

Famous New Yorker John McGraw

After one of the worst starts ever to a baseball career, John J. McGraw became a sports legend as a champion player and manager in the early 20th century.

John Joseph McGraw was born in Truxton, Cortland County, on April 7, 1873. His relationship with his father grew strained after John's mother and four siblings died during an epidemic in the winter of 1884-5. John left home while still in school, where he starred on the baseball team. Obsessed with the game, he spent the money he earned from odd jobs on baseball equipment and rulebooks.

In 1890, John decided to make a career of baseball. He started out earning \$5 a game for the Truxton Grays. When the Grays' manager took over the Olean franchise of the New York-Penn League, John became his third baseman. He committed eight errors in his first game with Olean. After six games, he was cut from the team.

McGraw kept trying. He played shortstop for Wellsville in the Western New York League and showed skill as a hitter and baserunner. After the 1890 season, McGraw joined the American All-Stars, a team that toured the southern states and Cuba during the winter. In 1891, a team of All-Stars and Florida players challenged the Cleveland Spiders of the American Association, one of the era's two major leagues, to a spring-training exhibition game. Cleveland won, but McGraw got three hits in five at-bats. Coverage of the game in *The Sporting News* inspired several teams to offer McGraw contracts. He signed with Cedar Rapids of the Illinois-Iowa League for \$125 a month.

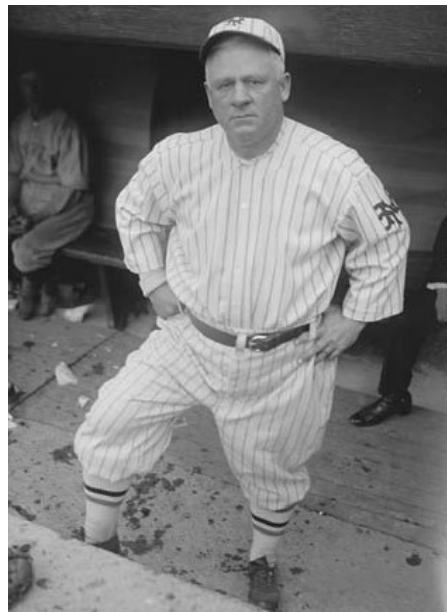
Before the minor-league farm system evolved, baseball teams used early national media like *The Sporting News* to find new talent. Talented youngsters could reach the majors very quickly. In August 1891, the AA's Baltimore Orioles brought John McGraw into the big time. After the Orioles joined the more prestigious National League in 1892, McGraw mastered the third base position. He helped Baltimore win three consecutive pennants starting in 1894. In 1899 McGraw became the Orioles' player-manager, but at season's end the NL disbanded the team due to poor fan support.

After one season in St. Louis, McGraw joined a new Orioles franchise in the new American League. He feuded with AL president Ban Johnson, who disliked McGraw's aggressive style and arguments with umpires. McGraw quit the Orioles in 1902 and joined the NL's New York Giants. After managing the Giants to the 1904 NL championship, he refused to play the AL champs in what would have been the second World Series. He got over his anger the following year and beat the Philadelphia A's in the 1905 Series.

In 31 years with the Giants, McGraw won ten National League pennants. He won two more World Series titles in 1921-2, beating Babe Ruth's New York Yankees in the first "Subway Series." Stressing the "inside" game of aggressive baserunning over big hits, McGraw remains second in career wins and held the record for getting ejected from games until the 21st century.

McGraw became a part-owner of the Giants in 1919 and remained the team's vice-president after giving up managing in 1932. He died on February 25, 1934 and was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame three years later. To this day he remains the template of a colorful, combative and successful baseball manager.

For more information about John J. McGraw and his baseball career visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum online at <http://baseballhall.org/hof/mcgraw-john>. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA Newspaper In Education Program. All rights reserved 2015.



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Truxton is a small town about 11 miles northeast of Cortland in Central New York. The town is named for Commodore Thomas Truxton, one of the U.S. Navy's first commanding officers.