

# AN 1896 XMAS VACATION

(Editor's Note: Using old newspapers on microfilm, while doing primary source research on college football history, often yields up many little treasures. Following is an item discovered in the Joliet Evening Herald-News of December 7, 1921, which discusses in detail the exhibition games played by the Missouri and Texas teams in Mexico at the end of the 1896 season.)

Kansas City, Mo. Dec 7 – No reunion of old Missouri university men is ever quite regular or complete until somebody retells the story of the Missouri team that went to the City of Mexico in 1896. That team did not win many scheduled football games, but it is unique in the annals of Missouri football.

Never before or since has a whole team de-camped, gone A.W.O.L., left the territorial boundaries of the United States, as that team did. Some of its adventures were recalled here recently when Holmes Hall of Sedalia, Mo., now a federal referee in bankruptcy court but in 1896 Missouri's quarterback, met George H. English Jr., a colonel in the world war, and now a practicing attorney, but in those by-gone days manager of Missouri's football team They went over the whole thing once more, while younger graduates, to whom the story of the vagrant football team was only a tradition, listened wide-eared.

Telling about it, Colonel English smiled. "The year before", he said, "Missouri had a wonderfully good team And we got all swelled up about it, and decided we could beat the world. When I became football manager, they had left me a schedule that called for games with Purdue, Illinois and Vanderbilt at St. Louis. They all beat us, and we couldn't persuade much of anybody living in St Louis that football was a good enough game to pay money to watch So we lost money as well as games. We finished the season with a 30 to 0 defeat at the hands of Kansas, and then we played a post-season game with the University of Texas team And that was how the football invasion of Mexico began."

"When we got to Austin, Texas, we found a team that we could beat. (Note: Missouri defeated Texas 10-0 in the 1896 regular season game.) There also we found a man named George A. Hill, who was promoting a Christmas excursion to the City of Mexico. One of the attractions he advertised to take along was two football teams, the University of Texas and a picked team of all-stars made up of older players. Our defeat of Texas rather put a crimp in his plans, and besides he had been unable to line up his all-star team satisfactorily. So he asked us whether we wouldn't like to go along with all expenses paid, and play the University of Texas again, at Laredo, Monterey, the City of Mexico and outlying points. As there was nothing to restrain us except college discipline, we said we'd love to. We didn't communicate with college authorities back in Columbia at all. What would have been the use? They would have only ordered us to come home. It was on December 24. So we stuck around Austin, playing football games for Hill, as he was paying our expenses. We played the deaf and dumb school and one or two other teams of that general caliber, and found we could handle them nicely."

(Editor's Note: During this time Missouri defeated the Austin Mutes 39-0; a team from San Antonio by a score of 21-0; and the Austin YMCA by a 21-10 tally.)

"Then we all entrained for Mexico, where everybody had a wonderful time. We played once at Monterey and twice in the City of Mexico, and once more in Laredo, Texas on the return trip. We beat them every time."

(Editors Note: That last part is not entirely accurate. In the history of Texas football entitled "Here Come The Texas Longhorns" by Lou Maysel, the author details that Missouri won 18-4 on December 25 at Monterey; Missouri won again 12-6 at Mexico City, but two days later the teams played a 0-0 tie in the same city; and then at Laredo on Jan. 2, 1897 Missouri won the final game by a score of 18-6.)

"The Mexicans didn't take the least interest in football. They evidently regarded it as merely another bit of evidence pointing to madness of all Americans. The American colonies, however, turned out well

for us. I remember Hill tried very hard to get President Diad of Mexico to come out to the game. The president thanked him, but didn't come He sent out some chief of staff or aide-de-camp to occupy the box that was tendered him, to show how he appreciated the courtesy. And shortly after New Years we came back to the United States and returned to Columbia."

Here Colonel English smiled again. "A rather painful period ensued at Columbia. There were star chamber sessions with the disciplinary committee of the faculty and it ended by the coach of the Missouri team leaving for pastures new, while Tom Shawhan, captain and halfback, and English, the manager, were suspended from the university."

"My suspension, however, was not such a severe penalty", said the ex-manager. "It was made effective during the week of the mid-year examinations, and as my standing was luckily good enough for me to pass in all my courses without examinations, it merely gave me a week's holiday while everybody else was boning up for examinations.

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