

History

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for a team with a western themed nickname for the Billings entry into the Pioneer League. In 1948, stockholders voted more than three to one for naming the new team the "Mustangs". In order to promote the team, the decision was made to call the team the Billings Mustangs, regardless of the supporting farm team.

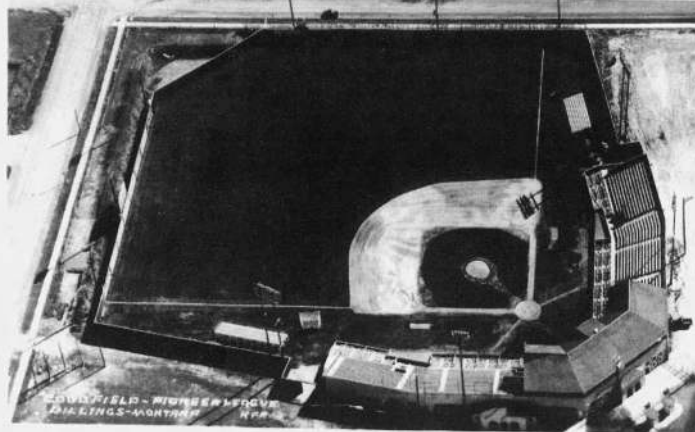
* Robert H. Cobb donated \$20,000 to expand the stadium, which was re-named Cobb Field. A Billings native, Cobb was owner of the Brown Derby Restaurant in Los Angeles and inventor of the Cobb Salad! Cobb was part owner of the Hollywood Stars in the Pacific Coast League. Bob was married to a movie star and had numerous movie star friends. Famous movie A-Listers, Bing Crosby, Cecil DeMille, Barbara Stanwyck, and Robert Taylor, each bought stock in the Billings Pioneer baseball club. Bing Crosby accepted appointment as honorary chair of the board of directors for the club.

* In addition to Cobb's contributions, stocks were sold at \$100 each, with no more than 10 share per person. There were 216 stockholders at the beginning of the ball park.

* Along with Bob Cobb, the first board directors included Archie Cochrane and his brother, Mickey Cochrane, a hall-of-fame baseball catcher and former big league manager. The local notables included Russ Hart (of Hart-Albin), Rockwood Brown, Larry Bennett, H.L. Faxon, L.W. Carter, Arthur H. Langman, H.H. Perrigo, and Robert E. Cooke.

* 1948 was the first Mustang season. There were only 17 players on the roster, so there was a player who served as manager. Larry Shepard, a pitcher, was named as the first Mustangs manager. Shepard coached the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1968 and 1969. He was Cincinnati Reds pitching coach during the 1970s.

* Higgenbotham-Koppe Jewelers had a sign in the outfield during the 1950s. If batter hit the sign, he would win a diamond worth about \$600. Dick Stuart, later a major leaguer, was the first player to hit the sign. Stuart played most of his career with the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Boston Red Sox.



Cobb Field, about 1950.

Courtesy Western Heritage Co

* "The Animals" were an enthusiastic group of fans who rode a large stuffed gorilla. Once the announcer called for a "Randolph Scott," possibly the movie star, to come to the booth, "The Animals" and their gorilla, whopping and hollering, went too.

The Western Heritage Center is currently hosting "We're Making History: Billings' First 125 Years." The exhibit will be open through December, 2008.

The exhibit looks at Billings through its historic characters, a railroad depot, artifacts from national and regional collections, local radio and television broadcasts, a kids' play area, oversized maps and a display on baseball in Billings.

The unique story of Billings is shared in a fun way and each visitor will get a genuine sense of what it's been like to live in Billings and the Yellowstone Valley and be surprised by the stories, artifacts and activities in the exhibit.

We are a Proud Sponsor of the Billings Mustangs!

Wednesday, August 13th
Casper Ghosts vs. Billings Mustangs is

Shipton's Big R & Wrangler® Night

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Early Baseball History (continued)

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Fri, Apr 17, 2020