

TIMELINE: Fun & Interesting Facts

1960's

In **1961**, The Timken Company donated \$100,000 and a fundraising campaign began to raise money to build the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. A donation of \$300 or more bought donors a lifetime pass to the Hall of Fame, and one individual wanted a lifetime pass so badly that he paid \$6.25 a month until he could reach the pledge amount.

The first HOF Game was played in **1962** in front of 14,000 fans, with the New York Giants and St. Louis Cardinals playing to a 21 – 21 tie.

The celebration continued to expand in **1963** with the addition of the first Festival events, thus earning recognition as “Football’s Greatest Weekend.” Wives of Cleveland Browns and Pittsburgh Steelers modeled for a crowd of 300 at the first Fashion Show Luncheon on September 5, 1963 at the downtown Hotel Onesto. The Onesto also hosted a dance later that evening sponsored by the Canton Junior Chamber of Commerce.

In **1964**, an estimated 50,000 people gathered along the parade route at 10 a.m. to see more than 70 units. This year, an estimated 225,000 will gather at 7:30 a.m. to view more than 130 units. The first Mayor’s Breakfast was held at the Hotel Onesto with 225 in attendance.

In **1965**, Cynthia Hershey was crowned the first Pro Football Hall of Fame Festival Queen, based on selection criteria of “imperturbability, personality, poise and beauty.”

“The Variety Show” was a Festival event that made its first and last appearance in **1966**, with tickets costing \$2 or \$4 for the 2,700 people who attended at the Memorial Auditorium. The featured entertainers were Benny Youngman and Jerry VanDyke. Scheduling difficulties prevented the Hall of Fame game from taking place, but the festivities continued.

In **1967**, the cocktail hour before the Enshrinees Civic Dinner was held outside the Mergus Restaurant and dinner was then held across the street in the Hotel Onesto.

Over 300 people attended the **1968** Mayor’s Breakfast at the Onesto Hotel, for \$3.50 per ticket.

In order to honor the original director of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, in **1969** the Hall presented the first Dick McCann Memorial Award to George Strickler, the first president of the Pro Football Writers’ Association, at the Enshrinees Civic Dinner.



1970's

Janice C. Meyer came on board as Festival executive director in **1970**, with a budget of \$20,000.

President Richard Nixon came to Canton for the **1971** festivities, Robert Goulet entertained, and Mrs. Vince Lombardi was parade grand marshal.

The Festival's 10th anniversary was marked in **1973**, and by that time, the budget had grown to \$38,000 and committee chairmen were charged with three basic responsibilities: select their committees, develop a plan of activity and develop a budget.

Redd Foxx served as parade grand marshal in **1974**, and was the first celebrity to have a police escort in the parade; this is the same year the Canton Police Department had to put an end to autograph seekers running into the street during the parade, as it had become a safety issue.

A **1975** survey by the National Association of Convention Bureaus found the average visitor during Hall of Fame Festival week spent \$35 a day on items such as lodging, transportation, food, amusements and miscellaneous.

The first Festival pins and brochures were developed in **1977**, the same year that some guests complained about cold ham and eggs served at the Mayor's Breakfast ... in **1978**, breakfast was changed to continental style!

Attracting the largest audience of the Friday events in **1979**, the Fashion Show Luncheon boasted 2,700 people in attendance, and for the first time in 17 years, rain fell during the parade.



1980's

The Facilities Committee was added to the Festival in **1980** . . . it has grown to 130 members in 2009 and is now known as security and logistics.

Sue Parr became the first female general chairman in **1981**, and Canton's huge number of loyal Cleveland Browns' fans were delighted to see the Browns defeat the Atlanta Falcons in the annual Hall of Fame Game.

The parade was seen in over 1.3 million homes in **1982**, and in 2000 it became and remains the only event with a title sponsor.

The first Ribs Burnoff occurred in **1984**, a one-day event held on Central Plaza, with 12 vendors, most of them cooking on tiny Hibachi grills, and an estimated attendance of 5,000.

In **1985**, Larry King brought his coast-to-coast radio talk show to the lobby of the Parke Hotel after the Enshrinees Civic Dinner, running from midnight to 5 a.m.

The Balloon Classic was initiated in **1986**, with 25 balloons; the 2013 version will boast 57. This was also the first year for the Volunteers Appreciation Party, with 500 to 600 people attending; the 2009 version anticipates 2,000 partygoers.

The **1988** Festival commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. This marked the first year that the Festival made a profit, and Chamber officials registered the Festival trademark, thus allowing only authorized merchants to sell memorabilia.

Mr. T. enjoyed celebrity status at the **1989** Festival and said "I am unworthy to be at the events. I rank this as being invited to the White House. These inductees earned this moment, not me." His requests were simple: no special meal, just a pizza. . .no air conditioning in his car. . .a white limousine for the first day, and a yellow cab on day two.



1990's

Fred Haupt, **1991** General Chairman, made a statement that still holds so true today: “It’s that person that counts the chairs at the Civic Center to make sure there are enough, the one who makes sure there are eight desserts at each table, those who pick up the celebrities and get them to the events on time, volunteers who make certain all the bands and floats are lined up as they should be in the parade and all of the other hundreds and thousands of assignments that make the festival go the way it should. It’s the total community commitment that makes it happen.”

Ron Dougherty was the General Chairman of the wettest Hall of Fame Festival in memory – **1992**. Torrential downpours created a deficit of \$65,373, but the thousands and thousands of Festival participants were not to be deterred, even enjoying the annual fireworks display through a heavy downpour.

Then-Governor George Voinovich pedaled an Ohio-manufactured Huffy bicycle down the parade route in **1993**, the same year the General Chairman Alumni Association was born.

The 75th anniversary of the NFL was celebrated during the **1994** Festival, the same year in which Janice Meyer announced her retirement, to be succeeded by Dennis P. Saunier as Festival Executive Director.

A memorable occurrence in **1995** was the theft of O.J. Simpson’s bronze bust from the Hall of Fame; it was recovered the next day on the berm of I-77 in Cleveland. This year also marked the first time that the Canton Chamber of Commerce joined hands with the Jackson-Belden Chamber of Commerce to merge the Balloon Classic Invitational and Food Fest, a fine relationship that continues today.

Canton’s own Dan Dierdorf was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in **1996**, and the Volunteer Appreciation Party was moved prior to the start of the Festival, to serve as a kick-off pep rally.

In **1997**, the Ribs Burnoff was expanded from two days to three days. “Today Show” weatherman Willard Scott co-hosted the Grand Parade. The AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game was held at the newly renovated and renamed Pro Football Hall of Fame Field at Fawcett Stadium.

The AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game was moved from the afternoon to Saturday night, to be featured in prime time on ABC-TV in **1998**. The Canton and Jackson-Belden Chambers of Commerce renewed their contract for five-years, to continue the partnership between the Balloon Classic Invitational and Food Fest.



1990's continued

The year **1999** was huge for northeast Ohio, as the Cleveland Browns returned to the National Football League and were featured in the AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game against the Dallas Cowboys; a special bonus was the broadcast of the game on ABC-TV "Monday Night Football." This was also the first year for a new event called the Browns-Cowboys GameDay Luncheon (the name was changed in 2003 to Enshrinees GameDay Roundtable).

2000's

For the first time in the Festival's history, all (134) living Hall of Famers were invited by the NFL to return to Canton for the **2000** induction festivities; 111 returned. In September, Joanne Murray became the third Festival director in its history.

The Hoover Company Grand Parade was broadcast for the first time in **2001** on Fox Sports Net Ohio, bringing the parade to 4,208,382 additional households in nearly all of Ohio, and parts of Kentucky and Indiana.

A special and emotional occurrence in **2002** was the naming of heroes from the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center attacks to serve as Grand Marshals of the Hoover Company Grand Parade; they included firefighters Billy Butler, Sal D'Agostino and Mickey Meldrum from FDNY Ladder Co. 6, and Port Authority police officer David Lim.

A more dynamic and compact schedule of events was the culmination of long-range planning sessions held in conjunction with the **2003** Festival, which marked the 40th anniversary of the Festival and Hall of Fame. Changes included the elimination of the Mayor's Breakfast, moving the Ribs Burnoff to the Stark County Fairgrounds on Thursday/Friday/Saturday, and featuring the Hall of Fame NFL Experience, and the Concert & Fireworks held as an independent event on the Sunday night before the game. For only the second time in history all (144) living Hall of Famers were invited by the NFL to return to Canton for the induction festivities; 116 returned. Another five-year extension was signed by the Canton and Jackson-Belden Chambers of Commerce to continue the fine partnership between the Balloon Classic Invitation and Food Fest.



2000's continued

Huge numbers of people enjoyed the **2004** Festival, in large part due to the notoriety and popularity of the Class of Enshrinees: Bob Brown, Carl Eller, John Elway, and Barry Sanders. The Fashion Show Luncheon showcased a platinum and diamond Tacori necklace featuring 50 carats of pave set diamonds, which was previously worn by Trista from The Bachelorette at her television wedding. The Hoover Grand Parade paid special tribute to football and military “Champions” to depict the 2004 Festival theme. Showcased were Colonel Ralph Heywood, the only former pro football player to serve his country in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, and a special float recognizing the three Stark County members of the Armed Forces who were killed in Iraq.

An economic impact survey was conducted during the **2005** Festival, only the second time in the Festival’s 42-year history; the first study was conducted in 1985. The survey revealed that the Festival has an economic impact of \$26.7 million on Canton/Stark County and \$48.4 million on the State of Ohio. These figures do not include the additional \$7 million spent by locals during the 11 days of the Festival. A Kids’ Fun Run was added to the 2-Mile and 5-Mile Race event, and 140 colorful banners were hung on the greater downtown area street poles to promote the Pro Football Hall of Fame Festival as “a one of a kind celebration.”

Schedule adjustments were made in **2006** to accommodate the AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game moving from its usual Monday night broadcast on ABC, to Sunday night on NBC’s “Sunday Night NFL Football.” The adjustment resulted in several Festival events being shifted to different days, and shortened the Festival from 11 days to ten. The Timken Company became the new title sponsor of the Grand Parade, and with six new Enshrinees, the total of football greats enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame increased to 235.

A significant change to the **2007** Pro Football Hall of Fame Festival was the opportunity to move the Enshrinement from an afternoon time slot to 6 PM, allowing a prime time television audience. All living members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame were invited to return for the ceremony and surrounding festivities, and approximately 85 were present. A capacity crowd at the Enshrinees Dinner warmly welcomed Roger Goodell, new commissioner of the National Football League, who offered congratulations to the Enshrinees and the entire Canton/Stark County community for a job well done.

With **2008** came the celebration of a significant milestone – the 45th anniversaries of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and its annual festival activities. In order to show a re-energized commitment to the festivities and to more clearly communicate that the Enshrinement of each new class of Hall of Famers is the central focus of the entire celebration, the festival name was enhanced to Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinement Festival.



2000's continued

With the enshrinement of the **2009** Class, 253 football greats have been inducted into the Hall and have the privilege of wearing the gold jacket. We were proud to contribute to the Fawcett Stadium renovation, a venue that is critical to our premier national activities - the Enshrinement and NFL Hall of Fame Game. The 2009 Game featured the Buffalo Bills vs. Tennessee Titans in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the AFL. There were many exciting highlights at all of the festivities, including Canton's own Bluecoats taking first place for the first time in the 21-year history of the Drum Corps Competition. Staff and volunteers teamed up to support a "Go Green" initiative to renew awareness and commitment to being good stewards of our communities and the environment.

In **2010**, in order to effectively accommodate 18 diverse events over 11 days, several schedule enhancements have been made, the most significant of which is a change of date and site for the annual Concert & Fireworks. Previously staged at the Cultural Center on the same Saturday evening as the Enshrinement, the event will now be the kick-off event and is being held in the downtown Canton Cornerstone Square area. In order to assure the success of all events, the professional staffs and team of more than 4,200 extraordinary community volunteers have worked in a spirit of cooperation over the past year to plan what is sure to be a "One of a Kind Celebration"!

Today

In **2013**, the Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinement Festival and the Hall of Fame celebrate 50 years. The Herculean effort that began in 1959 continues today as the festival has grown from just four events to 19 events over two-and-a-half weeks. In addition, the "Future 50" Expansion & Renovation Project, the largest in the Hall's history, was completed in time for the 50th Anniversary. The two-year, \$27 million project provides major enhancements to the visitor experience and accommodates the growing number of Hall of Fame guests, especially during the annual Enshrinement Festival.

