

# Gus Klopf: Pitcher, Spokane Bunch Grassers

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Recently the Eastern Region Branch, Washington State Archives accessioned a useful collection from the Spokane Regional Health District. The collection included Spokane County birth and death registers from 1890-1910. This is a valuable resource, especially for birth records from 1907-1910 because we previously did not hold any of those records at the ERB. They not only contain information about the newborn but also about the parents. These are not birth certificates, however. For any birth certificates after 1907, contact the Department of Health.



Lee Pierce processed the collection and he came across an interesting and fun entry that deserved a little attention. He was flipping through the pages when an unusual occupation caught his eye, "Base Ball." Lee called me over to have a look, and sure enough, the 10th entry on the first page was a birth return that listed a father named Augustus Klopf, a "Base Ball" player. Klopf's wife, unnamed, gave birth to their first child on the 28th day of August, 1891.

It seemed a bit of a stretch that there were professional baseball players in Spokane this early, but a Google search quickly dispelled that idea. Spokane had a baseball team as early as April 3, 1890, the Spokane Bunch Grassers. The ERB holds the articles of incorporation for the "Spokane Base Ball Club." The team's roster from 1891 shows a right-handed pitcher named "Gus Klopf," almost certainly our guy. Gus is a baseball legend in the Lilac City, he "threw the first ball over home plate in a professional game in Spokane." He went on to play 18 years of professional baseball throughout the United States, playing on teams from Galveston to Minneapolis.

## Photos:

Photo 1 Caption - "1889 promo baseball card from Old Judge Cigarette Company featuring 20 year old Pitcher Gus "Klopf" of the St. Joseph's Clay Eaters. Citation - "Klopf, St. Joseph Team, baseball card portrait," 1889, Benjamin K. Edwards Collection, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008675209/> Photo 2 Caption - Lee Pierce holding Volume 1 (1890-1903) of Birth Registers from Spokane Regional Health District

## Sources:

Spokane Daily Chronicle, February 4, 1908, "Gus Klopf is to be a Tiger"  
Spokane Daily Chronicle, April 18, 1972, "Spokane 60 Years Ago"