

**DATE:** September 27, 2023  
**BY:** Susan Boyle, BOLA, and David Peterson, DPRHC  
**TO:** Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board (LPB), c/o Erin Doherty, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods  
**RE:** Seattle Public Schools Memorial Stadium – Supplemental Material for Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board Meeting on October 4, 2023

The following is supplementary material in response to questions and comments which arose during the August 16, 2023 LPB meeting for the nomination of the Seattle Public Schools Memorial Stadium.

The Landmarks Preservation Board questions/requests:

1. Are covered (as opposed to open) grandstands typical in the region?
2. Are there other examples of similar stadiums with structural elements on top of the roof?
3. More information about non-high-school events (concerts, sports, etc.) that occurred in the stadium.

See below for additional information.

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## **The Grandstands Type – Both Covered and/or Uncovered**

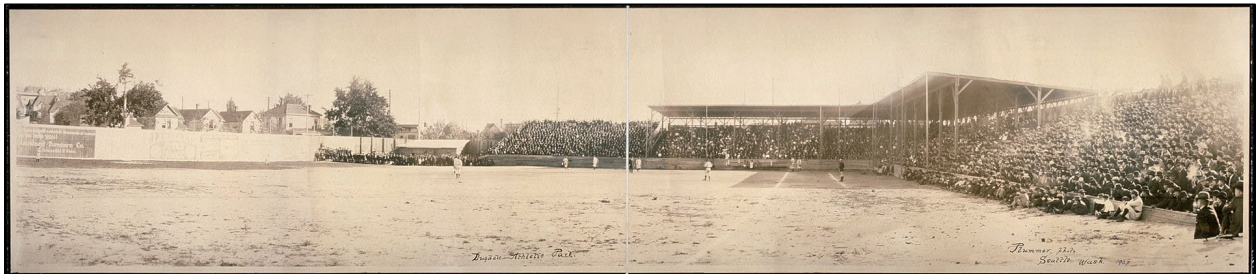
**Stadiums in Seattle and Washington state include a variety of structural types, with covered and uncovered grandstands. The covered type do not seem to be limited to the Northwest, but determined more by available funding.**

Many open stadiums from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were built with concrete, often into natural hillside bowls where the concrete grandstands serve as foundation and retaining structures as well, such as Stadium High School Bowl, Tacoma (1910). Others were built with circular bowls above grade such as the original UW Husky Stadium of 1920. The period 1900 to 1940s is known for the rise of the modern stadium, due initially to the growing popularity of soccer in Europe and baseball in America. Initially there were playfields surrounded by wood benches. (Daemrich, Arthur, “Inventing and Reinventing Stadiums,” Lemelkson Center for Study of Invention and Innovation, June 23, 2020.) Wood framed grandstand structures typified Seattle’s earliest, as represented by Yesler Park (built ca. 1898-1907), a baseball field near 13<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson. It was followed by Dugdale Field in 1913, a 15,000 seat wood stadium that burned in 1926 and was replaced by Sick’s Stadium. Primarily a baseball stadium for the Seattle Indians and Seattle Giants, Dugdale also hosted one NFL football game in 1926 (*Seattle Times*, “From Dugdale to Dome,” March 28, 1976, p. G2).

Research on other stadiums in Washington State built in the 1930s indicates many were constructed as Works Progress Administration projects. Between 1935 and 1943 the federal relief agency constructed 2,302 new stadiums, grandstands, and bleachers, added onto 129 others, and reconstructed or improve an additional 79 in the continental United States. (Table XVI, p. 147, “Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43”). **While many of the large college and civic stadiums of the 1920s had at least partially covered grandstands, most of those built in the 1930s and early 1940s did not. The determinant was economic and the added cost for a roof cover.** By the late 1960s roofs are featured in some high school stadiums. WPA stadiums were also built with concrete, and also wood and heavy timber. Examples

include the Hoquiam Olympic Stadium (1938, a National Register listed structure), and the Seattle Parks Department West Seattle Stadium (1938). This facility has a football field, track, and two grandstands, one of which is original. The original covered wood grandstand on the north side of the field remains, while concrete bleachers replaced the open wooden bleachers on the southern side in 1961. The West Seattle Stadium is the only remaining wooden grandstand in the city.

Construction of large stadiums appear to follow a 40-year cycle and the period from 1940 to 1980 is known for the multi-purpose and enclosed stadiums. (Daemmrich, June 23, 2020). **The mid-century also saw advancements in concrete technology and forms.** As exemplified by Jack Christensen's design of Grant County Stadium (1963) with a notable thin-shell concrete roof, and Ingersoll Field, built by the Olympia School District (1968, designed by Dan Avery), with its expressive bent support forms.



Above, the wood-frame Dugdale Park in 1920.



Above, the wood-frame West Seattle Stadium (1938).



Above left, the composite structure of Sick's Stadium. Above right, concrete was used in an expressive manner in the coiled circulation system in the UW Husky Stadium addition of 1949-50, designed by architect George Stoddard with structural engineer Sigmund Ivarsson, which was cited in *Construction News Bulletin* "Massive Cantilevered Balcony of Unusual Design to be Built at U of W Stadium," Dec. 31, 1949).

## Concrete Grandstand Roof Structure

**No other examples of concrete stadiums with the structural ribs "hidden" above the grandstand roof could be identified.** The system may have been seen by others as impractical due to inevitable maintenance issues. Moss growth shaded by the topside girders along with bird droppings and other vegetative growth on the rooftop would have eventually blocked drains.

As noted in the nomination report, Memorial Stadium is a concrete structure with each grandstand consisting of a partially cantilevered cast-in-place concrete slab roof supported by girders "hidden" above the slab that load onto a large 6 by 8 foot hollow concrete beam supported by welded steel flange columns clad in concrete. Besides providing a striking appearance, Stoddard and Hostmark's design of the concrete structure was noted as being fireproof, and also for avoiding costly maintenance issues associated with nesting birds.

The stand seating, concourse and field house are all cast-in-place reinforced concrete, all elements that have been exposed to weather for over seven decades. In 1999, to address persistent problems with leakage, the grandstand roofs were modified to accept membrane roofing. The underside of the roof retains its original smooth, planar quality.

Structural innovation in concrete was persistent in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, extending from influential European structural designs to local examples, such as the purely cantilevered roofs at Bellevue High School Stadium (1950-51) or the coiling concrete ramps added to Husky Stadium (1949-50, also by Stoddard).

Ultimately, the topside framing of Memorial Stadium represents use of traditional structural elements such as beams and girders to accomplish its visual qualities. Had the skillset been available to the designers Stoddard and Hostmark, structural innovations such as thin-shell concrete would have allowed

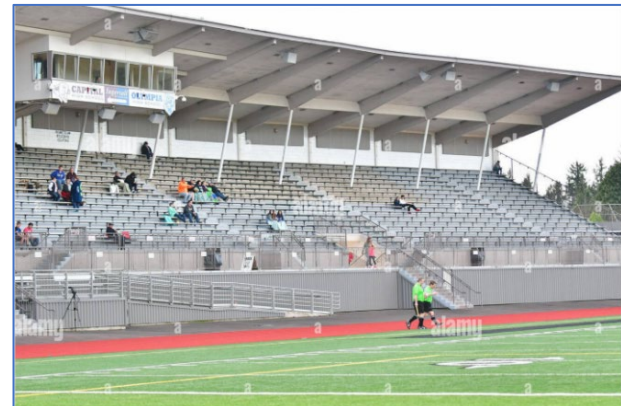
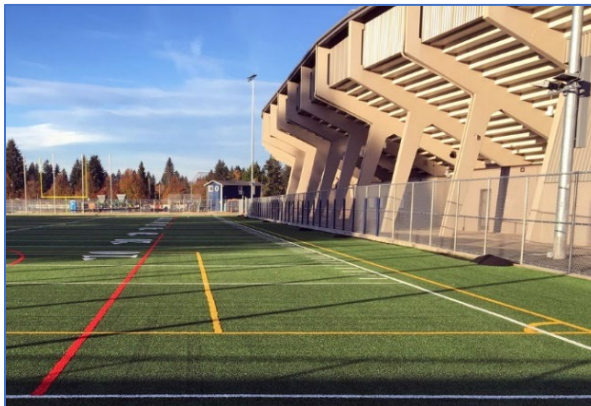
their visual goal of a smooth underside to the grandstand roof while also allowing an uncluttered rooftop for better maintenance.



Left, Florence Municipal Stadium, 1930-1931, 35,000 seat facility, with reinforced concrete bifurcating cantilevered beams. Right, the Olympic Flaminio Stadium, Rome (1957-1959), with 45,000 seats, with prefabricated concrete beams and corrugated cantilevered concrete roof. Both were influential designs by Pier Luigi Nervi.



Innovative examples of thin-shell concrete stadiums in Washington State include the Grant County Stadium (1963), below left, designed by Jack Christenson, structural engineer, and his Bainbridge Island High School Stadium (1990).



Above, the concrete frame Ingersoll Stadium, Olympia School District (1968, designed by Don Avery).

## Politics and Religion

President Harry Truman made a speech at Memorial Stadium in 1948 on the topic of “Reclamation.” Henry A. Wallace, the Progressive Party candidate and former Vice President during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s third term, made a campaign speech in 1948. General Dwight D. Eisenhower made a speech next door at the Seattle Arena in 1952; overflow crowds were accommodated in Memorial Stadium where the speech was broadcast over speakers.

The Boeing Aero Mechanics Union held at least three union meetings in the Stadium in 1958 and 1963.

Memorial Stadium was the location of sunrise Easter services sponsored by the Seattle Evangelical Union, and other church groups, from 1948 until at least 1969.

Billy Graham held daily revivals for 5 weeks in the Stadium in 1951, and again for one day in 1962 during the World’s Fair. Later appearances in the region required larger venues, such as the King Dome.



Top, an ad for the Sunrise Easter Service held at Memorial Stadium, in 1961 (Seattle Times). Above left, President Truman speaking at Memorial Stadium in 1948. Above right, Boeing workers union votes in 1958 (Seattle Times).

## Public Gatherings



Memorial Stadium was used as the ending location for the SeaFair Torchlight Parade's "Fiesta of Floats" from 1954 to 1977.

The stadium has been a gathering/prep space or ending location for some public marches, such as a parade honoring the Order of Eagles National Convention in 1951, a Right to Life political march in 1974, an AIDS Walkathon fundraiser in 1988, and a WTO march in 1999. In 1968, a memorial march for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. following his assassination ended at the Arena, but was moved next door to the Stadium due to the size of the attendants. These marches typically moved through downtown. **Public views of these marches occurred as they proceeded on public streets and through the media.**



A Right to Life political march in 1974.



On November 30, 1999 a march protesting the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle and its free-trade policies started with a rally and speeches in Memorial Stadium attended by an estimated 12,000 people. The march, with up to 40,000 attendees, became known as the "Battle for Seattle" for its confrontation with the police and damage to downtown retail businesses.

## Additional Sporting Events

High school football has been, by far, the primary use of Memorial Stadium since its construction. Major annual games included the Thanksgiving Day playoff and the annual high school Jamboree. Through the decades the stadium was also the site of city/commercial/church league baseball, little league baseball, soccer, and even motorcycle racing in the 1950s.

**Some national and minor league soccer teams played in the stadium in 1974-75, 1994-97, 2001-02, 2007-09, and 2014-18, along with Ultimate Frisbee leagues in 2015 & 2020-22.**

- **Seattle Sounders of the North American Soccer League (NASL)**, a 1973-1983 expansion team, played 10 games in the **1974–1975** seasons at Memorial Stadium (the narrowest turf pitch, or field of play, in the league), with expansion of stadium seating to 17,925 seats. In 1976 it moved the team office to Pioneer Square and play to the Kingdome, initially with 16,500 seats and 38,000 seats, but expanded to a crowd of 58,128 attendees, April 9, 1986. The team was sold several times and folded in 1983 prior to moving to the Tacoma Dome.
- **Seattle Sounders of the American Professional Soccer League (APSL)**, a minor A league team from 1994 to 2008 played in Memorial Stadium in **1994–1997, and 2001–2002**. Its offices and training facilities and played the 2008 season at the Starfire Stadium (in Fort Dent Park), Tukwila, built in 2003-2005. Starfire also hosted the Seattle Seawolves of the Major League Rugby (MLR), in 2018.
- The major league team, the Seattle Sounders FC, debuted in 2009. It never played in Memorial Stadium.
- **Seattle Majestics, International Women’s Football League (IWFL)**, founded in 2002, played at Memorial Stadium in **2007–09**.
- **Seattle OL Reign FC of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)**, founded in 2012, played in Memorial Stadium in 2014–18, after a 2013 debut season at the 12,500 seat Starfire Stadium, later played at Cheney Stadium, Tacoma, 2019-2021, since at Lumen Field.

Professional soccer left Memorial Stadium for Cheney Stadium in 2019 because the size of the playfield no longer met the pitch size required by NWSL standards set in 2017. After study the OL Reign announced it was not feasible to update the stadium to be compliant with US Soccer and NWSL standards: “Memorial Stadium was built in the 1940’s before any modern standards existed—safety, accessibility, security and seismic standards have all evolved such that it was financially impracticable to upgrade the stadium to a standard that would meet the needs of our league, our players and our fans” (OL Reign, “Open Letter to the Fans,” January 30, 2019). After finding that other Seattle stadiums were also non-complaint in terms of field sizes, seating capacity or locker room facilities, and after unsuccessful negotiations with CenturyLink Field, the Reign moved to Cheney Stadium.

Memorial Stadium continues to host district sports and several national ultimate frisbee teams:

- **Seattle Tempest of Women’s Ultimate League (WUL)**, has played in Memorial Stadium in **2020–2023**
- **Seattle Cascades of the American Ultimate Disc League (AUDL)**, has played in the Stadium **2015–present**

The stadium has been used also as an assembly place and end point for some **marathons** held in Seattle, and sometimes for the award ceremonies at the end of these races.

## Bumbershoot & Independent Concerts

### Bumbershoot, 1971 – 2019, 2023

Most concerts in Memorial Stadium are associated with Bumbershoot. The first of these city-sponsored events (“Festival ’71”) was initiated by Mayor Wes Uhlman, with musician Sheb Wooley, a logging show, indoor motorcycle races in the Coliseum, kids’ horseback rides, an electronic music instrument jam, a “Hot Pants Contest,” light show, local rock bands and dance troupes. It attracted the largest crowds to Seattle Center since the World’s Fair, and it has continued over each Labor Day weekend. **Bumbershoot concerts occurred on multiple indoor and outdoor stages throughout the Seattle Center.** (“Database list of concerts 2013-2023,” Concert Archives, <http://thieleunlimited.com> and other sources identifying the venue as Seattle Stadium, Memorial Stadium, High School Stadium or Seattle Center Stadium.)

Bumbershoot Concert Musicians	Date
Black Sabbath / Blue Oyster Cult / Molly Hacht / Riot	July 19, 1980
Mel Torme	Sept. 3, 1995
George Clinton and the P-Funk Allstars / Joan Jett and the Blackhearts	Sept. 4, 1995
Reverend Horton Heat / You Am I / Soundgarden / Screaming Trees	Aug. 13, 1994
Sonic Youth / Built to Spill / Sleater-Kinney / Sheryl Crow / Wilco	Aug. 30-31, 1997
Blues Revelers / Beck / Foo Fighters / Sonic Youth / Sky Cries Mary / Supersonic Soul Pimps	Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 1997
REM / Young Fresh Fellows / Saltine / The Picketts	Sept. 2, 1999
Savage Garden	Sept. 2, 2000
Everclear / Sonic Youth / Modest Mouse / Lifehouse	Sept. 1, 2002
Evanescence / Cold Play	Aug. 31, 2003
Elvis Costello / Puddle of Mud	Sept. 4, 2005
Steve Miller Band	Sept. 2, 2006
Melanie Martinez / Tame Impala	Sept. 4, 2016
X Ambassadors / Odessa / Solange / LEON	Sept. 13, 2017

Independent concerts	Date
An estimated one to three independent concerts have used the stadium each year, such as:	
Jerry Garcia Band	August 7, 1993
Grateful Dead	June 13-14, 1994
Metallica / Suicidal Tendencies / Candlebox	July 19, 1994
The Grateful Dead	May 24-25-26-27, 1995
Pearl Jam / Rickenbacker / Sean Ono Lennon / Wallflowers	July 21-22, 1998
EMP Opening Festival with Red Hot Chili Peppers / Metallica / Eminem / Snoop Dogg / Kid Rock / Filter / Dr. Dre	June 23, 2000
Screaming Trees	June 25, 2000
Pearl Jam / The Wallflowers / Zeke	July 21, 2008

Sicks Stadium (1938-1979) was sometime used as concert venue – Elvis played there in 1957, the Youngblood and Janis Joplin on July 5, 1970 and Jimi Hendricks along with Cat Mother and the Newsboys, Steve Miller Band and others in a “marathon concert” on July 26, 1970 (“Sicks Stadium Concerts,” Setlist.fm, and Peter Blecha, “Jimi Hendricks plays Sicks’ Stadium...” Historylink.org essay 21126, December 27, 2020).