

On October 10 and 11 of 2008 Grace and I went to the Hackley Public Library in Muskegon, MI to find out information about my father, Willard A. Anderson, and his family from the genealogical records there. It was quite a fruitful visit. We combed through microfiche rolls of the Muskegon Chronicle during the years 1915 and 1916, particularly the dates of Muskegon High School football games, and obituaries found in the newspaper dated June 30, 1911 and March 30, 1932 following the deaths of our grandmother, Johanna, and grandfather, John, respectively. In addition we found two references to Willard in a World War I scrapbook. Here are some of the things of interest that we found.

1. Willard Anderson was called "Billy" or "Bill" during his high school days.
2. He was a star fullback (at 155 lbs.) during his sophomore and junior years in high school, and was selected as the captain of the all-state team in 1916 by the Muskegon Chronicle. That year the Muskegon "Muskie," as they were called then, won the Western State Championship. The Muskies won most of their games in 1915 and 1916, many by lopsided scores (e.g., 110-0, 73-0). In one game Billy scored 4 touchdowns.

*Four Muskies Land Berths On All-State Eleven Selected For Chronicle; Anderson Named Captain of Squad*

3. One recount of a football game said that Anderson "drove through the Union (High School) line, smashing his own men out of the way and stumbling, turning and whirling, gaining enough ground when called upon (about two out of every three signals were his) to bring the ball within striking distance." Another article said that his style was to carry the ball in one hand while running on his two feet and other hand!
4. Willard was 19 years old as a junior (the school year ending June 1917) and did not return for his senior year. He enlisted in the Navy some time in 1917. The mystery is why he was so old as a junior and why didn't he complete high school. One family story was that he was asked to work at a reform school after his junior year, but it doesn't seem that he had much time to do that in 1917. In his mother's obituary dated June 30, 1911 (Willard was 14 then), it indicated that "William" resided in Chicago at the time. So it appears that he may have started high school later, probably when he was 16 or 17.

5. An article dated 9/16/1916 indicated that Willard was determined to be eligible to play football by the state board of interscholastic athletics. Why there was a question as to his eligibility is not mentioned, except that another article referenced a similar determination for another football player under the "eight semester rule," whatever that was. My guess is that there may have been some question as



to whether or not Willard had spent more than 8 semesters in school.

6. While in the Navy in London, "Billy" played in a football game at the Royal Cricket grounds. He played for the Destroyer Flotilla United States team against the Battle Squadron of the United States. Although the score was 0-0, an article indicated that "Anderson was a star." The World War I scrapbook featured a letter that Willard wrote home while he was in France. The letter talked little about the War, and more about life as a soldier when not fighting.

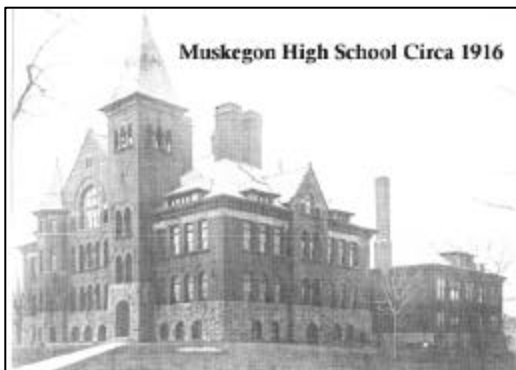
7. Johanna Anderson (Willard's mother) died June 28, 1911 at the age of 55 after a two-year illness. She was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, but apparently was moved to Evergreen Cemetery when her husband, John, died and was buried there.



8. John Eric Anderson (Willard's father) died March 28, 1932 at the age of 80. Cause of death was not indicated. His obituary spent a great deal of space on his business as a maker of artificial limbs. John lost his leg beneath a train when he was 45 years old and, being a cabinet-maker, fashioned his own artificial leg. At one time he invented the drop-top typewriting desk, the patent for which he sold to the Moon Desk Company in Muskegon. Subsequently, he worked for the Brunswick-Balke Collender Company (now the Brunswick Corp), a manufacturer of billiard tables, bowling balls and pins, and saloon bars. The obituary said that John "engaged in some of the finest wood-working operations" there. In his spare time he continued to produce artificial limbs for friends and acquaintances. After a while, that business grew into a full time business. When he was 60 he began making legs for members of the Railwaymen's Relief Association, an insurance company. His business was located at first in a shop in the back of his house. Later it was moved to his basement. The obituary indicated that he had built houses in Muskegon. A family story has it that he built his own house at 615 Southern Avenue in Muskegon.



9. We tried to find the Anderson house on Southern Avenue, but the 615 address did not exist. It appears that it was torn down to accommodate a trucking company business.
10. We found the high school yearbooks for 1915-1917, but hardly any references were made to athletics, except to cite the dates of football games. Willard's picture was not found in any of the class pictures.



11. Sometime in the future, we hope to go back to Muskegon, so search out information on Willard's brother's and sisters.
12. We have copies of all the articles and would be glad to send any to you if you wish to read the full text.

