 ? April 29 , 1931) was an American center fielder , manager , and stockholder in Major League Baseball who assisted in establishing the American League . He spent most of his 13 @-@ season playing career with the Cleveland Spiders , and went on to manage the Cleveland Blues , St. Louis Browns , and Washington Senators . Shortly before his retirement , he became a major shareholder in the Boston Red Sox .

His career ended abruptly . During his brief tenure as co @-@ owner of the Red Sox , McAleer quarreled with longtime friend and colleague Ban Johnson , president of the American League . In the wake of this disagreement , he sold off his shares in the Red Sox and broke off his relationship with Major League Baseball .

McAleer 's rift with Johnson , along with his sudden retirement , damaged his professional reputation , and he received little recognition for his contributions to baseball . Today , he is most often remembered for initiating the customary request that the President of the United States throw out the first ball of the season .

= = Early years = =

McAleer was born in Youngstown , Ohio , an industrial center located near the border of western Pennsylvania . His father , Owen McAleer , died at a young age , leaving McAleer 's mother , Mary , to support three children . The family lived on the city 's west side , where the McAleer children were raised to value the concept of formal education . McAleer attended local public schools and graduated from Rayen High School . In later years , all three of the McAleer brothers moved on to successful careers , and the oldest , Owen McAleer , Jr . , served for a time as mayor of Los Angeles .

A " strapping six @-@ foot 175 @-@ pound outfielder , " McAleer won early recognition for his physical speed . He became involved with a Youngstown minor league baseball club in 1882 , remaining with the team until 1884 . In 1885 , McAleer joined another minor league organization in Charleston , South Carolina ; and in 1887 , he played for a team based in Memphis , Tennessee . His skill as a center fielder was recognized in 1888 , while he was playing for a club in Milwaukee , Wisconsin .

Although his primary focus was organized sports , McAleer was also drawn to the field of entertainment . During one season of his minor league career , he became part @-@ owner of the DeHaven Comedy Company , a theatrical road troupe that was organized in Youngstown . His interest in show business remained a constant , and in later years McAleer developed a strong friendship with Broadway composer and performer George M. Cohan .

= = Playing career = =

On April 24 , 1889 , McAleer broke into the Major Leagues in Cleveland , Ohio , where he established a reputation as a graceful outfielder . In 1891 , when Patsy Tebeau became manager of the Cleveland Spiders , the club became known for its aggressive tactics . Tebeau encouraged players to block and hold runners , while he himself openly challenged and harassed officials . In 1896 , the Cleveland manager was jailed for attacking an umpire who " decided it was too dark to continue a game " . On June 27 , 1896 , McAleer was among several Cleveland players to be fined by a Louisville (Kentucky) judge for their role in the incident . Later that year , the club 's notoriety prompted other National League teams to propose a boycott of Cleveland , " until the Spiders mended their ways . " McAleer 's periodic displays of temper were in keeping with this rowdy environment . During an August 18 , 1891 game with the Cincinnati Reds , Reds player Arlie Latham tripped McAleer as he rounded third base ; McAleer responded by chasing Latham around the field , while brandishing his bat .

At the same time , McAleer proved a strong performer . A later newspaper account described him as an outstanding outfielder who was " blessed with excellent speed " . The article noted that

McAleer 's skills as a sprinter helped him steal 51 bases in one year and 41 in another . According to some accounts , he was " the first centerfielder to take his eyes off a fly ball , run to the spot where it fell to earth , and catch it " . Less proficient as a hitter , McAleer accumulated a lifetime batting average of .253 . During his career , the league 's batting (pitchers removed) average for players with the same home field was .284 . On April 24 , 1894 , he assisted in Cleveland 's 1 ? 0 victory over Cincinnati with a single in the ninth that drove home Buck Ewing , who had doubled . Along with teammates Cy Young , Jesse Burkett , John Clarkson , and Charles Zimmer , McAleer also participated in the Spiders ' victory over the Baltimore Orioles in the 1895 Temple Cup , a post @-@ season series between first and second @-@ place teams of the National League . The Spiders placed second to the Orioles at the close of both the 1895 and 1896 seasons . McAleer 's performance came in spite of a serious injury he received during a game held in Philadelphia on August 24 , 1895 , when he collided with a fence . Furthermore , he balanced his achievements in sports with a foray into politics in his hometown of Youngstown . During the summer of 1895 , McAleer was promoted in the local media as a mayoral candidate , first as a Republican , and then as an independent . Further research is required to determine the depth of his involvement in politics .

In 1898 , when the Spiders ' owners purchased the St. Louis Browns franchise , McAleer opted to stay in Cleveland , taking a brief hiatus from baseball until the Cleveland Blues franchise joined the newly formed American League (AL) . During his two @-@ year absence , the Spiders lost many of their more experienced players . In 1899 , the team won 20 games and lost 134 , which is still percentage @-@ wise the worst season record in Major League history . As baseball historian Bill James noted , the Spiders were forced to cancel home games due to poor attendance and " turned the last two months of the season into a long road trip " . After a full year out of baseball in 1899 , McAleer was back in a Cleveland uniform in 1900 , in a new league , as player @-@ manager of the Cleveland Lake Shores of the fledgling American League , then a minor league . McAleer 's subsequent career as a major league manager (1901 ? 11) overlapped with his playing career (1882 ? 1907) . Although he did not play professionally between 1903 and 1906 , McAleer played in his last Major League game on July 8 , 1907 .

= = Managing career = =

= = = Cleveland Lake Shores / Blues = = =

In 1900 , McAleer became player @-@ manager of the Cleveland Lake Shores (a predecessor of the Cleveland Indians) and continued with the franchise in 1901 , when the American League became a major league and the club was renamed as the Blues , a name borrowed from a team that had participated in the National League during the 1870s and 1880s . The Blues made their major league debut on April 24 , 1901 , with an 8 ? 2 loss to the Chicago White Sox . Two other league games were canceled due to inclement weather , and the contest between the Blues and White Sox served as the inaugural game of the AL .

In July of that year , McAleer presided over the Blues ' upset 6 ? 1 loss to the Detroit Tigers . Although the Tigers ' manager , Tommy Burns , agreed to forfeit the game for fear that the umpire , Joe Cantillon , would be injured by an angry crowd , McAleer agreed to play the Tigers using a reserve umpire . The Blues eventually closed the season with a 54 ? 82 record , placing seventh in the eight @-@ team American League .

McAleer , however , contributed little to this outcome . In 1901 , he played in only three games with the Blues . The AL , established in 1900 by Ban Johnson , former president of the Western League , was by this time in direct competition with the well @-@ established National League (NL) . McAleer , a close friend of Johnson and his associate , Charles Comiskey , played a significant role in the new league 's development , recruiting scores of experienced players from the NL .

= = = St. Louis Browns = = =

As manager of the Browns , McAleer lured players such as Hall of Famers Jesse Burkett and Bobby Wallace . In 1902 , the Browns took second place in the league , with a record of 78 wins and 58 losses . Between 1903 and 1907 , however , the team never ranked higher than fifth or sixth place in the AL . Then , in 1908 , the club rebounded , finishing just six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half games out of first place , with a record of 83 wins and 69 losses , landing at fourth in the AL . The Browns ended the 1909 season , however , with a record of 61 ? 89 , earning seventh place . McAleer was fired at the close of the season . Browns owner Robert L. Hedges , a Cincinnati carriage maker , replaced the " affable " McAleer with the " crustier " Jack O 'Connor , who was expelled from the league in 1910 for seeking to influence the outcome of the annual batting championship .

= = = Washington Senators = = =

On September 22 , 1909 , McAleer went on to manage the Washington Senators (popularly known as the " Nationals ") , a team that had ceased to be competitive since the death of star hitter Ed Delahanty six years earlier . The team fared little better under McAleer 's management , finishing with a lackluster 66 ? 85 record (seventh place) at the close of the 1910 season . The high point of the season was a game in which McAleer initiated what became a baseball tradition . On April 14 , 1910 , he asked visiting President William Howard Taft to throw out the first ball of a season opener . President Taft , an ardent fan of the game , readily agreed . Baseball historians Donald Dewey and Nicholas Acocella noted that the game " almost put an end to the career " of U.S. Vice President James S. Sherman , who " took a foul ball off the bat of Frank Baker directly in the head " . This contest also featured a one @-@ hit performance by pitcher Walter Johnson , who led the Senators to a 3 ? 0 victory over the Philadelphia Athletics .

= = Executive career = =

= = = Boston Red Sox = = =

Toward the close of the 1911 season , McAleer announced his resignation as manager of the Senators . In 1912 , he became a major stockholder in the Boston Red Sox , purchasing a half @-@ interest in the team . That year , the Red Sox " cruised to the pennant with 105 victories " .

By the time the Red Sox entered the sixth game of the 1912 World Series , the team had secured a 3 ? 1 lead over the New York Giants . (The second game of the Series ended in a tie .) Then , McAleer pressured the team 's manager , Jake Stahl , to hand the ball to unseasoned pitcher Buck O 'Brien for the " clincher " . McAleer 's recommendation was apparently part of a strategy to ensure that the seventh game of the Series would be played at Boston 's new Fenway Park . Although the Red Sox 's loss to the Giants (at 5 ? 2) guaranteed that the Series would conclude in Boston , the incident created conflict between McAleer and Stahl . Subsequent press releases suggesting that Stahl would replace McAleer as club president exacerbated these tensions .

In the seventh game of the Series , the Red Sox opened Fenway Park with a 7 ? 6 victory over the Giants . The team suffered a public relations fiasco , however , when a Red Sox shareholder sold seats at the stadium that had been reserved for the club 's most ardent fans , the " Royal Rooters " . Finding themselves without seats , the Royal Rooters , led by Boston Mayor John " Honey Fitz " Fitzgerald , marched around the stadium in protest . A riot ensued , and in the aftermath of the disturbance , only 17 @,@ 000 Boston residents showed up for the final game . Nevertheless , the Red Sox emerged as victors , with a final score of 4 ? 3 and one tied game .

Following the Series victory over the Giants , McAleer returned to his hometown to celebrate the event . A brass band met him at Youngstown 's train depot , and a parade and fireworks display were held in his honor . The Youngstown Daily Vindicator reported : " As the auto bearing Mr. McAleer turned into West Federal Street , hundreds of sticks of red fire were burning at Central

Square , while the quiet atmosphere was occasionally punctured by the explosion of a bomb " . This was the last time he would publicly greet residents of his hometown as a figure in professional baseball .

= = = Downfall = = =

McAleer 's tenure as part @-@ owner of the Red Sox came to a swift end . On July 15 , 1913 , McAleer became involved in a dispute with the AL president , Ban Johnson , when McAleer forced the resignation of Red Sox manager Jake Stahl , one of Johnson 's closest friends . While McAleer claimed that he released Stahl because of a foot injury preventing Stahl from serving as a player @-@ manager , rumors suggested that the two men had strong personal differences . Following a bitter quarrel with Johnson , McAleer sold his holdings in the Red Sox . His feud with Johnson turned out to be a lifelong affair , despite efforts taken by their mutual friend , Charles Comiskey , to smooth over the rift . While McAleer never publicly discussed the disagreement that spurred his retirement , he supposedly relayed his version of events to Frank B. Ward , a sports reporter with The Youngstown Daily Vindicator , with the understanding that the details remain confidential until McAleer 's death .

Although other sources tell a different story , Ward wrote that McAleer termed his " break " with Johnson as the result of a " betrayal " of trust . McAleer indicated that his controlling interest in the Red Sox entitled him to make all major decisions regarding the organization , Ward wrote . This view of McAleer 's powers , however , was not shared by the club 's manager , Stahl , the article added . To further complicate matters , Stahl 's father @-@ in @-@ law , a Chicago @-@ based banker , was reportedly a shareholder in the Red Sox . After one particularly heated exchange between Stahl and McAleer at the close of the 1912 season , Stahl went to Chicago to confer with Johnson . The article indicated that , after this meeting , Johnson sent McAleer a " sternly worded " letter , which may have been designed to preserve his relationship with Stahl and Stahl 's father @-@ in @-@ law . According to the article , Johnson later confided to McAleer that he owed Stahl 's father @-@ in @-@ law money and therefore felt obliged to take Stahl 's side in the dispute . McAleer , however , took the admonition from Johnson as a betrayal of their friendship , refused to accept Johnson 's explanations , and promptly retired , Ward wrote . This version of events is largely corroborated by the early research of baseball historian David Fleitz .

Baseball historians Dewey and Acocella , however , described a markedly different scenario in which Johnson secretly sold off McAleer 's shares while McAleer was away on a 1913 world tour with Comiskey , New York Giants manager John McGraw , and members of the Red Sox team . According to this account , McAleer 's conflict with Stahl was followed up by his involvement in a feud between two pairs of players ? Tris Speaker and Joe " Smoky Joe " Wood , on one side , and Heinie Wagner and Bill Carrigan , on the other . The conflict had a " religious dimension " and was described in the press as " pitting Masons against members of the Knights of Columbus " . McAleer evidently supported Wagner and Carrigan , the Catholic players in the dispute . These back @-@ to @-@ back incidents involving individuals associated with the Red Sox team " reinforced Johnson 's belief that the club president was the source of all the trouble " , Dewey and Acocella wrote . In his recent book , The Irish in Baseball , David Fleitz observed that McAleer 's abrupt dismissal was typical of Johnson , " who had a history of ending relationships when they no longer benefited him personally " .

= = Personal life = =

Relatively little is known about McAleer 's private life . Research suggests that he was married three times , with his first marriage (to Hannah McAleer) taking place in the early 20th century . At some point , he married the former Anna Durbin , a native of Trenton , New Jersey . The couple had no children . According to her obituary , Anna McAleer was her husband 's " constant companion " during his " active career as a baseball magnate " . When the couple settled in Youngstown in 1913 , she participated in charity work and joined the Altar and Rosary Society at St. Columba 's Church ,

where she attended religious services . In 1930 , Anna McAleer died suddenly at an apartment the couple shared on the north side of Youngstown . James McAleer , who discovered his wife 's body after returning from a walk , was " overcome " . McAleer had recently been released from a local hospital following an appendectomy ; he was quickly readmitted following his wife 's death .

A few months later , McAleer married a Youngstown woman , Georgianna Rudge , a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music who was almost 23 years her husband 's junior . Ultimately , Georgianna McAleer survived her husband by more than five decades . By the time of James McAleer 's second marriage , his health was in decline . He was hospitalized within a few months of the wedding .

= = Final years = =

McAleer returned to Youngstown , where he spent his last years . Active in the community , McAleer served on the city 's original draft board , which had been authorized under Ohio Governor James M. Cox during World War I. In retirement , the former baseball manager maintained friendships with celebrities including George M. Cohan and King Alfonso XIII of Spain . McAleer became acquainted with the Spanish monarch during a European tour with the Red Sox in the winter of 1912 ? 13 .

His final years were marked by poor health . Several weeks before his death , McAleer was admitted to a local hospital , where his health reportedly improved . This account , however , differs from that of baseball historian David Fleitz , who suggested that McAleer had been diagnosed with cancer in the early 1930s . In any event , McAleer died suddenly on April 29 , 1931 , shortly after being released from the hospital . He was 66 years old . After private funeral services at Orr 's funeral home , McAleer 's remains were interred at Oak Hill Cemetery , on Youngstown 's near south side . Apart from his widow , he left behind two brothers , J.C. McAleer of Austintown , Ohio , and Owen McAleer of Los Angeles . Other survivors included two nephews , Captain Charles McAleer , an officer in the U.S. Army , and James McAleer of Los Angeles .

Rumors persist that McAleer 's death was the result of a self @-@ inflicted gunshot wound to the head . While his name is included on some lists of Major League Baseball players who committed suicide , contemporary newspaper accounts indicated that McAleer died of natural causes .

New research by the baseball historian , David Fleitz , has provided a copy of McAleer 's death certificate where a " self @-@ inflicted gunshot wound " is listed as the cause of death .

= = Legacy = =

McAleer 's hometown newspaper , The Youngstown Daily Vindicator , eulogized the ex @-@ Major Leaguer in the following terms : " Forceful and resourceful , but always retiring when there was talk of his share in the development of baseball , James R. McAleer died within a matter of weeks after the passing of Byron Bancroft Johnson , his chief partner in the forming of the American League , and the man with whom he ' broke ' , which break brought about his retirement " .

The article praised McAleer for assisting the careers of other baseball figures . In 1905 , during his tenure as manager of the St. Louis Browns , McAleer helped future Hall of Fame umpire Billy Evans secure a position with the American League , writing a personal letter to Johnson on Evans ' behalf . Meanwhile , McAleer served as a contact for another Youngstown resident , John " Bonesetter " Reese , the Welsh @-@ born " baseball doctor " who worked with players such as Cy Young , Ty Cobb , Rogers Hornsby , Walter Johnson , and John McGraw .

McAleer 's contributions to the game failed to win him a place in the Baseball Hall of Fame , however . In 1936 , during the first elections to the Baseball Hall of Fame , he received just one vote in the balloting for 19th @-@ century figures . Nevertheless , McAleer received an unofficial endorsement from Hall of Fame second baseman Nap Lajoie , who described McAleer as " one of the best ever " . McAleer 's obituary in The New York Times suggested that he was " one of the fastest outfielders the major leagues ever produced " . In 2003 , Bill James described McAleer as " the best defensive outfielder of the 1890s " . More recently , baseball historian David Fleitz observed

, " this brilliant defensive outfielder was a smart , clever , and ambitious man who helped to create two of the original eight franchises of the American League " .