Twenty to Twenty in 1920.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

 I am now on the traditional road to yesterday and I am carried back to October 24, 1820 to the West side of Main Street between first and Second Street, Dayton Ohio. Today the business establishment at this spot is Lowes Dayton, but in 1820 it was Reids Inn and what a quaint old Tavern it was! A snappy wind comes from the Miami River and on this melancholy day October 24, 1820, I seek comfort and solace in Reids Inn with swinging sign of Commodore Laurence and “don’t give up the ship” Dayton history teaches me the tenacity and perseverance of Pioneer Ohio.

 I have now entered ye old Tavern, October 24, 1820. There are nine or 10 men seated about the cheerful log fire and amid the crackling of the **logs** I hear the gentle tinkle of a friendly glass. I listen to the conversation until Col. Reed bid me to join the happy circle. Now, I would not call those melancholy days because the conversation was full of daring and adventure. Full of convincability and cheer.

 One old-timer told of his adventures with wolves and bobcats; another of his tremendous haul of fishwhat is now Island Park. Another told of deer in North Dayton, and still another of the thousands of squirrels and rabbits and wild pigeons in what is now Riverdale.

 One topic of conversation that had everyone excited was the news that a menagerie and Museum was on its way from Cincinnati. One pioneer named Joe, all dressed up in buckskin and Coon-skinned cap, said it wasn’t news to him since a Yankee peddler had told him all about it six weeks before. He was about to proceed further, but the Clarion call of the dinner bell said “Col. Reids hospitality awaits you.” And the ever mindful Col. went to the door to look for latecomers, and he was not disappointed because from East first Street came two travelers! They had been to the mill which stood a stone’s throw from what is now Jim Flynn incorporated. The store where sportsmen serve sportsmen - land, sky and water.

 All were seated about a luncheon table with cheerful table talk. Suddenly, the conversation switched to journalism when pioneer Tom said he had heard of a new paper about to appear under the name “Gridiron.” This weekly press would be published and edited by one, John Anderson, with a view of exposing and reforming people whose views of right and wrong differed from his own. The editor pledged his honor, liberty and his life, if necessary, to the success of the “Gridiron.” But the “Gridiron” did not last long with its unjustifiable agenda. However, that name “Gridiron” with spirits and oily fat carries me to Triangle Park, October 24, 1920 where one of the greatest of all professional football games was played on the Triangle Gridiron. Ladies and Gentlemen this is a century removed from Col. Reids menagerie dinner bell and pioneers in buckskin and linseed wool.

 As stated, this is now October 24, 1920, Triangle Park, Dayton Ohio. The Dayton Triangles and the Canton Bulldogs are about to struggle for supremacy where once the Shawnees fought and lost.

 Joe Carr and Carl Storck, who pioneered professional football in the face of adversity, were confident of its success and as proof evident of their belief, let us look back at the Cleveland Browns, the Chicago Cardinals, the Philadelphia Eagles, the Green Bay Packers, the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Los Angeles Rams, the Chicago Bears, and many others.

 Well, that Triangle-Canton Bulldog football game October 24, 1920 will never be forgotten in the history of professional football. The Triangle stands were packed as Triangles Thiele, Cutler, Dellinger, Kinderdine, Davis, Sauer, Reese, Al Mahrt, Bacon, Sacksteader, Partlow and Fenner took to the field of play. Now came those professional champions, the Canton Bulldogs and among them Henry, Guyon, Calac, Green, Edwards, Buck and the one and only James Thorpe - All-American from Carlisle under Glen “Pop” Warner.

 Mighty cheers came from the stands. Cheers which startled the leafy banks of the big Miami and Stillwater, just a stone’s throw away. And even youngsters and canoes wondered what could disturb the silence of such an autumn day. They should have known that a great football game was on! Twenty to Twenty in 1920!

 The referee blows his whistle, the captains listen, the ball is in position now it is in the air. The game is on as brain and brawn come into their own on the triangle field of play. 22 rugged Americans will play four exciting and enervating quarters.

 Back and forth went the ball in the first quarter with neither side able to penetrate to pay dirt, when suddenly Calac, from old Carlisle, goes over for a touchdown. Feeney kicks goal and the score at the end of the first quarter Canton 7 Triangles nothing.

 But the Dayton Triangles had been behind before and had come on to win! The second quarter is now underway with the Triangles playing with the spirit of the best college 11. Al Mahrt threw the pigskin far and true with Dave Reese and Lee Fenner on the receiving end. Bacon ran the ends,Partlow hit the line and hit it hard. Here were precision, initiative and daring. Now the Triangles have two touchdowns the Bulldogs another. And so the half ended 14 to 14. A welcome interval it was for both spectators and players. The cheering and enthusiasm on the part of the fans was as good as the great line play of both teams. And both needed time for recuperation.

 The third quarter is underway as the October sun traveled gradually to the West. And now the Triangles have scored again, but failed to kick goal. Score, Triangles 20 - Canton Bulldogs 14. It was unbelievable! Never before had any team crossed the Bulldogs goal line 3 times in one game, but in all probability those Bulldogs had never met such an inspired team as the Dayton Triangles, October 24, 1920. Recently I heard Lou Partlow and Lee Fenner replay that game of 30 years ago and Lee and Lou never asked for any quarter.

The Triangle line was a stone wall and the bewildered Bulldog could not penetrate it. Now from the Canton bench comes the old master, Jim Thorpe.

‘On the shores of GitcheGumee,

Of the shinning big sea water

Stood Nokomis the old woman,

Pointing with her finger westward

O’er the water pointing westward

To the purple clouds of sunset.’

Really Jim had seen better days but the old spirit of Nokomis was there. The ball is mapped, and away goes a place kick 54 yards. Thorpe was again equal to the occasion. Score Triangles 20 -Canton 17 at the end of the third quarter. The fourth quarter is underway. The late October sun tells us that day will soon be done. The score is still 20-17 in favor of the Triangles. But again comes Jim Thorpe to the field of play and away goes a dropkick over the bars. The score is 20-20! In a few minutes the gun cracks! Professional football history had been made! When will such a game come again? I wonder Perchance, if GitcheGumee, and the shinning big sea water has the answer.

 The old Triangle Football team is now a “Sports Memory” but it is a most pleasant memory! A few years ago at the Miami Valley Hunt and Polo club the members of that famous Triangle combination had a reunion with emphasis on the games played and their side lights. Center for honors was Carl Storck, general manager of the club, and who with Joe Carr more to establish Pro football than any other sportsman in the United States.

 At this silver jubilee was Nelson Talbott, first coach of the triangles, Daytonian and All-American from Yale. Harry Cutler ,Hack Abbott, Eddie Sauer, and Lawrence Dellinger were there to reminisce. Russ Hathaway and Hobby Kinderdinetwi-lited Lou Partlow about his fullback playing, but be it said no man ever hit the line harder, or tackled harder than Lou.

 Harry (Pie) Decker, Hugo Sacksteader, Babe Zimmerman, and the Lee Fenner brought to mind stunning line and backfield play. Fenner, mighty player that he was, never dropped a pass or missed a tackle. And there was Al Marht without doubt one of the greatest quarterbacks and forward passers in the game. And no Dayton football meeting would be complete without the late Mike Redelle who was secretary of the Triangles. Mike always kept alive his interest in football and could tell you all about All- Americans Wing and “T” formations. One of Dayton’s greatest sportsmen was Mike Redelle. Hobby Kinderdine, greatest of all centers was there as was Glen Tidd, Bob Gregor and Carl (Dutch) Thiele and Dave Reese rounded out a roster the like of which may never be seen again. Francis Bacon, great halfback that he was, was unable to be present.

 Those of us who were privileged to see the Dayton Triangles at their best and who have seen the present day additions of professional football will contend that many of the teams of today could learn valuable lessons from the old Triangles who carried with them a big part of the foundation for present professional football.

 As we pass Triangle Park we see that the big fence is gone, the grandstand is missing and the goal posts have departed. But we shall always remember the stirring football played there nearly a generation ago, with the spirit of GitcheGumee and the shiny big sea water.

 In the old days a crowd of eight to ten thousand was considered immense. Quite a contrast this to the 35 to 75 thousand of today. Professional football like professional baseball has become big business and that is good because the American people have willed it so.

 And now I am ready to take leave of Reids Inn on October 20, 1820. That’s the old inn which stood where Lowes Dayton now stands. An old inn with dinner bell, fireplace, tinkling glass and tall, tall tales. All of which happened in the long ago before Dayton became the Metropolitan center that it is today.

 Here a century ago that Reids, the forefathers sought the latest news from the “Watchmen” and the “Gridiron.” Those journals were worth their weight in gold and we do not forget them as we read our modern press and listen to the radio and watch TV for touchdowns.

 Time, it is, that football did not exist when pioneers stopped at Reids in 1820. They had other diversions in the field of recreation and play but they believe in the motto “Play-It-Pays.”

Robert Worst

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