



# THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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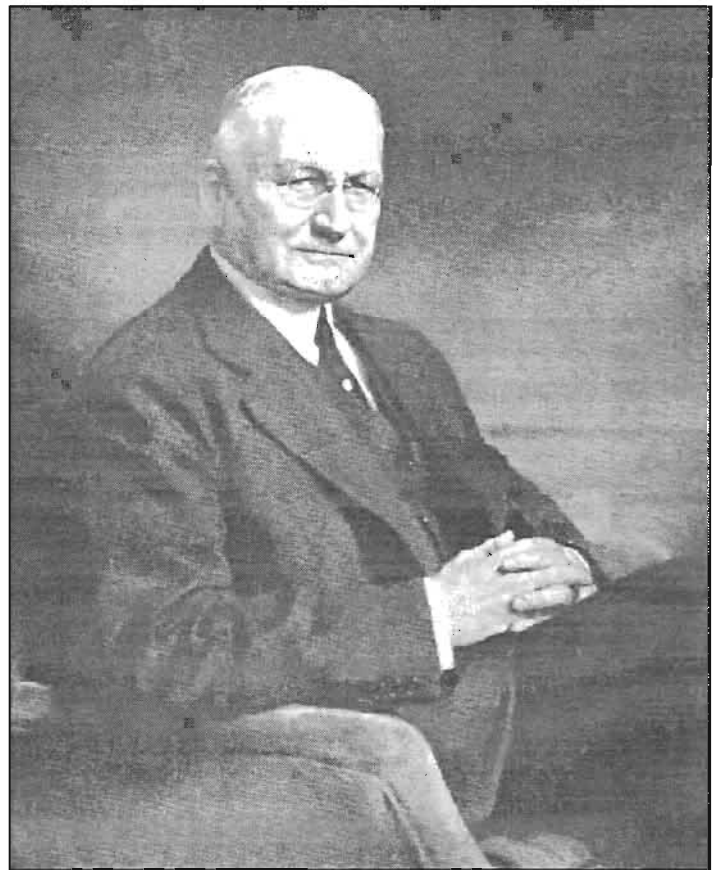
## Edward Andrew Deeds and the history of Denison's Deeds Field

Edward Andrew Deeds, the son of Charles and Susan Deeds, was born March 12, 1874, on a small farm south of Granville. He attended high school at the Country District School, and upon graduation he pursued his academic endeavors at Denison University. He graduated in 1897, earning a bachelors degree in science. While in college, he worked as a janitor in the science building and in town at the village electrical plant and the water works. The little spare time that Deeds had he spent playing for the Denison football team. While on the team, young Deeds played in the backfield; a natural leader, he was elected team captain in 1895.

### An Engineer at Heart

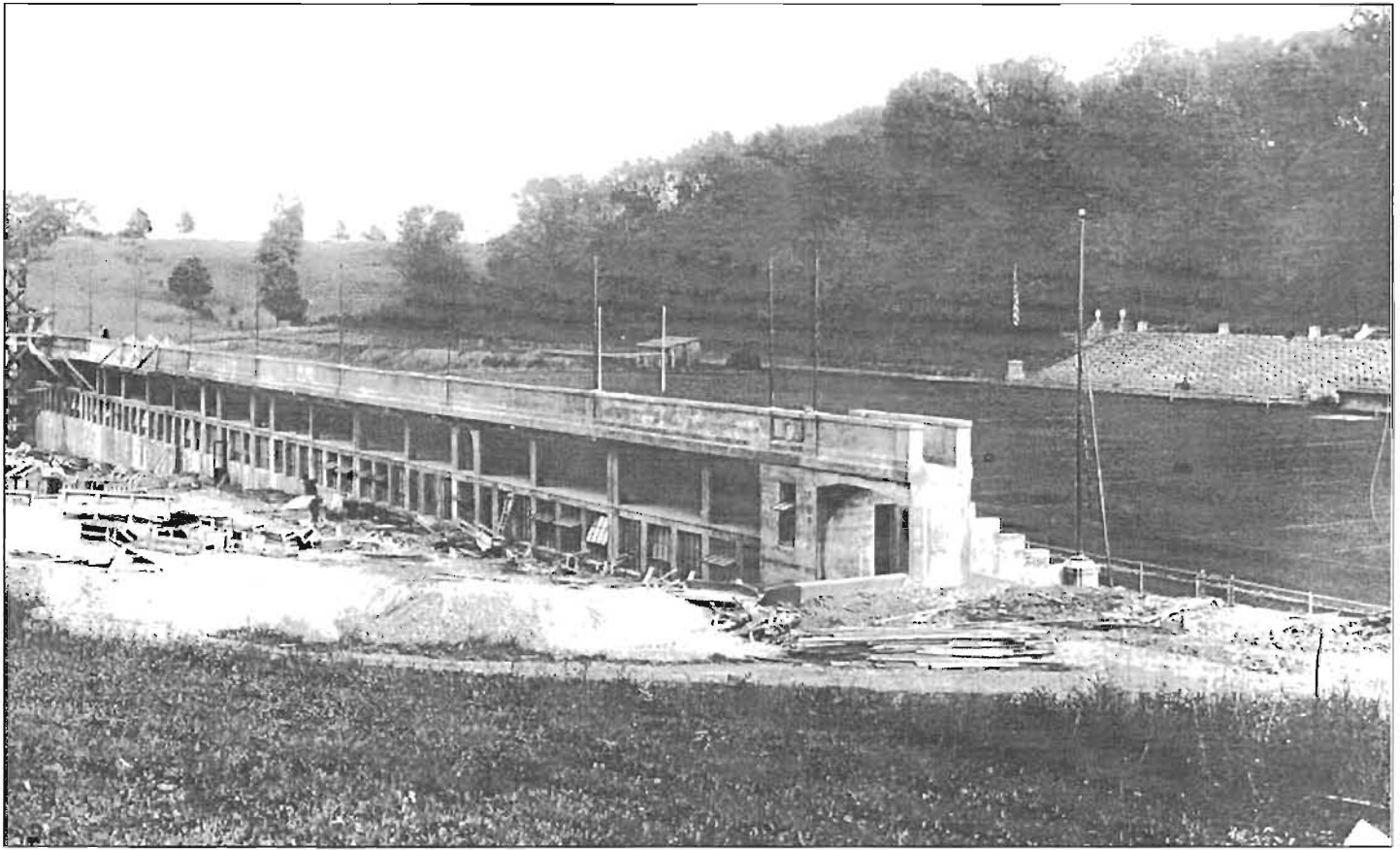
After finishing his undergraduate career at Denison, he pursued graduate education at Cornell University in electrical engineering. However, his time was short stayed due to lack of funds, which prevented him from earning his graduate degree. Returning to Ohio, Deeds began work in Dayton for the Thresher Electric Company; here he earned \$6.00 a week as an assistant draftsman. Within a year, he was promoted to the position of chief engineer, but resigned soon after and moved to another Dayton firm, the National Cash Register Company, where he would make his industrial mark. There he designed the plans for a new powerhouse that provided electricity to the plant. Next, the young but industrious Deeds relocated to Niagara Falls, where he designed the equipment for the Shredded Wheat Company, better known today as the Nabisco Corporation. Following his stint at Niagara Falls, Deeds returned Dayton and continued with the National Cash Register Company. Here he was placed in charge of engineering and production and was promoted to a company vice president.

In 1908 Deeds, along with C.F. Kettering, began experimenting in Deeds' barn with an electric starter for automo-



Edward Andrew Deeds

biles that indeed created a revolutionary industry, leading ultimately to the founding of the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company, better known as DELCO. This firm was later sold for several million dollars. The two men focused most of their energies towards experimental development that led to the formation of Domestic Engineering Company, which then changed names to DELCO-Light Company. In 1919, this company was sold to General



The original construction of Deeds field in 1921 included a large section of bleachers on the north side of the field, now the visitors' side. (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)

Motors. These two companies, along with the Dayton Metal Products Company-also founded by Deeds and Kettering-formed an industrial triangle of the plants in downtown Dayton.

### Back to the Football Field

In 1916, F. B. MacNab, a DELCO patent attorney, organized a recreational football team from among the employees of the three downtown Dayton factories. Deeds and Kettering, founders of the three companies sponsoring the football team, purchased a tract of land from the Edward Best estate. This land was to be a park for the City of Dayton. However, during this period, the area became a recreational park for the employees of all of Deed's and Kettering's companies. Rather than recruit a complete team from the factories, MacNab got together with Carl Storck to sponsor the Dayton Cadets football team; he then used players recruited from the three factories to fill out the team roster. Thus, DELCO, D.M.P. Co. and DECO provided players for the football team as well as serving as the corporate sponsors. The Dayton Cadets that year became the Dayton Triangles, one of the four charter member teams of the professional football league that later became the National Football League.

### The Move to the Airplane

In 1909, Deeds approached the Wrights, by now a rather famous family in Dayton, and broached the idea of using a DELCO starter in an airplane. Although the Wrights didn't accept this idea, this rejection didn't appear to harm the relationship between these famous inventors, as was later verified when Deeds consulted the Wrights about a private landing strip at his home, resulting in Deeds being, in 1916, the first person to have a private landing strip constructed at his home, on Moraine Farm.

In 1917 Howard E. Coffin was appointed to the Aircraft Production Board, with the responsibility to coordinate aircraft production in the United States. Using wide latitude in his appointment power, Coffin named Deeds to a position joining with him in the task of regulating aircraft production. Under this position, Deeds was appointed a Colonel in the regular army; his leadership qualities and technical knowledge led to the success of the Army Air Corps in the Great War.

Next Deeds founded the Wright Airplane Company with Orville Wright, Charles Kettering, and H.E. Talbott. This company was a major producer of planes in the First World War. Deeds declared in a statement about the motives of the

company: "This is an enterprise on which to spend money, not make it." However, the investors clearly established that the newly founded company was fully to take advantage of the anticipated profits generated from the entry of the United States into the war effort. Other investors felt this way, too. As a result, many automobile companies invested an abundance of money in his production company, which Deeds was moving towards a trend of mass aviation production.

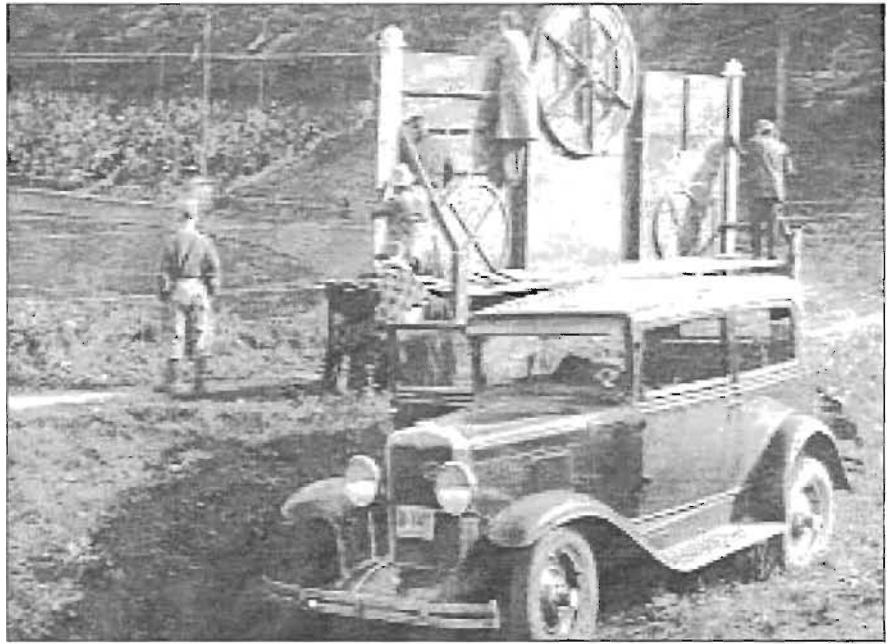
Deeds, along with E. J. Hall of the Hall-Scott Motor Company and Jesse G. Vincent of the Packard Motor Car Company, modified a Packard eight cylinder racing engine in just two days. This engine, named "The Liberty," appeared to be perfect for both mass production and for powering the nation's planes. However, the early praise proved premature. The engine's horsepower-to-weight ratio was too high, making it a poor aircraft engine. In addition, while the engine was well suited for large aircraft such as bombers or flying boats, it weighed too much for use in most fighters. Deeds insisted on continuing development of the engine despite the opinions of experts who insisted that the design would take two or more years to finalize.

There were efforts to develop another engine, but due to the possibility of making huge sums of money from "The Liberty," these efforts were not pursued. Eventually the eight cylinder version was abandoned in favor of a twelve cylinder model, which in time became very successful. Deeds owned more than 17,000 shares in DELCO's parent company, which he transferred to his wife during the war. Even though the DELCO starter had never been used in an aircraft engine, it was still chosen for the Liberty and would be used in more than 22,000 aircraft during the war. These sales resulted in considerable profits, to be sure, for DELCO, and ultimately for Deeds.

### **Trouble in the Aircraft Industry**

The Dayton Wright Company, another company in which Deeds owned stock, also received privileged treatment during the war. However, Deeds technically sold his stock in Dayton Wright and its parent company, the Dayton Metal Products Company, to business associates. However, a Justice Department report noted later:

"The fact is that the transfer of the shares in the Dayton Metal Products Co., which owned the stock of the Dayton Wright Airplane Co., was made to Colonel Deeds's intimate business associates on their unsecured notes, which are overdue and unpaid save to a small



**The Deeds Field scoreboard in 1931 was manually operated. (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)**

extent."

Deeds secured contracts for 4,000 DH-4 light bombers for Dayton Wright, which proved controversial for a number of reasons. The first was that the company had not even established a building to produce these planes. Over the next five months Dayton Wright managed to deliver only 193 aircraft, many defective. To speed up production, only one in six aircraft was inspected as these newly made planes came off the production line. During the war more than 1,200 had to be condemned. The DH-4 achieved wide notoriety for its ongoing problems; in fact, its pilots nicknamed this Deeds-produced plane the "flaming coffin."

After the war, a House of Representatives committee declared, first of all, that this type of aircraft was "...exceptionally dangerous to pilots and observers because of its defective construction." Secondly, the DH-4 contract exposed some of the worst aspects of the cost-plus contracts used during the war. The company was guaranteed a 12.5% profit on each plane produced. Hence, when asked to report the production costs, the Dayton Wright Company did so. However, the company later made sustained efforts to decrease the production cost, which ultimately increased the profits made per plane. In undertaking such a mode of operation, the result, not surprisingly, assured that the planes were poorly made with many problems that followed from the cheap production.

Because the Liberty engine had continuously been plagued with so many mechanical difficulties, President Wilson appointed Charles Evan Hughes to conduct a Justice Department investigation into the matter. By this time,

because Deeds had already accepted a commission as a Colonel in the Army. Hughes concluded that while Deeds's actions were not criminal, nonetheless he should be subjected to a court martial. Secretary of War Newton B. Baker conducted further hearings on Deeds' activities, consulting with two of Deeds' business associates; Baker then exonerated Deeds of any wrongdoing.

Due to Deeds' accomplishments with aircraft, for many years Dayton was regarded as the center of aviation. In 1931, Deeds returned to the National Cash Register Company, where he served as president for twenty-six years. Here his commitment and dedication led to the success of the company. In 1957 at the age of 83, Deeds stepped down from his administrative position. To this day, Edward Deeds, the kid from south of Granville village, remains one of the greatest inventors of the 20th century.

### A Short History of Deeds Field

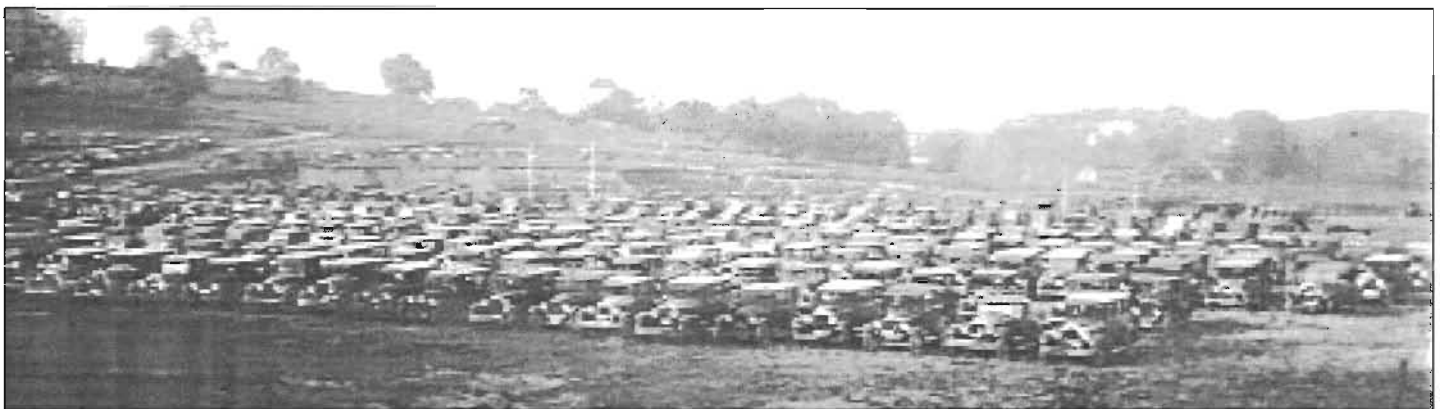
Colonel Deeds maintained a longtime supportive relationship with his undergraduate college in Granville. In the summer of 1912, following his induction as a Denison University Trustee, Edward Andrew Deeds was appointed to the committee dealing with campus and buildings. Later he made a large donation of land to the university for the specific use of expanding the campus, including buildings and athletic complexes. This donation was made up of a purchase of 13 separate pieces of real estate at the cost of \$80,000. These properties were to ensure the future development of the campus. They expanded the area of the campus nearly five times. A 1947 biography of Colonel Deeds tells the following story about Deeds Field:



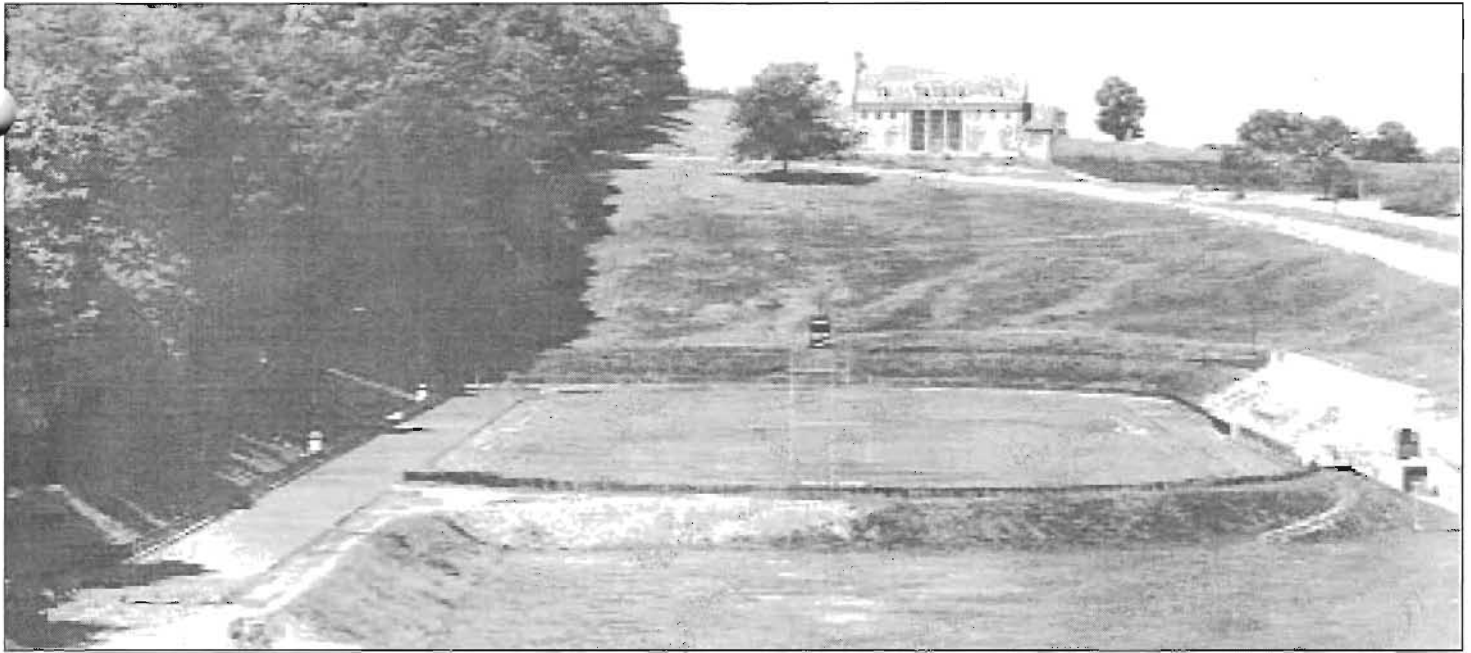
Flags along the top of both sides of bleachers added a festive touch to one of the early games played on Deeds Field, as evidenced in this post-card photo. (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)

“Deeds, whose football prowess is well remembered at Denison, has seen to it that his gridiron successors have an ample playing field. He financed and built Deeds Field and Stadium, one of the best equipped in Ohio. It comprises 150 acres and lies in a series of terraces in a natural amphitheater below the north slope of College Hill. On the first terrace is a tennis courts so graded that they can be flooded for skating. The second terrace provides space for the football field. Baseball diamonds with bleachers cover the third terrace, while the fourth has a field house with lockers and training quarters.”

After this purchase of the land, Deeds was next appointed to the position of chairman of the committee of campus and building. The committee devised plans to raise \$3,500,000 for continued expansion of the college. In 1919, Deeds estab-



A 1926 view of the parking lot during a Denison football game. (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)



**The Sigma Chi house stands sentinel over the new athletic complex including football field (upper level). This angle shows the terraced design of the athletic-field complex, (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)**

lished "The Deeds Endowment and Annuity Funds," and he generously made the single largest contribution to Denison University at the time. This initial donation exceeded \$250,000. The funds amassed well over a million and a half dollars. One carried an annuity agreement, which was in striking contrast with annuities with fixed charges. Within the circumstances of the gift, one half of the net income only was paid to certain annuitants during their life. That meant that for every dollar paid out to the annuitant, Denison University in return received a dollar for its operating income instead of its being charged to the college. After this donation, Edward Deeds went on to design a new athletic field complete with stadium. As a member of the committee, and the leading donor, he took it upon himself to ensure the field suited his fancy.

This massive building project took three years. Upon the completion of the stadium, there was a parade preceding the first event in which the newly erected stadium was to be used.

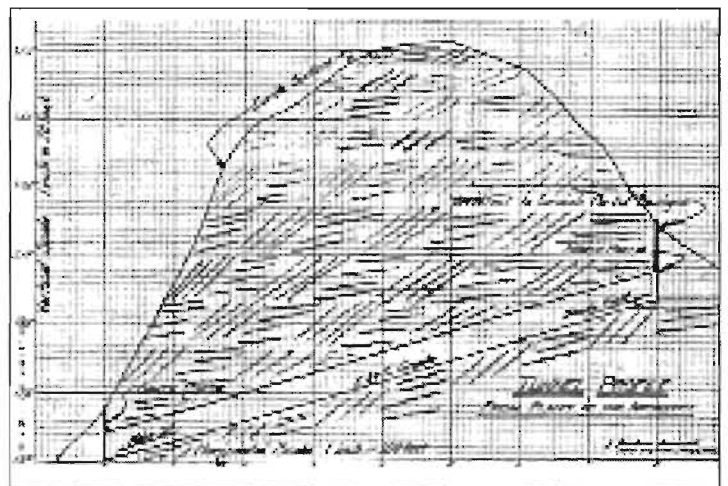
The parade, although brief, traveled through town and then made its way to the field. President Clark Chamberlain and Edward Deeds both gave short speeches that marked the presentation of the field to the university. This day, October 1, 1921, began a new era of superior facilities for Denison University athletic teams. In the gridiron match, Denison lost to Butler 19-6. At the time of this initial ceremony, the football facility had not been completed, and would not be until November 4, 1922, of the following year. The formal dedication took place then, and the field itself was dedicated to Deeds in honor of his generous donation to his alma mater.

In this opening-day dedication game, Denison rolled past The College of Wooster 10-0.

An interesting historical note relating to the building of a major Denison facility is that during halftime of the game in which the Deeds Field dedication took place in 1922, the cornerstone of campus landmark Swasey Chapel was laid on the crest of College Hill.

### **The Story of the Tunnel**

While the following story may seem preposterous today, surviving historical documents suggest that there was a



**This is a drawing of the tunnel Deeds proposed for underneath the Denison University hill. Note how it inclines upward from the North Main Street end to the football field side. (Courtesy Denison University Archive)**

planned tunnel from the north end of Main Street linking the village to the gridiron turf of Deeds Field. This tunnel was designed to run through the underbelly of College Hill with a 5.89% grade. The blueprints for this project are dated May 1, 1925, three years after the inaugural game. The plan included two partially self-supporting sections twelve feet across, to allow easy access from town to the stadium without making the dreaded walk over college hill. Many local people believed that this tunnel was designed for the purpose of personal use by Deeds himself rather than as a convenience to the people of the town. In the personal written accounts of Deeds, one discovers that he envisioned driving his Cadillac right up to the stadium!

The walls were planned to be constructed of "gunnite," with an average thickness of one and a half feet and wire mesh reinforcements used as support. The floor was to be made of four inches of concrete with provisions for some type of a crown on top of that. The project was later abandoned due to lack of finances after a rigorous evaluation suggesting how much the project would cost in its entirety.

Yet Deeds was not to be deterred easily. Later plans discussed constructing a ski lift that would carry football fans over the hill. This plan was proposed and adopted as a cheaper method to the earlier tunnel idea. Nonetheless, after evaluating the costs for this revised plan, the company retained to build the structure made it clear to the university officials that it would be much cheaper and more efficient to use automo-

biles as means for transportation around College Hill. Hence went Deeds's grandiose idea for a quick way to travel from the village to the football field on four autumn Saturdays!

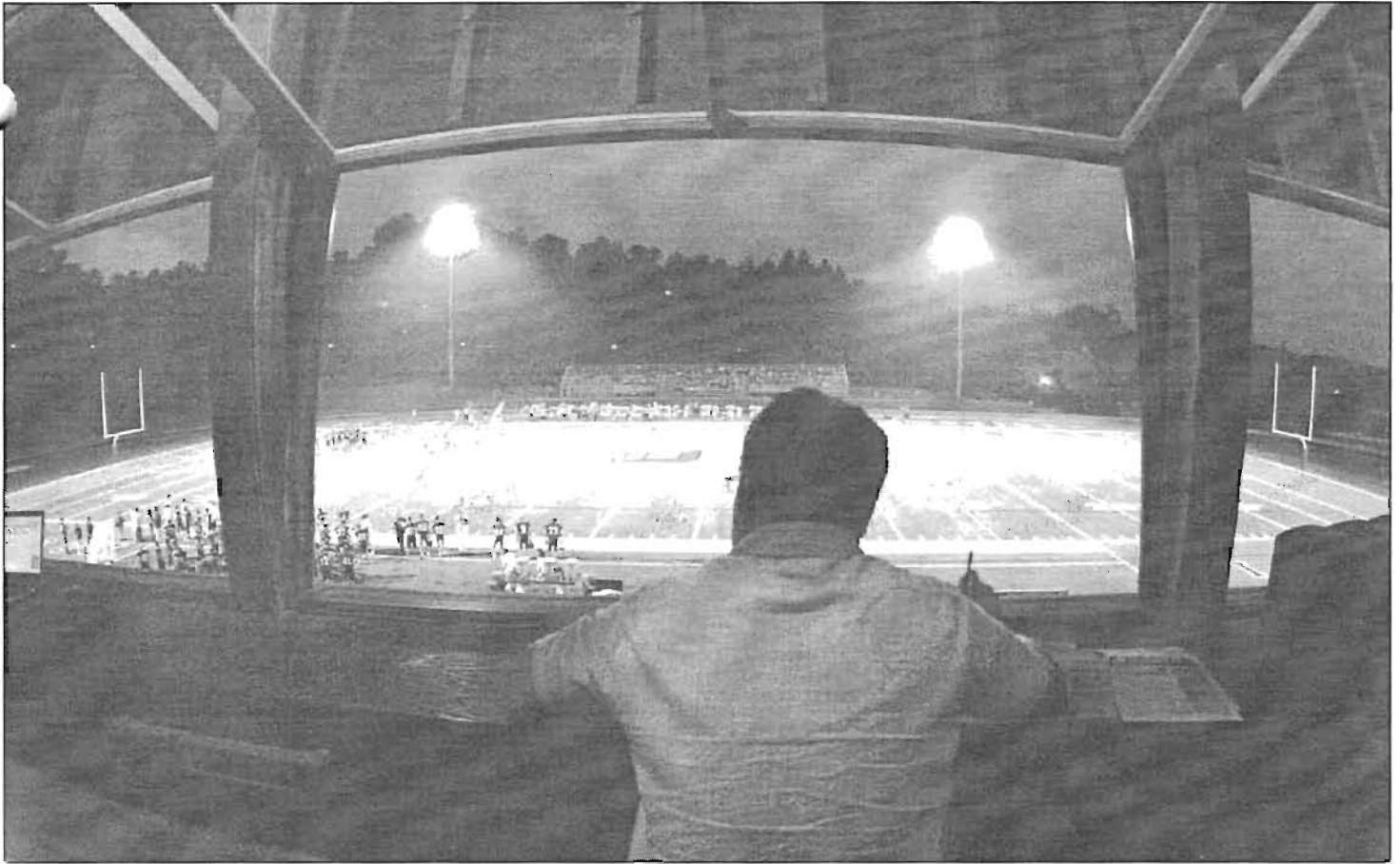
The structure and layout of Deeds Field has remained virtually unchanged since its original dedication with only a few minor exceptions. The first of these changes occurred in 1981, when the stadium was refurbished and the field was brought up to date with new sod. A new north stands replaced the original hulk of a concrete stadium. The second change, a nominal one, was made in 1997, when the stadium was rededicated in honor of Keith Piper, the legendary football coach who spent 42 years coaching at Denison. In his head coaching career at Denison, Piper posted an overall record of 200 wins, 142 losses, and 19 ties, for a .580 winning percentage. In 1985, the Columbus Touchdown Club selected Piper as its Ohio College Coach of the Year. The coaches in the North Coast Athletic Conference named Coach Piper NCAC Coach of the Year in both 1985 and 1986. In 1986, the Ohio House and Senate each passed proclamations hailing his achievements. The Senate again recognized Keith Piper on the occasion of his 200th victory.

During the summer of 2006, Deeds Field once again was renovated. The track was widened, an all season-artificial turf replaced the natural grass, and lights were installed to illuminate the field for extended practice sessions for many of the Big Red athletic teams.

Today Deeds Field at Piper Stadium, according to an arti-



Renovation of Deeds Field in 1981, which coincided with the university's sesquicentennial celebration, included removal of the old bleachers on the north side of the field. (Photo courtesy Denison University Archive)



A view of the field and its new surface, with the block D letter at center, from the press box, at the start of the 2006 season, for the Big Reds' first night game in decades. (Photo courtesy Denison University Information Services)

cle in *Sports Illustrated*, remains one of the most spectacular places to view a college football game. This is due to the generous donation from Edward Andrew Deeds nearly a century ago. This Denison alumnus, born south of the village of Granville, was a complex industrial figure who never forgot his undergraduate roots.

— **Brian Shue and Jason Wright,**  
**Denison University: Class of 2008**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This essay was written as a seminar project for the First Year Studies Seminar on "The History of Granville," conducted by Anthony Lisska during the spring term, 2005, which year was the bicentennial for Granville. The essay itself underwent mild editorial re-writing in preparation for publication in The Historical Times.*

*The authors also used information and drawings found in the Denison University Archives.*

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# Ohio Historical Marker unveiled at Old Colony

On Sunday, Nov. 19, a new Ohio Historical Marker was dedicated for Granville's pioneer cemetery, the Old Colony Burying Ground. The program was held in the Old Academy Building across the street from the cemetery, led by Board of Managers president Kevin Bennett, and included presentation of proclamations by Granville Vice Mayor Lon Herman and Granville Township Trustees chairman Wes Sargent. Eric Schnittke, representing the Ohio



Marilyn Sundin (left) and Tom Hankins at the dedication of the Old Colony marker. (Photo by Charles A. Peterson)

Historical Society, was also present. Three reenactors were attired to represent three of the pioneers buried there - Marilyn Sundin as Achsa Rose, Tom Hankins as Timothy Rose, and Dick Shiels as Elias Gilman.

The following remarks were then made by Rob Drake, representing the Old Colony Union Cemetery Board of Trustees, before the gathering of approximately 80 walked across the street to unveil the marker:

"Two hundred and one years ago this month, in November, 1805, men, women and children came through a forest that extended back to New England to found this village. "These original settlers came with a plan - a survey dividing the 28,000 acres which they had purchased into farms and a village. And just at the southern edge of the plat of the village, that plan set aside space for a burying ground, the same one that lies just across Main Street and which we have gathered to recognize today.

"Then, the Burying Ground lay in deep woods, the only sounds being the wind and the ringing of axes as trees were felled to build the first cabins. Today it sits on a busy state highway beside a car wash and a mill, and the noise is constant. What ties these worlds together?

"Many people today feel that in our fast-paced society the past has no relevance. But this cemetery, carefully restored over the last 15 years and honored today by the unveiling of this marker, is in fact still relevant to our day.

"Neither our homes, nor our institutions nor, indeed, our communities can long stand in this fast-paced world without solid foundations. This cemetery represents the very foundation of the Granville community. In it rest the men and women who conceived of and sacrificed to build this place. Physically it represents a part of Granville's original plan and a part of its actual, not imagined, past. It honors the people, the concept, and the values that built and support this community.

"It is fitting that this marker be erected to highlight the importance of this cemetery, and on behalf of the Trustees of the Old Colony Union Cemetery Board I extend our thanks to the Granville Ohio Historical Society and the Ohio Historical Society for providing it."



## THE HISTORICAL TIMES

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