FOSTER'S SECOND LETTER ON COMING BALL SEASON

MANY CHANGES IN THE TEAMS

National League Players Compared—What Boston Is Doing for the Fans.

By John B. Foster.

MORE EXCITING SEASON.

By Harry Pulliam, President of the National League.

It is my conviction that the clubs of the National league have been strengthened during the winter, and I believe that we will have a better and more exciting race this summer than we had in 1906 or 1907. It seems to me that the changes which have been made by the Boston and New York clubs will aid both, and the Philadelphia and Pittsburg clubs showed by their work at the end of the summer of 1907 that they are steadily improving. Chicago will make a hard fight for the championship, no doubt, but I believe that other clubs in the National league will make it harder for the "Cubs" to win the pennant this year than they did in 1907. There seems to be no reason why the season should not be prosperous.

Hans Wagner, "The Modest Man."

Underlying the National league there is unquestionably a stratum, and a substratum, it may be added, of conservatism. Nor would it be hyperbole to state that the heritage of the National league has been conservatism. It is a tradition as well as a positive quality defining its methods.

The explanation of this lies largely in the character of the men who have had to do with the upbuilding of the organization and with the history of the league from its inception to the present time.

Long before the American league was a stray thought in the ether of the psychological world the National league was building slowly but surely to the success of professional baseball. It was not always an easy task. The American league had its fight for existence, but it was as nothing compared with that of the National league, as the latter organization had demonstrated before some of the present members of the American league were out of their knickerbockers that professional baseball could be made successful. All the timber had been cleared from the land when the American league came into existence and undertook to cultivate some of the clearing.

Men who were prominent in the successful advancement of the National league's interests in its earliest days were mostly of the conservative business element who loved baseball for what there was in the game, and who promoted it, not so much for the revenue to be derived from it, for year after year passed without some men ever realizing a penny from their investments, as for the good of the sport.

Their close adherence to the methods which they practised in their commercial relations, their unwillingness to appear as "plungers" or as dashing speculators, followed them in their baseball careers, and it is unquestionably true that they thought more of their efforts to impress honesty upon the sport than ever they did of any detail of the game. Well may baseball, in its professional capacity, thank such men that they were interested to place such a solid foundation underneath it, and that through all the versified career of the National league there never has been the slightest question raised as to its integrity. Its sponsors were too far above dishonesty.

Thus, from early attachments and surroundings, it is found that all through the history of the National league it leans strongly to the methods which have guided it for years. It can no more get away from conservatism in the management of its club affairs than it can in its ordinary business relations.

This is preliminary to the statement that the National league clubs move slowly as a rule, in regard to the changing of their players. They cling to men—at times, when it would appear that it is useless to expect as much from them as in the past—and they are very loath to part with playing talent which gives some promise for the future, even though it may be a long time in developing. Hence, as a general rule, it will probably be found that National league clubs have a greater nucleus of old players from season to season than clubs in other major league of the past and present and clubs in minor leagues of major importance.

For this reason there are usually not such radical shifts in the National league, as a whole, as have been seen from time to time in the American league. This spring it is possible to take a small exception to the general rule, as there is in evidence throughout the National league a patient determination to place many of the clubs on a standard approximate to that of the Chicago nine, which at present holds not only the championship of its organization but that of the world.

Addition of Strength.

Beginning with the Boston club a series of changes is found which, to a large extent, has revolutionized the playing strength of the team in the Hub.

A new manager usually means much to a professional nine. Hence the engagement of Joseph Kelley to conduct the affairs of the Bostons this season unquestionably is prophetic of an entirely new system of play.

It is not Kelley's first experience as a National league manager. He undertook that hardest of all tasks, the control of the Cincinnati club, and failed to do as well as he wished. Very fortunately for Kelley there was no one who was more conversant with the lack of strength at Cincinnati than himself. He left the city acknowledging his inability to make anything out of the nine, offering no excuses for himself, but with many offered by his friends. He went from Cincinnati to Toronto, in the Eastern league, and there, surrounded by players who were not considered of championship caliber, succeeded in producing such good ball that Toronto won the championship. His friends immediately pointed to his success as showing what he could do when he was left to handle the affairs of an organization without being the victim of unsolicited advice, and when the Doveys, who were lucky enough to draw him under baseball law, found that the player was actually at their service, they were urged to put Kelley in Boston without fail, partly for his baseball ability, partly because it is a city which is pleasing to him and one which will be willing to give full credit for all the good that he may do.

Boston is not overwhelmingly strong in pitchers. There are some who are of average ability. They may be better this year than last because they will have the services of Bowerman as catcher to coach them. Bowerman has had experience of years with the New York club and is well conversant with the game. Kelley has Graham and another young catcher, Ball, whom he believes will prove a valuable helpmate to Bowerman and is confident that his batteries will render him good service all the year.

Boston's infield is made up of some former Boston players and some transplanted New York blood. McGann, day in and day out, has been one of the most reliable first basemen in either major league. He is a splendid man at handle thrown balls, his work and is handicapped mostly by the fact that he is not quite so fast on his feet as he was two or three years ago.

Ritchey is one of the surest infielders in either league, even if he fails to cover quite so much ground as some, and Dahlen for years has been considered one of the great shortstops of the country. Brain is a hard working third baseman. When this infield fairly gets into action with the warm months of the year it will make trouble for all nines which face it.

In the outfield are Kelley, Beaumont and Browne, with Bates as a substitute. It is a powerful quartet. If all of them bat to their speed Boston will be found nearer a place in the first division than some think possible. The material for a good nine is there. The question to be solved is what the material will do when the fight is really on for the pennant. One advantage in favor of Kelley is that most of his present team are men of experience and will not lack for knowledge as to how to do well. If they fail it will be in their execution rather than in their forethought.

Breaks Combination.

Since John James McGraw has been in charge of the New York team it always has played attractive baseball. Sometimes it has played championship baseball. When it hasn't done as well as that, it has played hard enough to make the winning of the championship no easy task for other teams.

The Giants are a remodeled nine this year. Players were permitted to go to Boston, not so much because they had forgotten how to play the game, but because it was McGraw's opinion that he had held his team together so long as he could reasonably hope to be successful with it. Conservatism in 1907 cost him a chance to win a championship.

Two, and perhaps three young pitchers will be added to the team's strength this year. Outside of them McGraw will depend upon the men whom he has had with him for four and more seasons. The assertion has been made that the pitchers have seen the best of their ball playing careers and that McGraw has made a mistake in placing reliance on them for another year. This is to be doubted. As a matter of fact, it was not so much poor pitching which lost for the Giants in 1907 as it was poor batting. Opportunity after opportunity to win games was dropped because of the lack of a timely hit. Twenty contests can be named on the Polo ground alone when a single baseHit would have won for the Giants. This is not indicative of a weak pitching outfit. If McGraw is wrong in his estimate of his pitchers as winners, this season will prove it beyond question.

Behind the bat the main reliance of the team will be placed on Bresnahan. He is one of the greatest catchers who ever stepped foot on a baseball field. It is not his physical ability which makes him great, but his splendid knowledge of baseball and his great mental activity. There is no catcher in either league quicker to grasp a situation, and few so quick. Once he steadies down, so that he is accurate in his throwing, he will be nearer the counterpart of "Buck" Ewing than any man of recent years who has played behind the bat. Needham will be carried as catcher, and it is very likely that McGraw will retain two young players to assist him.

Tenney, at first base, is the best left hand first baseman in either league, barring Chase and Donohue. He is on a par with the latter and not much behind the former in all respects except ability to get over the ground. In that attribute Chase has no equal. Doyle will probably play second, the most experimental member of the team. If he fails to come up to the standard which is necessary, McGraw will find another man to fill the bill. Bridwell's position at short is assured, and, by the way, his western friends will be surprised to see that this young man can shine when he is in company that keeps him on the jump. Devlin is the best third baseman in either league, and with this quartet McGraw must make his swing toward another pennant.

It is doubtful whether there is another outfield equal to that composed of Shannon, Seymour and Donlin. The former has developed into one of the greatest left fielders of the United States; Seymour's ability to cover ground is excelled by none, and Donlin not only is a player with a wide fielding range but one of the best batsmen in the National league.

In the above team there is a championship possibility. It would be a greater possibility were it to face a less powerful machine than that of Chicago.

Brooklyn a Factor.

Little or no change will be found in the Brooklyn team of 1908 as compared with that of 1907. The question to be considered is whether it will be more aggressive, more successful this year than it was last. The end of the season will have proved whether Brooklyn is a growing club or whether it reached its full growth in 1907.

It must be remembered that Brooklyn began to improve three years ago, when P. J. Donovan took charge of the team, and from that time has continued to improve. It may be possible, however, that the changes, which have been made in other teams in the National league, will counterbalance the good that has accrued to Brooklyn in the last three years, and that in the coming season, even if the team plays as well as it did last year, it will be a little too weak to cope successfully with the nines which are scheduled against it.

Behind the bat the team has good catchers in Bergen and Ritter. In the box lies the problem. Stricklett will not be with the team this year, and it is possible that Scanlon will not be at his best until late owing to an operation for appendicitis which was performed upon him this year. The other pitchers have their good qualities, but there is none of them who has been a steady winner. Pastorious, Rucker and McIntyre are winners at times, and Bell now and then has shown wonderful dexterity in the box, but there isn't a Walsh, a Mathewson, or a Brown in the team, a pitcher in whom the players have the confidence born of the knowledge that the batters cannot hit him.

The infield will be comprised of Jordan, Alperman, Lewis and Sheehan. On the whole, a bit better than last year, for Sheehan is possibly stronger on ground hits than Casey. Alperman may be slow in getting into his stride owing to the ankle which was broken last season, and Lewis can play better ball than ever he has if he will but set himself to the task. Life comes too easy to him.

Hummel, Maloney and Lumley will make up the outfield. As fielders a fine organization. As batters passable, except Lumley, who is a slugger, but his strength with the bat does not atone for Maloney's weakness. Hummel is a player whom it will do to watch. He improved more during the season of 1907 than almost any young player in the National league.

Philadelphia's Team.

If the Philadelphians show as much improvement under the management of Murray this year as they did last, they are likely to be in the race for the championship all of the season.

They should play better ball. They have become more accustomed to the necessities of their positions. They know better than ever before what is desired of them by their manager.

Behind the bat they will carry the same men that they did last season, Doolin and Jacklitsch. In the box they will have much the same players as last year with the addition of the youngsters who may be kept for the summer.

On the bases they will have Bransfield at first, Knabe at second, Doolin at short and Grant at third. Here their strength will be greater than it was at the beginning of 1907. Grant did not begin to play with them until he had finished his year at Harvard, and it will mean much to have him this season from the start.

In the outfield are Magee, one of the very best players in the United States, possibly McCormick and Titus. Murray seems to be of opinion that McCormick will do better for him than Thomas. Perhaps, but it is a change in which all baseball men do not agree with the Philadelphia manager.

The strength of his team is not likely to be in one good player, two good players, or its batting or fielding in particular, but in its general team work. There is where the greatest improvement was in evidence last year, and there is where more improvement is to be anticipated.

Murray has dinned into the ears of his players night and day the necessity of making every point which they can in the game. "Don't be satisfied with one base because the hit looks good for only one base," said he one night to his men, "but go after the second base and see if you can't get it. If it is fairly certain that you can't get it, at least make the other fellows believe that you think that you can make it. Draw a throw now and then. It may be wild. If it is another base is certain."

It is Murray's notion that the Philadelphia players were taking baseball too easy when he obtained the management of the team. They were permitting the possibilities to get away from them because they were satisfied with the certainties, and it is that fault which he has essayed to correct. Philadelphia should be in the fight from the start this season.

Pittsburg Has Possibilities.

Another team which must be reckoned upon as likely to do better in 1908 than it did last year is Pittsburg. In the forecast which was written by the author in 1907 he called attention to the fact that while Pittsburg might begin the season poorly it would grow stronger as the summer advanced. How well that was borne out is demonstrated by the position in the race which was occupied by the Pirates at the end of the campaign.

There are no great changes in the team this year, but it has had the advantage of playing together for a season, and the members of the team will fall into their stride with more celerity when the race starts.

Behind the bat the players will be much the same, with Gibson, Phelps and Smith. In the box there will be the old faces and whatever new ones are added. Maddox, who made such a fine showing last fall, is expected to do better this year. There will be other youngsters of skill and worth. On the bases, Abaticchio, Wagner, and Leach are assured. The first baseman is not settled upon, but it is likely to be Swacina. Wagner is a team in himself. Leach may go to the outfield after Storke has finished at Harvard, but he can assuredly be reckoned upon at third in the beginning of the year if he is needed.

Clarke and Hallman are likely to be in the outfield, and Leach will probably go to center after Storke joins the team. Maggert and Moeller are possibilities on the outfield, although neither may make the regular team. No matter what combination is put forward to play ball for Pittsburg, it is probably that it will be a combination which will fight with pertinacity to win all its games, and is not likely to be one that will be easy to beat.

Cincinnati Begins Year.

There is hardly a baseball season of recent history in which there have not been some changes of importance at Cincinnati. It seems to be one of the traditions of the city to feed upon changes.

A new manager will have charge of the players this year. John Ganzel, the first baseman, has been chosen. It will not be prudent to discount Ganzel's managerial ability too early. He has shown skill and intelligence in handling players, and it is not out of the question that he will succeed in getting some good results in Cincinnati, unless he is the victim of too much gratuitous advice, as some of his predecessors have been.

As a whole, the Cincinnati team does not shine with championship resplendency. The main question is how much good can be got from the players to make every fight for a game as interesting and as difficult as possible.

Behind the bat the team is strong. Schlei is an accomplished catcher and, even were there no other on the team who could be of material assistance to him, he would be of inestimable value to the nine in general.

Ganzel, Huggins, Lobert and Mowery will make up the infield—some young blood and some that is old, but of the young blood there is hope. Lobert promises to develop into a star. All that he needs is the proper guidance.

In the outfield Cincinnati has been fortunate in developing a fine player in Mitchell. The other outfielders are promising. They may be surmises. It would not be astonishing to see better results come from Cincinnati than predicted, as such frequently has happened in a team of young players.

Here's the Machine.

It is almost unnecessary to enter into any discussion of the Chicagos. So far as a baseball machine is worth anything, that of Chicago is almost priceless as relates to the championship of this year.

There is no necessity to tell what the players may do or what may be expected of them. Chicago enthusiasts will expect them to win the pennant for the third time in succession. They have an opportunity to do so if their players keep up the mark of others years and if they are able to go through the season without injury to any of their most valuable men.

The same style which won for them the championship of the National league in 1907, and also the world's championship, may win for them again. The sole question is whether the National league clubs conjointly have so increased their strength that the Chicagos will not have to fight a single club for the championship, as they did New York last year, or whether they will have to fight several clubs. If the fight becomes harder by reason of being more diversified, the Chicagos will be put to a greater test of strength than they have been since they have been under their new management.

Kling will be the main dependence behind the bat, with Moran to assist him. The pitchers will be the same as last year—Brown, Reulbach, Lundgren, Overall and Pfiester—with the addition of the problematic youngsters. On the infield will be Chance, Evers, Tinker and Steinfeldt, and in the outfield Sheckard, Slagle and Schulte.

There's the outfit, and with Hofman, one of the most valuable utility men in the league, to assist in plugging up any holes caused by injury, Chicago must enter the lists to stand or fall upon the work of the players who have made the team great.

St. Louis Experimental.

On the whole there seems to be little chance that St. Louis will do better than run again in the second division. The owners of the club have succeeded in eliminating a great deal of undesirable influence which did the team no good, and have undertaken to build up from the ground with new players, but such is uniformly slow work. In time it may be that St. Louis will gather a nine which will begin to take its place with those to be reckoned upon as first division contenders in a championship race, but it does not appear as if such would be the case this year.

That the team will play better ball than it did in 1907 is believed by a majority of baseball men who have discussed its possibilities, but there is none who thinks St. Louis will rise above the second division.

Marshall will be the mainstay behind the bat, and in the box there is an abundance of good young pitchers who need the encouragement of hard batting behind them to help them.

Konetchy, the first baseman, is a promising youngster, and Gilbert will add greatly to the success of the team by his fine work at second base, for Gilbert is one of the greatest ground coverers in the league. Byrnes will probably be at third, and short stop may not be settled until the beginning of the year.

In the outfield are Delahanty, Barry, Murray, House and Shaw, who will add to the team's speed even if they are not able to hit with the ability of old timers. It is an organization which will play interesting games more often than stupid games, but like all teams in which young players predominate may occasionally be stampeded. Gilbert may be able to check some of this.

When its pitchers are at their best there will be many a contest played this year in which St. Louis will be beaten by only one or two runs, and if the club but had the batters to help the pitchers, St. Louis might be hustling every club that was in the second division with it last year and in addition to that might be making merry with some of the first division teams.

Minor Leagues.

While the prospects of the teams in the major leagues always will be a subject of interest to baseball enthusiasts, whether they be as far removed from the scene of the games as New York from San Francisco, the possibilities of the season of 1908 cannot be reviewed thoroughly without a word for the minor leagues.

In spite of the scattered discussion during the winter to the effect that the American Association might pick up a firebrand and toss it into organized baseball, there is nothing which would indicate that the minor leagues will not enjoy more prosperity than ever before. It might be inferred from what had been said by certain of the American Association owners that minor league baseball had proved to be a poor investment for them. On the contrary, it has been an investment which paid handsomely, and it will continue to pay handsomely just so long as the men who are now in control of the clubs refrain from disturbing the methods which are in vogue in the national pastime.

In the east there is a splendid outlook before the Eastern league. Montreal is in new hands. The Newark club has passed out of the control of the Burnham interests to those of George Stallings. The latter is a fighter and also a good baseball organizer to the extent of placing a winning team in the field.

Toronto is sanguine that it will be able to win another championship, with "Mike" Kelly at the head of the team, and Buffalo is in line with a good nine for the coming year. Jersey City and Providence are well fixed with players, and "Jack" Dunn, the Baltimore manager, says it is up to him to make good this time with the Orioles, and believes that he has the nucleus of an organization which may win the pennant. Baseball has taken a new life since the games last year between the Eastern league and the "old timers," who once won the championship for Baltimore, and the interest is greater than it has been in three seasons.

Patrick T. Powers, the president of the league, insists that this season will be better than any which has been enjoyed by the organization for a long time, and concludes by insisting that he is willing to stand by that prediction in spite of the fact that this is a "presidential year."

In the west there will be another fine fight among the clubs of the American Association. If Columbus shall happen to win the championship again it will not be due to the fact that the team fails to meet opposition.

Toledo believes that it has a beter ball team than it had last year, and on the western end of the circuit additions have been made to some of the teams which are expected to make them better able to cope against the present champions.

Milwaukee will not secede from the association this year, and it is doubtful if it attempts anything of the kind any other year. It is certain that an invasion of Chicago will be fought by both major leagues, and it is not likely that the American association will be in a hurry to risk a battle which would result in somebody being financially crippled and somebody else having all the advantage of the fight at the end. That is usually the case in all baseball wars.

All the cities in the American association circuit would be winners, from the money end, at least, if their owners would devote their time strictly to advancing the interests of the organization as it exists at present without indulging in too many idle day dreams about expansion. At the present rate of growth of the cities of the American association, it will be but a short time when the population is as large, collectively, as it ever was in the earlier days of the present major leagues.

The Southern league is in the best of condition, the New York State league, with a new circuit, starts more favorably than it did last year, the New England league looks as if it will be a money maker, the "Three I's" is booming, the PacificCoast league is in good standing in every way, the Western league seems prosperous and its outlook favorable, and the score of smaller leagues have started under better auspices.

Three-fifths of this is due to the excellent agreement which was made when the National league and the American league declared peace. The present system under which organized baseball is working is absolutely the best in the history of the sport. It has placed baseball on a firmer financial basis than ever, and the sport must have some solidity to it in order to enlist the efforts of men to hold together the minor leagues from year to year.

A Good Ball-Player.

From east to west and from north to south the name of "Hans" Wagner is conjured with by the baseball enthusiast. The smallest boy who knows aught of baseball in the orange groves of southern California can tell you of "Hans" Wagner; the pickaninny who watches the players with a smile of adoration in Mobile has heard of "Hans" Wagner; the sturdy lad in the far northwest who impatiently waits for the snow to melt from the ground that he may play ball, has listened to the wonderful tales of what Wagner can do with the bat.

When the owners of the National league held their annual winter meeting in New York last winter and Charles Webb Murphy, president of the Chicago club, gave a fine dinner to several guests because his team had won the world's championship. "Hans" Wagner was invited to attend. He came from Pittsburg somewhat in fear and trembling, for he had no intimation as to why he had been summoned to meet with the National league in New York.

At the dinner he was presented with a magnificent silver cup. This is the first time in the history of baseball that an organized league of the importance of the National league ever was known to give one of its players anything so valuable in the way of a trophy for good work.

Wagner was completely taken by surprise, but he responded with a clever speech of thanks. Then he wrapped the big mug in its cover and wended his way back to Carnegie, Pennsylvania, to pass the remainder of the winter visiting around.

He was remembered by the National league because for years he had led the organization in batting, and in addition to that had given a good account of himself generally as a ball-player.

The huge figure of this genial man is one of the best known sights on a ball field. He is one of the finest ball players in the history of organized baseball. Not only is he an accomplished batter, but he is a crafty and fleet base runner, a fielder whose limit seems to rest only with the limits of the diamond and a player of excellent character. He is so modest that he will run at the sight of a reporter and shelter himself in his room when "fans" become too effusive in regard to his ability.

WHAT THE PLAYERS SAY.

By Mike Donlin.

(Returned to Life.)

"Take it from me that the Giants have a chance to win the championship in 1908. I saw the boys play at Chicago last year while I was laid up with a broken ankle, and I know that they are as able to grab the title this season as they were two years ago, when they not only beat Pittsburg for the flag, but the Athletics for the world's championship. Some persons say that the pitchers are weak this year. I can't see it that way. All the pitchers need is a little batting to help them out, and I think that McGraw has the batters for this season."

By "Joe" Kelley.

(Again a Major League Manager.)

"I don't make any claim for Boston other than to say that the Boston club is a great deal better in the field and on the batting line than some think. It is my opinion that we shall be able to finish higher in the race than we did last year. If everything breaks right for us it is possible that we shall get into the first division. Some of our friends seem to think that we may not finish worse than fourth. If we had two winning pitchers we might finish better than that."

By Charles Dooin.

(Auburn Haired and Talkative.)

"If the Chicagos have an idea that the championship is coming their way in easy fashion this year they should get that idea out of their heads as quickly as possible. The 'Phillies' have a look in because we are going to play better ball than we did in 1907 by about 20 per cent."

By John Evers.

(The Wit of the Cubs.)

"I can't see where we are going to lose this year. The other clubs in the National league may be stronger than they have been in the past, but there's one thing they all forget. They haven't seen us play our best. We'll show it to them if that is all which they are hanging back for."

By Fred Clarke.

(Custodian of the Pittsburgs.)

"Looks to me like a better race than it was last year. If we do as much better this season as we did better in 1907 than in 1906, we shall have a chance to make Chicago think that winning a pennant three times in succession is no 'cinch.' New York found it out."

By John James McGraw.

(Who Talks for the Giants.)

"Not since I have been a manager have I ever claimed a championship before a season began. It's too late to begin. I have said that I thought my team was good now and then, and I say so now. I think the Giants will be higher in the race this year than they were last and I firmly believe that they will play better ball than they have since we won the championship for the last time in 1905."

By John Ganzel.

(The Cincinnati Student.)

"Most of the people don't give us a look in anyhow, so I can't see what good it will do me to say anything. If we can play better ball and win more games this year than we did last I shall not think that the summer has been misspent. I guess maybe we will."

By "Patsy" Donovan.

(The Beau Brummel of Brooklyn.)

"Brooklyn has been sort of a dark horse for the last two years. If we get a good start in April we are going to be a light horse this year, and our light will shine so that it can be seen all over the league. If we get another bad start I haven't a word to say."

JOHN D. WILCOX

Republican Candidate for State Senator, Advocates Statement No. 1.

At the primary election next Friday, April 17, there are five state senators to be voted upon for position on the Republican ballot in the June election. Among the candidates is John D. Wilcox, who is well and favorably known to a great number of Oregonians, as he has lived in this state nearly 50 years. Mr. Wilcox is well qualified to appreciate the wants of the state in which he was born and has lived so long. Mr. Wilcox is by profession a lawyer, having been admitted to the bar of California in 1886. In that year he returned to Portland and formed a law partnership with the late Senator John H. Mitchell, who for over 20 years was a firm believer in the election of United States senators by vote of the people.

Mr. Wilcox is in favor of Statement No. 1 and the choice of the people for United States senator.

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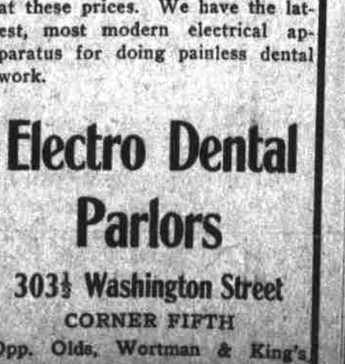

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