

2020

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Recommended Citation

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from Lott to Eisenhower,
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Cover image from the *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, 9 June 1905, page 4.

Recommended citation:

Eberle, Mark E. 2020. *Early Football in Abilene, Kansas, from Lott to Eisenhower, 1891–1910*. Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas. 14 pages.

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Mark E. Eberle

During the late nineteenth century, the name “football” (often spelled as “foot ball”) was an ambiguous term. It could refer to early versions of sports now recognized as soccer, rugby, or American football. The first two sports were imported from Great Britain. The third, American football, was the product of modifications to early rugby, which began at colleges in the northeastern United States in 1876 and continued until the First World War. For multiple reasons, such as the likelihood of injury and the organized practice time and coaching necessary, communities were slow to take up American football during these early years. As a result, limited opportunities for outside competition meant few games could be played in a season, which typically ran from October through December. An earlier study summarized the history of football in Kansas from 1856 through 1891 and the beginning of intercollegiate American football.¹ This study picks up that story by using Abilene, Kansas as an example of football in towns without a university during the years 1891–1910. At the beginning and end of this period, Abilene sent two young men to the US Military Academy at West Point. Both became members of Army’s varsity football team and both became generals.

Despite these martial connections between sports and war, this story of football in rural Kansas begins in 1891 in the city of Concordia, about 50 miles northwest of Abilene. Abilene had no organized football team that year, but Concordia had something few towns had in the United States—a female football club.

On July 3, the *Concordia Times* opined that the town should have a football team. “For several evenings past we have noticed a number of youths engaged in furiously chasing a foot ball up and down our streets. If they can devote so much energy and enthusiasm in merely kicking it[,] surely they could organize a foot ball eleven that would put to shame the lesser towns around and place Concordia’s standard as high as ever as ball players.”² Baseball was already widespread in the state, and it was often viewed as an important expression of a community’s vitality.³ With football beginning to gain notice in newspapers, perhaps it would be one more way to stand out among the numerous young settlements vying for local supremacy.

What Concordia got that summer, however, was probably not what the *Times* had in mind. Less than two weeks later, the *Concordia Daylight* reported, “There is no disputing the fact that Concordia has a regular, genuine ladies football club.” Details about the club were sparse, but newspaper accounts persisted through the summer and included a poem titled, “The Foot Ball Girl.” The football club had about 17 members, and they apparently played only intramural games. They probably played association football (soccer). In one report, some of the club members complained that their “pants were too tight,” suggesting they did not wear long dresses. Two years later, players on a pair of female teams in San

Francisco wore “abbreviated skirts and knee trousers” in a soccer game watched by “several thousand” people. “Though the play was rough at times no one was painfully injured.” The women in Concordia also complained about sore shins. The final mention of the club that summer came in September, when club members were to give a kicking exhibition at the local fair. “They will undoubtedly draw a large crowd.” The press reports in Concordia filtered down to an Abilene newspaper.⁴

In March 1892, the *Concordia Daylight* wondered, “Has oblivion swallowed our Ladies’ Foot Ball Team?” They hoped not, because they wanted to publish pictures of the club’s games, “with the aid of our Kodak.”⁵ Unfortunately, it would be decades before female soccer teams became established in Kansas communities. This was certainly not the first Ladies’ Football Club organized in the United States.⁶ However, newspapers in Kansas and across the country published a story from an English newspaper during the 1880s that summed up the prevailing opinion at the time, when female baseball teams were also not taken seriously.⁷

FOOT BALL FOR LADIES. Feminine Teams Threatened in English Society This Winter. The ladies’ cricket clubs have been so successful this season that we are threatened with ladies’ foot ball teams in the winter. The scheme is not likely to amount to much. Athletics for girls, within due limits, are very well; but foot ball is emphatically not a lady’s game. Even played under association [soccer] rules (we may presume that even the modern young lady would shrink from the Rugby game) it is far too rough and violent, and at times dangerous, to be a suitable feminine sport.⁸

That might have been the prevailing sentiment, but in November 1892, the *Enterprise Journal*, published in one of Abilene’s neighboring communities, replied to a similar comment published in the *Abilene Reflector*. Or was the reply tongue-in-cheek?

There is one encouraging feature about football as the coming national game—there will be no young ladies’ football teams organized.—*Reflector*.

They won’t, eh? Since the girls have begun playing baseball and wearing suspenders[,] we think they can do anything a man can.⁹

As occurred in many communities across Kansas, it is likely that informal games of football were played in Abilene before 1892.¹⁰ For instance, in the town of Solomon, about nine miles west of Abilene, local youths organized a football team in early 1888. Two years later, the *Solomon Sentinel* reported, “Foot-ball has lost its hold on this community, since one or two of our foremost players have joined the benedict ranks.”¹¹

In early 1892, Abilene and Chapman, about 10 miles east, had high school football teams, but there was no mention of intercity games that spring. In April, it was reported that the Chapman High School football team had “perished.” That autumn, the reorganized high school teams in Abilene and Chapman finally played each other twice—one win for Abilene and one tie. Central College at Enterprise, about six miles east of

Abilene, also organized a football team, which lost to Abilene, 8–0, on November 26.* Abilene, in turn, lost, 8–4, to the high school team from Salina, about 22 miles to the west. Several injuries were reported following these games, and some were serious enough to cause Chapman to delay its second game with Abilene. It was not only players who were injured. In Abilene, “Prof. Brown” of the high school “was disabled from active duty by an accident while instructing his class in the rudiments of foot ball.... He will soon recover.”¹²

It was only four games, but it was a start for Abilene. However, not everyone supported the new competition. In January 1893, the *Abilene Herald* expressed the view of the sport’s opponents. “Now that the snow is nearly gone we hope that the foot ball fever will not break out again. It is just as dangerous as prize fighting and should be prohibited by law.”¹³

Although Abilene’s initial football team purportedly represented the high school, this was not entirely true. Following the game between Abilene High School and Central College, the *Enterprise Journal* reported that the Abilene team included three local players who were no longer in high school. The ringers included William Matteson, who had played for the State University in Lawrence (the University of Kansas).¹⁴ The line between early high school and town football teams could be a little hazy.

In the autumn of 1893, Abilene was represented by the actual high school team. They played Minneapolis High School (one win, one tie), Kansas Wesleyan University of Salina (one loss), and Chapman High School (one loss). The season ran through December. In January, the Chapman High School football team “indulged in a game of baseball.”¹⁵

Football was also popular with younger students. In January 1894, the *Abilene Monitor-Herald* was informed that the teacher at a rural elementary school southwest of Abilene was hosting a fundraiser. “Miss Town gives an oyster supper at Sunnyside school house the 27th of January. Oysters 15 cents a dish, the proceeds to be used for a foot ball.” The newspaper then had to correct the story, because the school already had a football. “Imagine also our regret that we had belittled the generous effort of our hard worked teacher to procure an encyclopædia for her school down to the mere purchase of a foot-ball.” The supper raised \$26.24—a lot of oysters.¹⁶

If most people knowledgeable about Abilene’s history were asked to name a graduate of Abilene High School who was well known as a young athlete, who received an appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point (where he was also an athlete), and who went on to become a general after serving in the Philippines, Panama, and Washington, DC, among other posts, it would likely bring to mind Dwight D. Eisenhower. Yet this description also fits another Abilene resident who was 19 years older than Ike.

* Central College was founded as Harrison Normal (Teachers’) College in 1889. In 1891, the school was transferred to the Central College Association. The name Central College was used until 1896, when the school was transferred to the German Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who changed the name to Enterprise (Normal) Academy. The school closed in the spring of 1917. The overly simple reason given for the closing in the local newspaper was “propaganda waged in this country against everything German.” (*Enterprise Independent*, 30 May 1889, p 5; 29 August 1889, p 5. • *Enterprise Journal*, 23 July 1891, p 1; 11 June 1896, p 1; 25 June 1896, p 1; 3 September 1896, p 1. • *Enterprise Push and Enterprise Journal*, 6 June 1918, p 1; 26 September 1918, p 1, 3.)

When Abilene first experimented with football teams, one of the town's best-known athletes was unable to participate. Abraham Grant "Abe" Lott was the star catcher for the local baseball club, first mentioned in local newspapers in 1888. He was good enough that other teams sought his services when Abilene was not playing. He was usually accompanied by an Abilene pitcher—sometimes his brother, John, and sometimes Eli Sommers. In 1890, Abe Lott was among the organizers of the Abilene Base Ball Club.¹⁷ He had graduated from Abilene High School in 1889 and taken a position as the teacher at a rural school in Dickinson County.¹⁸ In June 1891, the "pedagogical base ball player" traveled to Junction City to take the exam for entrance into West Point. This was followed by exams at Leavenworth in early March 1892. At the end of the month came word that, "Abe Lott of Abilene [had] been notified that his examination papers for entrance to West Point [had] been approved."¹⁹

While at West Point, Lott played for both the varsity football and baseball teams. Cadets were given leave after their first two years, so he was home in Abilene during the summer of 1894 and back on the baseball diamond with the local town team. Lott returned to West Point for his final two years, where he was again playing for the varsity football team and "commanding the West Point base ball team," while serving as the club's catcher. In June 1895, Lott received the honor of being elected First Captain of the senior class. He graduated in 1896, and returned to Abilene for another short leave, where he again joined the local baseball team. In early September, "All the young men who [were] interested in football" met to reorganize the Abilene football team. "Abe Lott will be on hand Friday afternoon to coach the boys and give them pointers." Shortly after that, he reported for duty as a second lieutenant with the Sixth US Cavalry.²⁰

Lieutenant A.G. Lott would return to the Abilene ball diamond one last time in late May 1900. After duty as a cavalry officer on the northern Great Plains and in Cuba, following the Spanish–American War, Lott was assigned to duty at Fort Riley, about 25 miles northeast of Abilene. While at Fort Riley, he managed the post baseball club. Lott wrote to his old teammate, William "Billy" Matteson, to challenge the Abilene baseball team to a game. His post team lost to Abilene, 19–9. Lott, who would turn 29 the following month, played first base. At the time, Dwight Eisenhower was about 9½ years old, and it is easy to imagine him attending the game and watching a team captained by a former star athlete from Abilene who had graduated from West Point.²¹ Ike probably heard about Lott, whose career was followed in area newspapers, even years after Eisenhower had graduated from West Point. In early 1918, an Abilene newspaper recalled that Colonel Lott "was an athlete of unusual ability and made a distinct record through his high school and college days. He is remembered by the old ball fans in Abilene as one of the best catchers that ever stood behind a batsman."²² Lott also lettered in football with Army for three years, despite not having the chance to gain experience on a high school football team in Abilene.

In 1894, with only two years of experience in organized football, Abilene fielded a good team. The focus that autumn was a town team, and they started by scheduling games with Chapman, Kansas Wesleyan University, and other clubs during October. However, there were more cancellations and postponements than games. Abilene won their first game

with Chapman, 4–0, but Kansas Wesleyan had to cancel their trip to Abilene because their team had been “roughly handled” in a game with Lindsborg. The team from Fort Riley had to postpone their game in Abilene because some of the players were not allowed to be absent from the post that day. Chapman also canceled a game in Abilene that month. An attempt to arrange a game with the State University in Lawrence failed because “enough money could not be secured to pay their expenses” for the trip to Abilene.²³

A second football game was finally played on November 3, when the team from the State Agricultural College (Kansas State University) traveled to Abilene. The *Abilene Reflector* published the rosters of both teams, along with their positions and weights, which were substantially less than typical on today’s teams. Abilene won 24–0, but the *Reflector* reported that the “game was not so one-sided as the score appears and was hard fought throughout.” In addition to the *Reflector*, the *Abilene Chronicle* and *Abilene Gazette* provided detailed game summaries, but the first published newspaper report was in the *Kansas City Star*. Abilene’s success was attributed to superior teamwork and “interference” (blocking).²⁴

As the month progressed, some of the postponed games from October were played. First up was a trip on November 16 to Fort Riley, where the Abilene “boys were treated in the very best manner and all speak in high terms of praise of the hospitality of the fort.” Abilene won, 18–0. Meanwhile, the captain of the Chapman team finally secured the consent of the high school faculty for students to play. Previously, the faculty opposition to football had prevented some of Chapman’s players from joining the team. Chapman’s frustrated captain informed Abilene, “I will be there with a foot-ball team if it has to be made up of old women.” The game was played on November 19, and Abilene won, 20–0.²⁵ Two more shutouts in four days. Chapman then played the team from Central College in Enterprise. Chapman won, 12–0.²⁶

Next came the postponed game between Abilene and Kansas Wesleyan University. It was scheduled for Thanksgiving Day in Salina. The Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroads both offered 88-cent roundtrip fares. Abe Lott’s brother, John, served as referee, as he had in several other games, while a person from Salina served as umpire. During the second half, with Abilene leading, 6–0, the Wesleyan team failed to line up. Their captain had passed out during the first half but recovered until that point in the second half, when he could not continue. Thus, the game was awarded to Abilene by forfeit, 4–0 (equal to one touchdown). “The result was unsatisfactory to both teams and it is hoped another game can be had.”²⁷

Abilene.	Position.	Manhattan
Cloud, 173.....	Center.....	Johnson, 190
Lower, 205.....	Right Guard.....	Dowley, 175
Rugh, 185.....	Left Guard.....	Otter, 170
Jolley, 160.....	Right Tackle.....	Aull, 160
Smith, 155.....	Left Tackle.....	Williams, 160
Humbargar, 145.....	Right End.....	Conrad, 180
Badger, 150.....	Left End.....	Kirkpatrick, 160
Lott, 140.....	Quarterback.....	Hoffman, 130
Hurd, 145.....	Halfback.....	Hatch, 160
Pattison, 160.....	Halfback.....	Wenke, 150
Matteson, 180.....	Full Back...	Cavanaugh, 145
Substitutes for Abilene, Parker, Fry, Sterl; Manhattan, Holsinger, Jolley, Rowley. Time of game one and a half hours. Referees, Herbert Ehrsam, John Lott.		

The rematch was set for December 10 in Abilene. The Kansas Wesleyan team, augmented by a few non-students from Salina, arrived in Abilene accompanied by their band. “Fully two thousand people saw the game which was hard fought from start to finish.” The “Abilene High School Notes” published in the *Abilene Monitor* reported, “Not very many [students] came [to school] Monday afternoon on account of the great interest in the foot ball game.” Given the local importance of the game, the officials were all from other towns—the umpire from the State University in Lawrence, the referee from Beloit, and the lineman from Chapman. Abilene led 6–0 at halftime and won 12–0. Charley Pattison carried the ball around the left end for 75 yards to score the final touchdown, aided by “interference” from Will Matteson, Paul Hurd, and Bert Lower. Not long afterward, with about six minutes left to play, two players for Salina were “knocked senseless and had to be carried from the field.” Players on both sides were cut and bruised. The teams agreed to call the game. Both Salina players recovered sufficiently to return on the train to Salina. The game ended the season, with Abilene shutting out their opponents in all five games (six, counting the forfeit). To celebrate, a grand banquet was held to honor the football team. Among the speakers was the Governor of Kansas.²⁸

Although news of the town team had been the focus in Abilene, there was still interest in high school football in the state. In August 1894, there was a proposal in Kansas City to organize an interscholastic football league among Kansas high schools, with a regular schedule of games. The suggested cities included Abilene, Atchison, Beloit, Concordia, Emporia, Fort Scott, Lawrence, Leavenworth, Manhattan, Ottawa, and Topeka, but others were welcome to participate.²⁹ Nothing came of the proposal, but it was a sign of things to come.

There was also news that year about a football league set up by owners of major league baseball teams, who were looking for a way to extend the use of their stadiums from October through December (more profits). The organization was named the American League of Professional Foot Ball Clubs, and it would follow the association football (soccer) rules of England. Six teams entered the league: Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. The season opened on October 6 in Philadelphia, with New York defeating their hosts, 5–0. However, the league folded two weeks later. The reasons given were the “late period at which the association was able to get under way, on account of the prolongation of the baseball season, and the difficulty in avoiding conflict with the regular college football games.”³⁰ In short, attendance was weak. American (collegiate) football was becoming the preferred winter sport, but the baseball magnates were not ready to support a sport with a reputation for injuries that could decimate rosters.

Meanwhile, back in Kansas, reform-minded candidates from the People’s Party (Populists) had won control of the state government in the elections of 1890 and 1892. However, Republicans soon began to regain control. In 1894, as Republicans achieved political gains during the November elections, the two political opponents competed on the football field in Chapman. “The foot-ball game between the Republicans and pops

Tuesday afternoon resulted in favor of the latter by a score of 12 to 0. This is good as it leaves our pop friends something to crow over.”³¹

Abilene continued to field a town football team from 1895 through 1902. In 1896, Abilene added players from other towns before a game in Lawrence with the State University (Abilene lost, 6–0). This was not the only instance of football rosters being strengthened by outside players, as frequently done by Abe Lott and others in baseball. In January 1901, Chapman agreed to host Salina for a bet of \$50 a side, and other betting was expected to be substantial. Gambling was also common in baseball. However, there was a stipulation regarding the rosters for the Chapman–Salina football game. Players on the Chapman team must be from within eight miles of the town, and Salina players must live within the city. No ringers. About 1,500 fans attended the game, won by Chapman, 6–0.³²

The first sign that the Abilene town team was fading came in 1898, when no team was organized. Before it completely disappeared, an unusual doubleheader football match was held at the Abilene fairgrounds on Thanksgiving Day 1902. In the first game, Abilene defeated Salina, 16–0. However, it was the second game that made the event unusual. It was played by the black teams from each city. Games involving black baseball teams were not unusual at the time, but football games between two black teams in rural Kansas were rarely reported in newspapers. Coincidentally, Abilene also won the second game, 16–0. Even rarer than the report of the game was the publication of the rosters and positions of both black teams in the *Abilene Chronicle*.³³

From an historical perspective, the relatively quick demise of the Abilene town football team is not a surprise. Unlike baseball, in which most communities were represented by a town team during at least some years,³⁴ town teams in football were more challenging to organize. During this period of changes to the rules that further differentiated American football from rugby, the importance of organized plays requiring coordinated teamwork meant that substantial amounts of time had to be devoted to practice. This would be a challenge for young adults with full-time jobs. For example, the roster of the 1894 Abilene town team included the county treasurer, the deputy treasurer, an attorney, an assistant bank cashier, and the manager of the local telephone company.³⁵

Perhaps the most important factor limiting the development of town football teams was the increased risk of injury compared to baseball. The injuries frequently included cuts, bruises, and sprains, but dislocated joints, broken noses and bones, concussions, and subdural hematomas were also reported. The game in December 1894 between Salina and Abilene mentioned earlier, ended with six minutes remaining following a mass play. The mass play was a regular feature of the early game, in which the two teams would crash into each other in an attempt to advance the ball or hold the line by brute force. The mass play ending the game in December 1894 illustrates the potential dangers of this style of football.

The two lines came together with an impact that was heard to the farthest edge of the grounds, and the result was soon apparent. Salina’s captain was borne off the field senseless. Donnell, another Salina player, was writhing on the ground and soon became unconscious, while Lower of Abilene was badly hurt and considerably dazed.³⁶

Five years later, the memory was still strong.

Toward the last of the game the Abilene boys made a center rush. The dull thud could be heard a quarter of a mile. Those who saw it declare it was the most savage thing they ever witnessed. Abilene won the game, but every man who took part in it swore he was done with football.³⁷

Abilene had a high school team in 1899, but, as this memory from 1894 suggests, “The older players are more careful of themselves than formerly.”³⁸ In addition to injuries, deaths occurred during games, and these were widely reported in newspapers. In October 1899, a player was killed in a football game in Delphos, about 40 miles northwest of Abilene.

Geo. S. Thurston, the fullback on the Delphos football team, was killed here on Saturday on the field, during the game between Delphos and the Kansas Wesleyan university. The accident occurred early in the game. Thurston had just made a hard plunge on the line and the players in some way crushed his head and neck so that he died almost instantly. He was carried from the field, but was dead almost as soon as picked up.³⁹

After 1902, the high school was the principal team to represent Abilene. Students at high schools (and colleges) could more easily arrange regular afternoon practice to prepare for games, and they started doing so under the direction of experienced coaches. At the same time, the issue of serious injuries and deaths was being addressed by changes to the rules, fostered by the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) established in 1905, which would later change its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).⁴⁰ Addressing these concerns about safety became the focus, rather than prohibition of the sport, because more and more colleges and high schools across the country were playing football, and it was beginning to permeate American culture. In May 1903, a train carrying President Theodore Roosevelt across Kansas stopped in Abilene after making an extra stop in Chapman. While in Chapman, President Roosevelt was given a football, “which from its appearance had seen service.” The president used the football as the theme for his speeches in Chapman and Abilene. “[I]n all games of life, play as you play foot ball[:] don’t flinch, don’t foul, and when you buck the line hit it hard.”⁴¹

The 1903 football team at Abilene High School was still progressing slowly and intended to play only one game. Instead of another high school as an opponent, they would play “an eleven composed of young men who played with the high school and town teams several years ago.” The high school team lost to the town team, 18–0. However, they later added another game and defeated the team from Salina High School, 6–0.⁴²

In 1904, the Abilene High School football team was better organized and played a fuller schedule. In October, they had the team’s photograph taken, and the athletic association purchased football buttons for the students to wear. “On the button is a picture of the high school football squad and the school yell. Yellow and brown, the school colors, add to the design.” The team won most of its games against other high schools, but they lost to the Beloit town team.⁴³

In June 1905, the *Abilene Reflector* published the photograph of the 1904–1905 Abilene High School football team, an integrated team. No mention of Abilene having a black player was found in local newspapers, even though such information was usually considered newsworthy during this period of “separate but equal” segregation. This does not mean the player was not mentioned in newspaper reports of Abilene football games. Alfred Brisco played left end for the team in 1904 and 1905, and his exploits carrying the ball and scoring touchdowns were reported in several newspaper stories. Brisco played alongside Edgar Eisenhower in 1905, but he left school before Dwight Eisenhower joined the high school football team in 1907. In addition to football, Brisco was on the school track team. At the preliminary high school track meet in April 1905, Brisco won two events—shot put and hammer throw. He also played for the Abilene High School baseball team, on which he was listed as the pitcher in two games and shortstop in one game. During the summer of 1905, Brisco played for the Abilene Browns, the uniformed black town team. He also served as the Browns assistant manager.* Sports were not his only accomplishment. Brisco was near the top of his class in academics, and he participated in



Photograph of the Abilene High School football team taken in October 1904. The player in the center row on the far right is Alfred Brisco. *Abilene Weekly Reflector*, 9 June 1905, p 4.

* In 1897, Abilene had an integrated professional baseball team, with a black infielder—Bert Wakefield—and an American Indian pitcher—Isaac Augusta. Wakefield returned to the team in 1898 (Eberle 2018). In 1913, a black baseball team played in Abilene’s otherwise white Sunday School Baseball League. Dwight Eisenhower, on summer leave from West Point, umpired games for this league and possibly played in a game against the black club (Eberle 2017b).

musical, theatrical, and oratorical programs at school. The teenage Brisco also served on the organizing committee for the local Emancipation Day celebration in 1903.⁴⁴ He apparently moved to Kansas City, Missouri, married, and had two children. According to a Missouri death certificate, Alfred Briscoe died in June 1918 of heart disease after being under a physician's care for 10 days. His birthdate was given as 8 October 1885, but the "5" was written over another number. Information in the Kansas State Census for March 1905 indicated his birthdate could have been October 1886. In either case, Brisco was only about 32 years old when he died.

The Abilene High School football team continued to play well in 1905, when Edgar Eisenhower joined Brisco on the team as a substitute player. He saw some playing time and "was excellent on defense." A game at Herington that ended in a 5–5 tie illustrates the conditions under which early games were sometimes played. The game took place in a pasture with no goal posts during a rainstorm, so no kicked goals were attempted. In addition to the integrated high school team, Abilene's black football team planned to play Salina again on Thanksgiving Day, but the Salina team failed to make the trip. That same month, some older players from Abilene scheduled a game, but it was rained out. It was now the high school team that would represent Abilene.⁴⁵

The high school team continued to play well from 1906 through 1908. During these three seasons, the roster included at least one player named Eisenhower. In 1906, it was Edgar playing on the line, usually as tackle or end. The team was presented with a silver football on a pedestal as a trophy for their 9–0–0 record.⁴⁶

The first newspaper report of Dwight Eisenhower participating in a football game was in October 1907, when he served as timekeeper at a game between the Garfield and McKinley schools in Abilene. Later that month, he played quarterback in the first game of the season for the Abilene High School football team against St. Johns Military Academy of Salina. Edgar played left halfback. The final score was 0–0. Over two seasons, Dwight also played on the line and was noted for his defense. The two brothers played for the high school—both football and baseball—through the 1908–1909 school year, when they graduated. Edgar left for the University of Michigan, while Dwight remained in Abilene.⁴⁷

While the Eisenhowers were playing in Abilene during the 1907–1908 academic year, William "Red" Erwin played for the football team at West Point, following in the footsteps of Abe Lott. Erwin played so well that Walter Camp named him to his list of All-American players. Erwin was raised on a farm near Chapman, and his accomplishments at West Point were reported in Chapman and Abilene newspapers. Erwin returned home from West Point for a break in the spring of 1908 before leaving for the Philippines as a second lieutenant in the Ninth US Cavalry.⁴⁸

Dwight Eisenhower soon joined Abe Lott and Red Erwin as an alumnus of the Army football team. To better prepare himself for the entrance exams, Ike returned to Abilene High School in the autumn of 1910. In addition to his studies, he rejoined the high school football team, playing left end and left tackle. He suffered a "badly wrenched knee" in a game against Chapman, but recovered to play in subsequent games.⁴⁹ Eisenhower passed his entrance exams and began his studies at West Point in 1911, where he played football

until seriously injuring his knee. However, he was able to complete his education and earn his commission as an officer. The young Eisenhower had been driven to pursue post-secondary education, in part, by his interests in football and baseball. An unsubstantiated controversy about his eligibility to play for Army's football team after being paid to play baseball were described in detail in an earlier study.⁵⁰ As a football player, Eisenhower was the product of a system that initially focused on town teams, as was common in baseball, but the emphasis in football switched to high school teams during Ike's youth.

Acknowledgements

Newspapers were accessed at Newspapers.com and Genealogybank.com. Tim Rives, Deputy Director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, assisted in searching for information about Alfred Brisco in Abilene High School yearbooks and other sources.

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<i>Chapman Howitzer</i>	<i>St. Paul (MN) Globe</i>
<i>Chapman Journal</i>	<i>Salina Republican</i>
<i>Chapman Standard</i>	<i>Salina Republican-Journal</i>
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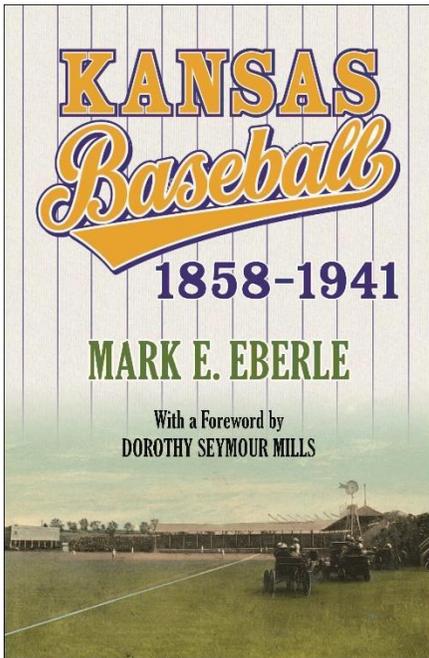
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You can learn about the early history of baseball played by teams throughout Kansas in the book *Kansas Baseball, 1858–1941*, published in 2017 by the University Press of Kansas and available in paperback or e-book through bookstores and online retailers.

The book explores the early game played by hundreds of town teams composed of white males, as well as teams of women, African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans. Also described are the regional minor leagues and major league tours, along with the histories of towns still playing baseball in the state's oldest ballparks constructed between 1924 and 1940.