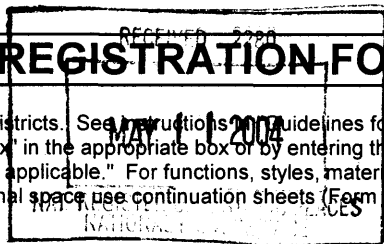


027

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See Instructions and Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Luther Williams Field
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 225 Willie Smokey Glover Boulevard, Central City Park
city, town Macon () vicinity of
county Bibb **code** GA 021
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31202

() not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- () private
- (X) public-local
- () public-state
- () public-federal

Category of Property:

- (X) building(s)
- () district
- () site
- () structure
- () object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	1	3
sites	0	0
structures	2	0
objects	0	0
total	3	3

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard Lewis

Signature of certifying official

5-6-04

Date

for W. Ray Luce
Historic Preservation Division Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Daniel J. Hill 6/24/04

determined eligible for the National Register.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

for

Keeper of the National Register

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/SPORTS FACILITY/PLAYING FIELD AND STADIUM

Current Functions:

RECREATION AND CULTURE/SPORTS FACILITY/PLAYING FIELD AND STADIUM

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

NO STYLE

Materials:

foundation	Concrete
walls	Brick; Concrete
roof	Metal/Aluminum; Metal/Steel
other	N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Luther Williams Field is located in Central City Park, which is southeast and adjacent to the downtown commercial district of Macon. The park is bounded on the west by the CSX Transportation Railroad tracks, on the north by Seventh Street, on the east by the Ocmulgee River, and on the south by a low-lying wooded and industrial area. Interstate 16 is located along the east bank of the Ocmulgee River and the Ocmulgee National Monument is located adjacent to and east of Interstate 16. The park was established in 1826 and continues to be used as a recreational area today. The Georgia State Fair has been held in the park since 1851, and a baseball field has been at the current location of Luther Williams Field since 1904. Luther Williams Field is the third baseball park that was constructed in Macon. The first park, located at the foot of Mulberry Street, east of the present Terminal Station, was built c. 1885. By 1904 a baseball park and grandstand were constructed in Central City Park in approximately the same location as the present field. The current field, grandstand, and ticket office, designed by Curran Ellis, were constructed in 1929.

The ticket office (photographs 1, 2, 7, and 12), located in front of the stadium, is a small, brick, three-bay building with a flat tile roof. The center bay is taller than the flanking bays and has an arched walk-through supported by square columns with an iron gate. The flanking bays each contain ticket windows on three sides and an entrance door at the rear (photograph 7). In the early 20th century ball-shaped finials topped the square columns of the ticket office. These were removed and an arched wrought iron banner (photograph 1) with the name "LUTHER WILLIAMS FIELD", added later, now tops the ticket office.

The grandstand (photographs 2, 6, and 16) is a concrete and steel structure with locker rooms, offices, concessions (photographs 9 and 10), and restrooms under the seating area. The central

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

section of the grandstand was designed to be 100 feet long, with wings of approximately 70 feet constructed parallel to the third and first base lines. The underneath portions of the grandstand (photographs 2, 5, and 6) have been filled in with brick to accommodate more offices, larger locker rooms, and storage space, however, original materials still exist. Dropped acoustical tile ceilings were installed on the interior, but the underside of the concrete bleachers (photograph 10) can be seen above the tiles as well as original tongue-and-groove ceilings in the coaches' offices. The locker rooms (photographs 21 and 22) are in their original locations under the grandstand. The home team locker room at the southwest end of the grandstand was expanded (photograph 20, at right) in 1994. The grandstand seating area is accessed by three tunnels (photographs 5, 8, 9, and 20) from the front of the stadium. The original monumental brick archways leading into the tunnels still exist. The original steel trusses that support the roof are still present (photographs 11 and 14). The roof has been replaced, and the wooden bleachers have been replaced by plastic seats. A set of metal bleachers on each side of the grandstand (photograph 16, at left and right) sits in the place of the original wooden bleachers that were used by the African-American patrons at the park. The press box (photographs 11, 15, 16, 18, and 19) is suspended from the steel trusses in the roof system directly behind home plate in its original location. The dugouts (photographs 15, 16, and 19) also remain in their original locations.

The original field was 250 feet from home plate to the old left field fence, 400 feet to the center field fence, and 250 feet to the right field fence. The field configuration has been changed several times since 1929. Currently the field (photographs 13 and 16) is 335 feet at left field and right field, and 400 feet at center field. A modern fence surrounds the field (photographs 3 and 4).

At one time there were foundation plantings around the grandstand entrance. Today landscaping at the park is minimal, but includes foundation plantings near the ticket office (photographs 1 and 2). Parking lots (not included in the boundary) are located in front of the ticket office (photographs 2 and 12) and behind the outfield fence (photograph 3).

According to historic photographs from the early 1930s, there was a wooden fence around the front façade of the grandstand in the early 20th century. There were also gates leading to the team locker rooms and the grandstand seating area. According to photographs from the late 1940s, there were wooden bleachers parallel to the foul lines and a covered shed was located adjacent to the outfield fence at the third base line side. Eight light pylons, installed in 1936, surrounded the outfield and playing field, and the outfield fence had painted advertising signs.

In 1946 the wood roof covering of the grandstand was replaced, and the walls and bleachers were repainted. In 1947 the infield was plowed under and leveled. Other work included putting rest rooms, visiting and home players' locker rooms, and umpires' dressing rooms in first class condition. By 1954, there were roofs covering the bleachers used by African-American spectators, which were located near the third base line, and new lights were installed in the park. In 1955 the front of the grandstand appears similar to photos taken in 1932 and 1949.

In 1956 the fence line was changed to 330 feet at left and right field and 390 feet at center field. The

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

old wooden bleachers were removed and replaced with new steel stands. Two outfield lights were moved and four towers of new lights were installed on the field. A new electric scoreboard was installed in 1957. An office, with an umpire's room adjoining it, was constructed to the left of the main entrance under the grandstand. The wooden fence surrounding the entrance side of the grandstand was removed and a new cyclone fence was installed.

By 1964, the roofs covering the bleachers along the third base line were removed and new bleachers were installed. In 1983 the City of Macon constructed new modern restrooms (the original restrooms were under the seating area between the concession stands and the steps leading to the seating area), painted the grandstand, and installed landscaping. In 1999 new plastic seats and a new metal roof were installed and the locker rooms and press box were upgraded.

It was noted that Luther Williams Field, in a survey conducted in 1992, was not in compliance with 28 PBA (Professional Baseball Agreements) requirements and 47 recommendations, most of which addressed the grandstand. That agreement set standards that had to be met at all minor league parks by the start of the 1995 season. In 1994, a major flood breached the levee in Central City Park and inundated the entire area. Repairs were again necessary. The restrooms had additional toilets installed. The home team's locker room was expanded and new carpeting and acoustical tile ceilings were installed. The manager's office was expanded to the left of the existing office to provide more storage space. The concession stands were upgraded. Metal mesh was installed at the original balustrade behind the grandstand seats near the roofline to meet code and safety requirements.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Entertainment/Recreation
Ethnic Heritage/ Black
Social History

Period of Significance:

1929-1956

Significant Dates:

1929-Construction of the field and grandstand
1932-First night game played under lights powered by a portable generator
1936-First night game played under permanent lights
1949-First game in Georgia to be played with an integrated team
1953-South Atlantic League integrated
1955-First African-American players on Macon team
1956-Franchise sold to Brooklyn Dodgers

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Curran Ellis, architect
Watson Walker, engineer

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Luther Williams Field, named for a former mayor of Macon, has been the home of minor league professional baseball in Macon since it was constructed in 1929. The park is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation as the oldest baseball park in Georgia and for hosting a minor league baseball team since it was constructed in 1929. Organized baseball has been played in Macon since 1860 and this site has been associated with baseball since the 1904 construction of Macon's second ballpark. The first all-pro baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was formed in 1869. Macon's first all-pro team was formed in 1885.

It is also significant in the area of architecture for its design, typical of baseball stadiums constructed in the early 20th century. Baseball parks, like Luther Williams Field, usually consisted of a grandstand with team and public spaces under the seating and a baseball diamond. The grandstand houses team locker rooms, concession areas, manager's offices, and restrooms. With the development of structural steel and poured cement for use in buildings at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, some of the early 20th century grandstands utilized this method of construction. The first use of reinforced concrete and steel trusses for baseball grandstands was in 1909 at Stribe Park in Philadelphia and at Forbes Field (demolished in 1971) in Pittsburgh. The grandstand at Luther Williams Park is a typical example of that trend. Other grandstands, such as the Yale University grandstand, constructed in 1927, in New Haven, Connecticut, added masonry front facades. Most had bleachers on either side of the grandstand. The concession stands were either under the grandstand seats or set out from the grandstand at the entrance. Some of the grandstands were open or partially enclosed under the stands; others, usually in colder climates, were totally enclosed. Centennial Field (extant) in Burlington, Vermont, constructed in 1922, is an early example of poured concrete and steel construction. The general layout is very similar to that in Macon. Exposed steel trusses support the roof covering and there are concrete seats. Cooper Stadium (extant), in Columbus, Ohio, opened in 1932, and has similar construction to the Macon stadium with a capacity of 15,000. In Wilson, North Carolina, Fleming Stadium (extant) opened in 1936. It has angular wings similar to those in Macon, steel girders, and poured concrete seats. There appears to be some infill under the seats as in Macon. Grayson Stadium (extant) in Savannah, Georgia, built in 1941, has a similar roof, seating, and bleachers, as well as an arched entry. Paterson Field (extant) in Montgomery, Alabama, opened in 1949, seats 7,000 and has a similar layout, grandstand, and seating as that found in Macon. Veterans Memorial Stadium in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, opened in 1949, and was one of the last examples found of the use of steel trusses with a configuration similar to the earlier grandstands. In comparing Luther Williams Field to the above-mentioned grandstands, it appears that it is one of the earliest examples of poured cement and steel truss baseball stadium construction in the country.

Most of the early grandstands were utilitarian structures well designed for their intended use so that spectators were close to the field, had good visibility, and were somewhat protected from the sun and rain. What separates these grandstands is the ornamentation and detailing at the entry. From examples noted above, it appears that Macon's grandstand has one of the finest existing examples in the country of a pre-World War II freestanding ticket office and ornamental triple-arch entry with

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

similar side entries. Luther Williams Field is part of Macon's first recreational complex, Central City Park, which was developed in the mid-19th century and still maintains its recreational function. It is the oldest baseball park in Georgia and one of the oldest minor league parks with an active minor league team in the United States.

Luther Williams Field is also significant in the areas of social history and ethnic heritage/Black as the site of the first minor league baseball game played in Georgia with a racially integrated team (Brooklyn Dodgers) in 1949, and for its racially segregated seating areas and public spaces, typical of public recreational areas during the historic period. The South Atlantic League integrated in 1953, and the Macon Peaches signed their first African-American players in 1956. This was an early milestone in the desegregation battle in Georgia and the nation that continued for many years until the Civil Rights Act in the 1960s.

National Register Criteria

Luther Williams Field is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of entertainment/recreation and social history and ethnic heritage/black as a typical early to mid-20th century baseball park with segregated spaces for patrons. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its grandstand facilities, ticket office, and playing field which are good and intact examples of these types of facilities during the historic period.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for Luther Williams Field begins in 1929, the year the grandstand and field were constructed, and ends in 1956, the year the Brooklyn Dodgers took over operation of the Macon franchise. This includes the period of time during which desegregation of professional baseball teams occurred in Georgia.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The contributing resources at Luther Williams Field include the grandstand, ticket office, and playing field. The noncontributing resources on the property are two storage sheds along the third base line and an umpires' building along the first base line. The bleachers along the first and third base lines have not been included in the resource count due to their temporary nature.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

****NOTE: The following history was compiled by Maryel Battin, preservation consultant, December, 2002. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.**

According to the History of Macon and Central Georgia by John C. Butler, Central City Park was created by an act of the State Legislature in 1826 and comprised nearly six hundred acres. Improvements were made beginning in 1871 by the municipal authorities at an expense of \$300,000 and included an amphitheatre, equine houses, stock pens, music pavilions, cottages for ladies, editors and visitors, a one-mile track, and a parade ground for the military and athletic exercises. The bandstand or music pavilion and the one-mile track still exist, but the amphitheatre and cottages are no longer extant. A round exhibit building was constructed in the early 20th century. The Georgia State Fair has been held in the park annually since 1851. A variety of buildings for stock pens were built over the years and an earlier baseball diamond, grandstand, and bleachers were located in the Park by 1904 in approximately the same location as the present Luther B. Williams Baseball Park. Central City Park is still used for recreational purposes and includes softball fields and picnic grounds.

In 1885 Macon had its first professional baseball team, which was a member of the Southern League, and played teams including those from Savannah, Memphis, and Chattanooga. An exhibition game took place on April 8, 1885 between Macon and the National League Cleveland squad. The regular season opened on April 16 with Macon at home against Chattanooga. Admission was 25 cents. Fans or "cranks", as they were called at that time, stood behind ropes or on bleachers, and women were seated in the grandstand. Early seasons were marred by lack of attendance, financial problems, and poor field performance.

Luther Williams Field is the third baseball park that was constructed in Macon. The first park, located at the foot of Mulberry Street, east of the present Terminal Station, was built c. 1885. By 1904 a baseball park and grandstand were constructed in Central City Park in approximately the same location as the present field. There were 4,000 grandstand seats and 1,000 bleacher seats. According to an historic photo from 1926, the roof was supported by what appears to be wooden posts with triangular brackets at the roofline. There were slatted wood seats and a balustrade composed of X-shaped members. According to the Macon Telegraph on March 17, 1919, the grandstand was in bad condition. There was no top on the bleachers to protect against the sun, the fence was falling down, and parts of the stadium had been destroyed by fire. However, it would be another nine years before plans were made to replace the grandstand. The grandstand and field were still being used until September 29, 1928 according to City Council minutes.

According to the Centennial Edition of the Macon Telegraph in 1926, the Macon Ball Club was organized in 1892. In 1894 spring training was introduced to Macon when the Baltimore Orioles came to town. From 1897 until 1904 Macon did not have a local team. In 1910 George Stallings, manager of the American League Club, and a native of Haddock, Georgia, brought the New York

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Yankees to Macon for spring training. Mr. Stallings was manager of the Boston Braves in 1913 and manager of the Buffalo Club in 1915. During those years he brought his teams to Macon for spring training. Although invitations were sent to Yale University and other teams to train in Macon, there is no record of any acceptances. During the period 1923-42 the Macon Peaches played intermittently. In 1927 the Macon Peaches were sold to Ben Spiller, owner of the Atlanta Club, to use as a "farm" to develop future Class A stars.

On August 28, 1928, Mayor Luther Williams signed an agreement to construct a park to cost no more than \$40,000. There would be 3,000 grandstand seats, 1,500 bleacher seats, and 500 seats for African-American patrons. Watson Walker, city engineer, drew plans for the field. The architect for the grandstand was Curran Ellis (1872-1934), a native of Macon who graduated from Mercer University in 1889. He studied with local architect D. B. Woodruff and Willis Denny of Atlanta. Ellis was responsible for the reconstruction of Fort Hawkins in 1928, the Lanier School for Boys in 1922, both located in Macon, and several apartment houses in the College Hill area of Macon in the early part of the 20th century. There is no record of his having designed other grandstands, although the Macon Telegraph stated in his obituary that "Luther Williams Baseball Park is now used as a model for similar plans in other cities."

According to the Macon Telegraph on December 23, 1928, a contract was let to construct the park. On December 24, 1928 at a City Council meeting, bids were received for construction costs. Blount Construction Company, a firm that recently relocated to Macon from Florida, was the low bidder at \$39,892. Separate bids were received and accepted from Miller Brothers for the plumbing at \$4,283.55 and from H. E. Lowe Electric Company for \$270.00. Curran Ellis, architect, was to receive fees amounting to six percent of the total. Although \$40,000 had been appropriated by City Council on August 28, 1928, that amount was amended when the bids totaled \$44,445.55. All contractors had to provide performance bonds guaranteeing completion of work except Lowe Electric. This information was announced in the Macon Telegraph on December 25, 1928, and work began by December 28, according to another article of that date. Some approval for payments is noted in the Council minutes, but other approvals do not mention a dollar figure. However, Blount Construction was paid in full May 21, 1929. The amounts noted total approximately \$33,000 with "some money spent to prepare the field for practice".

According to the Macon Telegraph on March 28, 1929, work was in process but the steelwork had been delayed which in turn delayed installation of the seats. The first exhibition game was to be played April 1, 1929 between the Macon Peaches and the Cincinnati Reds. The park was still not complete with the central entrance still to be finished. The Reds manager refused to allow his players to compete because debris and workmen's materials were on the diamond and the field was not in good condition. After the Reds decided to leave for Atlanta, the Macon Peaches played the Mercer Bears winning 12-4 in the first game in the park. Luther Williams Ball Park opened on April 18, 1929, and was dedicated June 13, 1929, when the Macon Peaches played the Asheville Tourists in a four-game series. The field was named in honor of Mayor Luther Williams, and the official designation was Luther Williams Field. Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis, high commissioner of baseball, threw out the first ball. W. G. Bramham, president of the South Atlantic, Piedmont and

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Eastern Carolina Leagues was also present. Paul Richards, later a major league catcher and manager, hit a home run and won the game for Macon 3-2. The first fair ball hit out of the park occurred on May 6, 1929 when the Macon Peaches won over the Augusta team.

The Macon Telegraph noted that the final cost of constructing the grandstand and field was \$62,000. In reviewing the Council's minutes for 1928 and until final payment was made to Blount in May, 1929, no record could be found to show that the increased amount had been appropriated by City Council and the \$62,000 figure reported in the newspaper may have been in error.

According to articles in the Macon Telegraph on October 24, 25 and 26, the Brooklyn Baseball Association signed an agreement with the City of Macon on October 25, 1928, for a five-year renewable lease to the new park for \$4,000 annually. There is no record as to how long that lease lasted.

In 1932, the first night game was played at Luther Williams Field with a portable power plant provided by a visiting exhibition team, the House of David, known for their long black beards. Also in 1932, according to an article in the Macon Telegraph on June 6, 1932, the first Sunday game was played, much to the consternation of local religious leaders. The Georgia General Assembly did not legalize Sunday entertainment until 1949. In Macon there was a program to supply braces for children with infantile paralysis from a portion of the proceeds of Sunday games, which served to quiet much of the opposition.

On July 20, 1936, the first night South Atlantic (Sally) League game was played under three million candlepower with light towers along each foul line and in the outfield. Two projectors were installed on top of the grandstand centered on the pitcher's box.

Buck O'Neil, who joined the Kansas City Monarchs in 1938, moved to the majors in 1955 as a scout for the Chicago Cubs, and became the first African-American coach in big-league baseball in 1962, stated in Baseball: An Illustrated History, "We got in the ballpark once in Macon, Georgia and I got the stuff off the bus and went into the dugout and here's the Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. They're going to march in that field. So you know, when the KKK was marching that means all black people, you closed your windows, you brought the shades down and all. So he says, 'You boys aren't going to play here tonight. We're going to march here tonight.' I say "Yessir". So we get back on the bus and go on. These were some of the things that we had to contend with." No record of that confrontation could be found in the Macon Telegraph.

The attendance at Macon's baseball games mirrored baseball attendance nationally. During the Depression attendance slumped until the New Deal programs came into effect and reduced working hours. The Civilian Conservation Corps allowed young men to play after work in rural work camps and sparked interest in the sport. In the 1930s most baseball fields were near commercial districts and could be reached by streetcar or subway. Prior to World War II the use of automobiles was increasing and inadequate parking at some fields was a problem. Macon's field was within a mile of the commercial district and Central City Park provided adequate parking. Because of the interest in

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

the new baseball park and the introduction of Sunday games, Macon's attendance was stable during this period.

However, World War II saw many players and fans drafted into the armed services with a resulting drop in attendance. Bus service to the park was discontinued, attendance was low, and games were discontinued from 1942 through 1946. By 1948, a long-time owner of the Macon Peaches, Roy G. Williams, who had a very successful drugstore on Cherry Street at Second Street for many years, sold his interest due to ill health. The new owners were William A. Fickling, B. Sanders Walker, and R. D. Kingman. Fickling and Walker were partners in the real estate and insurance field and Kingman was a beer distributor. After the War, with the introduction of African-Americans to major league rosters, attendance sparked both nationally and in Macon. Luther Williams Field for the first time had almost as many African-American fans as white fans. Nationally there were 59 minor leagues, 7800 players, and 20 million fans.

It was in 1949 at Luther Williams Field that the first baseball game in Georgia played with an integrated team occurred, according to Macon Telegraph articles on January 15 and 18, 1949. Both Jackie Robinson and Roy Campanella were coming to Georgia with the Brooklyn Dodgers for exhibition games. Governor Talmadge and Dr. Samuel Green, head of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia, were to study the legality of the games. Although there were many laws governing segregation in Georgia at that time, there were no laws against African-Americans playing baseball with whites. No local Macon ordinance was found to prohibit such an activity. The Dodgers came to Macon on April 7 of that year prior to leaving for games in Atlanta. Over 6,400 fans, the largest attendance ever in Macon at the time, were at the field to see the game with an almost equal number of white and black fans in the stands and bleachers. When Jackie Robinson stepped to the plate, black fans cheered him; white fans booed him, although by the end of the game some of the white spectators applauded him. Campanella did not play that day. The Dodgers won 11-2.

During the 1950s many new segregation statutes were passed, some barring interracial sports. Southern leagues became white again and black fans protested the dropping of black players. There was also the introduction of television and radio broadcast of the games, both of which impacted attendance. Some Sally League teams integrated to try to attract more black fans. All of these factors had an impact on the financial health of the baseball business.

On March 31, 1953, the Sally League integrated and three black players were on the Jacksonville Braves team. When they came to Macon, attendance doubled due to the increased number of black fans.

In 1954 financial losses were mounting for Fickling and Walker who announced they were leaving the baseball business. For years they had used profits from their real estate and insurance businesses to cover losses of the baseball ownership. They offered the club to Macon fans for \$30,000 and the Macon Chamber of Commerce formed a "Save Macon Baseball Committee." By the end of the season a non-profit organization, the Central Georgia Foundation, Inc., was the owner of the club with directors coming from the Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees, the City of Macon, and Bibb

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

County. Any profits would be distributed to charity. However, continued financial losses occurred and local businesses were asked to sponsor games and either sell or give away tickets.

In 1955, the first black players were on the Macon team, Sam Drake and Ernie Johnson. In 1956, John Glenn, from Moultrie, Georgia, was the first black player to be voted the most popular member of the team.

Also in 1956, the Brooklyn Dodgers took over the operation of the Macon franchise and the Peaches became the Macon Dodgers.

By 1961, Macon had no team and no equipment, the park was in poor repair, and the saving grace for baseball in Macon was the hiring of Bob Bonifay, general manager at Jacksonville. The club was sold to Darnell and George White who did maintenance work at Cochran Airfield near Macon. In 1962, the Cincinnati Reds took over the lease of the ballpark. It was during the 1962 season that Pete Rose played for the Peaches. In 1964, Luther Williams Field had its highest attendance ever, 7,005 paid admissions, when two Macon natives, Marv Fodor and Blue Moon Odom were playing on opposing teams, the Macon Peaches (Fodor) and the Birmingham Barons (Odom).

In 1975, the park was used for scenes in the movie "Bingo Long's Traveling All-Stars." Although \$155,000 worth of repairs were recommended in 1979 including new seats, new restrooms, and a new roof, it appears that only \$12,000 worth of improvements were made in 1980 when the City agreed to repair the outfield fence, focus the field's lights, install an outfield warning track and build new ceilings in the dressing rooms.

By 1982, the Macon club was \$60,000 in debt and was bailed out by A. Ray Smith, an oilman from Oklahoma, who had an interest in the local team and ran the Louisville Kentucky franchise. In 1988, the City spent over \$500,000 on the baseball park to install new seating, a new roof covering, and upgrade the dressing rooms and press box. These improvements were instrumental in getting the Atlanta Braves farm team to come to Macon. This greatly improved attendance figures with numbers in the early years from 4,000 to 5,500. The first season's total attendance was 107,059. However, according to an article in the Macon Telegraph on August 26, 1994, attendance became mediocre. The Braves moved the team to Rome, Georgia after the 2002 season. Today a new league is associated with Luther Williams Field. The Southern League of Professional Baseball, an independent minor league, has a franchise at the park, and they are using the historic name, Macon Peaches.

HISTORY OF SPRING TRAINING IN LUTHER WILLIAMS FIELD

According to the Centennial Edition of the Macon Telegraph in 1926, the history of spring training in Macon began in 1894 when the Baltimore Orioles were in Macon for their spring training. Macon was chosen because of its "excellent climate, atmosphere and abundance of sunshine." The following teams have conducted spring training in Macon from 1894 to 1941:

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

1894-96	Baltimore Orioles. Won three pennants during those years
1904-06	Boston Americans
1910	New York Yankees; brought to Macon by George Stallings, manager of the American League Club; native of Haddock, Georgia
1911	Toronto International League
1913	Boston Braves; brought to Macon by George Stallings, now manager of Boston Braves
1915	Buffalo Club; brought to Macon by George Stallings, now manager of that club
1920s	Yale University Team
1928	Local team played preseason series with New York Giants
1930-32	Hartford (Conn.) Agents
1940	Cleveland Indians and New York Giants exhibition game
1941	Montreal Royals, Brooklyn Dodgers, and Kansas City Blues

HISTORY OF BASEBALL FRANCHISES AT LUTHER WILLIAMS FIELD:

Macon has been a member of a number of leagues and has had numerous charter franchises over the last 118 years:

1885-86	Macon Southern League; charter franchise Disbanded after 1886 season
1887	Macon Browns Inter-State League, amateur team
1892-93	Macon Central City Southern League; charter franchise Disbanded during 1893 season
1894	Macon Hornets Southern League; renamed franchise Disbanded during 1894 season
1898	Macon Southern League; charter franchise Disbanded with league during 1898
1904-16	Macon Elbertas and Macon Peaches (aka Highlands, 1904; Brigands, 1905) South Atlantic League (D); charter franchise
1917	Macon Tigers South Atlantic League (D); renamed franchise Disbanded during 1917 season
1918-22	No Macon team
1923-30	Macon Peaches South Atlantic Association(B); relocated franchise (Charleston Pals) Disbanded after 1930 season

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

1932	Macon Peaches Southeastern League (B); charter franchise Disbanded during 1932 season
1936-42	Macon Peaches
1939	Working agreement with Brooklyn Dodgers
1940	Working agreement with Chicago Cubs
1946-56	South Atlantic League; charter franchise
1956-60	Macon Dodgers South Atlantic League (A) Renamed franchise (Macon Peaches)
1961-62	Macon Peaches South Atlantic League (A)
1963	Macon Peaches South Atlantic League (AA)
1964-67	Macon Peaches Southern League (AA); charter franchise Disbanded after 1967 season
1967-79	No professional baseball
1980-83	Macon Peaches South Atlantic League (A); charter franchise
1984-87	Macon Pirates South Atlantic League (A); renamed franchise Disbanded after 1987
1988-90	No professional baseball
1991-2002	Macon Braves South Atlantic League (A); relocated franchise (Sumter Flyers 1985-90)

HISTORY OF NOTABLES WHO PLAYED AT LUTHER WELLLAMS FIELD:

1909	Ty Cobb
1938-39	Paul Richard
1940s	Lee Holloman, no hitter with St Louis Browns
1949	Jackie Robinson
1950	Ted Williams played in exhibition game
1954	Henry Aaron
1958	Joe DiMaggio
1962-64	Macon Peaches under working agreement with the Cincinnati Reds: Pete Rose, Tommy Helms, Art Shamsky, Mel Queen, Gus Gill

DEVELOPMENT OF BASEBALL NATIONALLY:

1869	First all-pro team - Cincinnati Red Stockings
------	---

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

- 1876 National League of Base Ball Clubs formed
- 1882 American Baseball Association
Formed by owners of big city clubs not in National League
- 1896 All African-American team played white team. Pythians vs. City Items of Philadelphia
- 1919 Structure of today's minor leagues as farm system was formed
- 1921 First radio broadcast
- 1924 First Negro World Series
- 1929-39 Depression; attendance plummeted
- 1930s First regular season night game played in Des Moines, 1930
- 1933 Minors added post season play to help finances
Attendance total: 3.5 million drop of 40-50% from 1930
- 1934 New Deal program - reduction of working hours; Civilian Conservation Corps - young men played after work in rural work camps; baseball became more affordable and accessible
- 1935 First major league night game in Cincinnati
- 1936 21 minor leagues
- 1940 300 minor leaguers in armed forces
- 1946 Pre-war stars returned from war to play
- 1947 Jackie Robinson in majors; then teams started signing other African-Americans
- 1949 Best year for minors: 59 leagues, 7800 players, 20 million fans
- 1959 Minor leagues dropped to 20 teams, 2500 players, half number of fans
- 1954 100 new segregation statutes passed; several specifically barred interracial sports; Southern leagues became white again; Black fans protested dropping of black players

9. Major Bibliographic References

Alexander, Charles C. Breaking the Slump: Baseball in the Depression Era. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Baseball America Calendar. Durham, North Carolina: American Sports Publishing, Inc., 1987.

"Baseball Stands in Need of Repairs." The Macon (Ga.) Daily Telegraph, March 17, 1919, p. 8.

Battin, Maryel. "Luther Williams Field." Historic Property Information Form, December, 2002. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

Bird's Eye View Maps of Macon, Georgia.

Bonifay, Bob. General Manager, Macon Peaches, Macon, Georgia. Interview by Maryel Battin, December, 2002.

Bowers, Harley. Executive Sports Editor and Sports Columnist, Macon (Ga.) Telegraph & News, 1959-1996, Macon, Georgia. Interview by Maryel Battin, December, 2002.

Brumbach, Bill. "Blount Construction Company to Build Baseball Park Here." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, December 25, 1928.

Brumbach, Bill. "Contracts Let For Local Park." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, December 23, 1928.

Brumbach, Bill. "Construction Work is Started on New Baseball Plant at Park." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, December 28, 1928.

Brumbach, Bill. "Macon's Present Project for Park Gaining Ground." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, October 24, 1928.

Brumbach, Bill. "Work on New Ball Park Will Commence at Once." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, October 28, 1928.

Butler, John C. History of Macon and Central Georgia. Middle Georgia Historical Society, 1969.

"Face Lifting of Ball Park To Get in Full Swing Soon." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, January 11, 1956.

Filichia, Peter. Professional Baseball Franchises: From the Abbeville Athletics to the Zanesville Indians. New York.

Glassman, Sam. "Two Negro Players Signed By Peaches." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, April 9, 1955.

Howell, Orbin. Macon resident, Macon, Georgia. Interview by Maryel Battin, December, 2002.

<http://users.bestweb.net/mersbach/minpparks.htm>

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Jones, Jimmy. "Gala Week of Macon Baseball Season Will Begin Tomorrow." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, June 9, 1929.

Jones, Jimmy. "Game Today to Dedicate Ball Stands." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, June 13, 1929, p. 1.

Jones, Jimmy. "Peaches Work At New Park Today." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, March 28, 1929.

"Macon Baseball Team Organized." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, Centennial Edition, 1926, p. 4.

"Macon's New Ball Park To Be Named For Mayor." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, May 1, 1929.

"Mixed Races on Diamond Made Issue in Game Here." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, January 15, 1949.

Norris, Bobby. "Lighting Plant is Ready." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, July 19, 1936.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, located at Washington Memorial Library Archives Room, Macon, Georgia.

Simmons, Harry. Macon resident, Macon, Georgia. Interview by Maryel Battin, December, 2002.

Slappy, Sterling. "Georgia Law Has No Ban On Athletics." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, January 15, 1949.

"Steel Bleachers to Take Place of Old Wooden Stands as Overhauling of Home on Macon Dodgers Starts." The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, January 15, 1956.

Wilson, Carl. Macon Plays at Home Tonight: The History of Professional Baseball in Macon, Georgia 1885-1995. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Professional Press, 1996.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6.54 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 255296 Northing 3635153

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the proposed nomination is indicated on the attached map by a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The boundary for Luther Williams Field includes the grandstand, ticket office, and playing field, and the intact portion of land within Central City Park historically associated with the ballpark.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Holly L. Anderson, National Register Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 156 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 101
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** May 6, 2004
e-mail holly_anderson@dnr.state.ga.us

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

name/title Maryel Battin
organization
mailing address 348 College Street
city or town Macon **state** Georgia **zip code** 31201
telephone (478)742-4414
e-mail pbattin875@aol.com

- () **property owner**
(X) **consultant**
() **regional development center preservation planner**
() **other:**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) C. Jack Ellis, Mayor
organization (if applicable) City of Macon
mailing address City Hall, Box 247
city or town Macon **state** Georgia **zip code** 31202
e-mail (optional)

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Luther Williams Field
City or Vicinity: Macon
County: Bibb
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: July, 2003

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 23

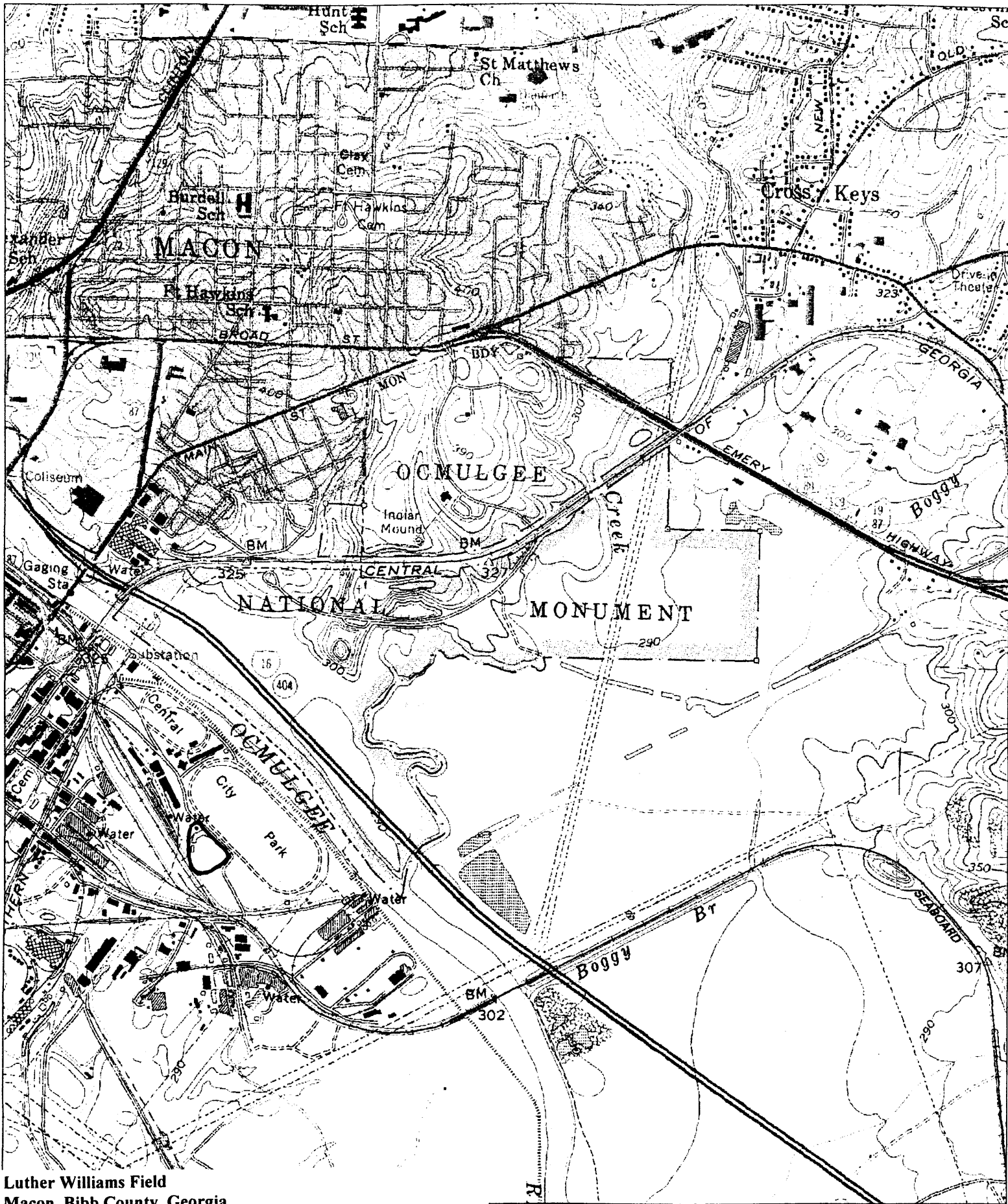
1. Ticket booth; photographer facing southeast.
2. Grandstand; photographer facing south.
3. Outfield fence; photographer facing northwest.
4. Detail, outfield fence; photographer facing northwest.
5. Grandstand entrance tunnel; photographer facing south.
6. Grandstand, visitors side; photographer facing west.
7. Ticket booth, rear; photographer facing west.
8. Center grandstand entrance tunnel; photographer facing southeast.
9. Center grandstand entrance tunnel; photographer facing south.
10. Grandstand main level, concession stand detail; photographer facing south.
11. Grandstand, upper level seating; photographer facing west.
12. Ticket booth, rear, from grandstand upper level; photographer facing west.
13. Playing field, from press box; photographer facing southeast.
14. Grandstand, upper level, roof system detail; photographer facing southwest.
15. Visiting team dugout; photographer facing west.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

16. Grandstand; photographer facing northwest.
17. Scoreboard; photographer facing southeast.
18. Grandstand and press box; photographer facing northwest.
19. Grandstand and press box; photographer facing west.
20. Grandstand entrance tunnel; photographer facing east.
21. Visitor's locker room; photographer facing northwest.
22. Home locker room; photographer facing south.
23. Grandstand entrance detail; photographer facing south.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)



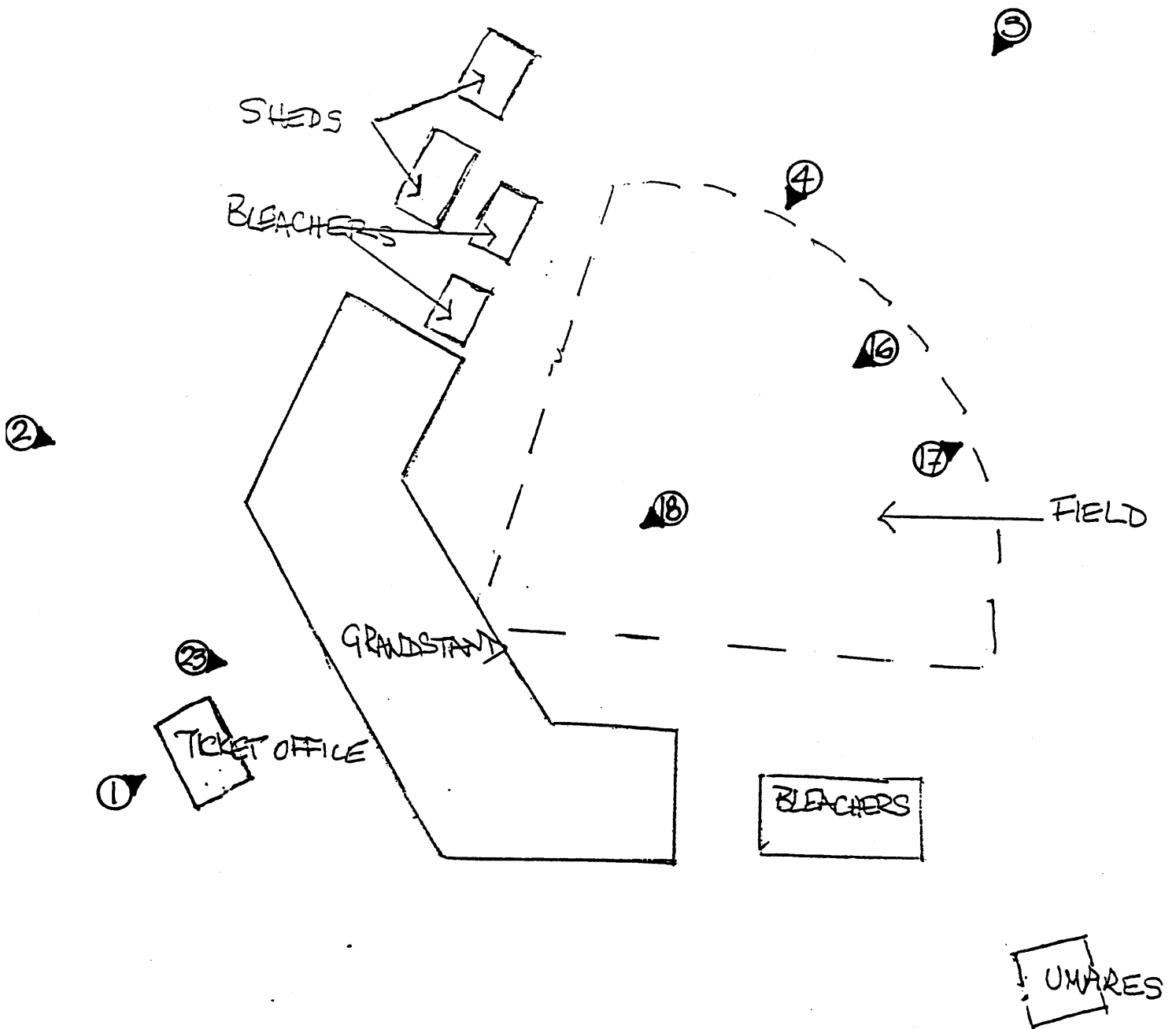
Luther Williams Field
 Macon, Ribb County, Georgia
 U.S. Dept. of the Interior
 Geological Survey
 Macon East Quadrangle 7.5 Series (Topographic)
 National Register Boundary: **————**
 Scale: on map
 North: ↑

206 0 206 412 Meters



1:20644





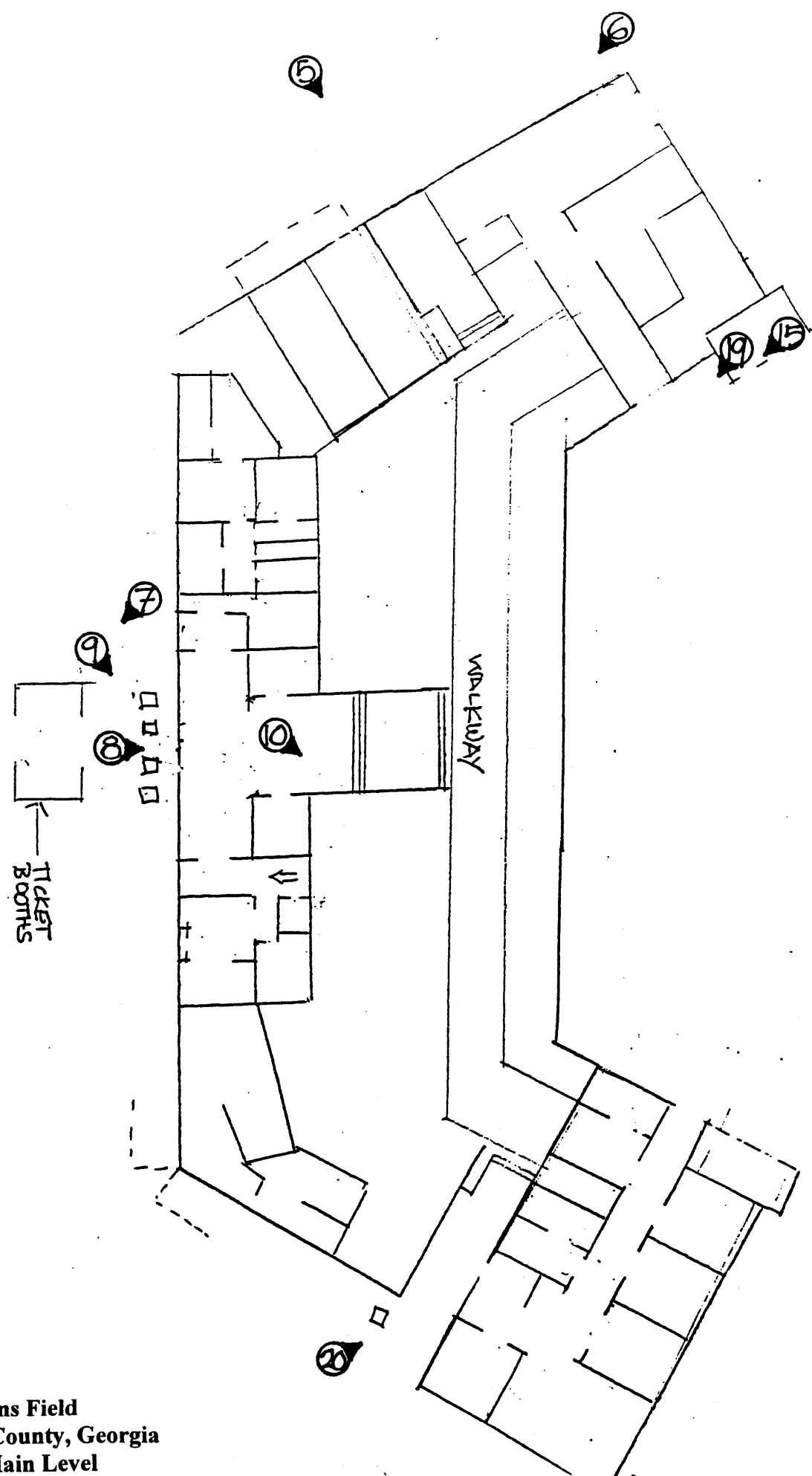
Luther Williams Field
 Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
 Site Plan

Contributing: ● Noncontributing: ○

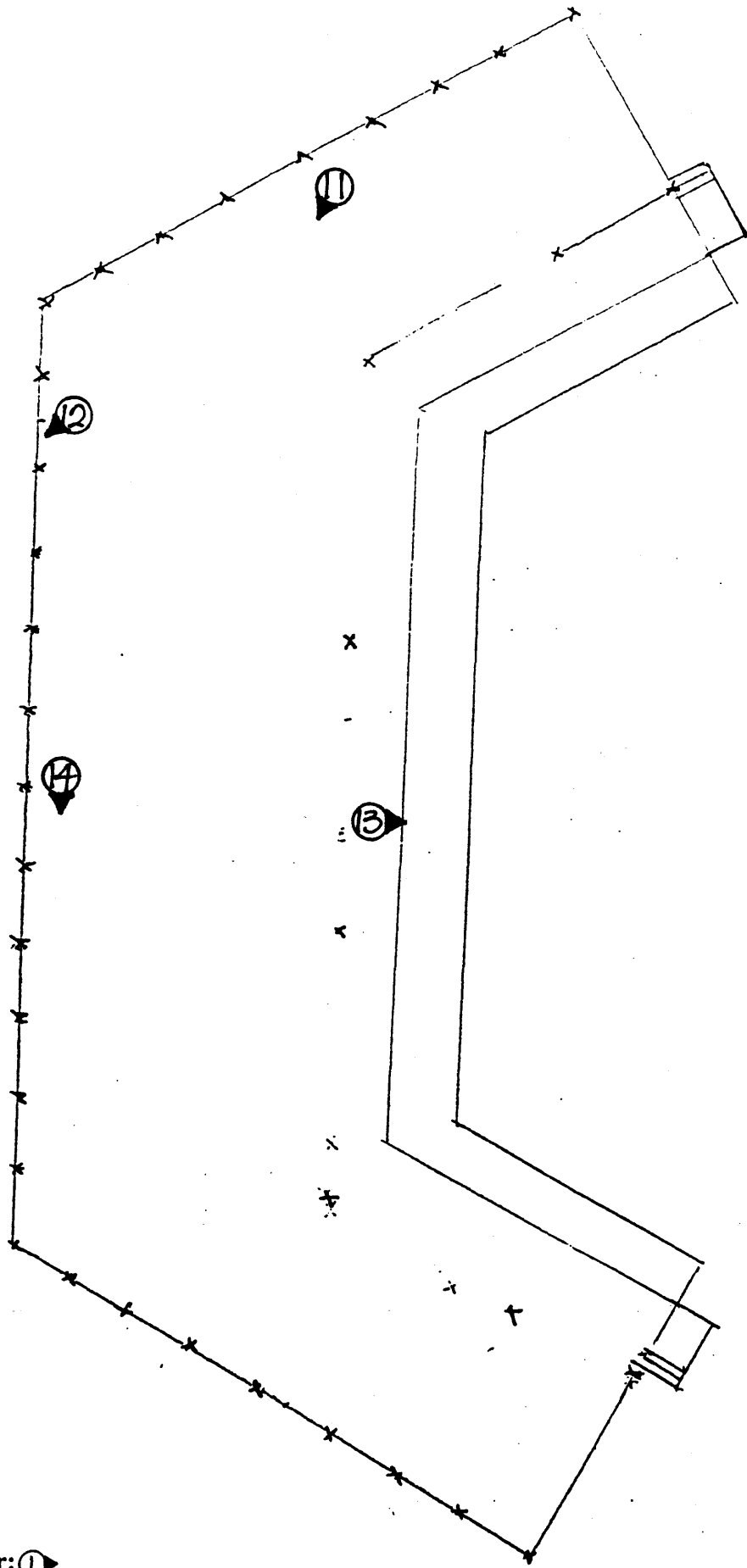
Photograph Direction/Number: ①

Scale: not to scale

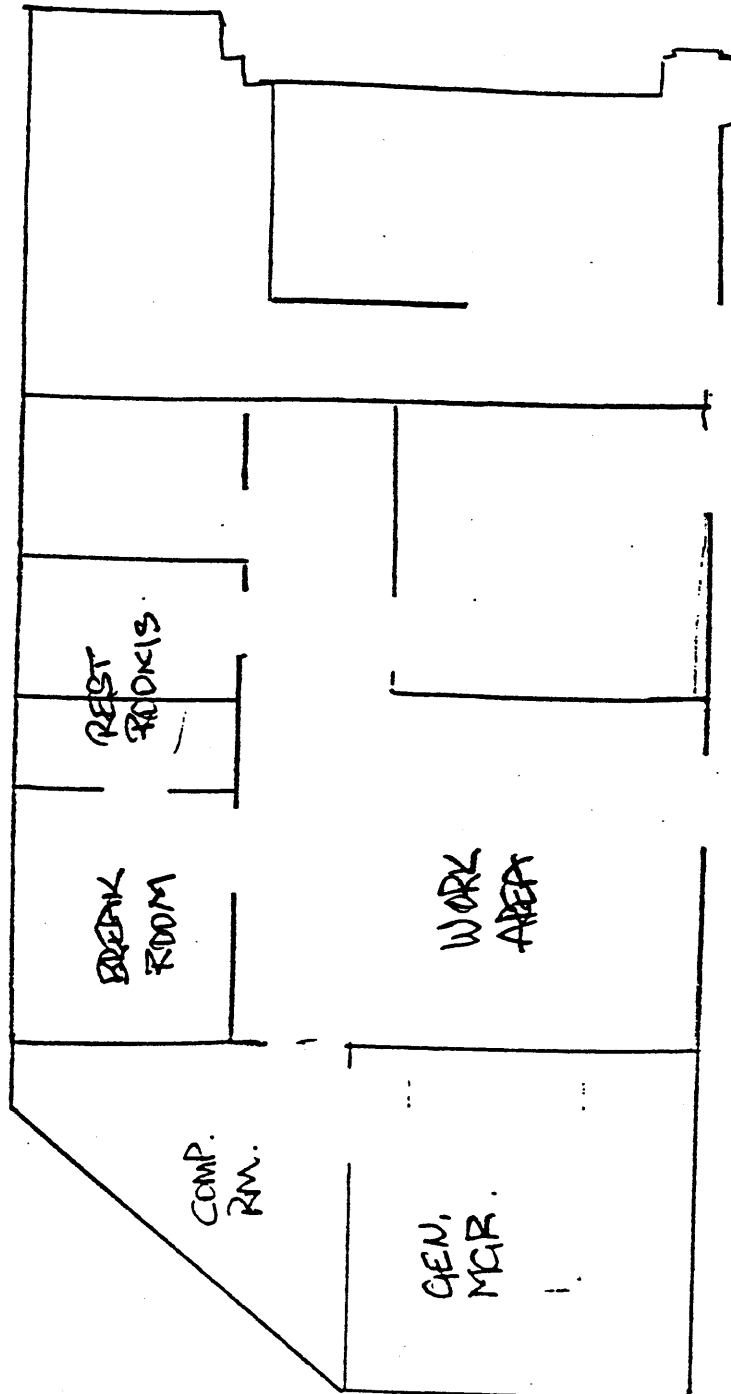
North: ←



Luther Williams Field
Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
Grandstand Main Level
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: not to scale
North: ↖

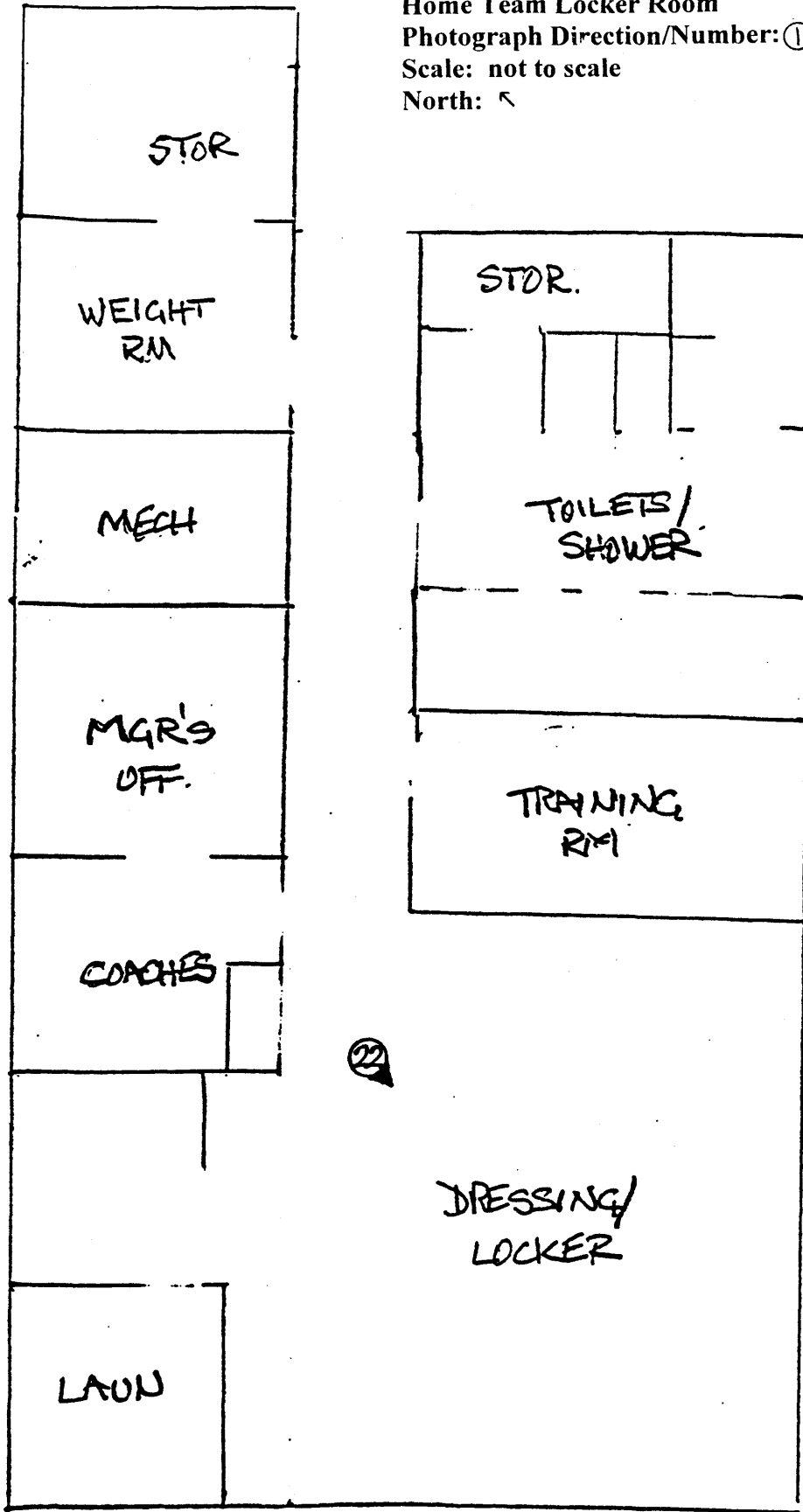


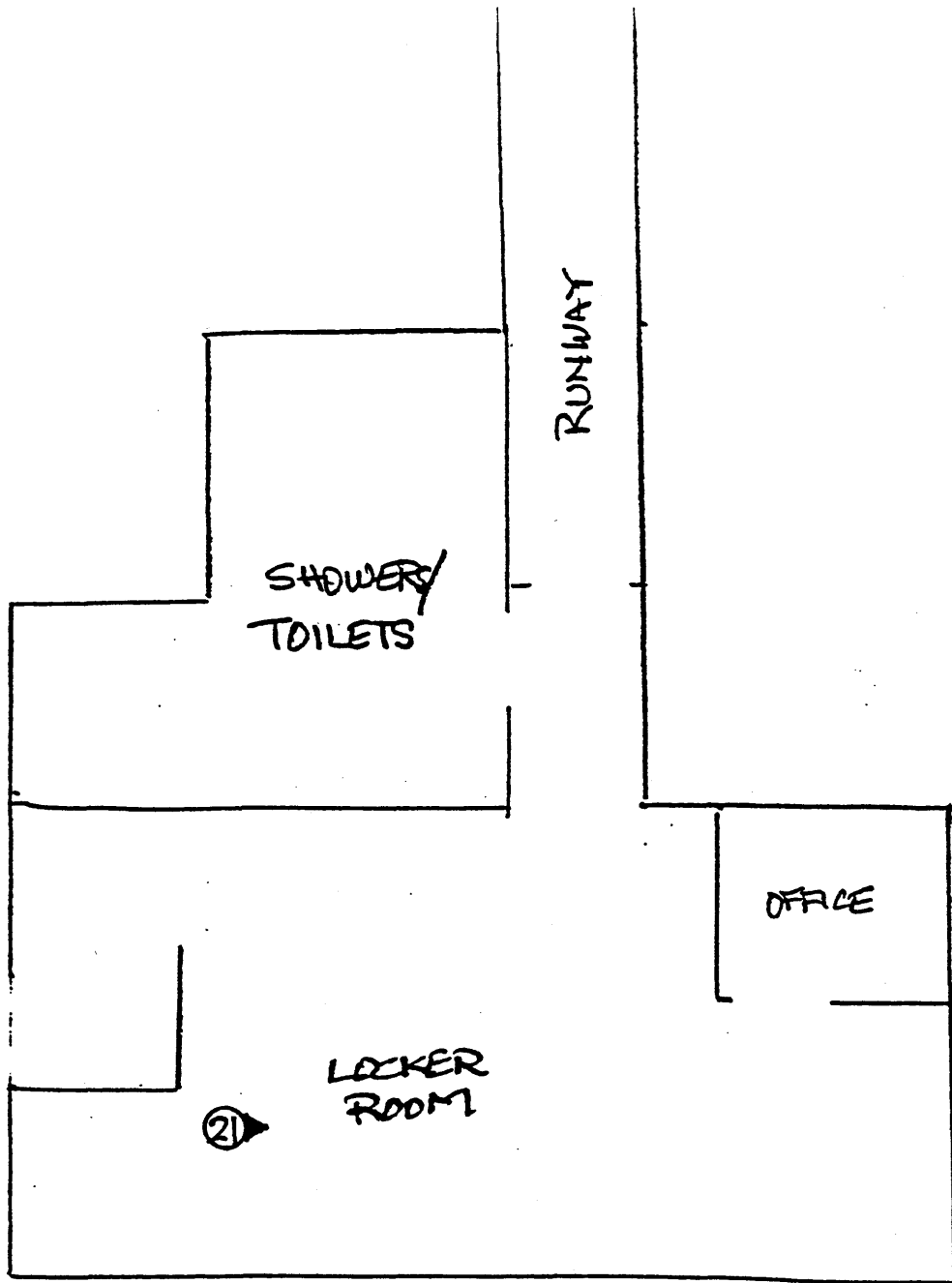
Luther Williams Field
Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
Grandstand Upper Level
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: not to scale
North: ↖



Luther Williams Field
Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
Administrative Offices
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: not to scale
North: ↙

Luther Williams Field
Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
Home Team Locker Room
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: not to scale
North: ↖





Luther Williams Field
Macon, Bibb County, Georgia
Visitor Team Locker Room
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: not to scale
North: ↘