



postscript.

The Historic Field House

It looked great in '28—the brand new, red brick Field House smack in what would be the middle of the OU campus. Not much parking—but not many cars. It was seen as a basketball venue—men only—and the first game played there saw the Sooners trounce legendary coach Phog Allen's Kansas Jayhawks 49-19. Now those were the days!

Waves of University history followed. All the Big 6 and Big 8 basketball greats, like Kansas' Wilt Chamberlain and OU's Alvan Adams played there. Epic wrestling matches with Oklahoma A&M coined the enduring phrase “bedlam.” Classic gymnastics meets took place there, and later women's volleyball. Pre-1972 and the Lloyd Noble Center, the Field House struggled to contain crowds attracted to Commencement ceremonies, enrollment “sectioning,” rock icons like Jimi Hendrix, entertainers like Bill Cosby and politicians like Robert Kennedy. In an indoor pool tacked onto the north side, the Ducks Club performed women's synchronized swimming, and Norman kids learned to swim.

But over the decades, time took its inevitable toll. Many big names bypassed campus appearances when the Field House, with its poor acoustics and limited seating, was the best OU had to offer. Coveted high school athletes were less than impressed. Coaches' pleas for something better were finally answered with Lloyd Noble Center, and there were calls to tear down the Field House—but more thoughtful minds prevailed. Wrestling, volleyball and gymnastics did not draw LNC-sized crowds and had to compete with basketball and other special events for court time. The Field House, with all its Sooner memories, was worth saving.

This summer, exterior scaffolding surrounding the building marked the concluding phase of a several-year project to renovate the grand old lady. The pool having long since disappeared, a \$2 million project at the turn of the century added the Port Roberson Wrestling Center to the north side, along with a new volleyball locker room.

The mammoth Great Expectations Campaign for Sooner Sports poured another \$6 million into a comprehensive interior makeover to reverse the years of in-

Masons tuck-pointed the brick on all sides; the cast-stone accents were returned to gleaming white. All the windows were replaced with energy-efficient

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adequate maintenance. The old building, now named for early-day basketball star T. Howard McCasland, was completely rewired to permit the first-ever climate control—yes, that means air conditioning—new lighting and sound system, a

versions that still maintained the character of the building. New doors now grace the main entry to the south lobby, as well as those on the east and west sides, and their gothic transoms were refinished. Additional exterior lights were installed.



Robert Taylor

Scaffolding surrounds the McCasland Field House, a landmark athletics facility long-ignored until a decade-long interior and exterior renovation project put it back on the campus map.

state-of-the-art scoreboard, chair-back and retractable seating and refurbishing of the historic 60-year-old wood floor.

As students departed the campus in the spring, contractors, under the supervision of OU Architectural and Engineering Services, moved in to match the exterior to the renovated interior. A new roof was installed. Existing horizontal skylights were removed, and the vertical glass panels extending the length of the building were replaced with translucent ones that admit light but not the glare plaguing the high-flying volleyball players.

Inside, the south lobby's terrazzo floor was replaced, and the second floor air conditioning was extended in areas like the restrooms.

In an era in which tear-downs are all-too-often the norm, it is reassuring to see those campus architectural treasures worth preserving being updated and repurposed for future generations. With careful attention of the athletes' needs and the fans' comfort and enjoyment, the McCasland Field House has been transformed and is once again looking great.

—CJB