

# Mansfield Memories – Park ‘evidence of gratitude of Mansfield for those who were willing to meet supreme sacrifice in defense of our country’

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*MANSFIELD - This is the second in a two-part series about Memorial Park*

Memorial Park was nearly complete in the spring of 1936. All that remained was the completion of a few lingering projects and a proper dedication.

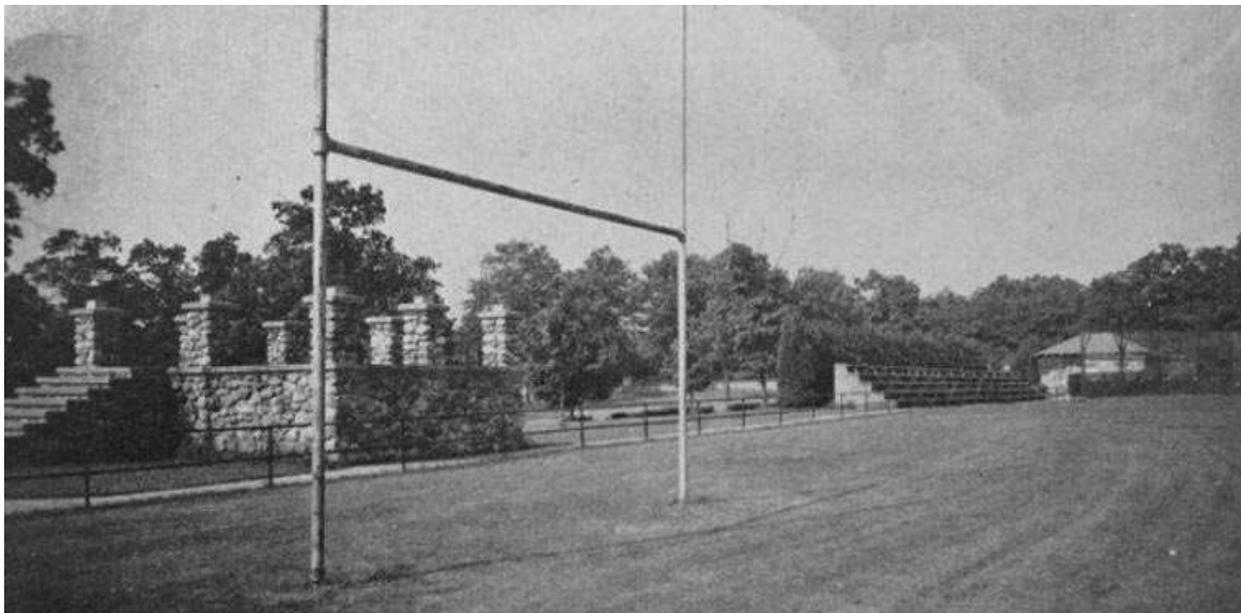
In June the light department installed nine 500-watt floodlights which “illuminated the field brilliantly.” As completion drew near it was estimated that the federal government expended \$100,000 on the park project, with the town kicking in an additional \$7,000 over the course of three years.

By August the park was complete but remained idle.

“I would like to see the park officially opened for use, for football games this fall,” said Selectman Everett Robinson.

The board agreed and appointed a dedication committee.

The committee consisted of more than 45 members including the Board of Selectmen, local clergy, and citizens at large. A consensus quickly formed that Nov. 11, Armistice Day, would be ideal for the dedication of Memorial Park.



The evening of the ceremony, the Mansfield Athletic Association's "Town Team" defeated the Walpole Bonecrushers by a score of 6-0 under the lights of the newly dedicated Memorial Park.

But the committee had less than three months to pull it together. There was concern that the November weather could be foul or too cold. But the committee quickly moved forward and formulated plans.

In the meantime the Mansfield High football team was granted use of the Memorial Park football field. The first game was held Saturday, Oct 3, 1936 when the Green and White defeated Barnstable by a score of 12-0. Game time was 2:30 p.m. and 500 spectators looked on. All uniformed military veterans were invited as special guests. Mansfield played host to Canton, Stoughton and Walpole at Memorial Park over the following three Saturdays.

Despite having little time to plan the dedication, the committee pulled off a wildly successful event. The weather was described as having “a sharp fall tang” but “a warm sun shone throughout the afternoon to temper the atmosphere.”

A massive parade was organized. It took nearly two hours to pass from beginning to end. It featured an estimated 2,500 marchers and rivaled any parade in Mansfield before or since. Bugle and drum corps, bands, veterans organizations and military detachments were all featured in the parade which worked its way through downtown Mansfield and culminated at Memorial Park.

Everett Robinson led the dedication ceremonies.

“We have assembled here to dedicate this park to the men who went forth in service to their country,” he declared.

The featured speaker was US Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts.

Walsh noted that the park “will stand for all time as evidence of the gratitude of Mansfield for those who were willing to meet supreme sacrifice in defense of our country.”

The Rev. John Chippendale of Saint Mary’s Church led the dedication of the flagpole to the memory of Leslie MacLachlan, a young Mansfield man who died two years earlier when he was struck with a baseball during a game.

A 21-gun salute ensued as the flag was raised. Additional speakers rounded out the dedication program.

At nightfall the Mansfield Athletic Association’s “Town Team” defeated the Walpole Bonecrushers by a score of 6-0 under the lights of the newly dedicated Memorial Park. Mansfield quarterback Joe Julian directed the lone scoring drive, which included a 20-yard completion to Boots Cody. Julian scored the touchdown on a quarterback keeper. In World War II Julien would win the Navy Cross with the US Marine Corps in the Pacific.

In later years tennis courts, a softball field and basketball courts were added to Memorial Park. As predicted, it endures as a tribute to veterans and as a valuable resource for the townspeople of Mansfield.