

# MANSFIELD MEMORIES: Fuller Field hosted Mansfield High's first official home football game in 1919

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*This is the third in a four-part series on athletic fields of Mansfield.*

Poor at best. Scarcely to be classified as a cornfield. No fit place to play. These are descriptions of Fuller Field, where Mansfield teams played and practiced for many years.

Fuller field was an undistinguished property at the end of Wilson Place, crammed between a house and the Old Colony railroad. But when Mansfield High School was relocated to Park Row in 1912 the athletes of MHS needed a place to practice and play. It was a walk of only about 300 yards from the school to what would become Fuller Field.

The town rented the land from Frances Fuller for about \$200 annually in the 1920s. In the Great Depression, the price dipped to \$60. The town eventually acquired the property but the Fuller name remained.



**First row, left to right: Co-Captain Palanza, Boynton, DeLong, Mason, D'Agostino, Rockwood. Top row: Griffin, Co-Captain J. Kane, Knight, E. Kane, Shelburne, Garland, Burns.**

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Mansfield's first track team at Fuller Field in the fall of 1945. By 1950 Mansfield's outstanding track team was the talk of the region.

Fuller Field was the sight of Mansfield High's first official home football game in October 1919, a 32-0 loss to Dedham. MHS football games moved to Memorial Park in the mid-1930s but the football team continued to practice at Fuller Field. Mansfield's "town" football teams also played at Fuller in the 1920s and 30s.

There was also a baseball diamond at Fuller Field. Home plate was near Wilson Place and batters faced north toward the center of town. The Old Colony railroad was in foul territory along the first base side. Like the football team, MHS baseball played games at Fuller until the opening of Memorial Park. When Little League Baseball came to Mansfield in 1952, some of their games were played at Fuller.



The Mansfield High School football team practiced at Fuller Field. Above is the 1947 team. Behind the team is the Old Colony Railroad, Taunton Branch, (now Rails to Trails) and Branch Street.

By 1950, Mansfield's outstanding track team was the talk of the region. It wasn't just that the team only lost one meet in four years and was coming off three consecutive South Shore championships. It was that the program was so strong and its facilities were so poor.

Fellow coaches asked Mansfield's Jim Kelly how he did it. Do you have a great practice facility? Kelly told them he had a "circular path worn out in a cow pasture." Speaking at a meeting of the Mansfield Lions Club, he complained that some town residents figured "as long as they can make championships without a decent place to train why spend any dough?"

Kelly explained that the track squad had 30 boys, far greater than any other sport. Track cost the least and had the best results. He wondered why “a schoolboy sport which does the greatest good for the largest number of boys ought to be without decent training facilities.” He called for a track to be built at Memorial Park.

That vision never came to pass. But three years later the voters of Mansfield approved a new high school (which is now Qualters Middle School). The new school opened in 1954 with a brand new track built directly behind it. Athletic practices were sometimes held in the field around which the track was built. This new setup with easy access to Memorial Park made Fuller Field obsolete.

At that time a novel concept was emerging: cities and towns were building affordable housing for seniors. The Mansfield Housing Authority acquired Fuller Field to build Mansfield’s first senior housing project, known as Cedar Court.



Governor Foster Furcolo speaks at the dedication of Cedar Court senior housing development, site of former Fuller Field in July 1958.

The development was described as having a “motel style” layout. It was considered so innovative that Governor Foster Furcolo came to Mansfield to dedicate Cedar Court in July 1958, and it is still in use more than 60 years later. The “cow pasture” once known as Fuller field continues to serve the people of Mansfield.



Mansfield High band director at dedication of Cedar Court in July 1958.



Governor Foster Furcolo, second from left, tours Cedar Court, Mansfield's new senior housing development, site of the former Fuller Field in July 1958.