

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

Name of Building or Site

Common Name: University of Wisconsin Field House

Historic Name: University of Wisconsin Field House

Location

Street Address: 1450 Monroe Street

Aldermanic District: District 5

Classification

Type of Property: University Athletic Facility

Zoning District: PUDSIP R5

Present Use: University Athletic Facility

Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's Office)

Name(s): University of Wisconsin Board of Regents

Street Address: 1860 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Dr.

Telephone Number: (608) 262-2324

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)

Parcel Number: 070922105014

Legal Description: T7N R9E, SEC 22, PART OF W 1/2 NE 1/4, LYING S OF UNIV
AVE SEC 22 T7 R9 W 1/2 OF NE 1/4 LYING S OF UNIV
AVE EXC TRIANGULAR TRACT SEPARATED BY
MONROE RD & THAT PT LYING N OF S MONROE ST
P & P RR CO CAMP RANDALL

Condition of Property

Physical Condition: Excellent

Altered or Unaltered: Unaltered

Moved or Original Site: Original Site

Wall Construction: Steel frame with concrete walls clad in sandstone

City of Madison

LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Historical Data

Original Owner: University of Wisconsin Board of Regents

Original Use: Athletic Facility

Architect: Arthur Peabody

Builder: William Christenson , Racine, WI

Architectural Style: Italian Renaissance

Date of Construction: 1929-1930

Indigenous Materials Used: Madison Sandstone

List of Bibliographical References Used

Documents:

Holly Smith-Middleton, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, University of Wisconsin Field House, 1997.

Archives:

Arthur Peabody Papers, UW Archives.

Periodicals:

Tsu-gein S. Lin and John Gruber. "A Pioneer Industry: Stone Quarries in Madison." *The Journal of Historic Madison, Inc.*

Willson, C.A. "Wisconsin's New University Field House." *The Wisconsin Engineer* 34:6 (1930).

Wisconsin Alumni Magazine 32:4.

Wisconsin Athletic Review.

Books:

Cronon, E. David and John Jenkins. *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1925-1945.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

Curti, Merle, and Vernon Carstensen. *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925*.
Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1949.

Feldman, Jim. *The Buildings of the University of Wisconsin*. Madison: The University
Archives. 1997.

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Date Form Was Prepared: October 2008

Landmarks Commission

LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

The information in this nomination was originally presented in the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the UW Field House. The original document has been edited and updated with relevant changes.

The University of Wisconsin Field House is located at, and prominently faces, the intersection of Monroe Street, Regent Street, Oakland Avenue, and Breese Terrace on the southern edge of the sprawling University of Wisconsin campus in Madison. Immediately to the north of the Field House is the Camp Randall Football Stadium. The south facade faces Regent Street, and on its east and west sides are hard-surfaced parking lots. Construction of the Field House began in 1929 and completed in 1930. The building was designed in the Renaissance Revival style by William F. Stevens and John Knudsen, members of the staff of the State Architect, Arthur Peabody, who supervised the project. The rectangular building is composed of a steel-frame, sandstone-clad main block. The building is equivalent to a five-story building in overall height and features a large central interior space, open from ground level to the full height of the building that is used primarily as a basketball and volleyball court. The central court is ringed with three tiers of bleachers. The Field House is in very good condition and retains excellent integrity. Its overall design and massing have not been altered since its construction, and much of its original materials are in place and in good condition. The arrangement of interior spaces, unique to a large athletic facility, has not been altered since the Field House was built. Additional tiers of steel-frame bleachers were subsequently added to accommodate a larger number of spectators than the original configuration. New rooms and concession areas were configured beneath the original tier of concrete bleachers. Also, new roofing material has replaced the original roof.

The Field House occupies the southernmost tip of a large trapezoidal-shaped piece of land that is bounded by Breese Terrace to the west, University Avenue to the north, Randall Avenue to the east, and Monroe Street to the south. This land is mostly flat and was historically the site of the Civil War era Camp Randall. Subsequently, the land was occasionally used as the site of both State and Dane County Fairs and other activities of this kind until 1893, when the land was given to the University. In 1895, the University built its first football stadium (non-extant) on the northeast portion of the land, which was replaced by the original portions of the present Camp Randall Stadium beginning in 1915. Gradually, the north half of this portion of the campus was given over to the UW School of Engineering while the southeast corner became Camp Randall Park, a Civil War memorial. The remainder was given to the UW Athletic Department, which now operates four large buildings on its portion, including the Field House.

The portion of the UW campus described above is surrounded by single family residential developments to the west (University Heights Historic District, NRHP 12-17-82) and to the south, by a mixture of residential and campus buildings to the east, and by the main portion of the UW campus to the north. The massive bulk of the Field House, which dominates the corner on which it is located, has been a prominent visual landmark since it was built.

The main block of the Field House is a large rectangular Renaissance Revival style building whose main south-facing facade and north-facing rear elevation both measure 200 feet. Although technically the interior of the building is divided into only a single story, this building is equivalent to five regular stories in height. The Field House has a concrete foundation (there is no basement story), concrete walls that are clad in uncoursed Madison Sandstone rubble that is ornamented with dressed and carved limestone, and a gable roof whose ridgeline runs north-south and whose slopes are covered in red-colored clay tiles. Both the walls and the roof are supported by an internal steel framework and extensions of this framework support the two upper tiers of bleachers that encircle the principal space in the interior.

Several horizontal elements encircle all four elevations of the building. These include a limestone plinth that is placed at the base of each wall, a limestone beltcourse that is placed at the level of the heads of the first story exit doors, and a limestone-clad cornice that terminates both side elevations and forms the base of the main gable ends on the rear elevation and the main facade.

The main south-facing facade of the Field House is symmetrical in design and its wall surface is divided into five equal-width bays by six full-height pilasters made of the same rubble as the walls. The two end pilaster strips are twice as wide as the other four and serve to frame the facade. The four thinner middle pilaster strips extend upward and divide the wall surface of the triangular main gable end into five equal-width segments. This rubble-clad gable end is also crowned by a tall dressed limestone parapet wall and is decorated in its center with a very large, beautifully modeled stone cartouche that bears a white terra cotta letter W on a red terra cotta field.

A triple entrance door group that is framed with a dressed limestone surround is placed in the first story of each of the two end bays of the facade and each of these groups is surmounted by a large round-arched steel sash, forty-four-light, eight-segment transom. A large round-arched window opening with a steel sash and 170 lights surmounts each of these two groups and a limestone balconet supported by limestone brackets is placed below each of these windows. Each of the three middle bays contains a much smaller flat-arched exit door in its first story (only a portion of the center one is original to the building). There are two small, narrow, flat-arched window openings in the story above each of these doors. Each contains a pair of eight-light steel sash casement windows. Above each of these pairs is placed another of the very large 170-light round-arched windows (there are five of these large windows in all on the facade) and each of these windows is framed with a limestone surround and has a limestone sill.

The side elevations are identical and both are symmetrical in design. Each side elevation features projecting, full-height, rectilinear entrance pavilions at each end. A triple entrance door group that is framed with a limestone surround is placed in the first story of each pavilion and above each group is placed a very large round-arched window containing steel sash and ninety-six lights.

The wall surface in between these pavilions is divided by six full-height pilaster strips into five bays, which, because of the greater length of the side elevations, are wider than the bays on the main facade and rear elevation. Each of these five bays contains a small flat-arched exit door in its first story. Two small, narrow, flat-arched window openings in the story above each contain a pair of eight-light steel sash casement windows. The greater width of these bays, however, made it possible to place two of the ninety-six-light round-arched windows mentioned above in each bay.

The rear elevation of the Field House was originally covered by a full-width concrete bleacher section that was a part of the adjacent Camp Randall Stadium (i.e. the south end zone), but these bleachers were removed during a renovation of the stadium. Because two levels of locker rooms and offices originally occupied the space under the bleachers, the asymmetrically designed side walls of this section were pierced by several flat-arched window openings that contain metal sash multi-light windows, and by service doors.

The portion of the rear elevation of the Field House that is visible above the bleacher section is essentially identical in design to the same portion of the main facade, even to the inclusion of another stone cartouche of the type described earlier in its gable end. A later alteration to the rear elevation, however, was the placement of a very large electronic scoreboard across much of the center portion of the elevation beginning just above the top of the bleachers. This scoreboard serves the Camp Randall Stadium and the current one is the latest and largest of several that have occupied this position for much of the history of the Field House.

The structural framework that supports the walls and the roof of the Field House was described as follows in a report written at the time of construction.

Vertical trussed [steel] frames that stiffen the walls and support the balconies are placed around the four sides of the building at intervals of about 32 feet. The roof is carried on trusses which span the width of the space between these frames.

The main trusses are 151 feet long, 24 feet deep in the center and 12 feet at the ends. These trusses are composed of 10 inch H sections. The vertical trussed frames are 10 feet wide and they are also composed of H sections.

The clay tile roof is supported on wooden plank which spans the 6 ½ foot distance between the steel channel rafters. These rafters are supported on purlin trusses which connect the main roof trusses. The wooden balcony floor and seat planks are supported on the inclined balcony stringers. Horizontal girders carry the stringer loads to the columns (Willson 1).

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)
Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria.

The University of Wisconsin Field House is being nominated as a City of Madison Landmark for its significance under criteria 1 and 3 of section 33.01(4) of the City of Madison Code of Ordinances.

The Field House was expertly designed in the Renaissance Revival style by the staff of the State Architect's office and was intended to provide both physical training facilities for the UW student body and a place where some of the University's numerous sports-related activities could take place. The building was constructed in 1929-1930 and is best known as the home of the UW basketball team, but it has also housed a variety of other sporting events, including track and field, boxing, and wrestling competitions associated with both the UW and with the state's high schools.

The Field House was also designed to replace the UW Stock Pavilion as the principle center for the UW's large scale cultural events. Bands, symphony orchestras, and popular entertainers have all performed in this space and it has also been the scene of both UW and area high school graduation ceremonies and other public occasions.

Historic Context

As the UW student body grew in the latter part of the 19th century, so did the need for University sponsored and controlled extracurricular activities. Some of the most important of these recreational activities were competitive athletics. Physical conditioning was already a part of the military exercises that were required of the University's male students after the Civil War. Another factor was the rapidly emerging nation-wide interest and participation in organized sports that developed as the nation adjusted to an increasingly industrialized way of life. Organized sports at the UW began as interclass competitions, organized and run by students. Not without controversy, the University eventually accepted and endorsed intercollegiate events along with the development of a physical education program. A combined gymnasium and armory was completed in 1892 (UW-Armory and Gymnasium) and Camp Randall was purchased as a site for playing fields in 1893.

Football was certainly the most popular of these intercollegiate sports. Interest in the sport increased rapidly in the 1890s and "it approached fanaticism in the early 1900s" (Curti, Merle and Vernon Carstensen 695). Eligibility requirements and problems of professionalism plagued it from the start, to the point that the University felt it needed to take some measure of control over the previously student run and managed intercollegiate sports. The University became one of the charter members of the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives, which would later become known as the Western or Big Ten Conference. Eventually, rules were established curtailing the worst dangers and ethical problems of the game.

The money for the salaries of coaches and for the other costs of supporting a competitive team came from ticket receipts. Early on, deliberate attempts to attract alumni to the games and win their loyalty were successful. In 1921, the stadium at Camp Randall could accommodate 25,000 people, three times the total size of the student body, and in two years, it was expanded to a capacity of 36,000. In 1928-1929, football gate receipts totaled \$251,069. Football had become a major University business.

The campus-wide following and the funds that the UW's football program commanded were paralleled by the growth of the UW's basketball program. From its beginnings at the UW in 1898, when it was introduced by students who had learned it at the YMCA, basketball grew in popularity among the students. Emmett D. Angell, a physical education instructor, acted as the UW's first basketball coach in 1904 and his team won its first championship title in 1905-06.

In 1911, Dr. Walter Meanwell was hired as the basketball coach and his early years of coaching were glorious ones for the UW basketball team. In his first ten years of coaching, his teams won 133 games and lost 35, taking seven championships. Meanwell became a national figure as a result and the games, which were held at the Old Red Gym, were packed, with thousands more fans crowding outside during the games.

It was within this context that "Doc" Meanwell and George Little, then the UW Athletic Director, lobbied for the construction of a new field house.

When George Little took the job as the athletic director at the University of Wisconsin in 1925, he also became the football coach. Little had been an assistant to J.F.A. "Sunny" Pyre, the ex-football star and faculty chairman of the [UW] athletic council.

Little acted as coach for two years, before hiring coach Glenn Thistlewaite away from Northwestern, and turning strictly to administrative work. A hard-working and persuasive man, Little had a vision for the athletic facilities at the University. By 1927 he had developed a three-million dollar master plan for athletic facilities, including replacement of the armory, the gymnasium annex [non-extant] and the boathouse [non-extant]. His support for this enormous project was considerable. The legislature of 1927 approved an appropriation of \$350,000 to begin the project. Because of economic hardship, this bill was pocket vetoed by Governor Zimmerman. Rather than pursue this avenue of funding, Little turned to the regents. His plans had now shrunk considerably. He now asked only for \$350,000 for a field house without facilities for non-income-producing sports.

Football was well provided for at the Camp Randall Stadium; the real problem was with basketball. Wisconsin played basketball in the old red gym. The gym was built in 1892, and for basketball games held 2240 spectators. It was called "the little cigar box gym" by newspapermen, and complaints were heard about scalping of the scarce tickets. A new field house became Little's main priority. The regents had been discussing a field house since 1925, and had decided to locate the field house at the south end of the stadium.

The regents were persuaded by Little to fund the field house through the University Building Corporation, the dummy corporation that had recently been used to fund the Van Hise dorms (which are now known as Tripp Hall, Adams Hall and Carson Gully Commons), and the furnishings of the Memorial Union. The regents approved a loan of \$350,000 at 4.5 percent for thirty years (Feldman 213-214).

The new UW Field House was dedicated in 1930, when over 9000 people attended the ceremony and dedicatory basketball game against Pennsylvania. H. Jamison Schwartz, the graduate manager of athletics at Pennsylvania said, "The east knows of Wisconsin in basketball. The name and fame of your coach, Dr. Meanwell, is no longer confined to the boundaries of your state. He has become truly a national figure in the fastest growing sport there is. Tonight is as good a time as any to re-affirm our belief in intercollegiate athletics, and in competitive athletics as a fine and vigorous and wholesome influence on our future generations" (*Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 148).

The Field House housed many famous games and was the site of continued basketball victories. When "Doc" Meanwell resigned as coach in 1934, he hired Harold "Bud" Foster, a former Wisconsin All-American player who led the team to both a Big Ten and an NCAA championship in 1940-41 and again in 1947. Today, the game continues to be associated with the University's tradition of excellence in this arena of competitive athletics.

Noteworthy UW boxing history was also made in the Field House. Boxing had begun at the University on an intramural basis but by 1933 had become a popular varsity sport. Shortly thereafter, the UW team became "the undisputed master of college boxing" (Cronon and Jenkins 655). Led by coach John Walsh, the boxers were undefeated and untied in nine out of sixteen seasons and many team members won individual national titles. Boxing became one of the UW's biggest spectator sports. The number and loyalty of fans rivaled and sometimes even surpassed the basketball turnouts. 3500 fans attended the first match in 1933, but soon were filling the Field House to its then capacity of 15,000 for matches. However, the sport was terminated at Wisconsin in 1960 when boxer Charlie Mohr tragically died as a result of a bout.

Non-UW boxing was also a part of the history of the Fieldhouse. At the end of April in 1959, a skinny teenager from Kentucky electrified the city with his appearance at the boxing trials for the Pan-American Games. Cassius Clay, 17, the National Golden Gloves and American Athletic Union champ, showed flashes of brilliance and blinding speed in advancing to the championship bout. But he suffered his first defeat in 37 fights before a Field House crowd of more than 5,000, before he would be better known as famed boxer Muhammad Ali.

The role of intercollegiate athletics at the University has evolved into a fundamental component of the identity of the University. Some of the ethical questions of qualification and professionalism are still unresolved, but the importance of these sports to the University's idea of itself and to its public image is indisputable. The intercollegiate activities are both a public relations tool that binds the public to the University and also a

revenue producer for the institution. The Field House embodies the history of that role on this campus. It has become a symbol of the competition for excellence for both the members of the University community and for the general public.

The Field House is also an historically significant building in Madison and on the campus as the site of significant non-athletic gatherings as well. From the time it was completed up to the present it housed important University-sponsored functions and performances. Concerts have been held there regularly, including performances by the UW's very popular marching band and performances by nationally known entertainers who performed as part of the UW's homecoming shows. Many graduation ceremonies have also been held there, including both those of the University and also of area high schools. The Field House was also the place where the president of the UW gathered the students to tell them about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. "A capacity crowd of students, faculty, and townspeople attended the gathering, broadcast throughout the state over radio" (Cronon and Jenkins 461). News of Germany's surrender resulted in another packed community gather at the Field House, presided over by UW president E.B. Fred.

As both a University and community gathering place and as a symbol of the University and of University athletics, the Field House has historically played an important part in the life of the UW and the city of Madison and it continues to do so today. Consequently, it is believed that the University of Wisconsin Field House is of sufficient historic significance to justify listing as a City of Madison Landmark within the area of cultural and social significance for its important contributions to the life of the community.

Architecture

The University of Wisconsin Field House is also being nominated as a City of Madison Landmark for its significance as an outstanding example of late Renaissance Revival style design as applied to a very large sports-related University facility. The Field House was designed during 1928-1929 by William F. Stevens and John Knudsen of the staff of the State Architect's office under the supervision of Arthur Peabody, the State Architect, and it was built between 1929-1930 by Racine-based contractor William Christenson. Its design is an excellent example of the numerous Renaissance Revival style buildings that Peabody developed for the UW campus as an outgrowth of his collaboration with the nationally known University of Pennsylvania architects Warren Powers Laird and Paul Phillippe Cret, who together with Peabody had developed a master plan for the University campus in 1908.

The earliest buildings on the UW campus are still extant; Bascom Hall, designed by Indianapolis, Indiana architect William Tinsley, and North and South Halls, designed by architect John Rague (Bascom Hill Historic District NRHP 9-12-74). All three of these buildings are simple but beautifully proportioned examples of Italian Renaissance Revival style design and all three were built between 1851 and 1859 out of locally quarried Madison Sandstone. Gradually, as the campus began to grow in the second half of the

nineteenth century, newer buildings in a variety of Late Victorian styles appeared throughout the campus, which, by the turn of the century was more notable for stylistic diversity than stylistic coherence.

In order to plan for the future growth of the University, the UW regents commissioned a master plan for the future growth of the campus in 1908 and chose as their consultants the firm of Laird and Cret, whose principals were both nationally known architects and professors at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture.

In an effort to bring order to the campus, Laird and Cret, in collaboration with Arthur Peabody, who was then the UW's Campus Architect, chose the Renaissance Revival style designs of the UW's earliest buildings as their chief source of inspiration. While the splendid Beaux Arts-inspired master plan that these three men ultimately developed for the campus was only partially implemented, the use of the Renaissance Revival style as the primary source of design inspiration for all new buildings constructed on the UW campus after 1909 was consistently adhered to until the end of World War II. That this was so was partly due to the inherent suitability of the style for institutional buildings and partly due to the fact that shortly after 1909 Arthur Peabody became the State Architect, a post that Peabody held until the 1930s. He was thus in a position to either actually design or else strongly influence the design, of every building built by the State of Wisconsin during his tenure, which also included all of the University of Wisconsin's buildings.

Besides producing the general plan for the future growth of the campus, Laird and Cret also designed a number of buildings for the campus during the next twenty years, several of which are among the campus' best buildings and are listed in the NRHP either individually or in the Bascom Hill Historic District. All of these buildings were designed with the active participation of Arthur Peabody, who served as the supervising architect of the three, and the collaboration clearly left its mark on the man since the great majority of the many buildings that he designed for the UW campus after his formal collaboration with Laird and Cret ended clearly show the influence of the Renaissance Revival in their designs. As a result, the pre-World War II UW campus gradually achieved an overall stylistic unity that was to be one of the most important legacies of the Laird and Cret-Peabody collaboration.

The UW Field House clearly owes its appearance to the influence of Laird and Cret's master plan. The inspiration of the Italian Renaissance in the design of the Field House can be seen in the simple basilican form of the building and in the overall design scheme of the exterior. Even though the interior of the building is actually just one large room that is entered at ground level, the exterior is treated as if the building had a ground story and a much grander second story or *piano nobile*. The exterior of what appears to be the first story contains entrance and exit door openings. Above many of these openings are small pairs of windows that form a kind of mezzanine story and above these in the *piano nobile* are the very large windows that provide most of the natural light that reaches the interior. This design scheme is classically derived and it is very typical of Renaissance and Renaissance-inspired design buildings.

In addition, all the wall surfaces of the Field House are divided into bays by pilaster strips, the building is encircled at the base of the walls by a tall limestone plinth, simple

classically inspired limestone trim enframes the building's doors and windows, and the tall parapet walls that edge the gable ends of the building are clad in the same dressed limestone as the plinth at the base. All of these elements have as their inspiration classically derived design elements that are typically associated with the Italian Renaissance.

Also contributing to the architectural significance of the Field House is the use of Madison Sandstone to face its walls. The Field House is one of the last buildings in Madison to be faced with Madison Sandstone, which was the same beautiful locally quarried honey-colored stone that had been used to face the earliest campus buildings. This stone was also used to face the first state capitol building in Madison (ca. 1839-1842) as well and it was quarried at several locations in and around Madison. Because it was used to face the first campus buildings, Laird and Cret specified in their 1909 campus master plan that all new buildings built on the east end of the UW campus should be faced in the same stone in order to give that portion of the campus a more uniform appearance. This was done, but as a consequence, the existing area quarries were close to exhaustion by the time the Field House was being planned. As a result, Peabody was forced to use rubble stone rather than dressed stone for the building's walls, but the end result is very nearly as handsome and it contrasts beautifully with the finely crafted dressed limestone that Peabody used for decorative accents on the exterior.

The architectural significance of the Field House is further enhanced by its unique interior design, which called for two galleries around a central playing floor large enough for two practice basketball courts. This design was so successful that it influenced the design and engineering of other field houses as well.

The University of Wisconsin Field house is therefore being nominated as a City of Madison Landmark both because of its important role in the history of organized sports at the University and because its design is an outstanding example of the application of a late Renaissance Revival style design to a large scale modern university building. This significance is further enhanced by the building's largely intact state and by its excellent historic integrity.



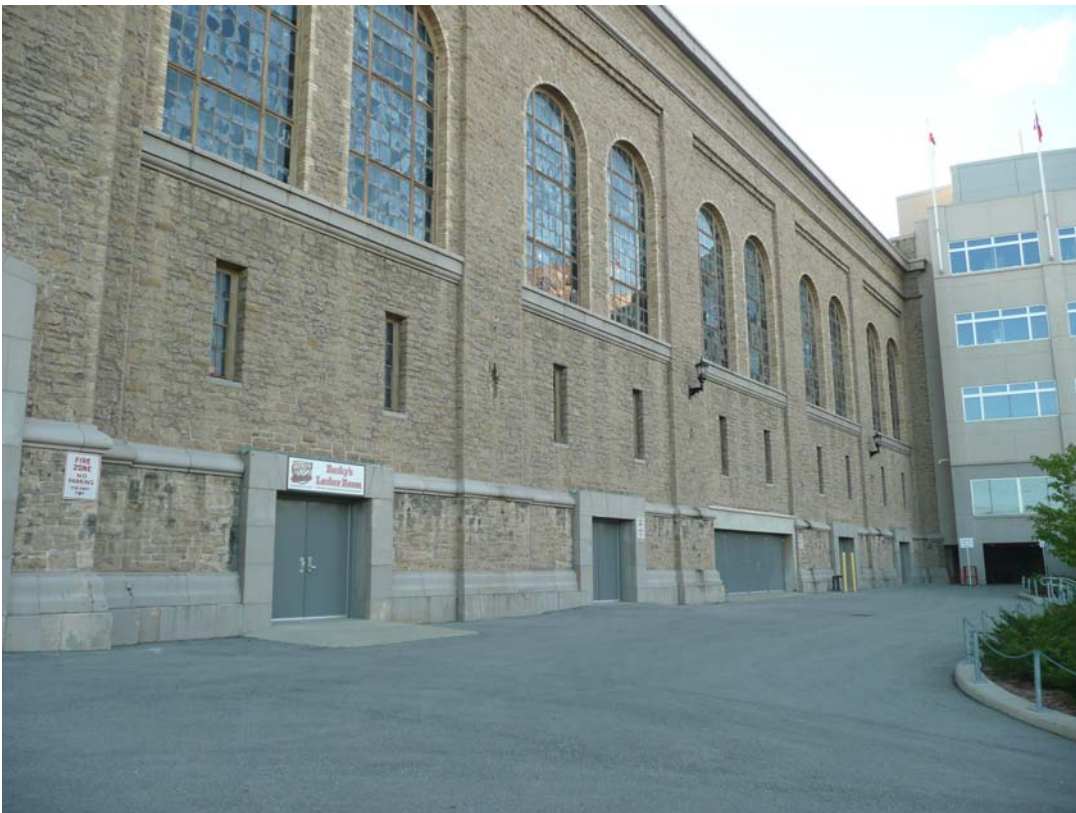
UW Field House: Main facade looking north



UW Field House: Main facade and West elevation



UW Field House: West elevation



UW Field House: East elevation