

**PURPLE
&
WHITE**

Community. Glory. Tragedy.

THIS IS THE LEGENDARY STORY OF
SALIDA SPARTAN FOOTBALL
1900 - 1955

BY LORI MITCHELL
WITH KEN BAKER AND DICK BRATTON

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The Early Years 1900 - 1914

Salida High School football dates back to the early 1900s. Football was a big event in Salida during these early years. In 1909 the school paper, the *Tenderfoot*, reported, "The town was football mad on Saturday afternoon when the Salida High School football team lined up against a strong aggregation of University and Denver High School men, representing the Barnes' Commercial School of Denver. The game was played November 6, 1909. The final score was 0 - 0."

Another published report read, "The final score was 0 - 0, in favor of Salida." The report indicated that most of the game was played in Denver's territory. The article went on to describe how Salida played "old style" football and Denver played "new style" football depending mostly on the forward pass.

Prior to 1910, Salida home games were played on dirt fields located where the current Andreas Field House is now. Early athletes traveled by train to the San Luis Valley, Gunnison, Leadville and to other towns on the eastern slope. Travel to Leadville was on the standard gauge, and over Poncha Pass and Marshall Pass it was on the narrow gauge.

In 1907 Salida played their third game of the year in Leadville. The *Tenderfoot* reported, "During the game on the Leadville field, one of our classmates, Arthur Cope, was seriously injured, and it was thought best to discontinue the game. He was brought to the Red Cross Hospital in Salida. Although suffering intensely, he expressed the hope that the accident would not interfere with athletics in the high school." The news report in the *Salida Mail* under the headline of "The Grim Reaper Scores in Football" declared, "Arthur had the ball and was making a swift end run when he was met with great force by his opponents." The diagnosis was a fractured spinal cord. His last request, before he died two days later, was that he wanted to play in the next game against Pueblo High.

Football was discontinued for the remainder of 1907 and all of 1908. The football program started again in 1909 but was discontinued again in 1912.

According to Irwin Sage, Sr., a player on the 1922 team, the Leadville incident resulting in Arthur Cope's death had caused a lingering lack of interest in the game, and the students were too busy during the war years to be involved in extracurricular activities.

Beginning in 1914, almost every Salida High School student was involved with some sort of war effort. Girls were doing Red Cross work as well as knitting and sewing soldiers' and sailors' garments. Many boys had joined the colors. Other high school boys were helping on the farms gathering crops. Students raised money for the Y.M.C.A. and to purchase war bonds and thrift stamps. When all Americans were called upon to conserve the food and the coal supply, every student willingly secured signers for the pledge cards. The 1917 yearbook declared, "It is

the earnest hope of every student that he may be able to continue to do his share toward bearing the responsibility and making the necessary sacrifices as the war continues.”

1916

In 1916 Salida tried yet again to reestablish a football program. Old equipment was dug out and Salida had a team of thirteen. They practiced faithfully and on October 14th the 1917 Salida team traveled to Florence to play their first game. They performed well for not being very experienced but lost the game 13 - 0. They then traveled to Gunnison to play their second and last game of the season. Salida played hard but couldn't compete with the veteran Gunnison players and lost the game 28 - 0. Football was again suspended.

1916 Players



**Harlan
Quarterback**



**Allen
Left Halfback**



**McAbee
Center**



**Morehouse, Captain
Fullback**

1918 - 1923

The high school yearbook, *Le Resume* devoted many pages to former and current students who were serving in the military. In the 1918 publication there was a biography on Neil Davenport, a former Salida football star. “He is playing the war-game now just as he played football--**to win**; and Coach Fulsom of Colorado State University said he was the best all-around man he ever trained.”



In 1922, Salida football was back and inter-school games were scheduled. Dark clouds started gathering right from the start of the season. The first game against Sargents Consolidated High School ended in a 12 - 0 loss for Salida. It got much worse. Gunnison then beat Salida by a score of 141 - 0.

Improved over the the '22 season, Salida played five inter-school games in 1923 and finished with one win and four losses. The high point and red letter day was when the eleven defeated Leadville by two touchdowns and the low point was when they lost to a much larger Florence team, 105 - 0.



1923 Salida Football Team

1925

The 1925 Salida team played seven games and had an improved record of three wins and four losses. They lost to some of the usual suspects, namely Florence, twice. They beat Leadville twice and pulled a surprising upset over Monte Vista, 19 - 0.

1925 Salida Team



During the 1925 school year a contest was held, presided over by the Athletic Association, to choose a name to use in promoting school spirit. Prior to this contest, some published reports used the “Mountaineers” when describing Salida’s sports teams.

The contest produced many suggestions but the one selected was “Spartans.” The winning moniker was entered by Emerine Jacobs, who graduated with the Class of 1927. “Spartans” was first used for all Salida High School teams in the fall of 1926.

1925 Players:

Right End Clifford Gibson, Right Guard John Nigro, and Quarterback Carter Hutchinson



1926

The most successful season to date was in 1926 for the newly named Salida Spartans. They competed in nine games adding new opponents to the roster and were only scored against in three of those games. The Spartans, led by Captain Elvis Starbuck, booked a season record of 8 and 1. On Thanksgiving Day they finally beat Florence in the final game of the season, 6 - 0, which saw nine senior Spartans playing their last game. The team's only loss came against new opponent, Canon City, 7 - 2.

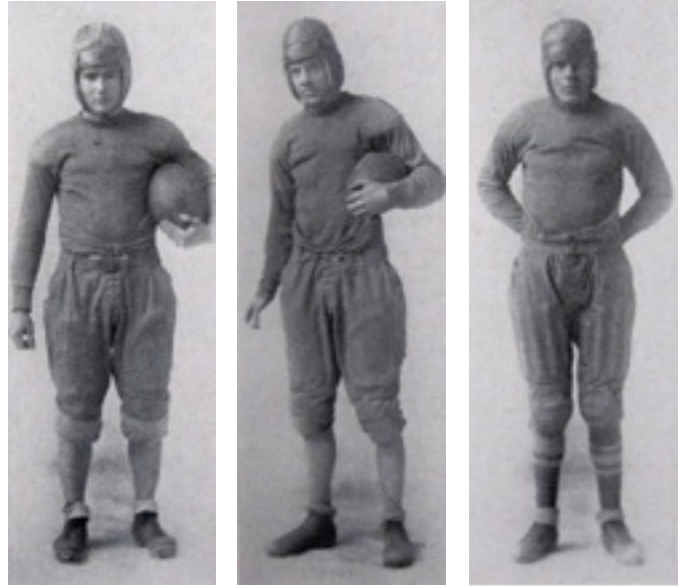


The 1926 Spartans

1927

Following their most successful season the Spartans entered the 1927 season optimistic. The schedule consisted of eight games, the first against alumni. After the alumni game ended in a 6 to 6 tie, the following seven games were played with the Spartans prevailing in four. The final game against Center was of the upmost importance. The title of the West Central League and the San Luis League was at hand. The Spartans were defeated 19 - 6.

The yearbook wrote these notes about the season, "The things hindering the season's success were Captain George Cope's illness, Billy Burns' collar bone and Lester Reidel's operation. Otherwise the team would have enjoyed a very successful season."

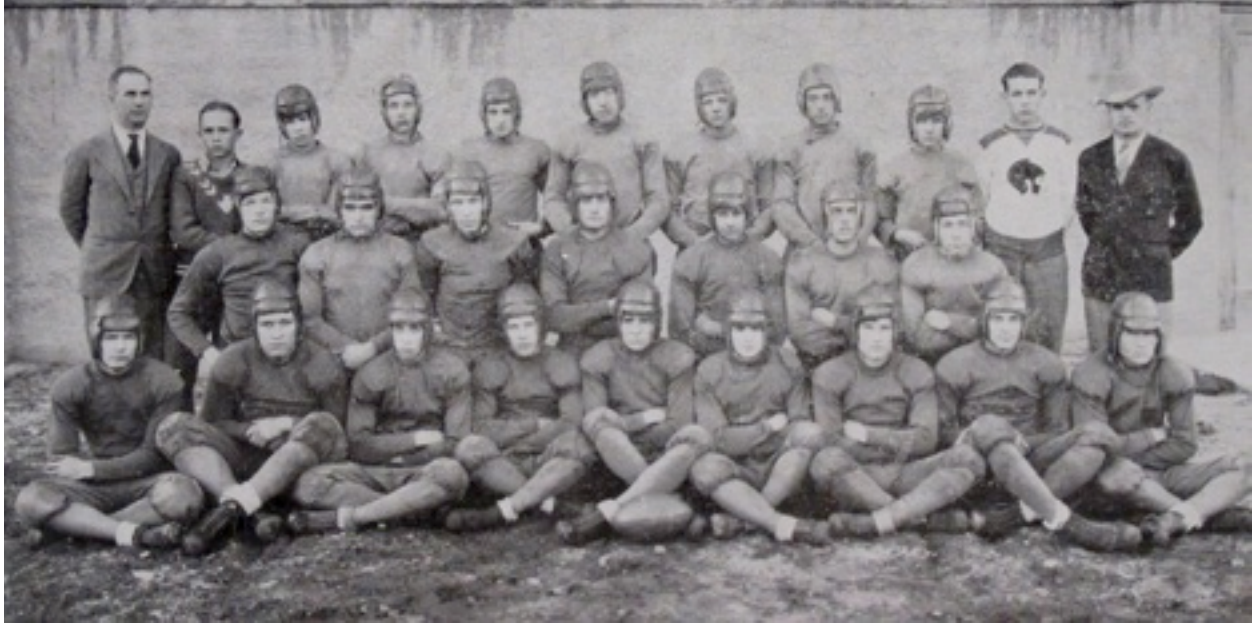


1927

Leon Starbuck, Captain and All-Stater Elvis Starbuck, and George Cope

1928

Even though the Spartan football team didn't play in a league in 1928, that was the season that put them on the map. Season tickets went on sale for \$2.00 and stores in Salida closed for the opening game that was held September 29, 1928.



1928 Salida Spartans

Prior to the game a large crowd witnessed the dedication of the brand new high school field. The new field was built with co-operation of many organizations, agencies and individuals in the community. The crowd then watched a hard fought battle between the Monte Vista Pirates and the Spartans with Salida coming out on top, 18 - 7.

The Spartan team under coach B.F. Taylor went undefeated during the 1928 season, scoring 284 points to their opponents 13. That's right, they held their opponents to just 13 points for the whole season, and this wasn't the last time they would accomplish such a feat.

This stellar 1928 team ran up 74 points against Leadville. In their last two games, the Spartans defeated Alamosa 33 - 0 and Colorado Springs 12 - 0. But, there was political drama. The team certainly should have qualified for post-season play but since the team did not belong to a recognized league and by state rule, teams located in "western Colorado" could not participate in State Football Championships, the Spartan team was left out. Pueblo Central High had qualified to play in the Championship game and the refused to play Salida. The final regular season game of 1928 was scheduled for Thanksgiving Day against La Junta. The snow on the

Salida field was too deep for play and in addition, the Spartans would have to pay all of the La Junta team expenses for travel to Salida.

The game wasn't played and the *Salida Mail* reported: "The Salida team finished the season with a record that no other team in the State can equal."

The yearbook had these final comments regarding the 1928 team, "What the team lacked in weight was made up for in courage. Their eternal fight and the ability to execute trick plays overcame all of their heavier opponents."

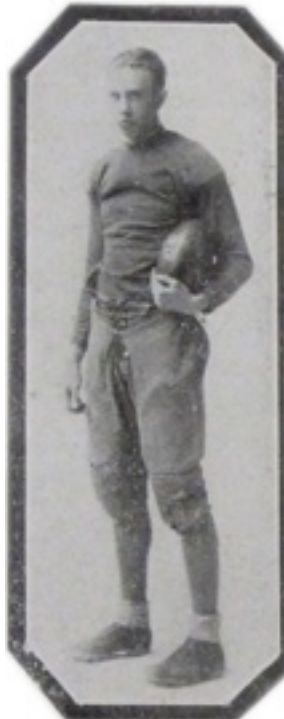
1928 Players



**Captain
Truman Williams
Right End**



**Paul Starbuck
Left Tackle**



**Wade "Rip"
Heister
Left Guard**



**Lawrence
Finessey
Quarterback**

1929

Beginning in 1929 the Spartans played in the South Central League. The league schools were Central and Centennial of Pueblo, Lewis-Palmer of Colorado Springs, Canon City, and Salida. Trinidad and Walsenburg were added later to the league. Prior to this time Trinidad and Walsenburg had been parochial schools and did not participate in public school leagues. During these early years there were no A, AA, AAA divisions for leagues. Salida competed against all other schools in the state, including schools in larger cities like Denver, Loveland, Longmont, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Grand Junction.



Lawrence Finessey
1929 Captain and
Quarterback

The head coach for the 1929 season was Byron Taylor. Published accounts from the time describe how the Spartans were “with light hearts” and had “expectations of winning” in their first game against Center. Within the first minute and a half of the starting whistle the first touchdown was scored. The second was soon scored by the Captain Lawrence Finessey as he crossed the goal line after a 70 yard run. Reports stated, “passes, plunges, and end runs worked equally well” and the rout was on. After the Spartans scored their fourth touchdown by the half, Coach Taylor sent in the second team.

The Spartans next opponent was Alamosa and they convincingly won 33 - 0. Reports noted that “trick plays and passes outwitted Alamosa completely.”

Salida then traveled to Pueblo Central to take on the Wildcats, the previous year’s state champions. The Spartans kept the much larger Wildcat team in the middle of the field, not allowing them into scoring territory. Pueblo Central tried to complete a long pass towards the end of the second quarter but it was intercepted by Finessey and he “showed them his heels.” More points by both teams were scored and the Wildcats seemed to be fighting desperately to win, but the game ended with Salida on top, 20 -12.

The Spartans suffered their first loss of the season when they played Pueblo Centennial at home. The Bulldogs had a severe height and weight advantage and they used it right from the beginning whistle.

1929 Salida First Team



Then there was the Canon City game, Salida's old perennial rival. A special train from Salida carried the team and fans to the venue. The Spartans were keyed up, yet nervous. The Tigers scored in the first four minutes, and Salida fought hard but were scored



1929 Salida Second Team

against two more times in the second quarter. The fourth quarter brought the Tigers their fourth touchdown and Salida lost to Canon City, again.

The game with Florence seemed like a rally after the Canon City game. The Spartans scored within the first minute of play and never looked back. At half time the lead was 33 - 0. With the Spartan reserves playing most of the second half, the Huskies drove the ball to the Spartans five yard line, but that was as close as they got to scoring a goal. Final score, 54 - 0.



**1929 Salida High School Marching Band directed by Harley S. Long.
The Band performed at every home game. They are pictured sporting their new purple capes that were purchased with money raised from each member selling subscriptions.**

The final game of the 1929 season was against Colorado Springs and the Spartans were determined to win. Six seniors were playing their final game and George Rout returned to the lineup after recovering from a broken collar bone. At the end of the first quarter, Finnessey completed a pass to Rout for a touchdown.

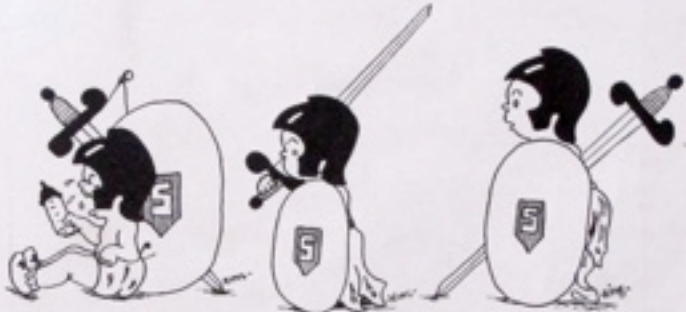
Colorado Springs threatened to score several times in the third quarter but Salida held them off. Quarter four was hard fought and with only two minutes left before the final gun, the Terrors ran the ball over the goal line. They then went for two points and with a drive through the center of the line, they scored the deciding point. Salida had lost 7 - 8.

1929 -1930 Yearbook Graphic

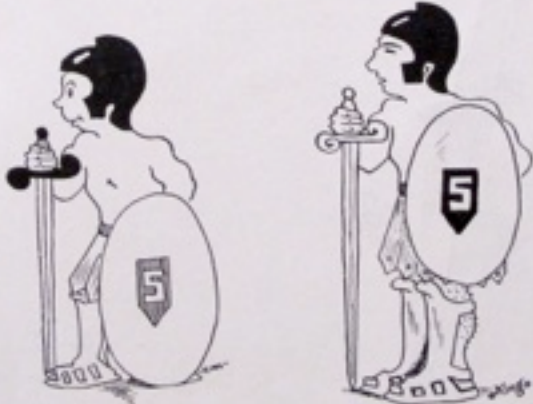
S. H. S. ATHLETICS

BYRON E. TAYLOR, Coach

EVOLUTION OF SPARTAN!



JUNIOR HIGH FRESHMEN SOPHOMORES



JUNIORS SENIORS

The Glory Years

One of the most notable coaches in Salida was not a high school coach. He was a brilliant science teacher, and he coached junior high football. His name was Alan Hampshire and not only were his junior high teams very successful, he is credited by many members of the great teams of the 1930's and 1940's with teaching them the fundamentals of football discipline that led to their great success in high school. Mr. Hampshire coached and taught in the Salida system from 1928 through the 1952 school year.



**Alan Hampshire
Coach**

The 1930's, specifically 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935 and 1936 were the glory years of Salida High School football. The Spartans developed a gridiron empire. An epic article written by Bill Madden and published in the Mountain Mail in 1970 described these glory days in great detail. Madden wrote, "During the period the purple and white clad Spartans of Coach Harold White won the rugged South Central League championship five times in as many unbeaten loop campaigns, posted an over-all record of 46 wins, 2 defeats and one tie, including a fabulous 39-game winning streak, and captured 3 consecutive state championships."

Coach Harold White came to Salida in 1930 and coached the Spartans through the 1936 season. The Spartan football field was renamed White Field in 1977 to honor the man who did so much for football in Salida.

Brick pillars, including a plaque recounting Coach White's legendary records, were constructed at the main entrance to the football field. After Coach White left Salida in 1936, he went on to coach at Northwestern University.

The Canon City jinx was like an anvil hanging over the heads of the Spartans. The Spartans hadn't been able to beat the Tigers and they once lost 83 - 0. The Spartans were determined to win. In 1931, under Coach White's leadership, Salida finally beat Canon City and continued to beat them every year for the next 26. The Tigers tied the Spartans in three games, but the 26-year streak was not broken until 1957.



Early 1930s Team

1932



“The 1932 edition of the Spartan team was one that will be long remembered. The Spartans opened their season hosting Alamosa. Salida had an easy time with the visitors and sounded a warning to future opponents,” according to the yearbook, *Spartan Echoes*. (Yearbooks had been printed sporadically or not at all since WWI, and some were smaller and printed under different titles than *Le Resume*.)

After Salida beat Alamosa, 39 - 0, they defeated Monte Vista, then opened up conference play with the Pueblo Central Wildcats. From *Spartan Echoes*, “In this game, the Spartans tore down the field using a fine variety of plays that baffled the Cats. On defense the team was a veritable ‘Rock of Gibraltar’.” The final score was 52 - 7. Coach White put in the second team late in the game which lead to the Cats only score.

There was a freshman halfback on the 1932 roster by the name of Frank Gentile who never tasted defeat in a game he played in during his whole high school career. Gentile was an all-conference selection as a freshman and was the Spartan quarterback on the 1933, 1934, and 1935 teams. At just 125 pounds he captained the 1935 purple and white squad and was one of three Salida backs on the All-State team that season. Gentile attended DU after graduation and was a captain of the football team.



After Salida beat Central they traveled to Olathe to face the Western Slope Champs. From Madden’s article: “The closest Gentile ever got to defeat was the fourth game of the 1932 campaign when the Spartans had to settle for a 0 - 0 tie with Olathe after losing 2 touchdowns on account of penalties. Salida was unbeaten until its semifinal state playoff game with the Trinidad Miners at Trinidad in early December. Handicapped by a flu epidemic and minus the services of 2 all-conference players--Tackle Jim Potter and Gentile--Salida lost 12 - 0. Indicative of the excitement aroused by that little band of gallant men was the fact a special train carrying 500 Spartan faithful made the trip to Trinidad.”

The season was formally closed with a banquet at Burns’ Cafe, given to the team by the Boosters Club. From the yearbook, “At the banquet, Dr. Shaffer presented Coach White and Assistant Coach Gruenler and the first team with silver footballs which have had the engraving ‘S.C.L. Champs’ on them.” Jack Woodard and Fred Disert were honored for making the All-State team.

1932 Salida Spartans



During this period the team and coaches drove to Denver and area by car over dirt roads across Trout Creek Pass and South Park. The trip itself was a championship competition with the elements. This era was in the depth of the Great Depression and the Spartan football team was a bright light of inspiration for the town. When the Spartans played in Salida, the town literally shut down to attend the game, and when the team played away from home, the fans followed in droves.

Special trains were scheduled to Canon City and to Pueblo, as both cities were on the main line of the D&RGW Railroad. When Salida was dominating the South Central League in football, fans of the defeated team, on occasion, would throw eggs at the “Special” from Salida.



1932 Banner



The “Special” from Salida

The “S” on Tenderfoot, Homecoming, and Cheerleaders

Charles “Chick” Melien, teacher, coach, Principal, and Superintendent, wrote in his book, 100 Years of Spartan Spirit, “ Mervin Aude, Class of 1932, designed the frame for the “S” on Tenderfoot Mountain. He first designed the frame for the “S” with the interior of the frame to be filled with stones. Money for this project was donated by the Class of 1932.

“For years the “S” had been given a coat of whitewash by the freshman, under the supervision of faculty members. Generally, the “S” was whitewashed just before the Homecoming football game and was included as part of the Homecoming activities.

“Mervin Aude’s frame disintegrated by the 1970’s. To maintain the “S”, the Board of Education employed Ernest Dunckhorst, a staff member, to construct a new “S” of cement. In general, the new “S” maintained the size of the original one, with a slight change in the shape of the letter. By the early 1970’s the freshman participation in painting the “S” was history, becoming the responsibility of the “S Club,” who were generally given time off to get the job done. During the 1976 Bicentennial the “S” was painted red, white, and blue--a landmark of the town.”



Whitewashing the ‘S’ on Tenderfoot.

Homecoming activities have played a major role in the history of Salida High. Today, not many alumni return for the weekend and the format has undergone some changes. For many years the lighting of the “S” on Tenderfoot using old tires was a standard as well as a snake dance through the downtown area, a bonfire, and a parade which also went through the business district and ended at the football field.



1940s Homecoming Parade

According to available records the first cheerleaders were elected for the 1933 season. The first squad elected consisted of two boys. Until the early 1950s the majority of cheerleaders were boys.

Salida High School has had an outstanding band all through it’s history. The band played at every home game and reports state that the band would give the Spartans a proper send off to away games by performing for the crowd at the train station.

In addition to cheerleaders and the marching band, for many years the school also sponsored many other clubs that helped promote Spartan spirit.

The Spartainites Club , organized in 1934, originally had 75 members, but that quickly grew to a whopping 250. The club consisted of boys and girls. They met in September and elected officers and a SHS sponsor was assigned. Members paid a club fee of \$1.00 which allowed them entry into all home conference games. The Spartainites performed original “exhibitions” at half-time and it was reported that they succeeded in “arousing interest in high school athletics as well as better attendance at the games.”

Salida High School also sponsored a boys glee club, a girls glee club, a pep club, and baton twirlers, all which helped cheer the Spartans on.

1933

“The Spartans of 1933 did what no team has done since football started again in Salida High School ten years ago, namely, to bring the State High School Football Championship to ‘that little side track up the river,’ as Salida has been dubbed by the teams of the South Central League, who incidentally, have only been able to score the sum of 27 points against the ‘Backwoodsman’ in two years,” announced the yearbook. In 1933 the Spartan opponents were held to only 13 points.

Frank Gentile had moved to quarterback and the Spartans added freshman Oliver Brenton to the back field. Brenton played four years of football for the Spartans and never took part in a losing game. He was one of the finest high school football players in Colorado.

With Gentile and Brenton in the backfield and guard Fred Disert as Captain, the 1933 season started off with a bang. Salida routed Olathe 55 - 0. This season opener started the legendary 39 game winning streak. Published reports state that Coach White wore a gray suit that day, and he continued to wear that same gray suit every game-day for the next four years.

From Madden’s article, “The night before the game, White and Assistant Coach Ernest C. “Gov” Gruenler played pinocle with their wives--a practice which was a must the eve of every game during the long winning skien. Because the game was a must regardless of the time, play sometimes extended into the wee hours of the morning.”



Oliver Brenton

After the win over Olathe the Spartans beat Monte Vista 8 - 0. The next game was a conference game against Colorado Springs and Salida rolled to a 32 to 0 victory. The Spartans then shut out Central, 13 to 0, and Canon Abbey, 20 - 0. The Spartans won the league championship by narrowly beating Pueblo Centennial 7 - 6.

In the state playoff quarterfinals Salida mopped up Alamosa 65 - 0, then beat Trinidad 7 to 0 in the semifinals. The Spartans then shellacked Loveland 26 - 7 in the State Championship Game. The Spartans of Salida High School were State Champions with there 10 - 0 - 0 season. Fred Disert, James Potter, and Robert Scudder were selected for the All-State Team of 1933.

Original 1933 Memorabilia



**1933 Game Football.
On display at Salida High School.**



**Top view of Fred Disert's helmet from 1933.
The back has the schedule and scores of each game.
One side lists all team members. The helmet is on
display at Salida High School.**



Front of helmet.



**Left side view.
Salida Spartans
Colorado State Champions.**



**Right side view.
Lists every player and
their position.**

**Banners on display at
Salida High School.**



1933 Salida Spartans Colorado State Champions



1934

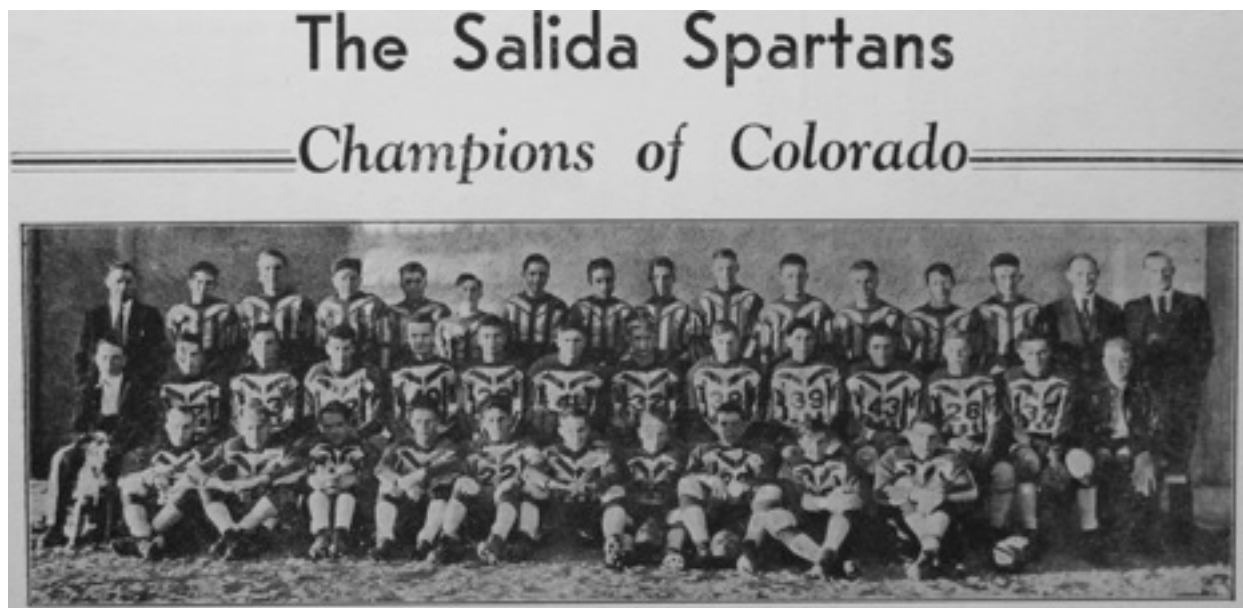
The Spartans have had many memorable games over the years and one of them was played in 1934. After finishing the season 9 - 0 - 0 and extending their winning streak to 19 straight games, the Spartans played in the championship game against the Lambkins in Fort Collins on December 8, 1934. The Spartans scored a safety in the fourth quarter and won the game 2 - 0.

The purple and white Salida Spartans were Colorado State Champions for the second year in a row and conference champions for the third consecutive year.

Members of the 1934 and 1935 seasons were Frank Gentile, quarterback; Left Halfback Hurdis Severson, who was also one of the best Spartan kickers of all time; Right Halfback Floyd

“Tuffy” Chambers, who went on to play football at Northwestern; and Fullback Oliver Brenton. All-State selections were Robert Scudder, Oliver Brenton, and Frank Gentile.

1934 Salida Spartans Colorado State Champions



Banners on display at Salida High School.



1935

The 1935 season felt like a long one. Salida played 11 games. After the season had ended the Spartans had won the Championship of the South Central League for the fourth consecutive year and also won the Southern Colorado, the Eastern, and the Colorado State Championships. This was the third consecutive year the Spartans were State Champions. The Spartans were dominating high school football in Colorado.

Some games seemed to almost put their winning streak in jeopardy, however. The Canon City game was very close and ended 19 - 13 in favor of the Spartans. Half-way through the season Salida barely beat Trinidad 6 - 0, they squeaked by Pueblo Central 3 - 0 and held on to beat Lamar in the state playoff quarterfinals, 16 - 12.

In December 1935, Salida advanced to the semi-final game against Wray. This game was another one of the more memorable that the Spartans have ever played. Late in the fourth quarter Frank Gentile returned a punt for 62 yards and scored the only points of the game. Final score Salida 6, Wray 0. Wray had dominated the game between the 20 yard lines but could not score. The reports from the Wray sports writers claimed the referees didn't call penalties that would have nullified Gentile's score. They also wrote, "never has a team been so outmanned and so outplayed and still won a football game." The Wray High School team however was much more sportsmanlike and sent a special message to the Spartans congratulating them for the win and asked them to win the game against Grand Junction and preserve the title for the eastern slope.

The Salida Spartans not only beat Grand Junction in the State Championship game, they shut them out 12 - 0. Gentile, Severson and Brenton, all from the backfield, were selected as All-State players. Chambers would be selected the following year. Sixteen out of 21 lettermen had played their last games for the Spartans.



**1935 Banners at
Salida High School**

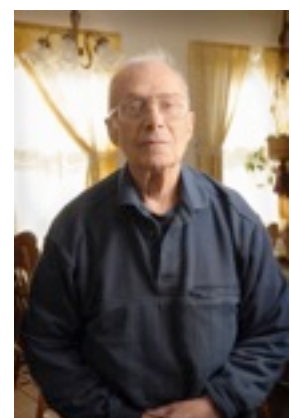
1935 Salida Spartans Colorado State Champions



Madden's comments as printed in the *Mountain Mail*: "Salida's win string stood at 30 games after the 1935 campaign and the last words appearing on the program of the football banquet in December revealed the tremendous enthusiasm already building up for the 1936 season. The words were: "The 1936 season will start in 41 weeks. We'll be seeing you."

Stanley Provenza, was a Salida icon who played on all championship teams throughout his high school career.

Provenza wasn't very big but he was a giant on the field and is an even bigger giant in the community.



**Stanley Provenza
1935 and 2011**

Provenza told many stories about the glory years. “We had a small lead and Coach White put me in as quarterback. The last thing he said to me was ‘don’t pass the ball.’ I get into the huddle and Tuffy Chambers says ‘pass me the ball, I know I will be open.’ So, I passed him the ball and he scored a touchdown. When I came off the field Coach White says, ‘good thing that worked’.”

Spartan football fame was not limited to Colorado. At the end of the 1935 season the University of Hawaii prep team challenged the Spartans to a home and an away game. The challenge was accepted by the Chamber of Commerce, but lack of funds, South Central League denial, and pre-World War II events began to change world dynamics and the games were never played.

1936

After 41 weeks had passed, the 1936 season did indeed begin. Salida still had Chambers and Brenton, the All-Stater and team captain, in the backfield.

Madden wrote: “In those days, Salida had spring football and there was a game between the team coming up known as Will-Bes and the graduating seniors tabbed Has-Beens. The Will-Bes won 27 - 6 with the Has-Beens’ only score coming on Gentile’s kickoff return. Perhaps the fact that Gentile had played in a game in which his team lost was a shadow on a seemingly otherwise sunny forecast for the 1936 season. But nobody thought of it at the time.”

The 1936 season started off well enough with the Spartans besting South Denver 21-7. Salida continued their dominating win streak by defeating Walsenburg 20 - 6, Trinidad 24 - 6, Pueblo Centennial 38 - 0, Colorado Springs 28 - 0, Pueblo Central 21 - 0 and Canon City 65 - 0. Salida had completed five seasons in the South Central League without a loss or a tie.

The Spartans then beat Alamosa 45 - 0 in a run up to the state playoffs. The quarterfinals pitted La Junta against Salida, but it wasn’t a real match. The Spartans shut out the Tigers 20 - 0.

The legendary winning streak now stood at 39 games. The semifinal playoff game was played November 26, 1936, Thanksgiving Day, against Grand Junction. All-State fullback Oliver Brenton had reached his 20th birthday and was ineligible to play and Pat McNamara, who played center, had died of pneumonia shortly before the contest. Grand Junction won 6 - 0 and ended the legendary Salida Spartan winning streak.

“The King is dead! Long live the king!” read the headline in the Mountain Mail on November 27, 1936. The report written by L.A. Barrett, Salida High School Principal, read, “The Salida Spartans after having reigned in Colorado prep school football through three on years relinquished claim to the 1936 honors when Coach Holt’s Grand Junction Tigers won a 6 - 0 game on Spartan field before three thousand customers Thursday afternoon.”

The Spartans didn't make excuses. They knew how to win, that was for sure, but now they learned how to lose. The Spartans were gracious in defeat which is credit to the players as well as their coaching staff.

From Madden: "Following the loss to Grand Junction, Coach White's famous gray suit, the one he had worn the day the 39-game string began and every game thereafter up to and including the Thanksgiving Day battle, was torn up and each of the players given a piece of the material."

The 1936 season produced two All-State players, left end Joe Kochman and left halfback Chambers. Guard Willie Haley was on the second team and Brenton, who was ineligible to be chosen because of his age, was awarded honorable mention.

An unspeakable tragedy happened in January, 1937. Coach White, Oliver Brenton, and Tuffy Chambers went rabbit hunting in Saguache County. Brenton walked into an old building and was looking under the floor boards and trying to scare out rabbits. Not knowing Brenton was in the building, Coach White from a distance, fired his 22 rifle under the floor trying to do the same thing. A few moments later White walked into the building and found Brenton shot in the head. Oliver Brenton died on January 9, 1937. The accident disheartened the community for a long time. It also ended the great coaching streak for a great coach.

Oliver Brenton, who was once acclaimed as one of Colorado's finest high school football players, is buried at Fairview Cemetery overlooking Salida. His epitaph reads, "On him and on his high endeavor the light of praise shall shine forever."



**Oliver Brenton's headstone,
Fairview Cemetary,
Salida, Colorado**

1937

The 1937 football season began with a new coach at the helm, Neal Mehring of Nebraska. Mehring's teams were known for their outstanding defense.

This season wasn't as successful as the few previous, but those were big shoes to fill. In league standings the Spartans dropped from first place to fourth with a record of three wins and three losses.

The league games started off well enough as every player saw action in a 39-0 rout of Walsenburg. The Spartans then lost their first league game since 1931 when they were shut out by the Miners of Trinidad 14 - 0.

The Spartans did keep their winning streak against Canon City alive by defeating them 14 - 7. Captain Chambers scored two touchdowns while Stanford Warner kicked two extra points.

Salida then defeated Pueblo Central 14 - 6, but the Spartans then lost to Pueblo Centennial 7 - 6. Salida dropped to third place in the league standings.

The next week the Spartans failed to score and lost their last league game to the Colorado Springs Terrors 7 to 0. The Terrors finished the season undefeated and were the South Central League Champions.

1937 Salida Spartans



1938

The 1938 season was one of the strangest seasons Salida had ever played. Three conference games ended in ties.

Although the Spartans finished third in the South Central League, they considered their season a success. They had the best defensive record in the league with only 32 points scored against them. They met three conference champions. Pueblo Central, LaJunta, and Cortez and not one of them was able to defeat the Spartans.

The Spartans were the only team to as much as tie the State Champs from Pueblo Central. The season record was 5 - 3 - 1, and the conference record was 2 - 3 - 1.

1938 Salida Spartans



1939

The only bright spot for the Spartans during the 1939 season was their defense. A mere 47 points were scored against the Spartans in league games which gave them best defense honors for the second consecutive year.

The season record was 3 - 2 - 4 and they finished fifth in the S. C. L. after only 2 conference wins. Their first league win was against arch rival Canon City. Kedric Smith made a brilliant 70-yard run and was downed at the five-yard line. The final score was 7 - 0.

For the first time ever the South Central League held an All-Star Team banquet. It was held in Pueblo and sponsored by the Pueblo Junior Chamber of Commerce. Four Spartans were honored as All-Stars and attended this gridiron dinner: Arthur Starbuck, Joe Cribari, Kedric Smith, and Phil Skufca.

1939 Salida Spartans



1940

The 1940 season was not considered successful as far as victories go, but the yearbook reported that many honors should be bestowed upon the Spartans for their moral victories. This team was very small.

1940 Salida Spartans



The average weight of each player was just slightly over one hundred forty pounds. They needed to put their speed up against the brawn of the larger opponents.

Salida traveled to Grand Junction after three weeks of practice. They lost this season opener under the lights 13 - 0. This game was one of those moral victories as Salida was outweighed twenty pounds to the man.

The Spartans first home appearance was against Canon Abbey. The game was in hand from the start and the reserves saw most of the action. Final score, 26 - 12.

1940 Action



Conference play began the next week as Pueblo Central invaded Salida. The yearbook recorded, "Banking on their overwhelming size and experience, the Wildcats were expecting a huge victory." After a grueling four quarters which saw the Spartans threatening to score more than once, the game ended 6 - 0 in favor of Pueblo Central.

The purple and white traveled to Walsenburg to meet an evenly matched team but lost 12 - 6. They then met the Terrors of Colorado Springs and won with points to spare.

Next up was Centennial and Salida almost pulled off the biggest upset of the season. The Spartans led 6 to 0 until four minutes were left in the game. The superior weight of the Bulldogs proved to be one of the deciding factors as they scored seven points at the end of the game. Final score, Bulldogs 7, Salida 6.

Salida then lost to the Minors of Trinidad, and played to a 7 - 7 tie with arch rival Canon City in a game where Salida played very poorly.

The final game of the season was against league newcomers, Florence. Salida played another horrible game and lost to the Huskies 7 to 0. It was a disappointing season, but it served as a building year and the Spartans came roaring back in 1941.

1941

Salida High School cheerleaders had been around since 1933. Prior to WWII the cheerleading squad had either 2 or 3 members, but in 1940 and 1941 Johnny Amicone was the only cheerleader. Amicone also held a record for being a cheerleader four years, 1939 - 1943.

Salida started out the 1941 season playing three non-conference games. They earned three victories, actually they were more like conquests. The Spartans first defeated Manzanola 32 to 0 and Cripple Creek 79 to 0. The third game of the season was a thriller with Kay Nabors scoring a touchdown after a 54-yard run. Canon Abbey was defeated 26 to 0. After just three games the Spartans had not allowed an opponent to score all the while putting 137 points on the scoreboard. The Purple and White were back.

League games began with a defeat of Colorado Springs, 20 to 0. The next game was away against Pueblo Central and the ever present Spartan fans were in attendance. They witnessed a defensive struggle which ended in a scoreless tie.

The Spartans set their sights on Florence and blanked them 31 to 0.



**Johnny Amicone
1941**

This made six straight shut-outs for the Salida defense. The Canon City game made seven. The Spartans crushed their arch rivals 31 to 0.

After traveling to Trinidad to play a tough Miner team, Salida returned with a 12 to 6 victory. For their ninth victory of the season the Spartans defeated Walsenburg 18 to 6 at home.

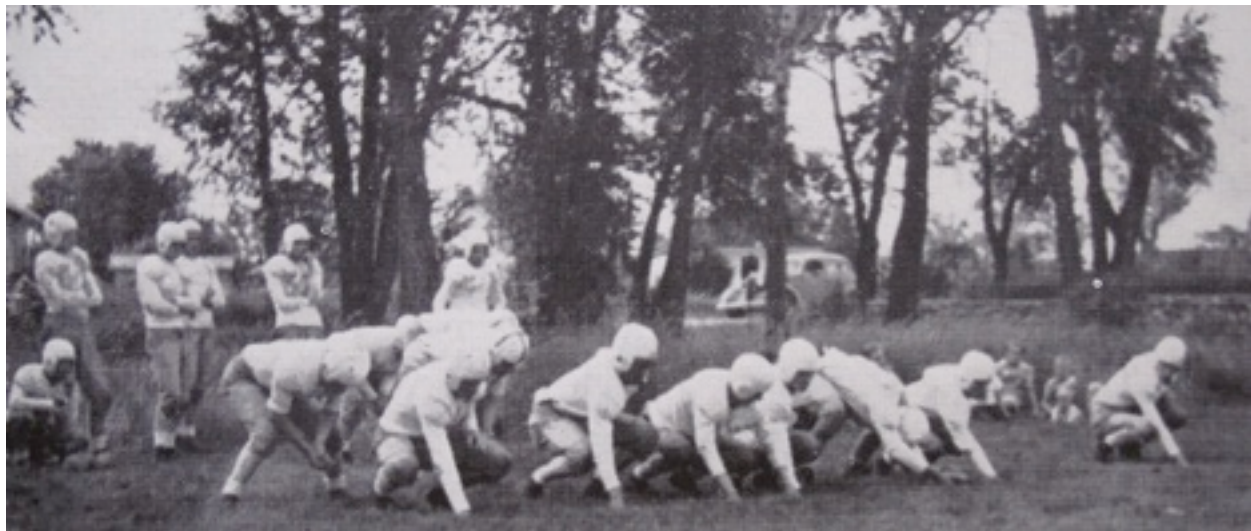
The final conference game was played against Pueblo Centennial and Salida not only won by a score of 14 to 7, they had reclaimed the South Central League Champions banner.

Salida advanced to the State Championship game by defeating Grand Junction 18 to 0, then defeating Las Animas in a thrilling overtime game, 2 to 0.



Johnny Amicone leading a cheer at the train depot.

1941 Practice



On Saturday, December 6, 1941 the Spartans lost the State Championship game to Fort Collins by a score of 7 to 6. On Sunday, December 7, 1941 everyone awoke to the news that the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor. Lavern Knipp, a member of the legendary 1930's teams was killed in that action.

1941 Salida Spartans



Fritz Williams, Albert Starbuck, Joe Cribari, Gene Aby were selected for the All-State Team of 1941.

1942

Charles “Chick” Melien reported in, *100 Years of Spartan Spirit*, “Aided by the American Legion and the City of Salida, the Board of Education installed lights at the football field in the summer of 1941. Until the early 1970’s, the Spartans played a good share of their home games under the lights. The lighted field was used for the first time by the drum and bugle corps during the summer as part of the American Legion convention.”

During the war years the football team was lucky to have enough healthy males to field a team. In 1942 seven of the team members left for active service. A note of great interest was the dedication of the games to former players who were killed in action and who were at the time in active service. The first game of the 1942 season was dedicated to Lavern Knipp who was killed at Pearl Harbor. Others receiving dedication were Cassie Beck, Bert Gregg, Noble Binns, Albert Davenport, and Harry Ostrum, Jr.

Some school functions saw smaller crowds due to gasoline and tire rationing. The Spartan football team, however, didn’t suffer from community support. The team remained a bright beacon of light in the midst of tough times. The season schedule was still posted in most shop windows and the downtown stores closed up for home games.

There were 10 regular season games in 1942 and in dramatic fashion Salida blanked their opponents in eight of them. In the seven conference games, Salida dominated every team. The Spartan defense shut out every league opponent except Trinidad who managed to score seven, and the Spartan offense amassed 221 league points.

Homecoming of 1942 started with a parade that looped from Alpine Park, through the downtown district and ended at the high school football field. The queen and her attendants were

seated in the senior float and were driven around the field before the game. At the half, Queen Helen McCauley was crowned by Otis Camp and maneuvers were performed by the Band, Glee Club, and Pep Club. The game ball was autographed by all the members of the team and then was auctioned off for war bonds. E.L. Stotler was the highest bidder and so was awarded the ball. The day was topped off with a Spartan win over Pueblo Central, 34 to 0.

The Spartans had won the league championship for the second consecutive year. In their state quarter-final game they squeaked by Las Animas 14 to 13. The Spartans shut-out Grand Junction 7 to 0 in a close semi-final game.

The 1942 Spartans were again runner-up after the championship game. Former player Dick Bratton, class of '50, attended this game and remembers that the Spartans were ahead by the score of 12 - 0 at half time but lost the game 26 - 18. High School Principal at the time, Lauren King had prepared an announcement at half time while the Spartans had the game in hand. It declared that there would be an assembly Monday morning and there would be no school afterward that day. Upon the conclusion of the game he had to tear up the announcement.

1942 Players



Doug Dishno



Steve Makris



Eugene McClure

Players who made the All Conference Team in 1942 were: First Team, Doug Dishno, Guard. Steve Makris, (Captain) Quarterback. Eugene McClure, Half back.

Second Team, Joe Beck, Shayle Smith, Melvin Cuenin. Honorable Mention, Bob Nevens, Merle Carpenter, James Lockett, Bill Bondurant.

1942 Action



1943

The yearbook described spring 1943 football, “Annual spring football training went into effect this year on April 12, 1943 when 45 boys checked out uniforms. The training period as usual lasted for three weeks or until April 30, when Seniors, and under-classmen fought it out in their annual game to prove who was better.”

The 1944 yearbook dedication read: “To the students and alumni of Salida High School who are now scattered to the four corners of the earth--in the air forces, in the army, in the women’s branches, in the merchant marine, in hospital units, in marine detachments or who are in any other way serving in this world conflict, this issue of the Salida High School Annual is most sincerely dedicated.”

Salida had another exceptional season despite having lost even more players to the armed services. The 1943 Spartans scored 142 points in regular season play and held their opponents to just 13 points, (this was the fourth time)yet again.

The first two games of the season were practice games in which Salida defeated Delta by a score of 21 to 0 and a week later lost to Montrose by a score of 6 to 0.

Their first conference game of the season was with Florence and the game ended in a 0 - 0 tie. An ineligible player on the Florence team was identified and state officials decided the Huskies would forfeit giving the win to the Spartans, 1 to 0. The Spartans then won all of the remaining six conference games, recording shut outs in all but one game, and earned the title of South Central League Champions for the third year in a row.

The 1943 State Championship game was lost to Boulder by a score of 32 - 0. This made it the third consecutive year Salida took second place in the Class A State Championships.

Outstanding 1943 players were honored. Joe Beck was chosen as an All-State guard on the first team, and Shayle Smith as center on the All-State second team. Honorable mention was received by end Robert Nevens, and backs John Leiva and Bob Gruenler.



1944

The 1944 team finished third in the South Central League having suffered two losses to League opponents.

Members of the team who gained recognition as outstanding players in the conference were Tommy Theotokatos, Robert Gruenler, Charlie Cribari, Chuck Cooper and Richard Dickinson.

The Salida Elks Club sponsored a football banquet for the team.



Tommy Theotokatos

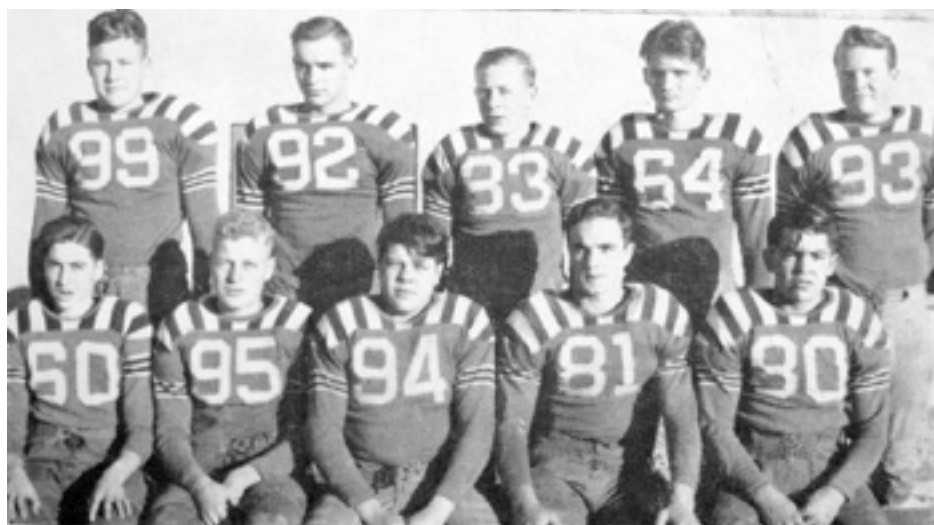


Charlie Cribari

1944 Team Photos



**Top Row :Coach Mehring, Cooper, Mr. Burgener, C. Cribari, Coach Gruenler.
Bottom Row: F. Cribari, R. Dickinson, S. Dickinson, B. Egly, E. Gentile.**



**Top Row :Gruenler, Gunnels, Henderson, Kovtynovich, Vahrenkamp.
Bottom Row: Makris, Mansheim, Nabors, T. Theotokotos, Leiva.**



**Top Row :Anderson, Armstrong, Butala, Clare, Benjovsky, Flood.
Bottom Row: Young, A. Gentile, Glesoner, Moore, Thonhoff.**



**Top Row : Nelson,
Paquette, Person,
Rennie, Roatcap, Muto.
Bottom Row: Runco,
Stewart, Southall, G.
Theotokotos, Trujillo,
Woodhead.**

1945

The first football game of the 1945 season was a non-conference game against Delta in which Salida won 13 - 0. The Spartans were defeated twice in conference games. The first defeat was administered by Pueblo Central 6 to 0, and the second by Centennial 13 to 0. The Spartans finished the season tied with Pueblo Central for second place in the South Central League.

The 1945 - 1946 yearbook dedication read "In due honor and respect to those servicemen who have shown such determination and courage on the different war fronts of World War II and who have now returned to Salida High School to gain more education, we wish to dedicate this annual."

The 1945 Homecoming parade was held on November 13th. As usual, it began at Alpine Park, went through the downtown business district and wound its way to the high school football field. From *Le Resume*, "Nearly every class and club entered a float in the parade. The Senior Class float took first prize, the Freshman second prize and G.A.A. third prize. Colleen Moore, and her three attendants, Gladys Pasquale, Carolyn Ramey, and Alice Argys, rode on the Senior float. At the half, Colleen Moore was crowned queen by Frank "Corky" Mitchell. During this ceremony, the band played." The game ended with a Spartan win over Colorado Springs 13 to 6.

Salida High School had its version of the "Three Amigos" in the late 1940s. The trio was made up of Bobby Simpson, Louis Argys, and Eleanor Gabardi and they followed the Spartans everywhere. Eleanor was elected Homecoming Queen twice, the only cheerleader to gain this honor.

Another interesting sidelight occurred early in the 1949 season on a trip to Lakewood, Colorado. The Trailways bus carrying the team broke down near Como in South Park. Ken Baker and another player walked into Como to call the bus company so another bus could be

dispatched. In the meanwhile, a rancher came to their aid and used his truck to push the bus over Kenosha Pass. The bus glided down the other side of the pass without power until it stopped. The extra bus finally arrived and the players transferred to it. Coach Andreas had the bus stop in Morrison to get the team lunch at a little cafe. Rushing to meet the start of the game, the players changed into their uniforms on the bus and arrived just in time for the game to begin.

The players scrambled off the bus and onto the field. They scored on their first drive. The extra point failed and the game ended with the Spartans winning 6 - 0.

1950

The Spartans had a very successful season in 1950. Under the leadership of Coaches Bill Andreas and Rudy Aganski the team won the San Luis Valley League Championship for the first time and reached the State Class A Division semi-finals.

Co-captains Bill Campbell and Rod Koenig along with guard Bud Martinez and end Tommy Johns made the all-conference team. At a football banquet sponsored by the Salida Elks club, Ronnie Short and Leo Rivera were selected co-captains for the 1951 team. Coach Andreas announced his resignation and Rudy Aganski was named the new head coach.

1951

Before the 1951 season could get started there was a coaching change. Rudy Aganski was called back into Army service so Gov Gruenler stepped into the head coach position with Tony Delmonico as his assistant coach.

The Spartans finished the season with an impressive record of seven wins and three losses. This record, however, wasn't good enough to win the league championship. That title went to Alamosa with three league wins.

Salida's first loss came at the hands of the La Junta Tigers. The Spartans were scheduled to play Centennial in Pueblo but the game was cancelled due to a polio epidemic in the steel city. The Spartans then traveled to La Junta and lost 60 - 0.

In the final game of the season the Spartans defeated the Canon City Tigers 31 - 0 to keep the streak alive.



1951 Salida Spartans

1952

With another record of seven wins and three losses the Spartans took second place honors behind Cortez in the San Luis Valley League. John Bayuk was high scorer in league competition. He was also selected for the All State Team.

John “The Beast” Bayuk

In 1950, Dick Bratton and Ken Baker, both football stars, graduated from Salida High. Their last year playing football was in 1949. According to Baker, “In our senior year a young, big, and rather ornery west-sider named John Bayuk was playing a lineman position on the Junior High football team. When he got to high school the coach decided that with his speed and bulk he would give him the ball and dare the defense to stop him. Coach also wanted John to kick-off.” Those coaching decisions gave birth to the legendary career of John “The Beast” Bayuk.

In the early ‘50s Spartans ran the single-wing offense and John Bayuk was the star. He very well could be the greatest prep athlete ever to graduate from Salida High School. He received All-American recognition as a high school football player, and during this time players had to play on both sides of the ball. On defense he was a linebacker. He was selected to participate in the 1953 All-American East-West vs. North South game held in Memphis, Tennessee.

Not only was Bayuk a star on the gridiron, he was a three letter athlete at SHS. Football, basketball, and track. When the Spartans won the State Track Meet title in 1953, it was with the help of John Bayuk. In a published report, Gary Sinclair, a fellow track team member from 1953, recalled how big Bayuk was over 230 lbs. and he shared this story from a dual meet in Canon City, “People were calling him fatso, and I swear this is the honest truth, he threw the shot and hit the fence where they were standing by and knocked it down.”

At the 1953 State Track Meet Bayuk won the shot with a toss of 49’-10”, four feet better than his nearest competitor, setting a new state record in the process. Bayuk also participated in two relays, the 880 which took second, and the mile relay which finished third. He also ran the low hurdles.

Bayuk was also an outstanding basketball player. In 1952 the Spartans were second in the state.

When Bayuk graduated in 1953 there were many college football teams looking at him. Unbeknownst to him, Superintendent Barrett had been writing and sending press clippings about him to various schools. The first school Bayuk visited was Western State College in Gunnison. According to Bayuk, Steve Frazee, a local business man and western novelist, drove him to Gunnison to talk to the coaches who were trying to recruit him. While he was there Ray Jenkins, a line coach for the Colorado Buffaloes drove to Gunnison and “rescued” him and sent him to Boulder.



John Bayuk, 1952

Bayuk fit in great at CU with their single-wing and optional T-formation offense. He also had a great supporting cast. With his size and speed he destroyed the middle defenses. In his junior year he lead the entire nation in yardage gained. His senior year he was fourth in the nation for points scored.

Irv Moss, a sports writer for the Denver Post, wrote about how Bayuk got his nickname in a published article from 2006. "One of his assistant coaches, Hugh Davidson, said the fullback was a big teddy bear, but there was nothing soft and fuzzy about how Bayuk earned his nickname, which remains second to Byron 'Whizzer' White among CU sports legends."

Moss continued, "The day was Oct. 2, 1954, and Colorado was playing at Kansas. Bayuk ran all over the Jayhawks in a 27 - 0 win. When the team returned to its hotel, a woman in the lobby was overheard saying one of CU's players was 'a beast.' The nickname stuck." To this day he is known as The Beast.

Near the end of Bayuk's senior season the Buffaloes were holding on to a 14-14 tie against the Missouri Tigers and second place in the Big Seven. Oklahoma won the conference, but the Orange Bowl didn't take the same team two years in a row. Late in the game the Buffs had a fourth down and a foot to go. Bayuk got the call. He ended up on the bottom of the pile at the scrimmage line with a Missouri player trying to gouge his eye out. The Beast bit him on the arm. When Bayuk stood up from the pile the Missouri player hit him and the Tigers received a 15 yard penalty which gave the Buffs a first down. CU then ran out the clock and traveled to play in the Orange Bowl. While in Florida a package arrived addressed to Bayuk. It was from the University of Missouri's president. The box contained a set of false teeth and a note reading, "Let's see you bite your way out of this."

In the 1957 Orange Bowl John "The Beast" Bayuk scored two touchdowns including the winning score. He also earned All-American status while having to play both offense and defense.

In February 1957 Salida honored him with "John Bayuk Day." The event was held at Salida Elks Lodge and Bayuk received a large trophy and \$1 for every yard he gained which amounted to around \$1000. He recalls that he also received a pair of shoes from Flory's Shoe Store.

After graduation Bayuk was drafted by the Cleveland Browns and played in four exhibition games before being injured. He came home to Salida to heal then went to Canada and played for the British Columbia Lions for one season.

In 2006 The University of Colorado held a reunion in Boulder for the 1957 Orange Bowl team. As an All-American Bayuk's jersey number 30 was honored and permanently etched in the flagstone on the facade of the Fred Casotti Press Box at Folsom Field.

After graduating from Salida High School in 1950, Ken Baker enrolled at CU and then joined the Navy. He didn't return to Boulder until Bayuk's senior year. Baker was also a member of the Buffaloes Orange bowl team. Years later in his professional life as an attorney,

Baker and Dick Bratton, an attorney from Gunnison and also a 1950 SHS graduate, met up with Jay O'Neal. O'Neal, now a businessman in Crested Butte, was the quarterback for the famous Oklahoma Sooners who won the 1956 Orange Bowl and defeated the Buffaloes when Baker and Bayuk played there. O'Neal related a story about his team--a story also witnessed by the Buffaloes.

The South in 1957 did not allow African-Americans in the "white only" hotels and did not allow them to eat in the dining rooms. In the case of the Sooners, this affected Prentice Gautt and for the Buffaloes it was John Wooten and Frank Clarke. Members of each team refused to eat in the dining room, they all ate in the kitchen. Wooten, Clarke, and another player stayed in the Presidential Suite as the elevator was direct and didn't stop on any other floors.

Wooten, Clarke, and Gautt went on to play professional football in the NFL and each achieved All-Pro status.

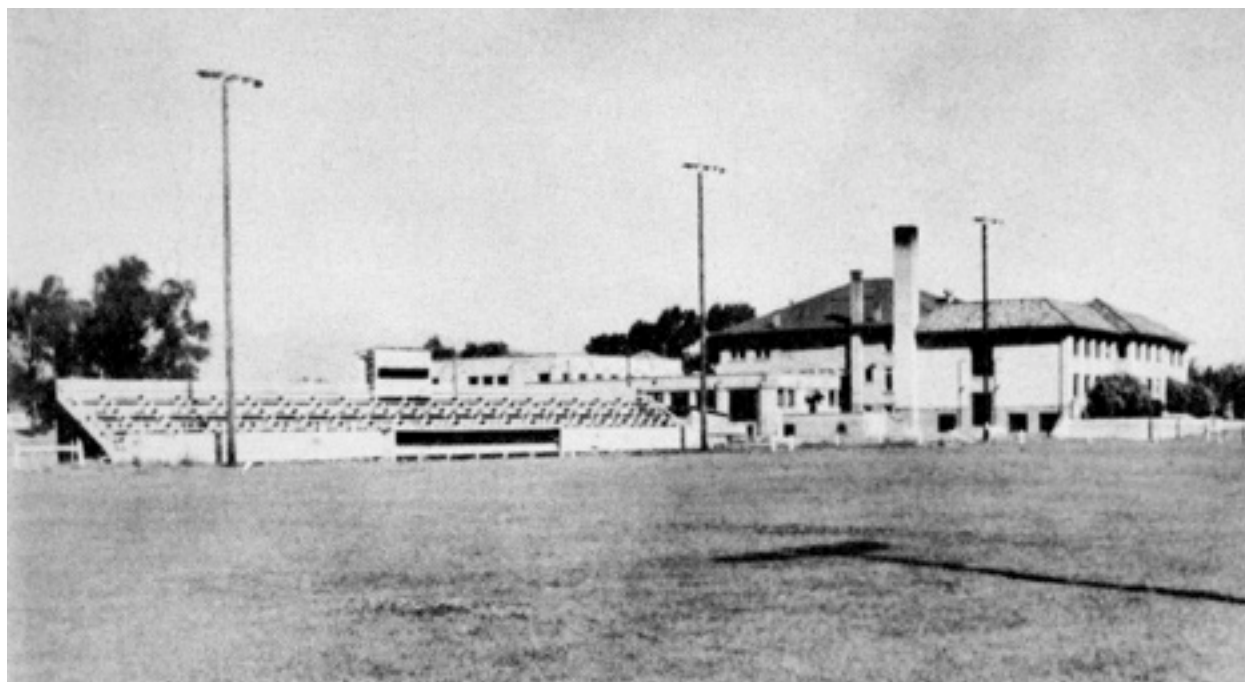
1953

Tony Delmonico took the reins from Gov Gruenler and became the head coach. The Spartans had a successful season with five wins, three losses, and two ties. Salida tied with Alamosa for second place in the conference.

1953 Salida Spartans



1953 Salida Football Field



1954

The Spartans led by co-captains Richard Perry and Esidore Bustos, had the most successful season since 1943. They had a record of eight wins and two losses. The Spartans were held scoreless in only one game. The head coach was Tony Delmonico with Frank Morelli being his assistant coach.

1955

The 1955 Spartans were again coached by Tony Delmonico and Frank Morelli. They finished with a two and three record in conference play and an overall record of two and eight co-captains for the 1955 season were Jim Jelinek and Arthur Martinez.

Purple and White is a work in progress. Stories are being collected for Part 2.