

## Ralph Craig – Detroit Central 1907



A hurdler at Central High, Ralph Craig didn't realize he could sprint until his University of Michigan coach, Keene Fitzpatrick, made him try. Good call. Two Olympic gold medals don't lie.

A solid hurdler in Central's powerhouse program, Craig won the 120-yard highs (college height) in 17.2 at the Michigan Interscholastic Championships his senior year. He added victories in the 220-yard lows (27.6) and the 4x2 (1:35.2).

He went on to star on the Michigan football team; he only got faster on the track. In 1910 he won the IC4A title for 220 yards—the de facto national college championship—in 21 1/5, tying the World Record (for a straight 220). The next year he did it again and added a win in the 100.

In the spring of 1912, the newly-graduated Craig announced that he would not try for an Olympic spot because he expected to be too busy in the world of business. Luckily, something changed his mind, and at the Eastern Trials for the Olympic team, he won the 200 and also earned a spot in his weaker event, the 100.

At the Games in Stockholm, Craig was not favored in the 100 because of his notoriously slow starts. However, favored Howard Drew got injured in the semifinals, and World Record holder Donald Lippincott was one of those worn out by 8 (!) false starts. Finally, the runners caught a fair start and Craig finished best to win the gold in 10.8 on the dirt track (these are the days before starting blocks, remember).

Five days later, heavily favored to win the 200, Craig did not disappoint, streaking to victory in 21.7. Surprisingly, he wasn't selected to run on the 4 x 100. The favored American team was disqualified after a bad handoff.

Craig was not done with the Olympics. A stunning 36 years later, he qualified for another Olympic team, this time in yachting. Though he was an alternate and did not compete, he did get the honor of being the flagbearer for Team USA. He was the second flagbearer from Detroit Central. The first, in 1908, was John Garrels.

For most of his working career, Craig was an administrator with the New York State Unemployment Bureau. He died in New York on July 21, 1972.