

CAMP RANDALL MEMORIAL



Fig. 1. The south face of the Camp Randall Memorial, c. 1958. [series 9/10/3, jf-71]

The Camp Randall Memorial Practice Building was built in 1954 to provide indoor athletic facilities, housed until that time in the old gymnasium annex on Langdon Street. The Camp Randall Memorial shell went into use in May 1956. It was remodelled to include an ice rink in 1974.

Two attempts, in 1949 and 1950, to build a replacement for the 1911 gymnasium annex failed. Both plans assumed a site on Walnut Street. Objections included funding difficulties, government rationing of materials, and unstable soil at the swampy site.

During 1952 and early 1953 the University, spearheaded by coach Guy Sundt, worked at new plans. In the fall of 1953 the regents decided that the practice building should be constructed adjacent to the Camp Randall stadium on the east. This site meant that the building could be connected to existing steam lines, and by building a connecting bridge to the stadium, the need for new locker and shower rooms was removed. It was decided to finance the \$1.5 million building from \$900,000 supplied by the athletic fund and \$600,000 borrowed by the WUBC. The loan would be repaid from athletic receipts.¹

The choice of site caused some objections by citizens and veteran's groups, on the grounds that the area was a memorial park. It was also the home of 44 families living in trailers as temporary housing in the Monroe trailer park. The University passed a resolution to designate the building as a memorial to the Union Veteran's of the Civil War, and installed prominently on the building a plaque telling the story of Camp Randall as a Civil War camp. The University asked the legislature to make the rest of the park a perpetual memorial. These developments satisfied the protestors.²

Groundbreaking for the practice building took place about February 5, 1954. The architect was Fitzhugh Scott of Ammons and Whitney from New York. The general contractor was the J. L. Simmons Company of Chicago. The concrete shell shaped roof was poured in 14 29 foot wide bays. 16 foot tall concrete piers took the weight of each pair of sections, through the three foot wide ribs. The finished roof contained 1,600 tons of concrete, and hundreds of tons of steel reinforcing rod.³

On March 18, 1956 the Badgers hosted Minnesota and Purdue in a triangle track meet, in the



Fig. 2. The Camp Randall Shell under construction, 1954. The stadium domes are in the background. [series 9/10/3, ns-256]



Fig. 3. Camp Randall Athletic facilities, The stadium, the field house, and the Camp Randall memorial. 1974. [Series 8/7 Camp Randall, jf-103]

new, though unfinished building. The Badgers won the meet. Sadly, athletic director Guy Sundt, who had worked so hard for the facility, had died the previous fall. The formal dedication of the building was held on May 18, 1956. The building was 200 by 400 feet, with a dirt floor, and had room for baseball, tennis, and track to be practiced simultaneously. It had no permanent seating for spectators. A small dedicated heating plant for overload and emergency situations was built near the northwest corner of the shell. The exterior sides of the shell was sheathed with Kasota stone to match the nearby stadium. The ends were covered with aluminum sheathing with a vertical pattern to prevent excessive reflection (see Fig. 1). The main entrance was through a lobby on the south end.⁴

The new facility performed up to expectations for a little more than a decade. In 1965 Hartmeyer arena, the city owned ice rink facility on Commercial Avenue went up for sale, jeopardizing the future of the hockey program at the University. A two phase plan to remodel the Memorial shell, was developed. Installing the ice rink and replacing the dirt floor with artificial turf was phase I. Cost of this phase was \$245,000 paid through intramural recreation fees. The 85 foot by 195 foot rink took up the south 100 feet of the shell. The south entrance lobby was changed into a skaters lounge. Phase II remodelling added a 30 foot by 150 foot section of locker rooms and shower rooms to the west side of the shell. At the same time, a new main entrance was built, also on the west side. The original main entrance on the south side, has been converted to a hall of fame display, with plaques for notable athletic figures in the University's history.⁵

The Camp Randall Memorial is now used mainly for the ice rink, track and field practice and basketball practice.

1) *Regents Minutes*, October 24, 1953; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, November 1953, p. 10;

2) *Regent's Minutes*, July 17, 1954, October 24, 1953; *Daily Cardinal*, October 8, 1953, October 27, 1953, September 23, 1954;

3) *Regent's Minutes*, December 12, 1953, June 17, 1954, September 25, 1954; *Daily Cardinal*, June 4, 1954; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, October 1949, p. 6, ;

4) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, March 1956, March 1957, p. 22, October 1955, p. 18; Dedication Brochure, Archives subject folder, " Camp Randall memorial" file; *The Wisconsin Engineer*, October 1954, p. 10; Archives Guy Sundt biographical file. Plans in physical plant plans room.

5) *Capital Times*, October 13, 1965; *Regent's Minutes*, November 4, 1966; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, January 1975 p. 15; *Daily Cardinal*, September 5, 1973, April 14, 1965;