

# PIONEER IN PRO FOOTBALL

By Jack Cusack

**About the Author.** *Jack Cusack was born November 17, 1890, at Canton, Ohio -- and it was there, as a high school boy, that his lifelong interest in football started. As a youth of sixteen, he was eyewitness to some of the events involved in the scandal of 1906, which wrecked pro football for six years; and when the game was revived, in 1912, Mr. Cusack, at twenty-one, became manager of the Canton Bulldogs.*

*During the six years he piloted the Bulldogs, Mr. Cusack put together some of the finest, star-studded teams in history, and he is the man who brought the celebrated Jim Thorpe into professional football. To quote Eddie Jacobs, Canton sports promoter in the 1920's: "Cusack is as responsible as anybody, living or dead, for pro football being revived in Canton."*

*In 1918, Mr. Cusack entered the oil and gas business in Oklahoma, and after that returned to football but once -- to be business manager for Jim Thorpe during the 1921 season of the Cleveland Indians. Today, Jack Cusack is an independent oil operator living in Fort Worth, Texas.*

C.L. Douglas

Dedicated to the memory of Jim Thorpe, and to the unsung heroes -- the players, the managers, and the owners -- with whom I was closely associated during my era in Professional Football.

"Let the Chips Fall Where They May"

Professional football, the most rugged and fascinating sport ever devised since the ancient Greeks started the Olympic Games 2,500 years ago in the fields beside the Alpheus River, is as typically American as Western rodeo and Alexander Cartwright's invention of a thing he called "baseball."

How it all started, what it was like in the beginning, has been a matter of varied discussion in recent years; but the foundation of the game, as now carried on by the National Professional Football League, actually was laid to three Ohio towns back in 1904. And that is the purpose of this book -- to give the historical background of professional football as I saw it; for I was in the midst of it during those great old days, and was closely connected with the game until the early part of 1922.

It is true that professional football was played between 1896 [*Ed. 1892*] and 1906 -- in Pennsylvania cities like Pittsburgh, Latrobe and Greensburg, and in New York state towns like Syracuse, Watertown and Ogdenburg -- and they had some very good teams made up, for the most part, by outstanding college players. But for financial or other reasons most of the clubs faded away by 1904, with some of the players drifting into Ohio as teams were being shaped up at Canton, Massillon and Akron.

In this Ohio triumvirate rivalry was keen and spectator interest was high as the Canton Bulldogs, the Massillon Tigers, and the Akron Indians met in many hard-fought contests during the next three years. But, late in 1906, a scandal erupted that was to make the term professional football anathema for the next nine years.

The prelude to the trouble really came in 1906, when several players -- Schrontz, Lang, Kierkoff and Hayden -- were hired away from Massillon by the Canton management, using the lure of higher pay. And then came the famous 1906 game between the Bulldogs and the Tigers that sure enough put the fat into the fire. Massillon won by 12-6 on the home gridiron, but there was a great deal of outspoken dissatisfaction on both sides over the result, which caused the loss of considerable betting money put up by the Canton supporters. Charges of crooked work

were bandied about until the newspaper at Massillon, The Independent, came right out in bold type and accused Blondy Wallace, coach and captain of the Bulldogs, with attempting to frame the game with some of the Massillon players. The paper went on to allege that Wallace, having failed to accomplish the frame, persuaded one or more of his own Bulldog squad to throw the game. Blondy sued The Independent for libel, but the suit was later withdrawn -- probably because the newspaper apparently had the evidence. [Ed. See "*Blondy Wallace and the Biggest Football Scandal Ever*" by Bob Carroll and Bob Braunwart in 1984 P.F.R.A. Annual for a different view.]

I was a high school youngster of sixteen at the time, but I still have vivid recollections of what occurred in Canton after its team returned from the Massillon game. One of my neighbors, Victor Kaufmann, who later became a physician at Canton, had lost a heavy bet on the disputed contest. Victor was quite an athlete in his own right, covering every field from football and baseball to bike riding and track, and on that evening he took me with him to the Courtland Hotel Bar, where most of the Bulldogs had congregated to post-mortem the game. Arriving at the hotel, we went directly to the bar, where Kaufmann lost no time in making his feelings known, loud enough for all to hear.

"If you want to know what I think," he said, "I'll tell you -- I think that game was crooked!"

The fight that started in that barroom was as spontaneous as the lighting of a fuse on a powder keg. Somebody swung out at Victor, and men who had been arguing the matter only a few minutes before began punching each other all over the place. Tables were overturned, and the surging crowd crashed through the plateglass window and continued the battle on Court Street until the coppers arrived, with their night sticks, to quell the rioters and haul some of them away to the pokey. Victor and I managed to slip out of the crowd and get away, but my friend went home in high satisfaction -- because he had gotten in some good punches in what he considered the right places.

At that time I was already an avid football fan, but after that brawl at the Courtland -- which was to set back professional organizations for several years -- I was convinced that this was the sport for me. It offered such exciting possibilities, both on and off the playing fields.

After leaving high school in 1907, I went to work as an office employe for the East Ohio Gas Company, a subsidiary of the Standard Oil of New Jersey, but it was still possible for me to keep an interest in football. From that year until 1911, Canton continued with sandlot teams, playing in intercity and sometimes contesting with surrounding towns like Salem and Akron. Some of the teams that I recall from those times were the Cantons, Cohen Tigers, Simpson Tigers, Nutshell Indians and the Petersburg Nationals. They operated by passing the hat at games and dividing the take among the players at the end of the season.

I have always looked upon 1912 as the Renaissance year for professional football; and in view of what happened later I have always believed that the future Football Hall of Fame rightfully should have been located somewhere on a line between Canton and Massillon.

A Canton team was organized in 1912, with all games transferred to League Park, owned by Ed Piero and Dr. Lothamer, and the new organization was called the Canton Professionals on the theory that the old Bulldog name would bring back memories of the 1906 scandal. It was at this time, when I was twenty-one, that I became identified with the team as its secretary-treasurer. I took the job as a favor to Roscoe Oberlin, who later was to become my partner. My services were for free, as I had declined to take a cut in the team's profits -- if any. [Ed. *The Pros actually began in 1911; Cusack joined them in their second year.*]

H.H. Halter, who was manager at the time, did not take well to the arrangement, giving a rather cool climate to our association. Halter booked the games for the season, a total of nine, with emphasis on Akron. The Akron Indians, owned, coached and managed by Peggy Parratt -- a former star of the Massillon Tigers -- was a real drawing card as an opponent because of the intense rivalry between Akron and Canton, but Parratt was a hard man to do business with when it came to dividing the gate receipts. He liked to divide the money half-horse and half-rabbit, his preference being the horse end.

Finally, the two managers had so much difficulty in arriving at an agreement that Parratt refused to meet with Halter, but said he would be willing to discuss contract terms with me. Accordingly, we met in Akron and signed a contract after 5 hours of talk. The situation naturally

displeased Halter, and during my absence in Akron he called a meeting of the team, at which a vote was taken to dispense with my services. I circumvented that by securing a 5-year lease on League Park, with an option of five more years, and installed myself as manager. Halter was out and the team continued with the exception of one or two that resigned. (The foregoing, however, is in no way meant as a criticism of Mr. Halter, who was a fine gentleman.)

I have called 1912 the Renaissance period for pro football because it was in that year that so many teams were organized in that part of the country -- the Cleveland Erin Braus, Toledo Maroons, Columbus Panhandles, Cincinnati Colts, Shelby Blues, Elyria Pros, and Pittsburgh Lyceums. Soon other cities were getting into the revival act -- Salem, Youngstown, Dayton and Detroit -- all on an individual basis. The spirit of pro football was on the march again, even without formation of an official league. [*Ed. Most of the teams mentioned by Cusack existed before 1912; however, for most of them there appears to have been a definite increase in the quality of play in 1912.*]

Our Canton team of 1912, with the exception of Erb of Allegheny College and Wright of Western Reserve, was made up of strapping local talent able to hold their own against the best competition because they were fast and heavy and kept in fine physical condition. In addition to Erb and Wright, we had Duckey Terrett, Pat Steiner, Smoke Smalley, E. Zerbe, Dutch Speck, Snyder, V. Zettler, Harry Turner, McDermott, Monk Oberlin, Art Sloat and Dick Van Alman. We played 9 games during that season, winning 6 and losing 3. We lost 2 games to Akron and one to Elyria, but since both of these teams were made up principally of college graduates, we felt that we had made a credible showing. But that was not enough for the fans -- they wanted a winner.

We were at a disadvantage in trying to upgrade the team on a profit-split basis. We had to have some college gridiron graduates, and that meant paying salaries, and so with the help of Roscoe Oberlin, the popular Canton captain, I persuaded our regular players to start the 1913 season with salaries instead of splits. Oberlin and I became partners and backers, with me handling the team as manager.

This new arrangement left us free to start building a team that could compete with Akron and Elyria, and we added several college men, including Ray McGregor of Mt. Union (a fine triple-threat backfield man), also Henry and Bill Dagenhard, together with Eddie and Norm Van Alman. As coach, I engaged Harry Hazlett, who was also doing that duty at McKinley High School, and he continued with us for a couple of years. In the 1913 season Canton played about the same schedule as in 1912, but again we were unable to beat Akron, our arch rival.

Money posed a problem for Oberlin and myself. Since our cash resources were at low ebb we had to depend heavily on gate receipts, and attendance varied. The first few games of a season often would draw as few as 500 half-dollar admissions, which didn't pay many salaries, but the games with Akron would draw around 2,500, and those with Shelby and Elyria about 1,500 each. At first we had no reserved seats to augment the take, but we installed them in the following year, gaining a seating capacity of 1,500 -- and, of course, some extra revenue.

I was brightly aware that if professional football was to be a success we had to live down the scandal of 1906 and gain the public's confidence in the honesty of the game, and I felt that this could be done only with proper understanding among the managers and backers of the various teams. It was my theory that if we could stop players from jumping from one team to another, it would be a first step in the right direction. Therefore, the managers (unknown to the players) made a verbal agreement that once a player signed with a team he was that team's property as long as he played, or until he was released. This helped to gain added respectability, and also aided in keeping the salaries down. Quite often we received letters from players who wanted to transfer to the Canton team, but our stock reply was that our roster was filled.

But the thing we needed most to give football new impetus was a good strong team in Massillon, traditional rival of Canton and thus a terrific gate puller, but Massillon had been out of the picture since the 1906 fiasco. Then, during the summer of 1914, I received a call asking me to visit Massillon and discuss the matter with Chamber of Commerce officials. I went, hoping to be of help, but I didn't like what I heard at the meeting. Massillon's plan for a new start centered around a plot to raid the Akron Indians and steal away some of the top players.

I raised immediate objections, reminding the committee that it was just such an action that helped bring on the 1906 scandal and that if the plan were attempted Canton would refuse to play against any team that Massillon could assemble.

"You'll be forced to play us," they told me. "If you don't, you'll be losing a lot of money."

"I realize that," I replied, "but I'd rather fold at Canton than risk losing the confidence of the public, thus destroying the game."

As things turned out the would-be promoters in Massillon did not put a team in the field, and it was a sore disappointment for all of us at Canton that they did not do so, but in a proper way, of course. It was a team that was badly needed to bring about the old rivalry so necessary for the success of the game. But that was that, and I went on about the business of upgrading my own team by the addition of Peters of Ohio Northern, and Dud Schreiner, an outstanding halfback from Cleveland.

Finances continued to create problems, and it was about this time that I conceived the idea of selling season tickets to bolster the treasury, but the Canton Merchants Association turned thumbs down on solicitation of its members, and that method of financing went glimmering. Then, just before the start of the 1914 season, a friend of mine, the late J.J. Foley, president of the Home Brewing Company, asked me, in a casual conversation about football, how the team was coming along and if I felt I could make any money.

I told him that if rain didn't fall too often I was certain success was assured, but explained that a couple of rainy days could put us in a serious financial bind. He next asked if I thought I could make money with some financial backing, even if we were rained out for a couple of games, and I replied that we certainly could. Without any further ado, he took me to the First National Bank and set up, in my name, a \$10,000 credit on which I could draw in case of necessity, and with this generous support I knew that the Canton team was on its way. I am happy to say that I never drew a penny from that account, as the weather continued good and the gate receipts began to increase.

During the season tragedy struck. Harry Turner, a Canton boy who played center, died of injuries received in the game, which brought our first victory over Parratt's Akron Indians. In making a tackle, Turner's back was fractured and his spinal cord completely severed, but he showed a rare type of courage and spirit. I was at his bedside when he died. He was conscious almost to the end, and his last words left an indelible imprint on my memory.

"I know I must go," he said, "but I'm satisfied, for we beat Peggy Parratt."

I knew that football history already had recorded several tragic incidents of this kind and that nothing worse could happen to a team than a playing field fatality: It affected not only the morale of the team but the loyalty of the fans as well, and it usually meant the building of a completely new team. Although we had several more games to play, some of the fans demanded that the season be closed at once, and some predicted that the game was through in Canton.

However, we had spent so much effort and time in bringing the Professionals to the point of profit that we decided to take a gamble and carry on. Even so, the next game, with the Shelby Blues, almost wrecked us. Shelby, usually a good drawing card, had a team that we should have beaten by at least three touchdowns, but we had a hard time winning by only one. Somehow we managed to finish the season, although attendance dropped to about 50 per cent of normal.

*[Ed. In the season's final game, Akron easily defeated Canton in the re-match.]*

Late in 1914, I was faced with a personal career decision. After seven years in the gas company office I was now, at twenty-three, the chief clerk, the only employe entrusted with the combination of the money vault, my principal duty being to take charge of the daily cash receipts and make the bank deposits. A year before, I had been told by Ralph Gallagher, the general superintendent (and later president of the Standard Oil of New Jersey), that I would have to give up football or resign from the company, and I promptly resigned. Mr. Gallagher, however, relented and gave me a year's extension, and now my time of grace was up.

"Well," said Mr. Gallagher, "what shall it be -- football or the company?"

"Football," I replied -- for I felt that the professional setup had a bright financial future, which proved true for me as well as for some of the others who followed after me.

## 1915

The year 1915 brought the beginning of the big-time era in professional football, and happily it brought Massillon back into play. A group of Massillon business men, headed by Jack Whalen and Jack Donahue, invited me to a meeting to discuss details, and they were now willing to agree with the principals I held out for the year before. [*Ed. Contrary to what Cusack says, the new Massillon owners did exactly what had been discussed the year before and raided Parratt's Akron team; arguably in self-defense, Cusack also picked up some former Akron players. By the end of the season, Parratt's team was made up mostly of Akron sandlotters.*] Their decision to field a team brought back the old rivalry that all of us needed so badly and furnished the drawing power that meant good gates. With the return of Massillon, another pleasant thing occurred -- the sports writers, having all but forgotten the 1906 scandal, began referring to the old rivals again as the Canton Bulldogs and the Massillon Tigers. We were back in business once more at the old stand.

I knew that in order to compete properly with Massillon we had to secure for Canton the best available talent, so I contracted every All-American I could locate, either by mail or personally, but found the response somewhat reluctant. The colleges and most sports writers around the country were opposed to professional football, as were many of the coaches and graduate players, and many of those I contacted refused to play. Some of those who did agree to consider playing jobs insisted on the use of assumed names, particularly the coaches, who wanted to protect their jobs. The various clubs booked the strongest teams possible from around the nation but only four were outstanding in 1915 -- Canton, Massillon, Youngstown and Columbus. Peggy Parratt withdrew from Akron at this time but did place a fine team in Cleveland the following year.

The Canton Bulldogs opened the 1915 season with Wheeling, W. Va., and racked up a 75-0 victory, and on October 18 we defeated the Columbus Panhandles, 7-0. Meanwhile, I succeeded in strengthening the Bulldogs with some of the star players of that era, one of the best recruits being Bill Gardner, a great tackle or end from Carlisle, the government's famous Indian school in Penn. Another was Hube Wagner, an All-American end and former captain at Pitt who had been picked second All-American by sports writers 26 times during his college career. I also signed Greasy Neale, then coach at W. Va. Wesleyan, an outstanding end and halfback with considerable All-American mention. I also acquired John Kelleson, a fine tackle, assistant coach to Neale. [*Ed. Evidence exists that Kellison did not join the Bulldogs until late 1916; Neale did not play for them until 1917; however, because both played under various assumed names during their time with Canton, Cusack may be correct.*]

On October 25 we lost, 3-9, to the Detroit Heralds in a hard-fought game on their home grounds. This was our first defeat by the Heralds, with whom we had contested during the two previous seasons. On November 1 we defeated the Cincinnati Colts [*Ed. A.C.*], 41-12; the Colts had a better team than the score indicates because their players were largely former college stars. And on November 8 we took a 38-0 victory over the Altoona Indians, composed mainly of Carlisle stars and self-styled "champions of Pennsylvania."

Then, just in time for Canton's first game with the newly revived Massillon Tigers, I hit the jackpot by signing the famous Jim Thorpe, the Sac and Fox Indian from Oklahoma who was rated then (and still is today) as the greatest footballer and all-around athlete that the world of sports has ever seen!

He had first won world acclaim as the one-man track team who swept the 1912 Olympics for the United States at Stockholm, Sweden; he had been the backbone of the Carlisle football team during his school years there, a powerfully built halfback who was unequalled anywhere as a line smasher, kicker and runner; and he was destined to become, at a later time, a top-rated baseball outfielder with the New York Giants, the Boston Braves, and the Cincinnati Reds.

In 1915, when I conceived the idea of hiring this already living legend of sportdom, Jim already had lost his amateur standing (and his Stockholm medals) because he had played a little semi-pro baseball for \$25 a week, and at the moment he was doing backfield coaching at the University of Indiana. I sent Bill Gardner, his old Carlisle teammate, over to Indiana to see

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

---

him, and shortly thereafter I had Thorpe under contract to play for the Canton Bulldogs for \$250 a game. The signing also marked the start of a warm friendship between us that lasted until Jim died of a heart attack, in 1953.

Some of my business "advisers" frankly predicted that I was leading the Bulldogs into bankruptcy by paying Jim the enormous sum of \$250 per game, but the deal paid off even beyond my greatest expectations. Jim was an attraction as well as a player, and whereas our paid attendance averaged around 1,200 before we took him on, we filled the Massillon and Canton parks for the next two games -- 6,000 for the first and 8,000 for the second. All the fans wanted to see the big Indian in action.

The first game was played at Massillon and Canton was defeated, 0-16. Here were the starting lineups:

CANTON 0	MASSILLON 16
AXTEL, Kenyon	LE ROCKNE, Notre Dame
EDWARDS, Notre Dame	LT JONES, Notre Dame
POWELL, Ohio State	LG COLE, Unknown
SCHULTZ, Sandlot	C LEE, Unknown
SCHLOTT, Sandlot	RG PORTMANN, W. Reserve
WALDSMITH, Akron U.	RT CAMPBELL, Unknown
GARDNER, Carlisle	RE FINNEGAN, Notre Dame
HAMILTON, Notre Dame	QB DORIAS, Notre Dame
WAGNER, U. Pitt	LH BRIGGS, Ohio State
JULIAN, Mich. Aggies	RH FLEMING, W&J
PETERS, Carlisle	FB HANLEY, W. Reserve

Touchdown--Hanley.

Goal from TD--Fleming.

Field goals from dropkick--Dorias 3.

**Substitutions**, *Canton*--Drumm for Schlott; Raymond for Waldsmith; Waldsmith for Schultz; Speck for Powell; Wagner for Gardner; Gardner for Axtell; Thorpe for Wagner; Wagner for Julian; Julian for Peters; Peters for Julian; Julian for Thorpe; Neale for Wagner; Julian for Peters; Thorpe for Julian.

**Substitutions**, *Massillon*--Kagy for Finnegan; Collins for Hogan; Bowie for Kagy; Kagy for Fleming; Fleming for Kagy; Kagy for Bowie.

Referee--Conners. Umpire--Durfee. Head Linesman--Bast.

Most of the Massillon lineup played under assumed names which still remain unknown to me, but if you will take a look at the Massillon roster in the preceding box you will find at least one player who was using his correct name. The Rockne listed there is the famous Knute, who already was putting Notre Dame on the map and who was destined to, go down in football history as that university's greatest great among its players and coaches. Rockne, as left end, and his Notre Dame teammate, Quarterback Dorias, made a tricky and famous combination on passes. [*Ed. A careful investigation of contemporary newspaper accounts indicates that Rockne did not play for Massillon in the first Canton game. He appeared in five other games for the Tigers, including, the second Canton game. The Tiger end misidentified here by Cusack was actually Boyd Cherry, a former Ohio State star.*]

In order for the reader of this narrative to have the full import of the first 1915 Canton-Massillon game, I quote from the writeup of Warren Cross, a highly respected sports scribe for *The Canton Repository*, who recently retired after half a century of reporting:

Only the slippery surface of the field kept the Indian (Thorpe), ideal in build and a finished football man, from scoring at least one touchdown. In the second period he broke through the Massillon defense and headed for the goal, with only Dorias in his path. In attempting to get by the Massillon luminary he lost his footing and slipped, going out of bounds on the eight- yard line.

On another occasion, after skirting Massillon's left end, he slipped with almost a clear field in front of him. He was the only Canton man feared by the Massillon defense. He showed the 6,000 yelling fans the reason for this fear.

Fisher (Greasy Neale), [*Ed. Neale used the name `Fisher' in 1917; the 1915 `Fisher' appears to have been Fred Sefton, formerly from Colgate.*] the unknown halfback from the East, and Carp Julian were the only other Canton men able to accomplish anything. For Massillon, in

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

---

addition to Dorias, there stood out Fullback Hanley and Ed Kagy, Captain. The first scoring came in the first quarter when Dorias of Massillon dropped the ball over from the 28-yard line. Just before the close of the period, Thorpe trotted onto the field, heralded by cheers from 6,000 throats. He took left half.

Early in the second quarter, a pass from Dorias to Kagy took the ball to the Canton two-yard line. Canton held for three downs. On the fourth attempt, Hanley plunged through. Fleming booted the goal. Score: Massillon 10, Canton 0.

After the next kickoff and the exchange of punts that followed, Canton made its best showing. Gardner intercepted a pass on Canton's 41-yard line. Thorpe grabbed a short pass over the line for nine yards and then shot outside of Massillon's left tackle for the longest run of the game. He covered 40 yards before he slipped and went out of bounds on the 8-yard line. Massillon's line held, Canton making only 4 yards in three attempts. On the fourth down Julian shot a pass over center, the ball was batted down by a Massillon forward and into the arms of Guard Drumm. He pushed through and over the goal line, but the touchdown was not allowed, Umpire Durfee ruling that a Canton man had touched the ball before it was batted down by the Massillon lineman. Protest was unavailing. Although it appeared to be a legal touchdown for Canton. Not until late in the third quarter could Massillon score again. Then Dorias scored a dropkick from the 42-yard line. An intercepted pass by Massillon paved the way for the last scoring, another Dorias dropkick from the 45-yard line.

After a lapse of nine years barren of the intense rivalry that has always been the outstanding feature of the athletic relations between the two cities, the same old Massillon Jinx still holds its mystic power over Canton. Massillon and the Jinx conquered, 16 to 0.

In preparation for our second game with Massillon, to be played at Canton on November 29, I further bolstered the Bulldogs with the addition of Robert Butler, Walter Camp's All-American tackle from the University of Wisconsin; Abel, another Camp All-American tackle from Colgate; and Charlie Smith, a fine tackle from the Michigan Aggies, and to my knowledge the first Negro to play professional football. [*Ed. Charles Follis, with Shelby in 1902 is recognized as the first black pro player; several others preceded Smith.*] Jim Thorpe was now serving as the Canton captain.

[*Ed. After the first Massillon game, a great deal of criticism in Canton centered on the use of Thorpe in the game. Why didn't he start? Why wasn't he allowed to play more often? Thorpe himself criticized the lack of team play by his mates. The upshot was that Thorpe replaced Hazlett as coach. Quarterback and captain Don Hamilton quit the team in protest, necessitating the importing of a new quarterback from Indiana.*]

And here were the lineups for that second game:

CANTON 6	LE	MASSILLON 0
GARDNER, Carlisle	LE	ROCKNE, Notre Dame
ABEL, Colgate	LT	JONES, Unknown
EDWARDS, Notre Dame	LG	COLE, Unknown
WALDSMITH, Akron U.	C	HAYES, Unknown
DAVIS, Indiana U.	RG	PORTMANN, W. Reserve
BUTLER, Wisconsin	RT	DAY, Unknown
WAGNER, U. Pitt	RE	KAGY, W. Reserve
LAMBERT, Wabash	QB	DORIAS, Notre Dame
THORPE, Carlisle	LH	KELLEHER, Notre Dame
NEALE, W. Va. Wesleyan	RH	FLEMING, W&J
JULIAN, Mich. Aggies	FB	HANLEY, W. Reserve

Canton scoring--Dropkick by Thorpe; place kick by Thorpe.

**Substitutions**, Canton--Smith for Abell; Speck for Edwards; White for Lambert; Schultz for Waldsmith.

**Substitutions**, Massillon--Cherry for Kagy; Sacksteder for Kelleher; Briggs for Sacksteder.

Referee--Conners of Bates. Umpire--Cosgrove of Cornell. Head Linesman--Jones of Ohio State.

Timers--MacGregor of Canton and Bast of Massillon.

Our Canton park would hold as many as 8,000 people, but on this November afternoon we had an overflow crowd of spectators. Not wanting to lose any gate admissions, we sold standing room in the end zones and, in agreement with Massillon, adopted ground rules providing that any player crossing the goal line into the crowd must be in possession of the ball when he emerged from the crowd -- and as things turned out, this proved to be a lucky break for Canton.

The contest was a hard-fought, nerve-knotting game with both teams about equally matched on line play. We were able to make but two first downs on line play, while Massillon was held to one. We made several forward pass attempts without completing one, while Massillon completed four. Jim Thorpe succeeded in making a dropkick from the 18-yard line and later followed up with a placement kick from the 45, giving Canton a 6-0 advantage. Massillon was held scoreless in the first three quarters, but in the final quarter the visitors opened their stock of passes and the situation began to look bad for Canton.

At this juncture I saw that something was wrong with Abel, our new tackle. Our opponents were making far too much yardage through his position, and when Captain Thorpe made no move to replace him I took it upon myself to do so -- in keeping with an agreement I had with Thorpe that it would be my right to substitute from the bench if I felt it to be necessary. (I might mention, too, that Jim was sometimes hesitant to substitute, especially as to replacing a player with All-American qualifications.) I found that Abel was ill with a heavy cold, and I replaced him with Charlie Smith, the Negro from Michigan Aggies.

Then, with only a few minutes left to play, the fireworks really started. Briggs, right end [*Ed. right halfback*] for Massillon, caught a forward pass on our 15- yard line and raced across our goal line right into the midst of the "Standing Room Only" customers. Briggs fumbled -- or at least he was said to have fumbled -- and the ball popped out of the crowd right into the hands of Charlie Smith, the Canton substitute who had been following in hot pursuit. Referee Conners, mindful of the ground rules made before the game, ruled the play a touchback, but Briggs had something to say about that.

"I didn't fumble!" protested the Massillon end. "That ball was kicked out of my hands by a policeman -- a uniformed policeman!"

That was ridiculous on the face of it. Briggs was either lying or seeing things that didn't happen to be there -- for most everybody knew that Canton had no uniformed policemen in those days. But Briggs was unable to accept this solid fact.

"It was a policeman!" he insisted. "I saw the brass buttons on his coat."

Both teams had a lot going on this end-zone play. The 1915 championship of the so-called Ohio League was at stake, along with "championship of the world," as the sports writers called it. If Referee Conners' decision were allowed to stand, Canton had the title wrapped up by 6-0, while if Briggs' touchdown had been completed the score would have been 6-6, giving Massillon the undisputed championship.

The spectators, brightly aware of all this, could stand the strain and tension no longer. With only three minutes left to play, the fans -- of both Massillon and Canton persuasion -- broke down the fences surrounding the playing area and swarmed across the field by the thousands, the Massillon fans protesting the referee's decision, the Canton citizens defending it. The officials strove manfully to clear the field and resume play but found the task impossible and called the game.

It wasn't all over yet, however. The Massillon team and its loyal supporters demanded that the game officials settle the matter conclusively by making a statement on the referee's decision, and at last they agreed to do so -- on the condition that the statement be sealed and given to Manager Langford of the Courtland Hotel, to be opened and read by him at thirty minutes after midnight. This arrangement was made in order to give the officials plenty of time to get out of town and escape any wrath that might descend upon them from either side. Tension remained high throughout the evening, and the hotel lobby was filled with a bedlam of argument until Manager Langford read the statement at 12:30 a.m. It backed Referee Conners' touchback decision, saying that it was proper under the ground rules, and the Canton Bulldogs and Massillon tied for the championship.



The "Mystery of the Phantom Policeman" who had caused Briggs of Massillon so much unhappiness was solved about ten years later, long after I had left professional football and had gone to live in Oklahoma. While on a visit back to Canton I had occasion to ride a street car, on which I was greeted by an old friend, the brass-buttoned conductor. We began reminiscing about the old football days, and the conductor told me what had happened during that crucial final quarter play back in 1915. Briggs, when he plunged across the goal line into the end zone spectators, fell at the feet of the conductor, who promptly kicked the ball from Briggs' hands into the arms of Canton's Charlie Smith.

"Why on earth did you do a thing like that?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "it was like this -- I had thirty dollars bet on that game and, at my salary, I couldn't afford to lose that much money."

And that's how the Canton Bulldogs tied for the 1915 championship -- on Jim Thorpe's two field kicks, with assists from a streetcar conductor and a lucky catch by Charlie Smith. [Ed. *This was the only game for Canton, and possibly the only professional game, ever played by Charlie Smith.*]

[Of some historical interest is the question of Thorpe's first pro football game. Most sources claim that he played a game or games for Pine Village, Ind., in 1913 or 1914. No proof of these appearances has been found. However, he definitely played a game for Pine Village on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 1915, between the two Canton- Massillon games, and this was his only 1915 game in Indiana. It is the editor's theory that Thorpe's first pro game was with Canton on Nov. 14, and that he had not played competitively since 1912. This could also explain his much-criticized limited use in the game.]

## 1916

Canton's banner year came up in 1916. With the intense rivalry between Canton and Massillon, I knew we had to have the best players available regardless of cost, and I question that any team to this day can boast of as many All-American players as was fielded by Canton or Massillon in that 1916 season. On the Canton team I often had a reserve of four or five All-Americans warming the bench.

The good teams of that era were outstanding in every way. Certainly, some of the weak teams -- the poorly organized ones -- were composed of drifters and undersized players, but the better teams were solid in every way. We believed in heavyweights who were fast on their feet, and the Canton line, at one time, averaged 213 pounds, with the overall squad averaging about 200. That was the sort of player material that made the 1916 Bulldogs one of the greatest teams ever assembled -- one that I would match against any team in professional football today, if they played under the rules and with the same ball in vogue at that time.

The season -- from which the Bulldogs were to emerge with only seven points scored against them in ten games -- was opened on October 2 with the Altoona Indians, and we defeated them 23-0. One of the most brilliant Canton stars in this contest was a newly acquired Georgetown graduate, Halfback Costello, a Camp All-American. His accurate passing contributed to all three Bulldog touchdowns, and he personally wrapped up the victory in the final quarter with a neat dropkick from the 35 line.

Costello was again the big noise on October 9, when Canton won a 7-0 victory over Pitcairn, a fine Pennsylvania team composed mostly of college stars, including several from Carlisle. We made no substitutes in this game, playing the fully sixty minutes with our starting lineup.

Canton took on additional strength before the October 16 meeting with the Buffalo All-Stars. We obtained the services of Ernie Soucy of Harvard to replace Dr. Hube Wagner, who had quit the game to give more time to his medical practice. Soucy, one of Camp's All-American ends, was outstanding on both defense and offense, and he was to contribute greatly to our success during the remainder of the season. And Jim Thorpe, who had missed the first two games of the season because he had been out playing baseball, returned in time to take over as captain in the game with Buffalo's All-Stars, a team of college players which included two Carlisle stalwarts, Tallchief and Mt. Pleasant.

The Canton steamroller had no trouble in flattening Buffalo. The backfield combination of Thorpe, Costello and Julian, together with a stellar performance by Soucy, netted eleven touchdowns and eleven field goals, Costello kicking nine and Thorpe two. The game ended 77-0. The previously highly touted All-Stars simply could not stand up against the interference Canton gave to the man with the ball. Usually led by Captain Thorpe, when he was not carrying the leather himself, a group of seldom less than six speedy huskies was out ahead to bowl over anybody who had the temerity to stand in the way.

The sports writer who covered the game for *The Repository* was jubilant.

"Those pessimistic fans who have been declaring that Canton will have no chance against Massillon this fall must now take in their horns. They will have to admit that Jack Cusack has gathered a bunch of football talent which gives the Red and White a chance against any team in existence or that will be in existence..."

"Cusack struck gold when he corralled this Soucy. Canton has seen a lot of stars during the last ten years but a more brilliant end than Soucy has never flashed across the local horizon... No need to say that Thorpe is a star. Every grid fan knows that. From the first time Canton got the ball -- the Indian snatching a buffalo punt and going down the field for the first touchdown -- until he retired at the end of the second quarter. Big Jim held the center of the stage. His very presence in their midst gave the Canton men vim and vigor..."

We had still another All-American in our lineup when we took on the New York All-Stars, on October 23. He was Buck, of Wisconsin University, a 254-pound tackle who knocked down every New York attempt to advance through his portion of the line. Again the principal ball carriers were Thorpe, Costello and Julian, and only once did the self-styled "champions of New York state" make a first down before they went down, battered and mauled, under a humiliating 67-0 defeat.

Our next opponent, on October 30, was the burly Columbus Panhandles, long rated as the toughest team in Ohio, but even this formidable aggregation found the Canton defense too strong. At times, Captain Ted Nesser, one of five brothers who played for Columbus through the entire battle, managed to pierce Canton's first defense line, but he never got past Fullback Carp Julian. It was in this game that Captain Ted's redoubtable brother, Frank Nesser, met a superior in punting when he competed with Canton's Thorpe. The Indian got all of his kicks away in beautiful style and on one occasion lifted the ball down the field for eighty-five yards, booting from his own 15-yard line over the Panhandle goal. It was a rough-and-tumble game filled with penalties, but the Bulldogs, playing it carefully, gave the Panhandles their first defeat of the season, 12-0.

In preparation for the forthcoming games with Massillon, the two games we wanted most to win, I added five more All-Americans to our roster -- Wilkinson of Syracuse, King of Harvard, Doc Spears and Ghee of Dartmouth, and Garlowe of Carlisle, the latter recommended by Pop Warner, who so often gave me good advice in the selection of new players.

At Canton on November 6 we played the Cleveland Indians, now managed by our former Akron rival, Peggy Parratt. It was another great day for Jim Thorpe, who carried the ball more than half of the time, did most of the kicking and passing, and thrilled the crowd of 7,000 fans with a 71-yard dash down the field after catching a punt. While Parratt's team was made up of college stars, they did not make a first down during the game, and Canton won a 27-0 victory.

So far, so good! The Bulldogs had wrapped up six of the season's ten games and not one of the six opposing teams had scored a single point against us! But in the return game with Cleveland, played one week later at the American League baseball park there, something did occur to slightly tarnish that shutout record.

Cleveland, like other large cities with colleges -- and Cleveland had two, Case and Western Reserve -- had not yet got around to accepting professional football, and since the metropolitan sports editors had given the November 13 game but scant publicity not more than 4,000 paying spectators were in the stands, including about 1,000 from Canton. Those Clevelanders, however, who chose to stay away missed a close, hard-fought game that belonged to either side until the last few minutes of play.

For some reason, the Bulldogs were off their stride at the start and were outplayed by the Indians in the first quarter, but never once did Cleveland get into Canton territory. In the

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

---

second, the Bulldogs settled down and Thorpe managed a run around left end for the first touchdown. With the count now 7-0, Canton was forced on the defensive in the third period. When Costello attempted to punt from his own 12-yard line, the kick was blocked and the ball bounced back of the Canton goal line, where Lobert fell on it for a Cleveland touchdown.

Throughout most of the final quarter it looked like a 7-7 standoff but, with only five minutes to play, Soucy tackled Derby so hard after he had taken a punt that a fumble resulted. Canton covered, and on the fourth down Jim Thorpe sprinted around the Cleveland right end for the touchdown that gave the Bulldogs a 14-7 victory.

The next game, with the Youngstown Patricians on November 20, was another close one, with the only scoring in the last few minutes. Canton was unable to throw its full strength into the fray. Soucy and Buck had gone to Minneapolis and had not returned in time to play; and Costello had to be replaced in the first quarter because of a foot injury.

Thorpe, who had injured an ankle in the last Cleveland game, took to the field against the advice of his doctor, but had to drop out at the end of the first quarter.

The Patricians, who had blanked all previous opponents during the season, put up a valiant battle, holding Canton scoreless for three full periods and most of the fourth; and then, with only three minutes to play, Canton's Ghee and Wilkinson manipulated a pass that enabled Wilkinson to make the only touchdown of the day. Wilkinson failed on the try for goal, and the Bulldogs trotted off the field with a 6-0 win.

And now we had reached the high point of the 1916 season -- the two closing games between the Canton Bulldogs and the Massillon Tigers for the professional football championship of the world.

The first game was played at Massillon on November 27, and not even the high wind that whipped across the muddy playing field was able to cool the football fever that gripped the 10,000 or more spectators who jammed the stands. Because of the slippery turf and tricky wind conditions a 50-minute game was agreed upon, and as the teams took the field Canton was a five-to-three favorite in the betting. The players for both the Bulldogs and the Tigers were, with a few exceptions, men who had been Walter Camp All-American selections.

Here were the lineups:

CANTON 0		MASSILLON 0	
SOUCY, Harvard	LE	ROCKNE, Notre Dame	
BUCK, Wisconsin	LT	NASH, Rutgers	
RUSSELL, Penn	LG	SCHMIDT, Unknown	
GARLOWE, Carlisle	C	WESBECHER, W&J	
SPEARS, Dartmouth	RG	FITZGERALD, Notre Dame	
KELLISON, W. Va. Wesl	RT	TOWNLEY, Minnesota	
STEWART, Colgate	RE	HEYMAN, W&J	
WHITAKER, Indiana	QB	DORIAS, Notre Dame	
GHEE, Dartmouth	LH	MATTERN, Minnesota	
WILKINSON, Syracuse	RH	FLEMING, W&J	
THORPE, Carlisle	FB	TALMAN, Rutgers	

**Substitutions**, Canton--Sefton for Soucy; Waldsmith for Garlowe; Ghee for Whitaker; Whitaker for Ghee; Costello for Whitaker.

**Substitutions**, Massillon--Sinclair for Schmidt; Schmidt for Sinclair; Baston for Rockne; Rockne for Baston; Lambert for Dorias.

Referee--Durfee. Umpire--Cosgrove. Field Judge--Jones. Head Linesman--Lambert.

The Tigers outplayed us from the start that Sunday afternoon. We made but one first down to the 6 chalked up by Massillon. The Bulldogs, although led by Thorpe, never penetrated inside of the Tiger 30-yard line -- but Thorpe, Sefton, Kellison and Buck proved themselves to be bears in stopping the Tiger offensives. Twice Canton had narrow escapes when Dorias, the Tiger quarterback, made beautiful dropkicks only to have the wind catch the ball and cause it to miss the uprights by inches. The slippery footing robbed both teams of speed, and throughout the game neither goal was seriously threatened. It all ended in a scoreless tie.

As in the case of the proverbial Mudville when their mighty Casey had struck out, there was no joy in Canton that Sunday evening. Warren Cross pretty well sized up the bitter disappointment when he made this observation on the sports pages of The Repository: "The

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

---

Canton confidence suffered a body blow which is likely to have a strong influence on the wagering on the second game."

The return game at Canton, on the following Sunday, drew another gate of around 10,000 fans. Rains had fallen the day before on League Park and the dirt infield portion of the baseball diamond, a part of the football playing area, was ankle deep with mud in some places. Threatening clouds hovered over the park as the teams took the field, and the Bulldogs had a new star in the lineup -- Fullback Pete Calac, a hard-hitting Carlisle Indian and running mate of Thorpe, whom I had just obtained from West Virginia Wesleyan.

Here were the lineups for the championship tilt:

CANTON 24		MASSILLON 0	
SOUCY, Harvard	LE	ROCKNE, Notre Dame	
BUCK, Wisconsin	LT	NASH, Rutgers	
RUSSELL, Penn	LG	SCHMIDT, Unknown	
WALDSMITH, Akron U.	C	WESBECHER, W&J	
SPEARS, Dartmouth	RG	FITZGERALD, Notre Dame	
EDWARDS, Notre Dame	RT	TOWNLEY, Minnesota	
SEFTON, Colgate	RE	HEYMAN, W&J	
GHEE, Dartmouth	QB	GOODWIN, W&J	
THORPE, Carlisle	LH	KELLEHER, Notre Dame	
DUNN, Dickinson	RH	FLEMING, W&J	
CALAC, Carlisle	FB	TALMAN, Rutgers	

Touchdowns--Waldsmith, Calac, Thorpe, Soucy.  
Goals missed--Thorpe 2, Calac 1, Spears 2.

**Substitutions**, Canton--None.

**Substitutions**, Massillon--Sinclair for Schmidt; Day for Sinclair.

Referee--Durfee. Umpire--Cosgrove. Field Judge--Lambert. Head Linesman--Jones.

The Bulldogs were in tip-top shape. They had put in some practice during the week. Thorpe's ankle had mended. Soucy and Buck were back in the line, and I had a fine feeling of confidence as the referee's whistle put the ball into play.

Canton ran all over Massillon that afternoon. At no time in the game did the Tigers prove dangerous, and never once did they set foot inside the Canton 31-yard line. The Bulldog quarterback, Milton Ghee, directed strategy skillfully, and time after time the two big Indians, Thorpe and Calac, ripped the Tiger defense to shreds with their powerful drives. "Fat" Waldsmith, the Bulldog center -- who had never attained All-American rank, but was a great star of all that -- took a lot of fight out of the Tigers early in the first period when he scooped up a fumble and dashed fifteen yards for a touchdown.

In the second period, after Canton had battered through the Tiger line for fifty-one yards, Calac bucked through for the second touchdown; but, like Waldsmith in the first, he failed at goal. The fourth quarter wrapped it up for the Bulldogs with plenty of points to spare. Soucy snagged a long pass and went over the line for a touchdown, but Thorpe missed the goal after Calac had made the punt-out. Near the end of the contest Thorpe rammed through the Tiger line for the last touchdown, but on the kick Doc Spears missed the uprights by six inches.

It was all over; and the Bulldogs, with a 24-0 victory, were the undisputed champions of the world!

Canton played the entire game without making a single substitution. Warming the bench were several All-Americans -- like Wilkinson, Costello and Neale -- but we saw no reason for making changes while we already had a winning combination on the field. The power and strength of the Bulldogs even won the admiration of their opponents. Bob Nash, the Rutgers University star who played for the Tigers that day and who was one of the greatest tackles of the era, summed it up nicely in a statement given to Sports Editor Warren Cross of The Repository.

It was the most line I ever played against. We just couldn't stand up against it, for the charge of the Canton line simply carried us out of the way. If we resisted, we were lifted bodily out of the path of the man with the ball and shoved aside like a bag of flour.

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

Besides winning the coveted championship, there was another thing in which the 1916 Bulldogs took great pride -- although the Cleveland Indians had scored against us by reason of that blocked punt they recovered behind our goal line, the Canton goal line itself was not crossed during the season.

### 1917

The 1917 season brought problems with which professional football could not cope for long. The United States had entered World War I, and besides the drafting of manpower which made the building of teams difficult, attendance at games fell off drastically in ever-increasing numbers as more and more men were called to the colors. Canton managed to keep a strong team -- pretty much the same one that took the 1916 championship -- but, with the exception of Massillon, Akron, Youngstown and Columbus -- the other outside teams were no more than mediocre. And so, before we got around to our traditional arch-enemy, Massillon, we had no difficulty in defeating the following:

Pitcairn, Pa.	12-7
Altoona, Pa.	80-0
Columbus, O.	54-0
Syracuse, N.Y.	41-0
Youngstown, O.	3-0
Akron, O.	14-0
Youngstown, O.	13-0

Massillon, still smarting from the 1916 defeat, was going all-out to take Canton's measure, and in the hope of doing so had engaged Charlie Brickley, the great Harvard dropkicker and an All-American on Camp's selections, to pilot the Tigers. Brickley, as a part of his strategy, had imported a complete Army Ambulance Corps team from Allentown, Pa., his intention being to use the soldiers as a second string which he could throw in at intervals to wear down the Bulldogs while giving his top stars a breather. The ambulance jockeys included many college stars who were rated as the army's top gridsters, but although they were fast, they were woefully light as compared to Canton's hard-hitting huskies.

Meanwhile, I had made some important additions to our own squad -- Gus Welch, an All-American from Carlisle; Matthews, an All-American from the University of Pennsylvania; and Williman from Ohio State -- and as we opened the first game at Massillon, on November 26, some new Tigers were listed in the lineups:

CANTON 14		MASSILLON 3	
WILLIAMS, Ohio State	LE	NASH, Rutgers	
MATTHEWS, Penn	LT	THORNHILL, Pitt	
RUSSELL, Penn	LG	REHOR, Michigan	
WALDSMITH, Akron U.	C	WESBECHER, W&J	
SPEARS, Dartmouth	RG	SEIS, Pitt	
KELLISON, W. Va. Wesl.	RT	COPLEY, Muhlenberg	
NEALE, W. Va. Wesleyan	RE	FRENCH, Unknown	
GHEE, Dartmouth	QB	CRAIG, Unknown	
WELCH, Carlisle	LH	COFALL, Notre Dame	
DUNN, Dickinson	RH	MARTIN, Unknown	
THORPE, Carlisle	FB	McLAUGHRY, Pitt	

Touchdowns--Thorpe, Dunn.  
Goals from TD--Russell, Wells.  
Goal from field--Brickley.

**Substitutions**, Canton--Sefton for Williams; Ward for Russell; Russell for Harris; Anderson for Thorpe; Bush for Russell; Moore for Dune.

**Substitutions**, Massillon--Nash for Jones; Thornhill for Schupp; Rambaud for Ball; Wesbecher for Doble; Austin for French; Miller for Craig; Brickley for Emmely; Morris for Martin; Cofall for Riley; Johnson for Rambaud; Morgan for Miller; Fitzgerald for Wesbecher; Miller for Morgan; McLaughry for Cofall.

Referee--Durfee. Umpire--Lambert. Head Linesman--Crolius.

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

As the Bulldogs took the field they found themselves faced by a team made up exclusively of Massillon's hired ambulance corpsmen, and almost immediately it became evident that Charlie Brickley had erred grievously in pitting such lightweights against the old and experienced Canton steamroller. A striking example of the Bulldogs power was given the 6,000 fans right at the start. Opening up on their own 23-yard line, Big Jim Thorpe and his eager helpers marched the ball down the field for seventy-seven yards without hesitating. It took just four minutes to travel the distance and send Thorpe across for a touchdown. Russell kicked the extra point.

Brickley lost no time in pulling out his entire starting team and replacing it with the Tiger varsity, which made a rushing attack for a 26-yard gain (the only Massillon first down of the game) and then promptly lost the same distance. After that the Tigers could make no headway at all on the offensive, and they took a terrific mauling the rest of the day.

Before the game, Brickley had boasted that his own kicking would win the contest for Massillon but his Harvard-educated toe garnered only three points, with a dropkick in the second period. In the fourth quarter, after a fast Canton drive of 60 yards, Dunn went over for another touchdown, with Welch kicking the goal. And that was it -- a 14-3 victory for the Bulldogs.

The second with our old rivals was played December 3 on our home grounds, and I think Massillon was just as surprised as we were when the Bulldogs, until then considered the unbeatable champions of pro football, were forced to bow down before the Tigers, 6-0, in one of the most bitterly fought battles we ever played in League Park.

CANTON 0		MASSILLON 6
SEFTON, Colgate	LE	NASH, Rutgers
EDWARDS, Notre Dame	LT	THORNHILL, Pitt
RUSSELL, Penn	LG	REHOR, Michigan
WALDSMITH, Akron U.	C	WESBECHER, W&J
SPEARS, Dartmouth	RG	SEIS, Pitt
KELLISON, W. Va. Wesl.	RT	COPLEY, Muhlenberg
NEALE, W. Va. Wesleyan	RE	FRENCH, Unknown
GHEE, Dartmouth	QB	MILLER, Unknown
THORPE, Carlisle	LH	COFALL, Notre Dame
DUNN, Dickinson	RH	EMMELY, Unknown
CALAC, Carlisle	FB	McLAUGHRY, Pitt

Goals from field--Cofall 2.

**Substitutions**, Canton--Speck for Patton; Welch for Calac; Matthews for Wilson; Spears for Patton.

**Substitutions**, Massillon--Jones for Nesser; Fitzgerald for Rehor; Peck for Wesbecher; Rambaud for Fitzgerald; Fitzgerald for Rambaud.

Referee--Durfee. Umpire--Lambert. Head Linesman--Crolius.

It was a line-bucking classic of attempted rushes during which each side tried valiantly to break through stone-wall opposition for a decisive touchdown, but neither team ever made it. It was a battle of goliaths in which the leading roles were taken by the rival left halfbacks -- Canton's great war chief Jim Thorpe and Massillon's rough-and-tough Stanley Cofall, a topnotch kicker of Notre Dame origin. In fact, the contest developed into a personal duel between them, and for the first time in memory the Canton players saw Thorpe lose his temper and his famous smile -- because Cofall engaged in some rough work that Him considered uncalled for. The Indian was injured in the second quarter but he stuck it out for the remainder of the game, carrying the ball more than any other man, doing more than his share on the defensive, and hoping for a chance to even up things with Cofall.

During most of the game the Bulldogs were on the short end of the so-called "breaks," which cause so many upsets in football, and it was bitter medicine for the Sac and Fox tribesman when the only breaks of the game went to Stan Cofall. The Tiger halfback succeeded in booting two field goals over the bar -- the first from 34 yards, the second from 31 -- and that's how Massillon took the 6-0 victory.

The statistics bear me out when I say that we had the better team in those 1917 games with Massillon. The Tigers failed to cross our goal line at any time, their total points adding up to

three field goals, while the Bulldogs pushed through for two touchdowns, the real criterion by which to judge football ability. In the second game alone, our Bulldogs made ten first downs against two for the Tigers; and Canton made a net gain of 186 yards on passes and rushes against a 35 net for Massillon. Anyhow, Canton retained the world championship, because all other pro teams had been trimmed so often in the 1917 season that only the Bulldogs could claim superiority.

### **Off to Oklahoma**

With more and more players going into the armed forces, football came to a halt until after the Armistice, in November of 1918. In the meantime, I had been engaged in the oil business in Oklahoma, and in the spring of 1919 I received a letter from Ralph Hay of Canton stating that he would like to carry on with the team if I was not returning. Ralph was a very good friend of both Thorpe and myself, was acquainted with most of our 1916 and 1917 players, and therefore was in position to organize a team from that nucleus. I decided to let Hay go ahead rather than withdraw from my oil operations, and so I turned over to him the lease I still held on League Park.

I have no records of Hay's 1919 team, but his 1920 squad lists ten of my 1916-1917 players - Thorpe, Calac, Buck, Corcoran, Martin, Edwards, Whalen, Gilroy, Speck and Hendren. It was somewhat like "old wine in new bottles." And under Ralph's management, the team again gave Canton some championship football.

### **Back with Thorpe**

In 1921, while assisting in the building of a refinery in Arkansas, I developed a severe case of malaria and found it necessary to leave that locality for awhile, so I decided to go back to Canton until I recovered. Jim Thorpe had transferred his interests to Cleveland's Indians, and the old warhorse asked me to come to the Ohio metropolis and look after his financial affairs. His contract called for a guaranteed amount for each game or a percentage of the gate, whichever was greater, and he felt that there were times when he was not getting his full due.

The team was backed by a large Cleveland mercantile firm, and when I arrived the management for the Indians showed some resentment over my presence. Home attendance was rather poor, and it did not take me long to discover that the team carried the same rating in the win column.

It did not take me long, either, to learn something about the unusual methods of bookkeeping being practiced. When playing in baseball parks, difficulties rarely arose over the take since the baseball management handled the gates with their own crews, and it was a simple matter to check the gate stiles at openings and closings. Then the baseball men would deduct their percentage for use of the park and give the rest to the football teams in accordance with contracts presented.

However, in parks under control of the home team, the check on receipts often posed some difficulties. In some instances, the tickets were of the roll variety such as those used at movie theaters, and these required a count before and after the game in order to arrive at the amount of money taken in. Also, the agreements between teams sometimes failed to designate the number of complimentary tickets issued, and this often complicated the business of making an accurate check.

As the representative of the players, I insisted on checking the tickets wherever Cleveland played, and for this purpose I always took sufficient help to man the gates, along with an ample supply of gunny sacks. I counted all of the tickets into the sacks, then checked the roll figures, and this simple method of audit paid off for the players. On two different occasions I found discrepancies running from \$900 to \$1,100, and complimentary tickets totaling 800 to 900, far in excess of the number that should have been allowed. In both instances, after strong and vivid argument, I succeeded in collecting our share of the deficiencies.

After the regular season ended, Cleveland booked a December 3 exhibition game at the New York Polo Grounds with an All-Star team that Charlie Brickley had assembled. The Cleveland Indians were deep in the red for the season and the management asked for my influence in getting the players to give their services for free, except for expenses. I flatly refused to use my influence for any such purpose, but did tell the players about the overture and informed them that I had no intention of making the New York trip. They, too, decided not to go unless I went along to protect their interests, and to that end they raised \$300 among themselves to cover my expenses, and I at last agreed to go.

The New York exhibition deal called for two games with a guarantee to Cleveland of \$4,000 per game -- the first to be played at the Polo Grounds on a Saturday, with the second scheduled in Brooklyn on the following day -- a game that never would be played for reasons that will soon be explained.

A crowd that was very disappointing in numbers watched Cleveland win at the Polo Grounds. The net returns after the baseball management deducted the percentage for use of the park amounted to only \$3,750, which was \$250 short of the guarantee, but we accepted, and a check for that amount was written by the baseball management and made payable to the Cleveland treasurer. Brickley's All-Stars received nothing.

We were staying at the old Imperial Hotel, Thorpe and I occupying a room together. It had been understood that the players would be paid at the hotel -- a procedure that had been followed during the season -- but around seven o'clock a bellhop came to our room with a statement covering our hotel expenses, and I became suspicious. I made inquiry at the desk and discovered that the Cleveland treasurer, just as I suspected, had checked out -- which meant to me that he was running out with the check, without paying the players.

To get to Cleveland, the check-holder had one of two choices -- to depart either from Brooklyn or New York City. I therefore sent two husky players to Brooklyn with instructions to stop the man from boarding a train, using physical force if necessary.

Thorpe and I went to the Pennsylvania Station and, as good fortune would have it, found the treasurer and his lawyer awaiting a train which was scheduled to leave in half an hour. I demanded that he return to the hotel and pay the players, but he refused, saying he would mail them checks from Cleveland -- which meant they would receive expenses only. Getting nowhere, and with time running out, I sought out 2 detectives stationed in the lobby and explained the situation, whereupon they decided (for a certain sum) to help us. They talked to the treasurer and his lawyer, but the Clevelanders insisted again that they would mail the checks.

When the train was announced and the gates opened for boarding the two men reached for their grips, but at that juncture the detectives grabbed them and we all went down to a precinct station by taxicab. The two frustrated birds of passage were not long in deciding that they did not care for the atmosphere of the police station, and agreed to return with Thorpe and me to the hotel. There, with several big gridsters giving me silent support, I succeeded in convincing the treasurer that the time for settling accounts was at hand. I gave him a statement for the payroll and expenses of the players, and in return he endorsed the \$3,750 check over to me, and we paid him the difference in cash.

After this adventure in football finance, I took over the Cleveland team and booked two more exhibition games -- one on December 10 with the Richmond (Va.) Athletic Club and the other with the Washington (D.C.) All-Stars. We took a rather pleasing dividend out of these two ventures, and then disbanded. And that was my last active connection with professional football.

## **Looking Back**

Early in 1922, before leaving for Oklahoma and a return to the oil business, I was approached by sports editors of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *Cleveland Press*, who promised me their full support in publicity if I would organize a team for the forthcoming season; but, remembering the disappointing patronage in 1921, I declined. In this connection I quote from an interview given by me to the *Canton Daily News*:



"I haven't fully decided on a future course," said the ex-Canton leader. "Clevelanders have taken me into several conferences, and they have pledged the right kind of support, but it is too distant to picture the situation next fall. Of course, I think professional football will be on the map, but it is in need of remedy. The association of teams has been all right in some ways, but it hasn't cured all ills. Managers should have a better understanding, and gain a sounder working agreement. Organized baseball teaches a good example."

The draft system put in many years later no doubt cured many of the problems.

I might add that during my regime as pilot of the Canton teams, not one player ever left the Bulldogs without being fully paid and no deduction was ever made or challenged in any expense account rendered. In addition, we made a very sizable profit in the overall picture, being one of the few teams that did so. My greatest reward, however, was in building back the confidence of the fans in the honesty of pro football after that confidence had been destroyed by the scandal of 1906.

Many of the stories written about the great Jim Thorpe were pure fabrication. One such tale that went the rounds was that Jim's shoulder pads were made of sheet metal or cast iron. Maybe they felt like that to the men the big Indian tackled or knocked aside on his terrific plunges through the line, but the only metal involved was just enough interior ribbing to hold the layers of felt padding in place. I had those pads made at Jim's suggestion. They were constructed of hard sole leather, riveted together, and their legality was never questioned while Thorpe played for me. The Indian and I planned to put them on the market and advertise them as "The Jim Thorpe Shoulder Pad," but the manufacturer we approached feared that they might be classed as illegal, and we abandoned the project.

Another story current in those days was that Thorpe bet \$2,200 on one of our games with Massillon. This was pure fiction, because to my certain knowledge Jim never carried more than \$200 during an entire season. At his own request, I kept all of his earnings until the end of each season and then gave him a check for the full amount, which he banked when he went back to Oklahoma. There was not one iota of truth, either, in that preposterous story that Thorpe made a standing offer to pay \$1,000 to any team that could keep him from gaining ten yards in four downs. He simply wasn't the type to do a foolish thing like that.

Football rules of today make for higher scoring than in my time. For example, we played with a ball that was spheroid and harder to pass. As I recall, it was in 1927 that the present elongated ball was brought into play to make passes easier and longer. And after a touchdown, in the old days, the ball was kicked out and had to be caught by a player on the team making the touchdown; otherwise no try for the extra point was allowed. Consequently, ninety per cent of our tries were made from an angle, which accounted for so many misses. Today, more points are possible because the ball is merely carried out on the field and lined up for the kick directly in front of the goal posts. In my day, there were no free substitutions from the bench; the quarterback directed strategy, right on the field.

There are those in professional football today who refuse to recognize the birth date of the game as having occurred at any time and place in the years previous to 1920. They use the argument that the teams fielded in the first 2 decades of the century were not strictly "pro" because they recruited so many "amateur" college players and coaches who were eager to pick up a few dollars on the side by working for teams other than dear old alma mater. They contend that the professional organizations did not become "pro" in fact until that time in the 'Twenties when they made it a rule not to hire college stars until after they had graduated.

But there are old-timers still around (including myself) who can look back on the exciting years of the 1910's and feel high satisfaction in having had a hand in dressing professional football in its swaddling clothes. Consider such giants of the game as Big Jim Thorpe, Doc Spears, Milton Ghee, Carp Julian, Bill Gardner, Pete Calac, Dr. Hube Wagner, Robert Butler, Howard (Cub) Buck, Greasy Neale, Fred Sefton, P.C. Crisp, Bill Garlowe, Costello and Soucy; if they were not real "professionals" -- well, what were they?

In my library is a book written in 1934 by Dr. Harry A. March, a former Canton resident, entitled *Pro Football -- Its Ups and Downs*, and in my opinion it is something of a historical novel. At the time of publication this book was sent to me by the late Joe Carr, then president of

## PFRA ANNUAL 1987 (No. 8)

---

the National Football League and manager of the Columbus Panhandles in the old days, and he had inscribed on the fly leaf this message:

*To my pal Jack Cusack. He helped to make pro. football what it is.  
-- Joe F. Carr*

I would like to say that this tribute, from one who knew, is ample reward for my contribution to this great game.

One of the watershed moments of integration in pro football came in 1962 when halfback Bobby Mitchell signed with the Washington Redskins. Pictured here, Mitchell (49) of the Washington Redskins does a spin move in the open field during a 14-37 loss to the Cleveland Browns on September 15, 1963, at Cleveland Municipal Stadium in Cleveland, Ohio. (Photo by Nate Fine/NFL). Nate Fine. 4 / 13. Hall of Famer Deacon Jones set a new standard for the way defensive ends played, and helped make "sack" an official stat in football. Pictured here, Jones #75 and the Los Angeles Rams played the Ba PIONEER FOOTBALL. 2,711 likes. This page is NOT affiliated with Pioneer Regional School Corporation or Pioneer Jr/Sr High School. All posting are...Â Pioneer is 13-1 in the all-time series vs football tradition rich North Judson. That lone 21-28 loss to the then 2A Bluejays came in a 2008 non-conference regular season game at Liberty Field due to 4 turnovers by the Panthers. The 2008 team finished the season 10-3 and Sectional Champs, before losing 19-21 to the 1A State Finalist Sheridan Blackhawks in the Regional championship played at the PIT. Top Keywords % of search traffic. semi pro football. 29.18%. football. 5.21%. Domain Registration Data. Compare it to Pioneersfootball.org domain is owned by MillerTimeSites and its registration expires in 4 months. General Get more Pioneersfootball.org whois history. MillerTimeSites.