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HOMECOMING EDITION



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Roundup file photo

Barricade kissing, snake dancing, skits

The oddest Baylor Homecoming traditions each decade

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Half a century ago, Baylor Homecoming celebrations included barricade kissing, snake dancing and “Hawny Frog” skits, trading elaborate floats for simple wagons and buggies. Today, much like 1909, the bonfire still burns bright, a pep rally flings green and gold afar, the parade bridges downtown Waco and campus and, of course, the football game is a staple. Decades of Baylor Homecoming shine brightly in their similarities, with some crown jewels fading into the archives.

Dr. Elizabeth Rivera, university archivist for Baylor’s Texas Collection, has seen many changes in Baylor’s rich homecoming traditions throughout the years, with just a few constants.

“So it’s the bonfire, the pep rally, the parade and the football game that are all present in 1909,” Rivera said. “And all four of those are consistent today.”

Baylor is now formally recognized for holding the nation’s first collegiate homecoming celebration in 1909, as well as the first-ever bonfire and first-ever snake dance, which, according to Rivera, served as a sort of “conga line” around the blaze.

“In 1915, they did the weird snake dance too,” Rivera said. Between football games, Baylor boys went through a “tortuous” snake dance in the middle of the field to the accompaniment of the Alessandro and Baylor bands, according to the Baylor University Archives.

The Athletic Rally before the 1920s also included the snake dance to the playing of gongs, rattles and shouting from all men

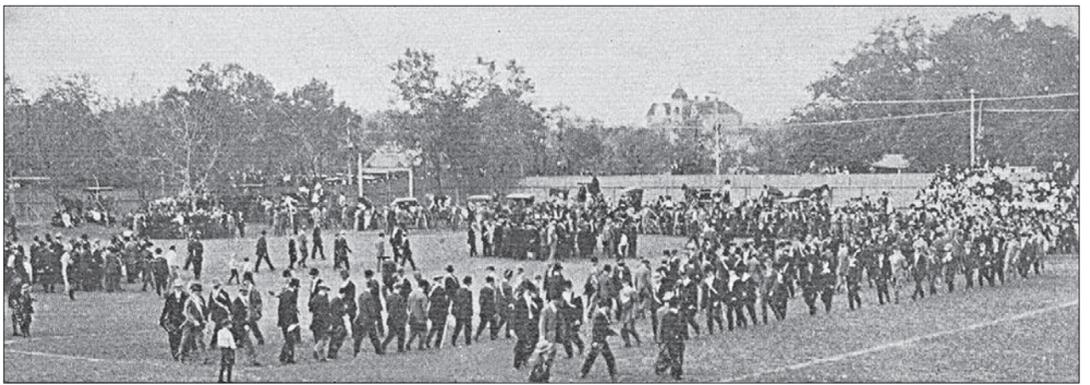


Photo courtesy of the Baylor University Texas Collection

COMPETITIVE CONGO In 1909, men participated in a “tortuous” snake dance in the middle of Carroll Field during halftime.

in attendance, namely lawyers and preachers. In the dance, participants would form a line to mimic a snake in a competitive, synchronized march across the field.

The snake dance seems to have phased out by the 1920s, and several other traditions began to steal the homecoming limelight, including plays, recitals and the famous barricade kissing.

In 1931 and 1933, the homecoming football matchup was against TCU, and the rivalry was the creation of the “Story of Hawny Frog.” The skit consisted of a horned frog that rides into Bruiser’s den, where a battle between the two mascots ensues.

According to Rivera, the skit involved an “uncle” character for additional humor.

“It’s also fitting when you think about that they didn’t have social media the way you all have,” Rivera said. “So that’s a way not only to connect with people, but it’s also entertainment.”

“The Story of Hawny Frog” was also recreated in 1935, where a stage play depicting the creation of Baylor with Judge Baylor

CRAZY TRADITIONS >> A8

Carriages to caravans: The 120-year parade history

ASHLYN BECK
News Editor

This year’s Baylor Homecoming parade was nearly 120 years in the making.

On Nov. 24, 1909, the Golden Wave Band led the first Baylor Homecoming parade. The first procession of its kind included participants from Waco and Baylor and, much like today’s rendition, traversed through downtown Waco before coming down 5th Street and onto campus. In 1909, though, the parade journeyed all the way to Carroll Field for participants to watch Baylor football take on TCU.

“After arriving at the university, the immense throng crowded

among the grandstands and vacant spaces on Carroll Athletic Field to witness the football game between Baylor and their old-time rivals, Texas Christian University,” a Nov. 27, 1909, Waco Tribune-Herald article reads.

With a collection of around 60 automobiles and 60 carriages, the parade came from anything but humble beginnings. The procession, about 30 to 40 blocks long, included then-Baylor President Samuel Palmer Brooks, senior class representatives, organizations, clubs and teams, according to the Baylor Homecoming website.

Baylor 2025 Homecoming Parade Chairman and Edna senior Kaydence Chiles said she kept the ethos of

the first parade on her mind while planning this year’s event.

“It brings both Baylor’s campus and the Waco community together to celebrate our shared history,” Chiles said. “The alumni of the past are allowed to come watch an hour and a half long parade that showcases the best of Baylor and Waco.”

Baylor’s 1909 parade was dubbed the first ever homecoming celebration in the nation in October 2024. According to a Nov. 29, 1909, Lariat article, the event made an impression on everyone.

“The homecoming parade is admittedly the most successful and creditable thing of its kind ever put on by a Waco institution,” the article reads. “Every feature was distinctively

grand. All things were on a gala exhibition.”

Despite the event’s celebratory inauguration, Chiles said it has only become more notable in the last 120 years. The biggest change, she said, is the addition of floats to the procession.

“Campus organizations come together to make larger-than-life floats with moving parts and special effects that are awe-inspiring,” Chiles said.

Though the homecoming parade dates back to 1909, planning for the 2025 parade began in February. Chiles said she and her team worked tirelessly with the City of Waco to get permits, contact vendors and create a parade that now includes over 160

campus and community entries, including 14 balloons, 10 floats and others.

“I’ve seen multiple sides of the planning process as well as made great relationships with both participants and administration,” Chiles said. “The planning process and set up of it all is very stressful, but it’s always so rewarding in the end.”

A Baylor legacy herself, Chiles said the parade has always been a special event for her. For Chiles, it’s not just a celebration of alumni coming home; it’s a culmination of generations of Wacoans and Baylor students continuing to uphold traditions and

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