

# 1905 jump remains a school record

**By Tom Greenwood**  
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Eighty-five years ago, John Neil Patterson left his mark in this world.

To be exact, he left it 6 feet, 2 inches off the ground.

As a junior at Detroit's University School — now known as University Liggett School (ULS) and located in Grosse Pointe since 1923 — Patterson set a school and state high jump record of 6 feet, 2 inches that has lasted at ULS to this day.

In fact, Patterson's leap in June 1905 was only three inches short of the 1905 world record of 6 feet, 5 inches.

"Not bad for a 17-year-old," said ULS track coach Philip Langford. "I think it's very, very unusual for a track record anywhere to last that long. While the current state record

is 7 feet, the closest anyone has come at ULS is 5 feet, 11 inches."

**LANGFORD KNEW** Patterson owned the record, but what astounded him was discovering that it had been set just after the turn of the century.

"I was looking through some old record books and discovered that Patterson set the record back in 1905," Patterson said. "I couldn't believe the year. It was tough competing in those times.

"The Fosbury Flop — where the jumper goes over the bar backwards — didn't exist. Then jumpers went over feet first and landed in a sand pit. There was no foam padding back then."

Langford said Patterson also held the school record of 16.2 seconds for the 110 meter high hurdles until it was broken at ULS in 1987.

"That time of 16.2 seconds won the Big 10 that year," Langford said. "The state record now is 13.6 seconds and the ULS record is 15.8. He was a world class athlete for his time."

## **LANGFORD DISCOVERED**

— through Patterson's 1948 obituary — that Patterson went on to win a silver medal in the high jump at the 1908 Olympics in London, finishing second behind fellow American Forrest Smithson.

"If that's not enough, Patterson was also a war hero," Langford said. "He flew as a captain in the U.S. Air Corps during World War I."

**JERRY CVENGROS**, associate director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, agrees that 85 years is pretty unusual for a track record.