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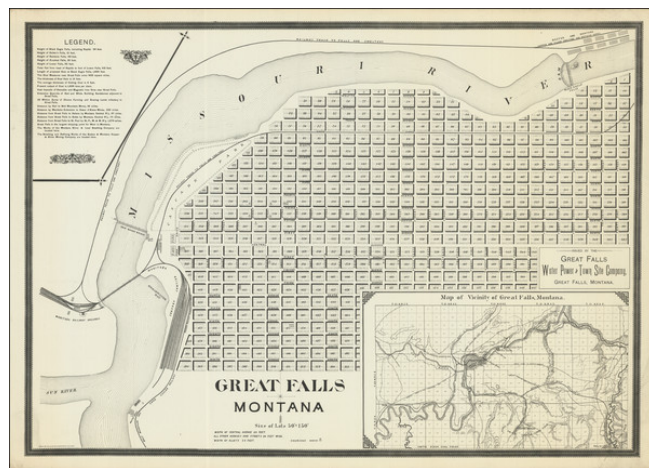
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[Great Falls, Montana] Great Falls, Montana Size of Lots 50' x 150'

Stock#: 85587
Map Maker: Great Falls Water Power & Townsite Company
Date: 1892 circa
Place: Chicago
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 37.5 x 26.5 inches
Price: \$ 2,400.00



Description:

Early Town Plan of Great Falls, Montana

Fine example of this extremely rare plan of Great Falls, Montana, shortly after the completion of the Dam at Great Eagle Falls and Iron Wagon Bridge across the Missouri River.

The map illustrates the recently developed town Great Falls, which was first platted in the Fall or Winter of 1883. Since its original platting, a number of important new features are illustrated, including:

- Great Eagle Falls Dam (first hydroelectric power for Great Falls)
- Manitoba Railway Grounds and Passenger Depot (first railroad to reach Great Falls in 1887)
- Belt Mountains and Sand Coulee Railway (The San Coulee Railway seems to have arrived to Great Falls by December 1888)
- Completed Railway lines of the Boston and Montana Coper and Silver Smelting and Refining Works (the company had completed this work by 1892)

At the bottom right is a regional map that tracks the Missouri River from the Smith River in the west to just beyond the Great Falls of the Missouri River, highlighting the position of the Great Falls Townsite, recently constructed Smelters, lessers falls on the Missouri River and the railroad lines and Wagon Roads leading to the townsite, with the Belt Creek Coal Field at the lower right corner and the Smith River Coal Fields at the bottom of the inset map. The full map covers an area about 40 miles wide by 25 miles high, including the area of today's Malmstrom Air Force Base, Giant Springs State Park and

The present map would seem to be one of the earliest surviving printed maps of Great Falls.



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Great Falls Water Power & Townsite Company

The map was issued by the Great Falls Water Power & Townsite Company, which was formed in 1887, in order to develop Great Falls; provide electrical power and water and attract commerce. The company acquired land on the northeast side of town on the Missouri River from Black Eagle Falls down to Sheep Creek. The company employed J.T. Fanning, a hydraulic engineer, to survey Black Eagle Falls in the summer of 1887 to determine the suitability of the falls and the best location for a dam. Plans for a dam were drafted, but construction was delayed until 1890.

Dating The Map

Great Falls was created in 1883 by Paris Gibson, a businessman who had made his first fortune in Minneapolis and who had begun a new venture in Montana as a sheep herder. The earliest notice of the future city was in the *Helena Daily Independent*, Friday March 2, 1883, which noted:

. . . a Company with Paris Gibson at its head contemplates building a woolen factory at the falls of the Missouri, a short distance below the mouth of the Sun river."

One June 3, 1883, an announcement of acquisition of land by what would become the Great Falls Townsite Company appeared in *The River Press* (Fort Benton, M.T.)

Six deeds, embodying about 1,000 acres of land for Jas. J. Hill, President and the leading spirit of the Manitoba railroad, and Paris Gibson of this city, were filed for record day before Wednesday with the county recorder. This land lies near the mouth of Sun River, not far from the Great Falls and is to be its site, so rumor says, of a coming metropolis. . . ."

By June 27, 1883, the planned city was announced in a two column article in *The River Press* and the *Butte Miner* with the headline "**Great Falls -- The Coming Minneapolis of Montana,**" extolling the virtues of the water power at the site, ". . . much greater than that of St. Anthony falls at Minneapolis." Over the course of the next month, accounts of the planned town were widely published throughout Montana's leading newspapers.

The area that would become Great Falls was surveyed for Paris Gibson by Herbert P. Rolfe (later publisher of the *Great Falls Leader*). In July 1883, Gibson sent Rolfe on an expedition to survey and plat what Gibson called "a Minneapolis on the Missouri."



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Real estate sales and promotion started immediately. A newspaper account in the *River Press* notes that "Chas Weger, of Rock creek, has just arrived from the new city, where he has been to pick out a suitable point for Holter & Bros. proposed saw mill and planning mill."

By the Spring of 1884, the first construction had begun and the Great Falls Townsite Company was operating from two tents on Broadwater Bay. By the summer, the Great Falls Townsite Company was operating from offices on Central Avenue and by December, the company had announced the intention to run "a first-class ferry."

The Pioneer Hotel is shown, which was also built in the summer of 1884, as well as Ira Myers Sawmill, completed in the summer of 1884. The map locates the Manitoba Railroad, which was the first railroad to reach Great Falls in 1887.

Great Falls History

Meriwether Lewis was the first white person to visit the area, which he did on June 13, 1805, as part of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. York, an African American slave owned by William Clark and who had participated in the Expedition, was the first black American to visit the site of the future city.

After Lewis and Clark in 1806, there is no record of any white person visiting the site of the city of Great Falls until explorer and trapper Jim Bridger reached the area in 1822. Bridger and Major Andrew Henry led a fur-trading expedition to the future city location in April 1823. British explorer Alexander Ross trapped around Great Falls in 1824. In 1838, a mapping expedition sent by the U.S. federal government and guided by Bridger spent four years in the area.

The Great Falls of the Missouri River marked the limit of the navigable section of the Missouri River for non-portable watercraft. The first steamboat arrived at future site of the city in 1859.

Politically, the future site of Great Falls passed through numerous hands in the 19th century. It was part of the unincorporated frontier until May 30, 1854, when Congress established the Nebraska Territory. Indian attacks on white explorers and settlers dropped significantly after Isaac Stevens negotiated the Treaty of Hellgate in 1855, and white settlement in the area began to occur. On March 2, 1861, the site became part of the Dakota Territory. The Great Falls area was incorporated into the Idaho Territory on March 4, 1863, and then into the Montana Territory on May 28, 1864. It became part of the state of Montana upon that territory's admission to statehood on November 8, 1889.

The modern city of Great Falls was founded in 1883. Businessman Paris Gibson visited the Great Falls of the Missouri River in 1880, and was deeply impressed by the possibilities for building a major industrial



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city near the falls with power provided by hydroelectricity. He returned in 1883 with friend Robert Vaughn and some surveyors and platted a permanent settlement on the south side of the river. The city's first citizen, Silas Beachley, arrived later that year. With investments from railroad owner James J. Hill and Helena businessman Charles Arthur Broadwater, houses, a store, and a flour mill were established in 1884. The Great Falls post office was established on July 10, 1884, and Paris Gibson was named the first postmaster. A planing mill, lumber yard, bank, school, and newspaper were established in 1885. The *Great Falls Tribune*, the first newspaper in town, was published in May 1885.

Paris Gibson's partner James J. Hill organized the Great Falls Water Power & Townsite Company in 1887, with the goal of developing the town of Great Falls; providing it with power, sewage, and water; and attracting commerce and industry to the city. To attract industry to the new city, he offered low rates on the Montana Central Railway. By 1887 the town had 1,200 citizens, and in October of that year the Great Northern Railway arrived in the city. Great Falls was incorporated on November 28, 1888.

Great Falls quickly became a thriving industrial and supply center. A ground-breaking for a smelter in nearby Black Eagle took place in 1890, the same year that construction of a hydroelectric dam atop Black Eagle Falls was completed. The dam provided the fledgling city with electricity and marked the first major instance of hydroelectric power in Montana. In 1894, naturalist Vernon Bailey passed through and described Great Falls as "a very good town, appears prosperous and booming & I should judge contains 15000 inhabitants".

Paris Gibson

Paris Gibson (1830-1912) was born in Brownfield, Maine and went to Bowdoin College. In 1853, he was elected to the Maine legislature.

After moving to Minnesota, where he built the North Star Woolen Mill at St. Anthony's Falls, he served on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents from 1871 through 1879, and was a founding Trustee for Lakewood Cemetery. He abandoned his failed business interests in Minnesota to try his luck out West and, in 1880, paid a visit to the Great Falls of the Missouri River and quickly recognized their potential for producing hydroelectric power.

Gibson convinced his friend, railroad magnate James J. Hill, to invest in a townsite at the falls and urged that Hill extend his railroad through the new city. In 1883 the city of Great Falls, Montana, was founded. Paris Gibson, was quoted as saying "When the City of Great Falls was founded and its plat was recorded in 1883, it was decided at once to set aside for park purposes, certain well located tracts of land within the City limits and to commence the planting of American Elms and other desirable trees..." The First step in this planning was setting aside a large tract of land between Park Driveway and the Missouri



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River, extending a mile up from Central Avenue. Although the "park" named Cascade Park (now Gibson Park) was owned and cared for by the Township Company, Paris Gibson was in the forefront in leading the effort to develop a park system.

By 1887 Hill rail lines linked Great Falls to Butte, Montana, and Helena, Montana. However, the main line of Hill's Great Northern Railway bypassed Great Falls to the north. Despite this setback, Great Falls became a major center of trade for area farmers and ranchers, and its dams on the Missouri River contributed power for ore processing and grain milling industries.

Rarity

OCLC locates examples at the University of Chicago, Montana Historical Society, Montana State University and the University of Montana.

Detailed Condition:

Minor repaired tears.