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FOOTBALL PROGRAMS AS HISTORY

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One of the most unrecognized items that contributes much to the documented history of college football is the game day program. Long ago these booklets were frequently works of art; filled with drawings, articles, cartoons, pictures, advertisements, and yes, even the team rosters.

The football programs issued by the major universities between 1920 and 1940 stand as artistic jewels that evoke a period of sport atmosphere and tradition now long gone. Understandably, these old programs that were printed for sale on just the one day, are now highly sought-after and treasured collectibles. By contrast, the college football game day programs of today are usually slick publications, occasionally with some historical content, but more often like just another of the sport magazines that fill the newstands and are rarely retained. A careful study of the old college programs reveals a story of not only football material, but also provides us with an image of what cultural and economic times were then and how they were changing.

For example, between 1927 and 1929 we see these publications are expanded by many pages of large display advertising. Then by 1933, the Great Depression has depleted program advertising lineage and these magazines had become thin productions limited mostly to football information, plus the standard Chesterfield team lineups in the middle and the Camel ad on every back cover. This shrinkage parallels, as it were, the tightened belts and economic desperation of many football game spectators. Examining the contents of a few historic programs will illustrate some of the cultural documentation they were providing for future generations.

Harvard - Yale : November 19, 1927, at Cambridge.

The cover on this program is the essence of football in a sense: a hard tackle at the goal line, padded violence, action, the red shirts versus the blue shirts. The painter of the cover art was the noted illustrator of the day, McClelland Barclay. Inside the cover is a Marmon automobile advertisement. The drawing shows football fans crowded together on a train, sitting on suitcases, headed for the game; while on the road outside races a Marmon 8 auto with a pretty girl waving at the miserable people on the train.

The copy points out that having such a car is easy, by taking a "short detour straight into dad's pocketbook" Further, "Get dad down for the home game . . . remark on the popularity of fellows who own cars." The price is \$1,795. What a natural pitch this is for Harvard-Yale fans. Page 18 of the program carries an entire page of auto ads for the Auburn, Stutz, and the Isotta Fraschini. One advertisement shows a motorcycle cop stopping a pretty girl for speeding in a tiny sedan. The cop says, "All right girlie, speed along but be careful. By the way, what do you call this smart, tiny speed devil?" She replies that its "the imported Pony Peugeot from France".

Next is an entire page of cruise line schedules from New York to the Continent from Cunard, Swedish-American, and North German Lloyd; or even sailings from Los Angeles to Honolulu. Following up on the theme of luxury and comfort, another page of ads pitches the New Forrest Hotel, located at 49th and Broadway in New York 300 rooms (each with a bath and shower), for \$3 and up. Then on page 23 we learn that a raccoon coat sells for \$350 and up at Gunthers, 5th Avenue at 36th Street in Manhattan, and dinner at the Spanish Room of the Hotel Arlington in Boston (seven courses), comes to just \$1.25.

What about the day's football game? Well there's the classic picture of Yale Captain W.A. Webster sitting on the rails and wearing the white letter "Y", while C.A. Pratt, the Harvard captain, is shown wearing his gear on the practice field. One page is given over to football rules, while yet another is filled with eight Yale pep songs, including the famous "Bulldog, Bulldog".

Illinois - Ohio State : November 23, 1929 at Columbus.



**HOLLAND-AMERICA
LINE**

*Christmas
and
New Years
Holiday Cruise to the
West Indies*

16 Day Luxury Cruise of the
S. S. STATENDAM
The largest ship sailing to the West Indies
Make Christmas a Great Event This Year
Sail Away December 20
from Yale - Princeton program, 1930

Because this was Homecoming, the program is very thick (costing 50c) and features not only football, but every other Buckeye team. There were also comical cartoons by Milton Caniff, an OSU student artist, years before his syndicated "Terry and the Pirates". This program also included some historical material, as on page 18 there is a photo of Ohio State scoring its first ever touchdown against Michigan back in 1908.

There were two black players in the Ohio State team photo, and team pictures of all the Columbus high school teams showed several black players at East, West, and Central High. Meanwhile, there were greetings from Ohio State President George W. Rightmire, in which he wrote about the "colored" Illinois quarterback from 1904, a player "named Taylor who streaked across the field."

On the cultural side, there was a movie advertisement for theaters in Columbus which were showing films with Myrna Loy, Elliot Nugent, Ted Lewis, George Arliss, Jeannette MacDonald, and Will Rogers. And Columbus citizens could enjoy Paul Robeson, Mary Garden, George Bernard Shaw, or Mischa Elman; all appearing live on stage. The Cleveland Airport also ran an ad saying that it had a pilot on duty 24 hours a day, ready to take you "anywhere with safety", along with a drawing of a single engine plane that looked like the Spirit of St Louis.

Army - Navy : December 21, 1931 at Yankee Stadium

This game was played for the benefit of Unemployment Relief, and was the second charity game between the two service schools after their series was severed in 1929-29 in a dispute over eligibility rules. A Greek goddess graces the cover, wearing the blue and gold stripes of Navy, and the black, gold and grey of Army. This program has many cartoons, some by Soglow, later famous for his Little King series. Under an advertisement for United Airlines, there was one for Scintilla aircraft magnetos, along with one for French "75" deluxe cigarette lighters which sold

for \$5. And on page 70 we find a display ad for a Thompson submachine gun. But indicative of the economic times is the Empire State Building advertising office space for sale or rent. There is also a photo of President Herbert Hoover holding a football, joined by nine members of the 1894 Stanford team for which he had served as team manager. There are also photos of government officials such as Patrick J. Hurley, the Secretary of War; and General Douglas MacArthur, the Army Chief of Staff. There was also a photo of Army's student manager, John P. McConnell, who by the Vietnam War was the Air Force Chief of Staff.

Missouri - Northwestern : October 1, 1932 at Evanston.

Surprisingly, given that this was near the depths of the Depression, this program is filled with ads. Wayne King and his band was playing at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, while Ben Bernie (and all the lads) were downtown at the New College Inn of the Hotel Sherman. There is also a full page ad for Evanston's Hotel Orrington, where dinner was just \$1; while the 2500 rooms at the Hotel Morrison started at \$3 per night.

In 1932 the usual Camel advertisement on the back cover of the programs showed an air mail pilot peering into the dark, ready to take off, and smoking a Camel because "it takes steady nerves to fly the mail at night." Another advertisement advised listening to Pat Flanagan on WBBM "for the games you can't attend," a nice way of saying, if you can't afford a ticket. WGN, the station that had broadcast the national political conventions and the Scopes Trial of 1925, was plugging Quin Ryan and his show.

Michigan - Ohio State : October 21, 1933, at Ann Arbor

There were few ads in this program But Cadillac did announce that its car could be driven away for \$2,695, or the LaSalle for \$2,245. On the other hand, the Olds Six went for \$745. There was also an article by famous football historian Parke H. Davis, who played end for Princeton in 1890, about knowing seven presidents of the United States through his involvement with college football.

I was a witness to this tense OSU-Michigan game of 1933. The gatekeepers would normally let us small fry in during the fourth quarter, but a week earlier I had gone to Michigan Stadium during the third quarter of the 40-0 blowout over Cornell and found the gates already open. But for the Ohio State game the gates were not opened until only two minutes remained. There were 93,000 packed into the stadium for the game, the largest crowd I had ever seen.

While waiting to get into the stadium, we kids would be amused, in a way, by the violence shown by the men with the truncheons stationed inside and along the fence, who had been hired to club would-be gatecrashers. The potential "crashers" would mount a tree just outside the fence, and then leap over it and run toward seats around the sunken bowl. This was serious business in depression days, fence guards chasing down the crashers and raining blows on them until the cops arrived. When I finally got inside the stadium, I worked my way through a mass of men standing in the top aisles until I saw the teams down on the field; Ohio State in red jerseys, Michigan in navy blue, both wearing brown pants. Michigan scored in that final minute to make it 13-0, on their way to an unbeaten season, the only blemish a 0-0 faceoff with Minnesota.

With the game over, all the kids scrambled for the football programs which were left on every row of seats. At some games these were difficult to find, and we would ask people for their programs. A lot of hard liquor bottles had also been left everywhere on the seats, and Prohibition was obviously just a memory by this time.