

1st Annual American Legion Armistice Day Race

Sunday, 11 Nov 1934 at Legion Hall in Uptown Butte

“Cease Firing” ... sounded by bugler, flashed through the trenches of war-torn France 16 years ago. It was the answer to the prayers of mothers the world over. It ended the greatest armed conflict in history that had raged for more than four years. It was also a signal for riotous celebration, by every nation, that lasted for days – days when loved ones rejoiced in the thought that no more lives would be sacrificed.

- The Montana Standard newspaper, 11 November 1934

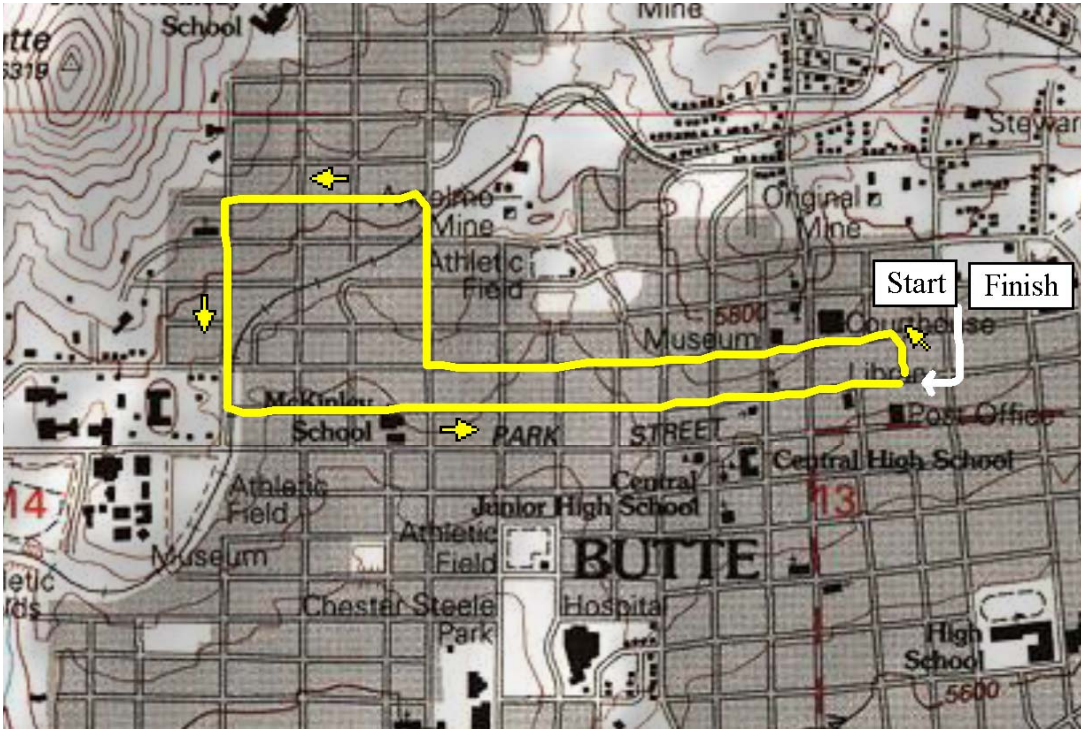
This year Butte once again celebrated the unofficial Armistice holiday with a litany of what are by now traditional activities plus something new ... a cross-town foot race sponsored by Butte’s American Legion, and however unlikely it may seem, the idea for the race (or, more accurately, races) was spurred by collegiate football.

School of Mines’ football coach Charles McAuliffe and American Legion Commander C. Owen Smithers, who was himself once a collegiate runner at State University in Missoula, collaborated to create two races for the weekend.

The first race featured collegiate runners from the State College Bobcats verses the State University Grizzlies. That race was designed as the featured halftime entertainment for the 6500 fans in attendance at the “Cat-Griz” football game which was played at Butte’s Clark Park the day prior to Armistice Day. Immediately after the game’s first half ended, the collegiate runners took to the field during the 20 minute intermission and started their race with three laps around the inside of the stadium. The runners then exited the stadium for 1.25-miles more of racing on Warren Ave and adjoining streets before returning to finish with three additional laps inside the stadium. The Grizzlies’ Jack Rose of Kalispell won the race by taking the lead with two stadium laps remaining and then “flashing into a spectacular burst of speed at the finish” to break away from the Cats’ Barney Myers with a finish time of 12:16 for 2.4 miles. The Grizzlies also won the team scoring portion of the contest by a score of 36 to 42, when combining the places of each team’s first six runners.

At 11 a.m. on Sunday, the 11th day of the 11th month, a special detail of Legionnaires fired an 11-bomb salute to war veterans, from near the American Legion Hall in the Uptown business district. Then there was a silent pause in tribute to those who gave their lives and limbs to protect their country.

A few minutes later the air was cracked by the report of the race starter’s pistol, and then, in front of a crowd that was estimated to include more than a 1000 people, twenty-two racers sprinted out onto the steeply undulating 2.5 mile course. They started going eastward from East Broadway, then north on Hamilton, west on Granite, north on Excelsior, west on Woolman to the base of Big Butte, south on Western, and finally east on Broadway to finish back where the race started.



While the runners were out on the course, another new event, the push-mobile race thrilled spectators with six 2-boy teams racing self-constructed crafts, which had peppery names like “Road to Ruin.”

The “Going Places” crew of Albert Wilkenson and Henry Hooper won the event.

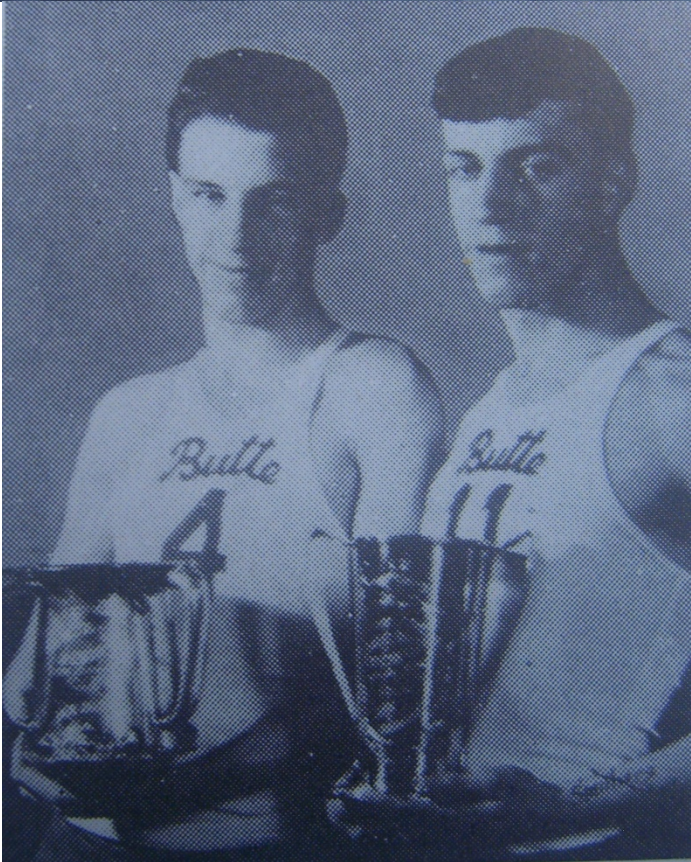
The foot race was won by Butte High student John Dougherty, who led his teammate, Jack Pachico through the finish. Finish times were not reported.



Shown at right are Pachico and Dougherty (from left) with their respective trophies, each of which was engraved with the runner’s name.

Standings: 1, John Dougherty, BH; 2, Jack Pachico, BH; 3, Andrew Slatt; 4, Paul Lightfoot; 5, John Holleran; 6, Jack McGinley; 7, Chuck Shannon; 8, Eddie Walsh; 9, Jack West; 10, Dowell Minter; no additional finishers listed.

Louis Dreibelbis, a prominent Butte business man and old-time sportsman, donated race medals and trophies that were handsome enough to be displayed in local jewelry stores prior to the race.



A black and white photograph of a large outdoor stadium during a football match. The stadium is filled with spectators in the stands. On the field, players in light-colored uniforms are lined up for a play, while players in dark uniforms are positioned to defend. A large goalpost is visible in the background.

[Clark Park was (and still is, sans stadium) located southeast of the intersection of Harrison and Grand. The stadium burned to the ground in 1957.]

Armistice celebrations started immediately after the football game with the American Legion open house.

Although names were not provided for all race placers, the list of entries also included:

Cats: Charles Kramis (Hamilton); Carl Peterson (Waltham); Ted Hedrick (Polson); Earl Geyer (Great Falls); William Forsyth (Creston); Grover Schmidt (Fort Benton); John Seamans (Huntley); Newell Wilder (Lewistown).

Griz: Harold Sterns (Anaconda); Ben Taylor (Troy); Ted Garlington (Missoula), Horace Godfrey (Whitefish); Albert Vadheim (Great Falls).

Other interesting items-of-the-time that appeared in this weekend's Montana Standard:



In a bit of irony, this Chesterfield ad appeared very near the Armistice Day Race report.