



# Paper Trail

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## CLARENCE CHILDS, SOLDIER AND ATHLETE



6th OVI Football Team, Camp Poland (Childs, 2<sup>nd</sup> row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left).

Sandusky County, Ohio, has a long tradition of producing superb athletes. Perhaps one of its most fascinating was Clarence Childs. Born in Wooster, Ohio, in 1881, Clarence moved with his family to Fremont at age eleven. It was in Fremont that Clarence would not only discover his talents as an athlete but also as a musician.

Clarence ran track, pitched baseball, and played football. But Clarence's love of music was as strong as his passion for sports. One summer, when the circus left town, Clarence left with it. His brother found him in Shelby, Ohio, playing his trombone with the circus band. Persuaded to return home, Childs enlisted in the Ohio National Guard where he could play his beloved trombone in the band. During his senior year, he played halfback for the Fremont Football Club.

Childs' plans for his future were cut short by war. Called to active duty before graduation, Childs mustered in as a musician, trained at Chickamauga, and served with the occupation forces in Cuba until the close of the Spanish American War. ([Diary Transcription](#)) After discharge, Clarence traveled to Europe with the All-American Concert Band and performed at the Paris

Exposition.

He later enrolled at Kenyon College where he ran track, played football, and managed several music clubs. His senior year, he transferred to Yale to study law. He continued to play football and took part in track and field events.

The crowning achievement of his athletic career came in 1912 when he was tapped for the Olympic games in Stockholm, Sweden. Childs won the bronze medal in the hammer throw event, missing the silver by less than an inch. After touring Europe and the U. S. with the Olympic team, he joined Yale's coaching staff. That summer Childs married Zella Sherrard of Fremont, Ohio. He coached at Wooster College and then Indiana University. His assistant was his Olympic teammate, the legendary Jim Thorpe.

Once more, war disrupted Childs' life. Still a member of the Ohio National Guard, Childs was called to duty on the Mexican border and then on the Western Front during World War I. While serving as operations commander of the 147<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Major Childs was severely wounded by shrapnel. He spent nearly two months recuperating in France and then returned to duty in Belgium as part of the demobilization operations.

After 3 ½ years of war, Major Childs returned to Fremont and took an interest in politics. In 1921, he received an appointment to the U. S. Treasury. A short time later, Childs became a casualty of political infighting and lost his position. Childs remained in Washington, D. C., and is believed to have worked for the Secret Service or the Treasury Department until his death in 1960.