

**CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA**  
**INTRODUCTION and 1886-1887 DEATH INDEX**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1885-1906 CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA, DEATH INDICES & RECORDS**

Great Falls was founded in 1885, a part of Chouteau County, Montana Territory. Records were kept at Fort Benton until Cascade County became a reality on September 12, 1887. Formal record-keeping commenced in Great Falls, the new county seat, on Monday, December 19, 1887.<sup>1</sup> Only coroner records/inquests were required by law, and these reported the hearings and conclusions from certain crimes and suspicious deaths. Montana did not mandate death certificates until 1907.

The newspapers of Great Falls (*Tribune* and *Leader*) sometimes noted deaths, but obituaries were not the custom of the time. Some Lutheran Church and Presbyterian Church records are available at Ancestry.com. **Please note:** what follows is most likely incomplete, just because formal records were not required. Many records consisted of a brief statement in the Tribune column, "Spray of the Falls". Sometimes a death was announced in a local community column, (for example, Belt, Sand Coulee, Stockett, Cascade, Ulm, Neihart, Vaughn, Simms, and Sun River). Sometimes, the only record found was a reference to a death happening in a previous time period. Occasionally a death was noted by cause of death, but with no personal name.

Finding Cascade County deaths was a challenge. I used newspapers, Cascade County coroner reports and inquests, Findagrave.com, Great Falls Genealogy Society cemetery records, local history books, certain county/city Polk directories, and records from the GFGS's *Treasure State Lines*. Cascade County Commission Minutes even provided hints, in that gravediggers and doctors received set fees for caring for/burying the poor. Funeral home records were noted where available.

Each Cascade County death found was recorded by date known. If you know of other records, please report these (along with documentation) to GFGS, so that we can improve these records.

In addition to the digitized death indices for the years 1885-1906 I created PDF files of information I found about each death (occasional obit, clipping from news column, Commissioner Minutes, et al.). The PDF files are available by year at the Great Falls Genealogy Society Library.

~~~Janet Thomson, GFGS, January, 2021.

---

<sup>1</sup> Great Falls Tribune, Monday, December 19, 1887, p. 1, quoting the Act which created Cascade County, Montana Territory ["Section XIII. This act shall take effect from and after the third Monday of December 1887"]. This article also provided brief biographies of those appointed to County positions: Commissioners Charles Wegner, J. A. Harris; J.W. Matkin, Clerk & Recorder; H.P. Rolfe, Probate Judge; A.E. Dickerman, Treasurer; C.P. Downing, Sheriff; R. T. Gorham, Assessor; G.W. Taylor, County Attorney; J.W. Stanton, Public Administrator; Bessie Ford, County Supt. of Schools; Dr. J. H. Fairfield, County Coroner; along with three deputy clerks/sheriffs.

**CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA  
INTRODUCTION and 1886-1887 DEATH INDEX**

| <b>SURNAME</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>FIRST NAME</b> | <b>DATE</b> | <b>COMMENT</b>                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Allan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Alfie             | 01/23/1887  | Marker, Highland Cem.                                               |
| Allan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Olive             | 01/18/1887  | Marker, Highland Cem.                                               |
| Allan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Wallace G.        | 01/19/1887  | Marker, Highland Cem.                                               |
| Barrett                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Helen S., Mrs.    | 05/10/1887  | Obit. Age 53. Sand Coulee Cem.                                      |
| Blake                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | John W.           | 11/04/1887  | Obit, 2 markers (1 mil.); Highland Cem.                             |
| Cartwright                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Orville           | 04/05/1886  | 13-14. Membraneous croup. Marker, Highland Cem.                     |
| Cartwright                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Willie            | 04/05/1886  | Age 15. Membraneous croup. Marker, Highland.                        |
| Danner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Melinda E., Mrs.  | 12/05/1887  | Age 26, died of chill. Highland Cem., obit., pix                    |
| Gibbons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Boy               | 11/05/1886  | Scarlet Fever. Child. Deaths in the family shown.                   |
| Gibbons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Boy               | 11/06/1886  | Scarlet Fever. Child. Deaths in the family shown.                   |
| Gibson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Infant Male       | 12/16/1886  | 13 days old. Son of Phil and May Gibson.                            |
| Hughes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Pansy             | 04/02/1886  | Age 2, half-sis of Cartwrights. Marker, et al.                      |
| Iver                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Ida, Miss         | 07/02/1887  | Typhoid. "Eastside" (Highland) Cem. Notice.                         |
| Jelica                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | May J.            | 10/21/1886  | Scarlet Fever. Child. Death notice.Marker.                          |
| Lyons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Morris            | 11/17/1886  | 22. Calvary Cem. Long obituary, no marker.                          |
| Murdock                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | George William    | 09/04/1885  | Bright's Disease. Marker, obit. Highland Cem. Army Vet.             |
| Robinson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Rex R.            | 05/06/1887  | Age 3-4. Marker, Highland Cem.                                      |
| Slicht                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | William           | 12/28/1887  | Age 45. Death notice. RR accident.                                  |
| Smith                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | William           | 00/00/1885  | Army vet. Burial Prospect Hill, later moved to Highland Cem., 1897. |
| Walker                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Infant            | 08/07/1887  | Death notice, Highland Cem.                                         |
| Walker                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | M. E.             | 00/00/1887  | No other info                                                       |
| Wildekopf                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Caroline, Mrs.    | 08/29/1885  | About 24. At Sun Rvr. Leavings; consumption. Sun River Cemetery, MT |
| <b>Sources:</b> Ancestry.com [Findagrave.com]; Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls Leader [newspapers.com]. Within newspaper sources: "died Sunday."; "died yesterday"; "died recently"; "Obituary"; notices for members to attend funerals from organizations, columns for Sand Coulee, Neihart, Belt, Cascade. Local history books (those that had cemetery lists). JDT |                   |             |                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |             |                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |             |                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                   |             |                                                                     |