



ADAIR COUNTY NEWS

Fred Rainwater, track & field star at "the Lindsey-Wilson" 1907-1910

A photo at http://columbiamagazine.com/photoarchive.php?photo_id=23620 of the historical marker for the Fred Rainwater Oak Tree on the Lindsey Wilson campus caught my eye, so here's my two cents about Mr. Rainwater.

Evidence of Fred's athletic prowess lies in the number of mentions of his name in the *Adair County News* from 1907 through 1910. It first appeared in the May 15, 1907 edition, in which it was noted that at "the Lindsey-Wilson" Field Day held on Saturday, May 11, he won the mile race in a time of five minutes, 32 seconds, and was awarded a silk umbrella by the Athletic Association for his efforts.

The next year, on May 2 (reported in the May 6 edition), he took two events, the mile run, in a time of four minutes, 45 seconds; and the 440 yard run in one minute, five seconds. The prizes were, respectively, a fancy vest, donated by Coffey & Cravens, and a set of cuff buttons, compliments of John Flowers.

About three months prior to the May '09 Field Day, Fred's abilities made the *News* in a related fashion. The February 17, 1909 edition reported that several people, including Mr. Rainwater, had "represented the Lindsey-Wilson at the Hodgenville celebration." The article went on to say that Fred "started [to Hodgenville] on Thursday and made the trip there and back afoot. He is a perfect athlete and is the fastest runner in the school. The day before starting to Hodgenville he got a little exercise by running two miles."

Apparently that long February perambulation -- a round-trip distance of some ninety miles -- got him well limbered up, for at the Field Day events on May 8, 1909 (reported in the May 12 edition) Fred won no fewer than four events: the pole vault, with a height of nine feet, five inches; the half-mile run, in a blistering two minutes, nine & three-fifths seconds; the mile run, in a time of six minutes, six and one-half seconds; and the sack race, no time given. These winning efforts earned him the following prizes: a pair of shoes, donated by Russell & Co.; a fancy vest, donated by Jack Young; a hat, donated by [former Lt.] Gov. Hindman; and a .22 rifle, donated by Dr. Dunbar.

The following year, on May 12, 1910 (reported in the May 18 edition of the *News*), Fred again cleaned house, winning five events this time (unfortunately, the *News* recorded no information other than the event and the surname of the winner): mile race, 440 yard run, pole vault, potato race and sack race. The article ended thus: "Rainwater is to go to Danville to enter the contests on the long distance runs and we are sure he is going to capture some of the prizes."

The May 25, 1910 edition of the *News* gave this brief summary of how he fared in Danville:

"Mr. Fred Rainwater, a student of the Lindsey-Wilson, made good at Danville last week. He entered the foot races, Field Day and won the two and one miles races and was second in the half mile race."

But back to the Rainwater Oak Tree historical marker: The odds of Fred having *any* Native American heritage is pretty much less than zero. Ms. Susan Chance-Rainwater, a diligent family researcher & historian of the first order, succinctly lays out the case for that argument at <http://chronography.com/rainwater/myths.html#37>

(William Frederick "Fred" Rainwater was born in Pulaski Co., Ky., in 1887 to George Alfred & Susan Garner Rainwater, and he died in his native county in 1969.)