

NEBRASKA'S TWO ATHLETIC FIELDS

In the history of athletics in the University of Nebraska there have been but two athletic fields: the present field and the old Nebraska field, which was located on the part of the campus now covered by the mechanical engineering laboratories.

The last remainder of this old field was destroyed only a few weeks ago, when that portion of the old grandstand which was located on the west side of the original athletic field was torn down. For the past year this undestroyed portion of the grandstand has been left standing in its original position. It there served the double purpose of reminding the freshmen of the once famous Nebraska field, and of bringing back to the mind of the visiting alumnus the scenes of his college days when he sat huddled in his overcoat on a bleak and chilly Thanksgiving day waiting to be aroused from his comfort by some sensational development for the betterment of the Scarlet and Cream team battling before his eyes to uphold the honor and reputation of the dear old U. of N.

First Used for Drill.

The old Nebraska field which lay at the northwest corner of the university campus ever since the first days of athletics in the university was not always an athletic field. When the course in military science was estab-

lished in the university this northwest corner was the most convenient one for the cadets to use as a drill ground. Long before the days of the "pig skin" and the "horsehide" the tramp, tramp of the cadets was heard on the ground which was to become the historic battlefield of the Scarlet and Cream. Many and many times have injuries to the football men been caused by the hardness of the field, which was originally packed by the feet of the cadets as they marched back and forth on the old drill ground.

very long a new line of activities in the athletic department began to slowly develop. This was football. The sport had become to be one of the dominant parts of athletics in the majority of the western colleges and universities and it was only a matter of time until it would be the dominant sport of the University of Nebraska.

Time passed slowly for the members of the rooting body of the students before the team that represented the Scarlet and Cream began to make its mark as a factor in western football. The candidates for positions on the early football teams of the university were handicapped to a large extent as they had no good place to play. The only place that was in a suitable condition for them to practice on was the old drill ground and baseball lot. But in using this place as an athletic field the coaches and players were again handicapped. The field was covered with a growth of trees on the north side and it was necessary for these to be removed before the field would be large enough for the team to hold games or even have a large enough gridiron for practice.

The members of the team decided that these trees must be removed and here they met another obstacle. This was in the shape of the university authorities. The authorities of the school

The confusion of the students can be easily imagined and their haste to increase the distance between themselves and the campus was ludicrous.

Owing to these attempts of the students in this way and others the offending trees were gradually removed and the Nebraska field was a surety.

Bleachers Next.

After the field had been cleared there was another difficulty which arose. This obstacle was the need of the equipment of the athletic field with bleachers and a grandstand. When games were played on the home field the crowds would line up along the side lines and when the play was at the end of the gridiron the people would fill in the opposite end of the field and when a punt was made under such circumstances the crowd would be sent scurrying to the side lines again to be out of the way of the players and the ball. This difficulty became so serious with the increase of interest in football that it was necessary for the management to provide some sort of seats for the spectators.

Bleachers were accordingly built on the east side of the field. Later the grandstand was built, but only in portions as the increase in the attendance necessitated its erection. The first big outside game which was played on the home field was the game with Minne-

history of university athletics as the most fiercely contested battles ever fought by the wearers of the Scarlet and Cream.

Again the needs of the university for more room were seen and again the athletic field had to pay the penalty of the growing need for more room. This time, in the spring of 1908, when the plans for the mechanical engineering laboratories were completed, it was decided to locate the new building on the remainder of Nebraska Field. This plan left the university without an athletic field of any sort. Plans of all sort were considered and it was finally decided by the athletic board that the action of the next legislature in regard to the appropriations for the university would settle the matter of a new athletic field for the university.

While the action of the legislature was awaited the members of the football squad were without a place to practice. Arrangements were made with the Western League officials of Lincoln to use the baseball park for the fall of 1908. Here the members of the football squad were forced to practice daily thereby spending much valuable time riding to and from the park on the street cars. The value of the time spent in this way and the other disadvantages was soon realized and extra efforts were made to

The loss of the old Nebraska Field has had an effect on the university, that will long be remembered. The great financial loss by having no athletic field has been one severe lesson to the university athletic management, and another effect has been the lack of real student spirit felt to a high degree when the field near the Antelope was used. The members of the student body found it difficult and expensive to attend the games when they were played at such a distance from the university. Thus the people who attended these games were not the ones who rooted, the attendance being, as a rule made up to a great degree of Lincoln citizens. The lack of effective rooting was felt by the members of the teams both in baseball and football, and to win games these teams must feel that the student body is back of them holding them up and giving them the proper support.

Though the first Nebraska Field has passed into history there still remains the many remembrances of the days when the boys plowed up the Minnesota or Kansas lines and carried the ball across their lines for touchdowns. Perhaps the most memorial game that was ever played on the old field was the game in the fall of 1907 when the Ames Aggies came to Lincoln fully confident that they had the Corn-



CORNHUSKER LINE-UP, 1909

huskers beaten before the game started. This game is one that will long be remembered. With weather conditions ideal for a fast game the two teams met. Back and forth they fought until Ames scored a touchdown, but failed to kick goal. Nebraska was shortly aided by an Ames player making a fatal mistake and placing the ball behind his own goal line for a safety which gave the Cornhuskers two points. Ames retaliated for this mistake by scoring a field goal and making the score 9 to 2.

The fierceness with which the Nebraska men came back at the Aggies can never be forgotten. The reliable toe of Captain John Weller soon sent the oval across the bar for four more points for Nebraska, making it 9 to 6 for the Aggies. Still the fight continued and back and forth the teams worked until there were only a few more minutes to play and the Nebraska men lined up for a place kick. The angle was a difficult one to make and every spectator held his breath. The ball was snapped and when the sure toe of the reliable Captain John hit the pig skin it sailed over the bar for the needed four points to win.

Football Begins.

Before baseball had been in vogue

and several of the faculty members believed that the beauty of the trees and their use as an added attractiveness to the university was too great to sacrifice for the good of an increased athletic field. But by diverse means the trees were removed, the field leveled off, and the university was then equipped with a full sized gridiron and athletic field.

Means of Removing Trees.

Various plans were used to remove these trees off the gridiron by the supporters of the team. The favorite method used by the students was to sneak up on the campus, evade the night-watchman and quietly saw a tree down and then drag it off the campus, rejoicing that one more step had been taken in the development of a gridiron.

One night tradition tells that several of the members of the "gridiron enlarging society" came up to the campus and sneaked to the tree covered part of the gridiron. Quietly they began to saw down one of the most beautiful of the trees. The night watchman was lying on one of the benches near by and observed the boys as they began their depredations on the offending trees. Being a friend of the students and not wishing to arrest them the watchmen turned over and said:

"Faith, byes, Ol'm goin' to wake up in about foive minutes, and sure you'd better not be here."

sota in 1900. Many games had of course been played on Nebraska Field, but none of which aroused the interest of football enthusiasts as did the game with the Gophers in that year. The seat sale was enormous and it was seen by the management that there was enough seats to only accommodate a respectable majority of those who would attend the game. Accordingly a large number of shingles were ordered from one of the local lumber yards and there were piled on the ground in a large pile arranged with the bundles of shingles forming steps so that a fairly respectable amphitheater was thus formed. On this the large crowd was given seats as far as possible.

Field Cut Down.

The good athletic field which the university now possessed was not long to be a reality. The need of the university for a physics laboratory was felt to be more needed than an athletic field, for when the plans for the new Brace laboratory were completed it was learned that it would be located on the southern end of the athletic field. The pleadings of the students were in vain and the new building was constructed there since there was no other location for it on the campus. This cut down the extent of Nebraska Field to a considerable degree, but it did not destroy the gridiron and a number of the games played on this shortened field have gone down in the

influence the members of the legislature to do all they could to provide funds for the purchase of ground near the university.

When the appropriations for the university were made enough money was provided to enable the regents to start condemnation proceedings and the block just north of the old Nebraska Field was purchased. Later the two lots of the adjoining block to the east were condemned and purchased by Lincoln citizens who hold them in trust subject to sale to the university. A great deal of time was spent this summer in moving and razing the buildings on this property and finally the land was cleared and the space for the new athletic field was clear.

Immediately after the buildings had been moved off the location of the new field, the work of filling in the old cellars and other holes on the ground and leveling off the surface was commenced. This work having been completed, the next problem was for the erection of grandstands and bleachers. The plans for the erection of a gateway and other buildings were drawn and these were accepted by the members of the athletic board. The plan then was to have the field completed for the first game on October 23, of this year. On this date the Cornhuskers met the heavy Hawkeye team and held them to a 6 to 6 score and the history of the battles on the new Nebraska Field had commenced.

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The old field and its memories are now history and the student body as a whole are waiting for the answer that Nebraska and her football team will make on the New Nebraska Field—the list of victories to be won and the standards to be maintained.