



This often-asked question has a simple answer.

In 1912, **John F. Ernsthause**n, a native of Elmore, Ohio, started a business in Norwalk. With a partner, he bought produce from Huron County farmers and shipped the fruits and vegetables to city markets. As the business grew, shipping by railroad became problematic because the trains didn't run enough and the produce would spoil.

Sole owner of his company by the early 1920s, Mr. Ernsthause solved his produce shipping problem by renting trucks. In 1932, he decided to forego the fruits and vegetables market and concentrate solely on shipping freight for other customers.

By the mid-1940s, Mr. Ernsthause had developed his Norwalk Truck Lines into both the city's dominant employer and one of the biggest over-the-road trucking firms in the U.S.

Arguably one of the first business owners in America to seek commercial "naming rights," Mr. Ernsthause came up with the idea of calling the Norwalk High School sports teams the "Truckers" – a namesake for his company and a reminder of the industry for which the city of Norwalk was well-known.

For this, Mr. Ernsthause was willing to pay. In the fall of 1946, he sent his top assistant to football practice at Whitney Field to meet with coach Grant Walls and the team. When practice drills were finished, Walls told the team to meet in the locker room.

At the meeting, the Norwalk Truck Lines assistant executive offered a proposal:

Mr. Ernsthause would buy all new uniforms – helmets, pads, jerseys, pants, and shoes – for the football team, and also buy complete new uniforms for the marching band. This he would do if the team changed its name from the Raiders to the Truckers, wearing the colors of navy blue and gold.

The proposal was met with a stunned silence.

"Well boys, what do you think?" Walls said, calling for a show of hands.

The vote was unanimous.

As one senior football player noted, "There wasn't any question about it. We had leather helmets that were so beat up and old, you could fold them and put them in your back pocket. A lot of us didn't have (football) shoes; we had to take what we could find from a big pile of old shoes in the equipment room."

Thus the Truckers were born.

The team with the unique name and brand-new blue-and-gold uniforms debuted at Whitney Field in September 1948.