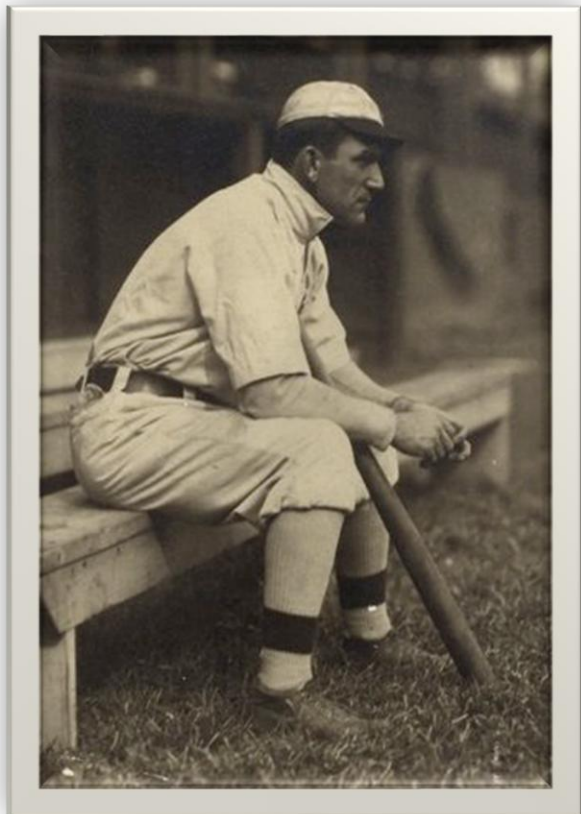


## Lake County Vignettes to Ring in 2025:

### #1 Cleveland's First Superstar – Nap Lajoie

As the new year begins, I've been making a conscious effort to slow down and savor our picturesque Lake County in winter. Taking time to be outside with the mix of sun and snowflakes, deer huddled in my backyard garden or the crunch of snow-covered ice on a recent lantern hike. Making little pockets of time to appreciate my passions is another goal for 2025. It

can be  
as



simple as a quick read or a few nostalgic minutes with baseball history. Here is the first of three local hidden gems to tally the score of community glories.

### **Nap Lajoie & the Baseball Hall of Fame**

With spring training a mere two weeks away, this vignette explores the life of one of the best second basemen ever to play the game:

**Napoleon “Larry” Lajoie (1874-1959)** whose baseball stardom inspired one of Cleveland baseball's early names. This **1937 Baseball Hall of Fame** player called Lake County home for many, many years. ‘Nap’, of French-Canadian descent, was born in 1874 in Rhode Island. He

starred as a second baseman for the **Philadelphia**

**Phillies** from 1896-1901. Challenging the infamous reserve clause, he signed with the **Philadelphia A's** in 1901, and a state wide legal battle ensued resulting in his transfer to **Cleveland** that same year.

Arguably the first superstar of the newly formed **American League**, Lajoie became the face of the Cleveland franchise. His popularity even resulted in a name change



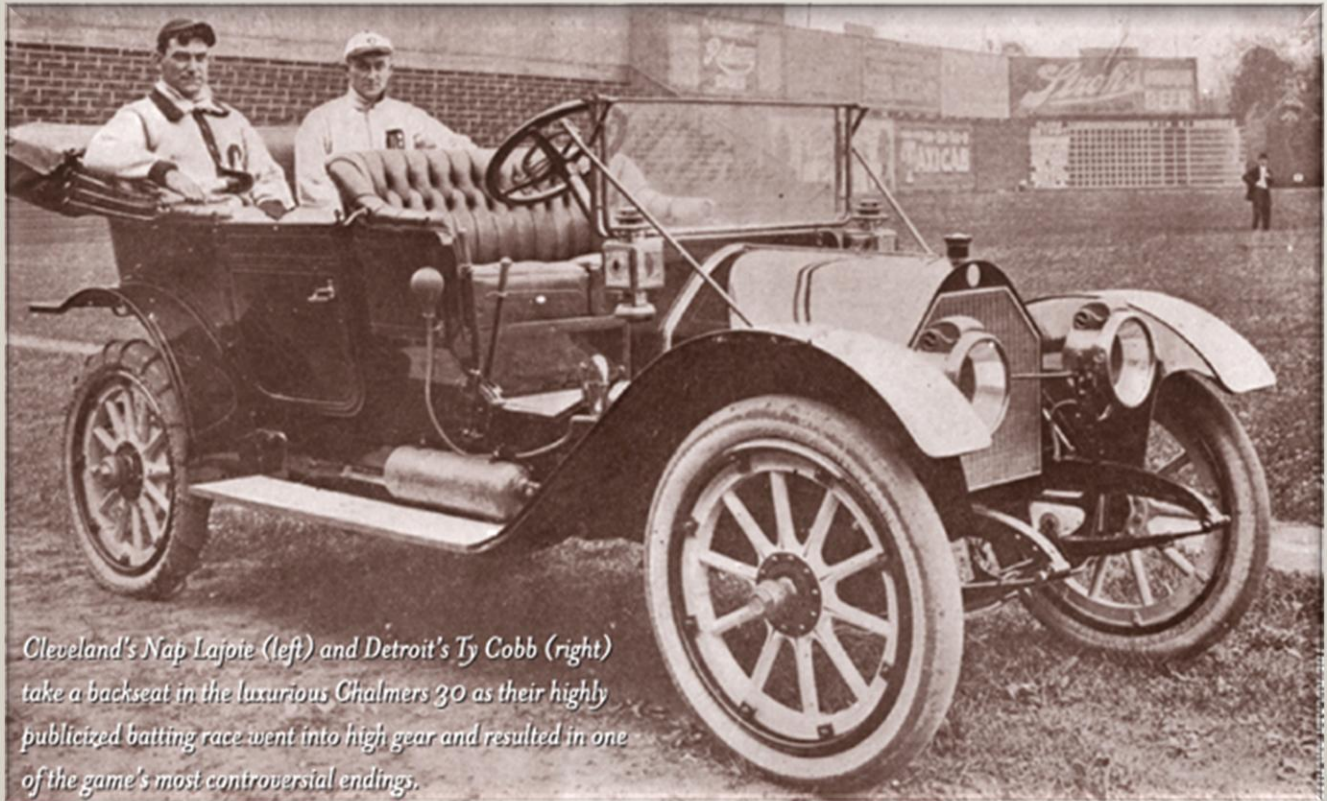
from **Cleveland Broncos** to **Cleveland Naps**. Batting .300 in eleven of the next twelve years, with four batting titles in addition to serving as player-manager (1905-1909), only cemented his place in baseball and Lake County lore.



His induction class at **Cooperstown** included **Babe Ruth** and **Ty Cobb**. Nap and Cobb had a fierce rivalry that was showcased in a 1910 batting battle to win a luxury Chalmers automobile. The contest had a controversial ending that resulted in each player receiving a car.


Nap left Major League Baseball after 1916 and, after a brief stint in the international league, he retired with his wife Myrtle to **Salida Drive in Mentor-on-the-Lake**. The couple was content to remain there on the Lake Erie shore during the summers through 1943.

In 2022, the **News Herald** reported on Nap's skill in another sport as a member of the **Mentor Headlands Country Club** (now **Black Brook Golf Course**). A tournament in 1928 was held to determine the premier golfer among its membership. The winner was Nap Lajoie! <https://www.news-herald.com/2022/08/04/nap-lajoie-golf-champion-of-mentor-its-true/>



Cleveland's Nap Lajoie (left) and Detroit's Ty Cobb (right) take a backseat in the luxurious Chalmers 30 as their highly publicized batting race went into high gear and resulted in one of the game's most controversial endings.

Myrtle Lajoie passed in 1951, and Nap passed at age 86 in 1959 from complications of pneumonia. His name still resonates in Cleveland Baseball annals, and he is honored at [Progressive Field](#). He is listed as one of the players in [Cleveland's All-Time Starting Lineup](#). The premiere second baseman, of course.



# LAJOIE AND COBB

Are running the greatest race for batting supremacy in the history of base ball for the

# CHALMERS CAR


**OFFERED AS A PRIZE TO THE BEST BATTER**

The car has already proven its supremacy, being selected the "Champion Car of the year" on account of making a better showing in contests, last season, than any other car in the world. Also winning the 1910 Glidden Tour—the most severe test ever given a motor car (never won previously by a car costing less than \$4000).

Remember these Chalmers cars were all *absolutely stock cars*. Our 1911 cars embody experience gained from entering these contests. If they will stand this service, they'll stand yours.

Our policy is, "SATISFIED OWNERS"—we know how and do.

**E. B. FINCH,** Temp. Location 6506 Euclid.  
After September 12, 7102 Euclid.  
**CHALMERS AND HUDSON CARS.**



E. 865.



Sources: *The Historical Society Quarterly* Lake County Ohio, May 1972, Gretta Shipman Pallister author, *Lost Lake County Ohio*, Jennifer Borez Engelking, 2022.

<https://www.baseballhistorycomesalive.com/who-won-the-1910-batting-title-ty-cobb-or-nap-lajoie/>

Submitted by: Dan Maxson

Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - The News-Herald, Community Media Lab

Volunteer Docent , Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum

Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township

Additional research by Virginia Jeschelng