

The Rise and Fall of the St. Mary's University Football Program

Tyler Sleeter

This project explores the St. Mary's University football program from its origins in 1909 until its final termination in 1941. This project is a brief overview of the program. The focus is on the program itself with particular attention to finances, university concerns, and student attitudes toward the program. Through Rattler Newspapers archives, letters from the University to the Provincial House, and photographs courtesy of the National Archives of the Marianist Province of the United States, this project will bring together for the first time this information for public viewing.

Project Description

This project began as an examination into the reasons why St. Mary's University no longer has a football team. It would encompass only information directly related to that event. However, after researching the Rattler Newspaper archives, it was discovered that the football program had two termination stories. This led to the obvious question of why, over a period of ten years, it was terminated only to be brought back and terminated again. The goal then became a broader examination of the football program from the years 1924 to 1941. The examination of the larger time period will allow the project to tell the story of how the program was impacted by financial hardships that plagued the country at the time, as well as the impact the students had on the success or termination of the program.

While covering the years 1924 to 1941, the project is broken up into three sections. The original program from 1924 to 1931 will contain information on the small but popular team and the management of the program. This time period saw the largest crowds, the beginning of pep parades on city streets, and the largest team. Next is the first termination period of 1931 to 1934 which showcases the influence of the University's governing board and the student body's decision to end the program for various reasons. The next category is from 1935 to 1941 when the program was revived and then permanently terminated even though it was extremely popular with the student body, alumni, and the city.

Information for this project comes from three primary sources. Most of the information was obtained from the Rattler Newspaper digital archives. Because this source begins with the 1924 – 1925 school year, it became a limiting factor in the project. While research was in attempt to locate information about years prior to 1924, only team photos were found predating 1924. Another source for the project were letters contained in *The Society of Mary in Texas* by

Joseph William Smith. These letters added first hand accounts about the program to the information from the Rattler Newspapers. Lastly, many photos were sourced from the Marianist Archives Collection. These photos are combined with photos and headlines downloaded from the Rattler Newspapers to add visual interest to the project.

This project will be finalized as a digital story and added to the story of St. Mary's University. It will be available to anyone who chooses to read the story through the internet. It is the understanding of the researcher that this is the first time the story of the university's football program has been told. It is significant in contributing to the history of the university and can provide a basic foundation for anyone who is interested in doing more specific or more in-depth research on the football program.

Best Practices

This project was done using best practices as understood by an undergraduate student of public history under the mentorship of two knowledgeable professors. The attempt was made to represent a shared story of the program. To make this happen, the researcher included stories of team members, coaches, the student body, university officials, and Marianist clergy associated with the campus during those years. While no oral histories were collected, the attempt was made to utilize the Rattler Newspapers as a substitute for oral histories.

The project will be shared and published using a digital format. Therefore, it is the attempt of the researcher to use the appropriate tools to create, publish, and market the project. The project will be available to the public and must serve as a stand-alone piece that anyone can read and understand. With that in mind, the PowerPoint is being put together in a story format rather than a bulleted format. The photographs are being used to break up the monotony of the story and to put faces to the program itself.

Artifacts

The artifacts for this project are contained in the PowerPoint and the Curate-scape Tour. Rattler archives and the Marianist archives were researched for photos, newspaper articles and headlines, and letters from school personnel. The chosen artifacts were based on the assumption that anyone viewing the PowerPoint or touring Curate-scape would be interested in the history of St. Mary's University, specifically in the football team. The artifacts could be used to assist someone with further research on this topic.

Chosen artifacts can be split into two categories, photographs and written information. Photographs were chosen based on subject of photo, historical value, and quality of original source. The attempt was made to include team photos at specific periods, for example the first team in 1909 and the winningest team in 1929. Photos of the football field, the bus, recognized players and coaches, as well as team memorabilia were used to highlight specific parts of the story told in the PowerPoint. Written information was included that would provide data and documentational evidence in support of the story being told. This included team schedules, rosters, and headlines that added value. Letters from school officials were used to flush out the details of the story as well as give specific information. These letters were most helpful to the parts of the story pertaining to the years 1931, 1934, and the Simms controversy. None of the letters are shown in the PowerPoint or Curate-scape because the quality was poor or the information could not be readily converted to a photograph readable through the technology used for this project.

Links

<http://stmupublichistory.org/RattlersRemember/tours/show/2#offscreen-menu>

<http://stmupublichistory.org/RattlersRemember/admin/items/show/17>

<http://stmupublichistory.org/RattlersRemember/admin/items/show/16>

<http://stmupublichistory.org/RattlersRemember/admin/items/show/15>

Capstone Project: The Rise and Fall of the St. Mary's University Football Program

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