RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

Current building name: McArthur Court
Historic building name: McArthur Court, Mac Court, The Pit, McArthur Amphitheater, The Basket Ball Pavilion, The Igloo
Building address: 1601 University Street
Ranking: Primary

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural style classification: Half Modern
Building plan (footprint shape): Rectangular
Number of stories: 4
Foundation material(s): Concrete
Primary exterior wall material: Stucco
Secondary exterior wall material: Corrugated Metal
Roof configuration/type: Vaulted
Primary roof material: Metal
Primary window type: Horizontal-pivot sash
Primary window material: Steel
Decorative features and materials: Blind arches, string course, buttresses, and diamond panels atop corners
Landscape features: Located on the University Street Axis with sidewalks, stairs and foundation plantings (virtually nonexistent except for a few shrubs: Spirea, Mock Orange and Weigela)
Associated resources: Howe Field, Howe Field Gate and Soldier’s Memorial (by O.B. Dawson), University Street Axis, and connected to Esslinger Hall via the Athletic Department Offices
Comments:

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Date of construction: 1928
Architect: Lawrence and Holford
Builder/Contractor: A.J. Pajunen
Moved? (yes/no): No        Date of move(s): N/A
Description/dates of major additions/alterations: 1937: new roof; 1954: Athletic Department Addition (Lawrence, Tucker and Wallman) connects McArthur Court to Esslinger Hall; 1955: addition of exterior trusses, corner stair towers and concrete exit balconies as fire escapes; 1966: renovations to the roof and stucco exterior; 1996: new metal roof changes from curved to gabled profile and a seating and court remodel (Soderstrom Architects)
### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS & SIGNIFICANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original use(s) or function(s): Basketball Arena</th>
<th>Current use(s) or function(s): Basketball Arena/performing arts venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area(s) of significance: Education, Architecture</td>
<td>Period of significance: 1928-1956</td>
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Statement of Significance (use continuation sheet if necessary):

McArthur Court was named after Clifton N. “Pat” McArthur, who was the first president of the ASUO, first editor of the school newspaper, the student director of athletics, and Speaker of the Oregon legislature and Representative to Congress. Clifton has been called the “Father of Oregon Athletics.” It was designed in the Half Modern style by Ellis Lawrence, with a rectangular footprint and a concrete foundation. The four-story building has an exterior stucco application and a vaulted metal roof. It also uses the Lamella technique of vaulting that originated in Holland, of which it is the first example in the Northwest, and possibly the West Coast (replaced in 1996). It was utilized in order to cut costs and span 109’ using 10’ lengths of 2” x 12” lumber. It was originally intended to seat 6,000 spectators, but seating grew to 10,000 by 1955, when the addition of side balconies, exterior trusses, and corner stair towers helped to expand the facility, altering the original exterior. On the new exterior, one can see blind arches, a string course, buttresses, and diamond panels atop corners. A second expansion in the 1970s added end balconies. The Howe Field Gate to the south was designed by renowned blacksmith O.B. Dawson in 1937, who also designed Dads’ Gates and the interior Knight Library Gates.

McArthur Court is touted as the oldest on-campus basketball arena in the country. On January 14, 1927 the U of O Ducks, then the Webfoots, played the Willamette University Bearcats in the first game held at McArthur Court with the UO Webfoots taking a 38-10 win. In those days the arena was known as the Igloo, it held 6,000 fans and had no upper balconies. Mac Court was the home of the Tall Firs, an Oregon team that in 1939 won the first-ever NCAA national championship game. In a 2002 interview with John Dick, one of the members of the Tall Firs, he reminisced about the notorious fan support at basketball games. According to Mr. Dick, “From the beginning Mac Court had plenty of noise. In terms of crowd support, I don’t think it was terribly different than it is now. If you tried to yell something to one of your teammates at the height of the action, you couldn’t hear. It was as deafening then as it is now.” The building was completely paid for by a self-imposed student fee, and in 1932 after the final payment was made, students burned the Mac Court mortgage in a public ceremony. Not only has the court continued to be the home of the Ducks basketball teams to this day, but it has also been the site of many important community and state events over the years. Musicians from the likes of Stravinsky and Vagner to Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong to the Grateful Dead have performed there. Jack Dempsey has fought there. In 1946, then basketball coach Howard Hobson brought Charles Patterson to McArthur Court to play for the Ducks, who became the first African American to play basketball in the Northern Division of the Pacific Coast Conference. To this day, McArthur Court is a central performing arts and athletics venue for not only the campus community, but for the entire city of Eugene and Lane County. This is reflected in the many nicknames that the building has acquired over the years, including “The White Elephant”, “The Igloo”, “Mac Court” and “The Pit”.

On the whole, the building has retained a good amount of integrity and has been kept in good condition. Despite the alterations, consisting of a new roof in 1937, the addition of rollaway bleachers in 1949, the addition of metal corner stair towers in the 1950’s, and a renovation of the roof in 1996, McArthur Court is a relatively unchanged landmark on campus. It is a significant resource that is individually eligible to be listed in the National Register. It is ranked as a primary campus resource for its good integrity and high significance.

### NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Significance (check one):</th>
<th>X High _ Medium _ Low _ Very Low or None</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity (check one): _ Excellent X Good _ Fair _ Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition (check one): _ Excellent X Good _ Fair _ Poor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Building designation: _ City Landmark _ National Register _ National Historic Landmark X Not listed</td>
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Preliminary National Register eligibility findings

Building is potentially eligible: X Individually or _ As a contributing resource in a district only

If eligible individually, applicable criteria (check all that apply):

- X A. Associated with significant events
- B. Associated with significant persons
- C. Distinctively architecturally
- D. Archaeologically important

If applicable, building qualifies under NR Criterion Considerations: _ Yes _ No If yes, which apply:

Building is NOT eligible: _ Intact but lacks distinctiveness or _ Altered/loss of integrity or _ Not 50 years old
DOCUMENTATION

Indicate resources consulted when researching this building (check all that apply):

- University archives
- Sanborn maps
- State Archives
- Local Historic Society
- Biographical encyclopedias
- UO Planning Office files
- Building permits
- State Library
- Personal interviews
- Obituary indexes
- Newspapers
- SHPO files
- State Historic Society
- Historic photographs
- Other (see below)

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Primary source materials, McArthur Court architectural drawings located in the UO Planning & Facilities Services hanging files.

Pennington, John W. "The Eskimo Ice House." Lane County Historian (Fall 1987): 62-4.

“75th anniversary: A friendly fortress: Mac Court will always feel like home to Ducks." Eugene, OR, The Register Guard, 15 January, 2002, 1A.


RECORDING INFORMATION

Researched: Dustin Welch and Andrea Blaser, Winter 2006
Recorded: Susan Johnson and University Planning Office, Summer 2006 (updated June 2007)
Photo number or name:
Building Name: McArthur Court

PHOTOGRAPH

Site Plan

- Stairs are remnant of the walled in east entrance
- Howe Field Gate and Soldiers Memorial
- McArthur Court 1928
- Connection to Esslinger Hall in 1954
- Howe Field
- Student Tennis