

PFRA-ternizing: Pittsburgh Myths

You probably know that the first authenticated pro football game was played in Pittsburgh in 1892 when the Allegheny Athletic Association paid a former Yale All-America named "Pudge" Heffelfinger \$500 to help them defeat the Pittsburgh Athletic Club.

Well, you're wrong.

The game was played at Exposition Park, a field on the north shore of the Allegheny River in the city of Allegheny. About a dozen years later, Allegheny became part of Pittsburgh, but at the time it was separate. If you think that doesn't matter, just ask a Raiders' fan how he likes being from San Francisco.

But that's only half of it. In 1892, Pittsburgh wasn't Pittsburgh, so all along you've been misnaming that athletic club.

In 1890, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names ruled that the final "h" should be dropped from the names of all cities and towns ending in "burgh." All of which means that the "other" team was the Pittsburg (no "h") Athletic Club. Historians have routinely given the P.A.C. the modern, with an H, spelling. The no-H version was considered a quaint error from an era when the spelling was more a matter of opinion.

Not so. The ruling of the U.S. Board on Geographic names makes it official.

Shorn of their beloved H, the citizens of Pittsburgh mounted a campaign to keep the traditional spelling. The board relented in 1911 and restored the "h." All these years later, people remain confused. Today, Pittsburgh is the most misspelled city in America – even more than Cincinnati.

Okay, try this.

In 1934, Art Rooney put up \$2,500 he'd won at the track and Pittsburgh joined the NFL. The key was that Pennsylvania voters repealed the Sunday Blue Laws which barred Sunday football. The Blue Laws were so named because they were originally printed on blue paper.

Whoa! It turns out there's no evidence that the blue laws were originally printed on blue paper. Rather, the word *blue* was commonly used in the 1700s as a putdown of Puritans and their rigid moral codes. Like in "bluenoses."

And Art Rooney (no bluenose he) said he'd won \$2,500 and more at the track several times, but the money that got the NFL franchise was not track winnings.

Or this.

In 1941, Rooney sold the team to a young steel magnate and then took an interest in the Philadelphia Eagles. A few months later, Rooney's "Eagles" switched places and moved to Pittsburgh. As a result, he renamed the team the "Steelers."

Not quite. Unless all those sportswriters who wrote Pittsburgh football news stories had ESP, Rooney named his team the Steelers in 1940. When it didn't help, he sold his Steelers in December. He switched teams the following spring. Today's Steelers are the transplanted Eagles.

Izzat why they were once called Steagles?

No, the "Steagles" received their unofficial name in 1943 when manpower shortages caused a merger of the Steelers and Eagles. The team was officially called Phil-Pitt. In 1944, Pittsburgh merged with the Chicago Cardinals. The team was named the Card-Pitt

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Combine, but its record was so bad that it became known as the "Car-Pits" because other teams walked all over them.