

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001581 Date Listed: 9/28/88

Legion Park Bowl Etowah AL
Property Name County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Amy Schlager
Signature of the Keeper

9/28/88
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

This property should be considered a structure, not a building.

Discussed and concurred in by Alabama SHPO on September 25, 1988.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

AUG 17 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *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 Legion Park Bowl
other names/site number Gadsden Amphitheater

2. Location

street & number 336 1st Street, South N/A not for publication
city, town Gadsden N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Etowah code 055 zip code 35901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

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 request for determination of eligibility 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 does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 8-11-88
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

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 and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Amy Schlager Date of Action 9/29/88

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Amphitheater

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/Amphitheater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation sandstone

walls sandstone

roof clay tile

other floor; concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Gadsden Amphitheater is primarily an open-air arena constructed in the mid-1930's of native sandstone, quarried from nearby Lookout Mountain. The rustic architectural design of the Amphitheater is reminiscent of 18th Century English Picturesque Style, often seen in the country homes and cottages of that time. Except for a 1960's era brick addition constructed as a club house by the American Legion, the Amphitheater's present physical appearance remains the same as when it was first built.

The original Amphitheater consists of a 1500-seat arena enclosed by stone screen walls, a hexagon-shaped gatehouse, a proscenium stage with a semicircular extended forestage, dressing rooms, and a club room. The arena is enclosed by 1'-4" thick solid stone walls that are stepped and sloped to follow the seating tiers and surrounding hillside. These walls extend about 6 feet above the seating levels. The tiered seating arena is done entirely in native sandstone.

The overall plan of the Amphitheater is roughly a semi-hexagon on a north-south axis, with the stage area at the north end. The rectangular Club Room sits to the northwest of the stage and adds geometric interest to the Amphitheater plan by breaking away from the hexagonal shapes of the other elements.

The back half of the concrete stage floor is covered by a "shell" roof structure, supported by heavy timber trusses. The shell's interior is finished in stucco. The main feature of the stage is a massive 2-foot thick by 40-foot wide solid stone proscenium arch, stabilized laterally by the shell's heavy timber trusses.

There are two major entrances to the Amphitheater Arena. At the upper level is the hexagonal gatehouse, its red clay-tile roof topped with a small wooden flag pole, probably meant to fly a decorative pendant. This design touch evokes images of the Elizabethan era, and Shakespeare's Globe Theater. The gatehouse is flanked by two massive wood gates, constructed from 1 x 6 tongue-and-groove cypress battens. These gates feature heavy black wrought-iron strap hinges and pulls.

The lower arena entrance is situated between the Club Room and Dressing Rooms. This entrance is reached through a court yard enclosed by stone garden walls, which are capped with limestone trim. Originally this entrance featured wooden gates like those at the gatehouse; however, they are now missing and have been replaced by steel gates.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1
Legion Park Bowl

The Club Room is a one-story, one-room structure at the northwest side of the stage. Its solid stone walls support a steeply-pitched (12 in 10) roof. The Club Room's interior is fairly rustic, with plaster walls, exposed 10 x 12 hewn oak beams, and a 1 x 4 wood plank ceiling. The Club Room floor was originally intended to be random oak plank; however, this floor was never installed and the concrete slab is now covered in asphalt tile. The north gable wall features a massive stone fireplace with a stone mantel.

Major design elements of the Amphitheater include four-pane wood double-hung windows, and 4-panel cypress doors. Exterior door and window trim is 2" wide brick mould, with an ogee detail. Interior casings are made from 1 x 6 wood with "back band" edge trim.

Most stonework is laid in an uncoursed, random pattern. Stone jointery at the Stage and Club Room is done in a handsome random-coursed ashlar pattern, with mortar joints tooled in a "grapevine" pattern. Two mortar colors - pink and natural gray - are used on the grapevine jointery.

Another prominent design feature is the use of red "wire-cut" clay-tile roofing on the steeply-pitched roofs of the stage shell, the gatehouse and the club room. Other original elements included black wrought-iron lantern-type wall lights, a few of which still exist. The original stage lighting dimmer control remains in the loft above the stage.

The Amphitheater is situated on the northern slope of a hillside next to the Gadsden Convention Hall, built at approximately the same time as the Amphitheater and remodeled in 1966. The site is bounded on the east by Rains Boulevard and the Coosa River. To the west is the 1960's era Y.M.C.A., constructed of prestressed concrete. A paved parking area bounds the north side of the Amphitheater. Also at the north elevation is the American Legion Club House Addition, a brick and steel-framed flat roof structure. The Amphitheater grounds contain several healthy, mature hardwood and pine trees.

INTEGRITY

A small, one-story brick addition was constructed to the rear of the amphitheater in the 1960s. Serious erosion has caused some of the sandstone seats to crumble and deteriorate as well as crack the concrete stage floor. Some of the clay tiles have been replaced with wood shingles. Despite these damages, the amphitheater has maintained its integrity.

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) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1935

Significant Dates

1935

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Paul W. Hofferbert

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Gadsden Amphitheater is locally significant as the most ambitious of three rustic-style stone construction projects built in Gadsden under the Works Project Administration of the 1930s (Forrest Cemetery Chapel and Gadsden High School Stadium). Designed by local architect Paul W. Hofferbert, the amphitheater displays the rustic vernacular characteristics associated with W.P.A. period architecture.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gadsden Library Vertical Files
The Gadsden Times
Original Plans - Paul W. Hofferbert

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1 acre \pm

UTM References

A

1	6	5	9	2	2	2	0	3	7	6	3	3	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the amphitheater and the surrounding land and parking lot that historically has been associated with the amphitheater.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sylvia Hudson & David Oliver / Reviewer: Steven M. Kay, AHC

organization Friends of the Amphitheater date 2-6-88

street & number 1100 6th Avenue telephone 205 547-1741

city or town Gadsden state Alabama zip code 35901

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1
Legion Park BowlHISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Gadsden Amphitheater, called the Legion Park Bowl in initial newspaper announcements of the project in 1934 and later known as the American Legion Amphitheater, was constructed as a project of the Public Works Administration of President Franklin Roosevelt during the mid 1930s. The amphitheater was constructed adjacent to Gadsden Municipal Auditorium, another PWA project. The 1,700-seat theater structure was designed by architect Paul W. Hofferbert and is made of native sandstone quarried on Lookout Mountain some 20 miles from the amphitheater site. Skilled stone masons supervised the project and their craftsmanship is evident in the massive proscenium arch of the stage and the unique point work which joins the stones together. The amphitheater, built at a cost of \$12,000, was completed in May, 1935. Dignitaries invited to the dedication included Gov. Bibb Graves and U. S. Senators Hugo Black and John Sparkman. The amphitheater has since been one of the most used facilities in the City of Gadsden. The downtown location on the scenic Coosa River makes it easily accessible from major traffic arteries into the city. Hundreds of events have been held in the amphitheater, ranging from boxing and wrestling matches, to concerts, to political speeches and religious services. Plays, operettas, and musical reviews, both professional and amateur, have utilized this unique theater's stage and outstanding acoustical qualities. During World War II, the amphitheater was used as a USO center to entertain the thousands of military personnel stationed at Camp Sibert. During summer months, outdoor movies were regularly featured at the amphitheater. Following World War II, American Legion Post 5, the organization which owned the amphitheater, resumed their regular meetings at the clubhouse adjacent to the amphitheater. The amphitheater continued to be a popular site until the physical structure began to decline in the mid 1970s. In 1979 the City of Gadsden leased the amphitheater for the summer and after some repair work, a full slate of successful musical concerts were held. In 1986, the Gadsden City Commission negotiated the purchase of the amphitheater from the American Legion. The purchase was completed and some funds were earmarked for restoration. The restoration effort, spearheaded by a group of concerned citizens, continues today.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 10 Page 1
Legion Park Bowl

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

PARCEL I. For a point of beginning to describe the lands herein start at the intersection of the Southwest line of Chestnut Street with the Southeast line of First Street, and from thence run in a Southwesterly direction and along the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 773 feet to a point which is 180 feet Southwesterly, measured along the Southeast line of First Street from the Southwest line of Walnut Street Extension, and which said point is the point of beginning, and from said point of beginning deflect an angle of 89 degrees 15 minutes to the left and run in a Southeasterly direction, parallel with the Southwest line of Chestnut Street a distance of 230.12 feet to a point; thence deflect an angle of 89 degrees 15 minutes to the right and run in a Southwesterly direction and parallel with the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 185 feet to a point; thence deflect an angle of 90 degrees 45 minutes to the right and run in a Northwesterly direction a distance of 230.12 feet to a point in the Southeast line of First Street; thence deflect an angle of 89 degrees 15 minutes to the right and run in a Northeasterly direction and along the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 185 feet to the point of beginning, said description embracing a portion of the Northeast Quarter (NE 1/4) of the Northeast Quarter (NE 1/4), in Section Nine (9), Township Twelve (12) South, Range Six (6) East of Huntsville Meridian, in Gadsden, Etowah County, Alabama.

PARCEL II. Commence at the intersection of the Southwest line of Chestnut Street with the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 773.0 feet to a point which is 180.0 feet Southwesterly measured along the Southeast line of First Street from the Southwest line of Walnut Street extension; thence deflect an angle of 89 degrees 15 minutes to the left and run in a Southeasterly direction parallel with the Southwest line of Chestnut Street, a distance of 230.12 feet to a point; thence deflect an angle of 89 degrees 15 minutes to the right and run in a Southwesterly direction and parallel with the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 14.15 feet to a point; said point being the point of beginning of the hereinafter described property; thence deflect 90 degrees 10 minutes to the left and run in a Southeasterly direction a distance of 116.0 feet to a point; thence deflect 90 degrees 10 minutes to the right and run in a Southwesterly direction a distance of 60.0 feet to a point; thence deflect 89 degrees 50 minutes to the right and run in a Northwesterly direction a distance of 116.0 feet to a point; thence deflect 90 degrees 10 minutes to the right and run in a Northeasterly direction a distance of 60.0 feet to the point of beginning, being a portion of the NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4, Section 9, Township 12-S, R-6-E, of the Huntsville Meridian, Etowah County, Alabama.

SAVE AND EXCEPT: Commence at the intersection of the Southwest line of Chestnut Street with the Southeast line of First Street and from thence run in a Southwesterly direction and along the Southeast line of First Street a distance of 958.0 feet to a point which is 365.0 feet Southwesterly measured along the Southeast line of First Street from the Southwest line of Walnut Street extension, thence deflect 89 degrees

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 2
Legion Park Bowl

15 minutes left and run in a Southeasterly direction, parallel with the Southwest line of Chestnut Street a distance of 139.5 feet to the point of beginning of the hereinafter described property; thence continue in a Southeasterly direction a distance of 90.62 feet to a point; thence deflect 90 degrees 45 minutes to the left and run a distance of 78.7 feet to a point; thence deflect 89 degrees 30 minutes to the left and run a distance of 31.7 feet to a point; thence deflect 90 degrees 26 minutes to the left and run a distance of 29.9 feet to a point; thence deflect 37 degrees 15 minutes to the left and run a distance of 8.8 feet to a point; thence deflect 60 degrees 00 minutes to the right and run a distance of 8.8 feet to a point; thence deflect 35 degrees 36 minutes to the left and run a distance of 11.0 feet to a point; thence run in a Southwesterly direction a distance of 14.9 feet to the point of beginning; being a portion of the NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4, Section 9, T-12-S, R-6-E, East of the Huntsville Meridian, Etowah County, Alabama.

Said description encompassing all property owned by grantor in that block bounded by Albert Rains Boulevard (U.S. Highway 411), Riverside Drive, First Street and Walnut Street.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number photo-
graphs Page 1
Legion Park Bowl

No. 1 - Information in items 1-5 is the same
for nos. 1-6

- 1) Legion Park Bowl
- 2) Gadsden, Alabama
- 3) Seth A. Hudson
- 4) 2/88
- 5) Alabama Historical Commission
- 6) Club house and arena entrance, camera
facing south

No. 2

- 6) Gate house entrance, camera facing
north

No. 3

- 6) Gate house entrance, camera facing
north

No. 4

- 6) Arena, camera facing south

No. 5

- 6) Stage, camera facing north

No. 6

- 6) Arena seats, camera facing west