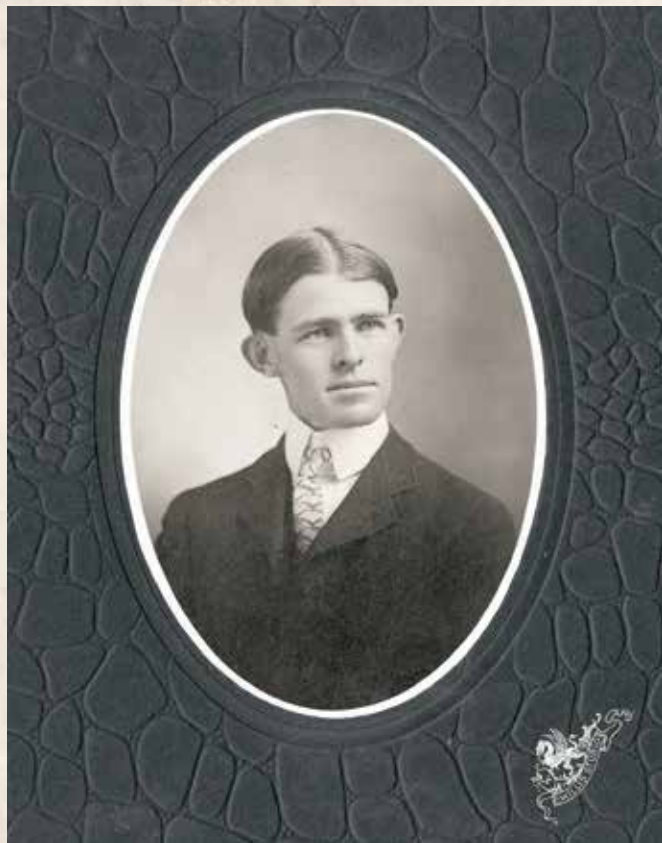


*Pioneer and scholar:
the university's first graduate made history and then helped document it.*



The 1898 portrait of OU's first graduate, Carlton Ross Hume.

In the days, weeks and months that followed Dec. 14, 1895, eyewitness accounts of the first University of Oklahoma football game scattered across the prairies of Indian Territory like so many tumbleweeds in the wind.

The contest between the upstart university squad and a more accomplished high school team from Oklahoma City warranted a casual mention in the Dec. 20 edition of the *Norman Transcript* newspaper, but there were no sports writers on hand to describe the action and no box score made available to provide any statistics.

Just the final score: Oklahoma City 34, OU 0.

It was an inauspicious beginning, to say the least.

By the time Harold Keith hatched the idea to write a book about the early days of OU football in 1931, almost four decades had passed since that all but forgotten game. But that did not deter Keith, the school's first sports publicity director, who would spend the next 17 years piecing together football's infancy and evolution on campus with painstaking research that saw him write hundreds of letters to former players, coaches, students and townsfolk, and travel to any and all destinations that might hold even the smallest of clues.

Many of the participants had moved, while others had died or simply faded into the woodwork like ghosts. Many letters came back marked "undeliverable," calls went unanswered and there were plenty of information-gathering journeys that started hopeful but proved fruitless.

One postcard, however, found its way to the Caddo County Courthouse in Anadarko, Okla., and into the mail slot of the Honorable Carlton Ross Hume, a local judge who just happened to be OU's first graduate and a member of the school's fledgling 1896 football squad. Within a few days, Keith and Hume were corresponding by phone to set up the first of several face-to-face interviews.

continued

The Hume Chronicles

BY JAY C. UPCHURCH

Photos Courtesy of OU Western History Collections

It was exactly what Keith needed to breathe life into his book project.

In Hume, Keith found a historian of sorts, someone who had been witness to basically every significant moment and event at the university from the time he arrived in 1894 until he earned the second of two degrees in 1900. After a brief teaching stint and a two-year stay at the University of Kansas School of Law — OU did not have a law school until 1907 — Hume returned home to Anadarko to start his own law practice.

Fortunately for Keith, Hume retained close ties to his alma mater, regularly attending sporting events and serving on various alumni committees and boards over the years. So when the two men sat down in 1933 to discuss those early days of football at the university, Hume was a wealth of information.

Although he did not attend that inaugural OU football contest in 1895, Hume was familiar with the story and, more important, he knew several of the participating players with whom he helped Keith connect. Through his contacts in the legal world, Hume also assisted in tracking down John A. Harts, the man responsible for inspiring interest and assembling the first squad.

In a short article written for Keith's consumption in the 1930s titled, "Prehistoric Foot-Ball At The University," Hume detailed information provided by Harts:

"In the fall of 1895, John A. Harts, a foot-ball player from S.W. Kansas College at Winfield entered the University, and was the founder, coach and captain of the first team the school ever had. He spent the fall drilling the team, no member of which had ever seen a game. After several weeks of practice, the first and only game of that season was played with Oklahoma City High School."

When Harts left OU the following spring to prospect for gold in the Arctic, the future of football at the university seemed in doubt. If not for Hume and his younger brother, Ray, the team might have disbanded altogether. They joined forces to form the school's first athletic committee, collected what remained of the previous team — 11 uniforms and one football — and recruited more prospects to fill out a 20-man roster.

The siblings had spent their formative years in Ohio and Kansas prior to the family's move to Anadarko, where their



Coach Bennie Owen took over what was then known as the OU Rough Riders in 1905 and headed the team for 22 years. Much of what we know about the team's early years was captured in the memories of Carlton Ross Hume.



father, Charles R. Hume, had been appointed as the doctor for the Kiowa Indian Agency in 1890. The boys took their knowledge of the game and, with the help of fellow students like Harry

Ford, Homer Burson and John P. Evans, helped establish the foundation for what would eventually become the most popular pastime on campus.

The makeshift squad played two games in 1896 — both against Norman High School — the first with Ross Hume at quarterback and Ray Hume serving as team captain. OU won that initial meeting 12-0 and, two weeks later, earned a 16-4 victory in the rematch.



OU's football team only played two games in its 1896 second season. Both were wins against Norman High School, and the team had its photo taken to celebrate the victories.

The elder Hume recalled a few details from that brief season in his article to Keith, writing, "In 1896, the team was made up entirely of students, and was much lighter. My brother was captain, and in one game with Norman High, I played quarter. After much practice, we won twice from Norman, and this was the first all-victorious team the school ever had. And to duly celebrate, the team had its picture taken ..."

The following year, the arrival of a young professor named Vernon L. Parrington would prove to be a major boon for the school's football team. Hired to take over the university's English department, the Illinois native came well-versed in football, having played during his college days at Harvard and coached briefly at Emporia College in Kansas.

Parrington's knowledge of the game and belief that participating in athletics helped his students develop into more

well-rounded college men became staples of the program over the next four years, and further set the stage for future generations of OU football.

Meanwhile, Hume had decided to leave the team to focus more intently on his studies. He remained engaged in a long list of student activities — including acting, academia and all things science — and was among the best-known students on the Norman campus.

On June 8, 1898, he became OU's first graduate, earning his Bachelor of Arts degree. Hume was followed by Iowa native Roy P. Stoops as the only two students in that historic class.

Still, Hume never strayed too far from football, serving as an official linesman and timekeeper at home games throughout the 1898 and '99 seasons.

Keith's book "Oklahoma Kickoff," which was published in 1948, provides in great detail a colorful look into the first 25 years of OU football (1895-1920). In the opening chapter, the author shares Hume's reason for trading in his cleats for a spot on the sideline.

"He discreetly retired to the time-keeper's job and during the three remaining years of his college career was content to let others assume the playing drudgery," wrote Keith, noting that Hume was a mere 5-foot-6 and 130 pounds.

While neither of the Hume brothers played football after the 1896 season, both young men remain tied to OU athletics thanks to various contributions. Ray Hume was part of the spirit committee that selected crimson and cream as the university's official colors. And in 1899, Ross Hume helped pen the final verse of the official school yell, "Boomer, Sooner, O.K.U.," which was later altered to "Okla. U."

A few years later, a young coach named Bennie Owen took over the OU football program and eventually changed the team name from Rough Riders to Sooners. Owen's teams won more than 120 games during his 22 seasons (1905-26), earning him legendary status in OU lore and a spot in the College Football Hall of Fame.

Hume went on to earn the first master's degree from OU in 1900 and, four years later, he returned to his adopted hometown of Anadarko, having graduated from the Kansas School of Law. During the next 50-plus years, he split time practicing law as an attorney and serving as a county judge and civic leader. Hume was also a staunch advocate for a number of Native American groups in the area, including the Caddo Nation.

His mother, Annette Ross Hume, earned notoriety as one of America's first female photographers. Her collection of more than 700 images remains one of the most important documentations of Native American life (1891-1910) on record and is archived at OU's Western History Collections.

Hume married Amber Gossard in 1907 and the couple had three children — Ross, Dorothy and Betty, each of whom shared his passion for OU. All three would go on to earn various degrees there.

"My father felt a lot of pride in regards to his association with the University of Oklahoma," said Hume's daughter, Dorothy Hammond, in 2007. "He wasn't boastful, but he



Seen here at his desk in 1943, Harold Keith was a noted novelist and OU's first sports director. He spent nearly two decades chasing down tales of the university's first football teams and found his storyteller in Carlton Ross Hume.

thought it was pretty special to look back at some of his accomplishments over the years, especially those where he was involved at OU."

"I remember when he retired, he donated all of his law books to the university, and that (OU President) Dr. Cross honored him at a dinner on campus," says Hume's grandson, James Hammond, a 1961 OU graduate who lives in Denton, Texas.

"That's the type of relationship he always had with the university over the years."

C. Ross Hume was witness to basically every phase of the OU's evolution during its first half century. He watched it grow from a one-building institution into a major university during the 1940s and '50s — one that today has an enrollment of more than 31,000 students and features more than 300 student clubs and organizations across campus.

Hume, who passed away in 1960 at age 82, experienced a number of firsts during his time as a student at OU and helped sustain the pulse of an upstart football squad that has since become one of the most successful programs in collegiate history.

His influence is quietly woven into many of the university's spirited traditions that he helped establish as an ambitious young student. But of all his accomplishments, maybe the most important thing Hume did was to help Harold Keith recapture the faded details of OU's 1895 baptism into the world of collegiate football.

"Boomer, Sooner, O.K.U.!"

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