

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USD/INPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

Other Name/Site Number: Red Gym; Old Red

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 716 Langdon Street Not for publication:___

City/Town: Madison Vicinity:___

State: WI County: Dane Code: 025 Zip Code: 53706

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:___
Public-Local:___
Public-State: X
Public-Federal:___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:___
Site:___
Structure:___
Object:___

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1
1

Noncontributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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 _____

Determined eligible for the _____
National Register

Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

Removed from the National Register _____

Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DEFENSE
RECREATION
SOCIAL

Sub: ARMS STORAGE
SPORTS FACILITY
MEETING HALL

Current: RECREATION
EDUCATION

Sub: SPORTS FACILITY
COLLEGE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Romanesque Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Stone (sandstone)
Walls: Brick
Roof: Asphalt
Other:

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 4**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**INTRODUCTION**

The University of Wisconsin Armory and Gymnasium (Armory) is located on the north side of Langdon Street between Park and Lake Streets on the eastern edge of the campus. A wide sidewalk runs along the shore of Lake Mendota just north of the building. There is a sidewalk and small formal lawn south of the building on Langdon Street. East of the Armory are two modern buildings: the Wisconsin Center (south), built 1958, and the Alumni House (north), built 1967. There is a parking lot west of the building. South and west of the building are other university buildings and spaces, which, together with the Armory, are the original grounds of the University of Wisconsin. This original campus was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 as the Bascom Hill Historic District.

The building is composed of three rectangular masses. The main section of the building is a four-story basilican mass. South of the basilican section there is a two-story headhouse. A two-story stairhall section is connected to the west facade of the basilican section. The west section was not included in the original 1892 design, but was incorporated into the plans in 1893, and completed at the same time as the rest of the building. The Armory was designed by the regionally prominent architectural firm of (Allan) Conover and (Lew) Porter in the "castellated medieval fortress" variation of the Romanesque Revival style then favored for armory design. The Armory features a rusticated coursed, sandstone ashlar foundation and load-bearing, red brick walls in common bond with sandstone trim. Distinguishing features include stepped gables, turrets and towers with corbelled and crenellated battlements, and broad arched entryways on the south and west facades. On the interior, there is a central staircase flanked by small rooms in the headhouse, and a second staircase in the west section. In the basilican section, there is a central corridor leading to the pool and locker rooms on the first floor, flanked by spaces that were originally large and open, but that have been subdivided into several small rooms. The drill hall and assembly room (drill hall) and the gymnasium fill the second and third floors respectively. The Armory is in fair condition and shows good integrity throughout. The drill hall, nationally significant as the site of the 1904 Wisconsin Republican convention, retains a high degree of integrity. The post-1904 alterations to this space are limited to the addition of three pairs of doors into the west stairhall, and the removal of a shallow balcony that ran along the south end of the room.

DESCRIPTION

The basilican section measures 96 by 165 feet. It has a central stepped gable roof, its ridge perpendicular to Langdon Street, and is flanked on either side by a lower shed roof. A clerestory, originally surfaced with slate and now covered with asphalt shingles, separates the upper and lower roofs. The flat roofed headhouse measures 24 by 109 feet. The flat roofed west

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

section measures 24 by 44 feet. There is a four-story tower with corbelled and crenelated battlements on each corner of the Armory. A rusticated coursed, sandstone ashlar foundation unifies the three sections. The Armory is built of load-bearing, red brick in common bond trimmed with sandstone. The narrow joints are filled with red-tinted mortar. All the sloped roofs are clad with asphalt shingles. It is uncertain when the original slate roofing was replaced. The flat roofs are built-up. Sandstone string courses appear above the first floor on the north and south facades. There is another at the third floor on the east and west facades and the north towers. A brick corbel table, surmounted by a sandstone string course which wraps around the outer turrets, appears in each gable end and on the west section. Originally, there were three large skylights in the gable roof. They were probably removed when the slates were replaced. The original skylight on the headhouse roof has been retained. The fenestration pattern is symmetrical except on the south facade. The Armory has both round arched and flat arched window openings, most with wood double-hung sash. Most of the round arched openings, primarily on the second and fourth floors, hold one or two flat-headed sash windows and a semicircular transom. There are multipaned hoppers in the east facade clerestory and at the third floor, except on the north facade, where there are casements. Nearly all the window openings have brick lintels and sandstone sills. All the doors on the first floor are wood. Above the first floor, steel doors give access to the fire escapes. A modified 1906 steel fire escape obscures much of the north facade, but does not affect the drill hall. Simple steel escape ladders rise to the clerestory on the east and west facade.

On the south facade of the Armory, a stepped parapet rises from the edge of the headhouse roof to each tower. There is a turret with corbelled and crenellated battlements on either end of the gable. A third identical turret corbels out of the center of the gable from the corbel table and rises above the roof line. A sandstone string course runs around each tower forming a continuous sill at the second story. It continues across the main wall of the headhouse, stepping up to accommodate the entrance portal and providing a sill for the windows above the portal. The main entrance is set west of center within a large, round arched portal framed with gauged brick. Deeply recessed within the portal is a round arched surround with replacement doors and windows. Originally, the main entrance featured a pair of massive, vertical plank wood doors with quarter round heads decorated with steel plate and rose-head nails in imitation of ornate strap hinges. The doors were flanked by a pair of smaller, similar vertical plank doors and surmounted by three curving windows with scrolled iron grilles. East of the portal is a rectangular stone plaque, inscribed: "ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN 1893 ERECTED BY THE BOUNTY OF THE STATE." The plaque has a stone border enriched with an egg and dart molding.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The north (rear) elevation of the Armory features a stepped gable and three turrets flanked by a pair of towers just like the south elevation. Three massive brick and sandstone wall buttresses were added in 1905, and the first floor window openings reduced. The window configuration of the drill hall was not changed. The buttresses taper, becoming flush with the wall just below the sandstone string course that forms a continuous sill for the second story windows. The buttresses divide the wall into four columns of windows. Sandstone string courses run around the towers at the third floor.

The east elevation is made up of six bays with a tower on either end. In each bay, a brick buttress tapers into the wall just above the first floor lintels. There is a series of regularly spaced window openings on the first floor. The sills were raised when an annex to the Armory, since removed, was built on this facade in 1911. The addition of the annex did not affect the drill hall.

The west elevation is almost identical to the east elevation. However, there are only two buttresses on the west elevation, and the windows in the clerestory have been covered with asphalt shingles. The presence of the west stairhall section, which projects from this elevation just north of center, makes for a slightly different window configuration. There are no windows in the three central bays on the first two floors. South of the west section, there is pair of original wood doors which combine diagonal and vertical planks. On each face of the west section there is a stepped parapet. There is a small tower with corbelled and crenellated battlements on each of the northwest and southwest corners. A broad flight of concrete steps leads up to four pairs of paneled wood doors in the west face. The south face features a large, round arched, entrance portal. There is a pair of original vertical plank doors with imitation strap hinges, surmounted by a semicircular transom, deeply recessed within the portal.

The original interior plan when the Armory opened in 1894 was as follows:

On the first floor of the Armory, the commandant's office was located in the southwest tower and contained a private stair to the gun room on the floor above. The artillery drill room was located on the west side of the south end; a large locker room was opposite. The north end held a bowling alley (west), the steam-heated swimming tank measuring 80 by 20 feet (central), and a shower room. On the second floor, a small room in the southeast tower was reserved for sparring. The gun room was in the southwest tower, along with a small office for the gym instructor. The drill hall, also reached by the staircase in the west section, occupied almost the entire second floor of the basilican section. It measured 160 by 93 feet and was 43 feet high. A shallow balcony running the length of the south end overlooked the drill hall at the mezzanine

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

level. The running track encircled the basilican section on the third floor. The gymnasium, flanked by rifle ranges, was on the fourth floor. Measuring 160 by 65 feet, the gymnasium was said to be the largest in the country. The ceiling was 26 feet high. (See sketches.)¹

Today, the Armory's interior plan is laid out as follows: The headhouse consists of a central lobby and broad wood staircase with small rooms in the southwest tower, and small rooms and a narrow wood staircase in the southeast tower. This stair is dog-leg to the second floor and spiral above. On the first floor, the plan of the basilican section consists of a central hall leading to the pool. The pool is flanked by locker rooms. In the southwest corner of this section, the former artillery drill hall has been divided into seven small rooms. The southeast corner contains several small rooms, but was heavily damaged by arson in 1970 and so is not currently accessible. None of the first floor spaces were used during the 1904 convention. The second floor of the basilican section contains the drill hall where the convention delegates met. A running track, an original feature, is suspended above at the third floor. The gymnasium, flanked by the old shooting galleries, is on the fourth floor. Each of the northeast and northwest towers contain small rooms on each floor. The west section contains a broad, steel frame, concrete straight staircase to the second floor. Several small rooms are tucked under the stairs on the first floor.

The interior of the Armory has a variety of finishes. The outer walls are exposed cream brick originally unpainted. A few have been plastered. In the drill hall, there is red brick below the window sills. The drill hall retains its 1904 appearance except for the addition of three pairs of doors into the west stairhall (1916), and the loss of a shallow balcony along the south end of the space. The most notable original interior doors are the pair opening out of the drill hall onto the headhouse stair. Each heavy paneled wood door is nine-and-a-half feet tall. Glass panels in metal frames, installed after 1953, create a vestibule just inside the main entrance. Most of the interior walls are vertical board; many have wood framed glass in the upper two feet. There are a few partitions of concrete, concrete block, structural clay tile, gypsum board, or sheet metal scattered around the building. Most of the flooring is made up of narrow wood boards. In the heavily fire damaged southeast section of the building, most of the flooring was destroyed and not repaired. The floors are concrete on the first floor in the west section, around the pool, and in the locker rooms flanking the pool. There is ceramic tile north and east of the pool. Wall-to-wall carpet, composition sheet flooring, or terrazzo have been installed in a few rooms. The ceilings are nine feet high except in the drill hall (43 feet high) and the gymnasium (26 feet high). Most have been left exposed to show the supporting beams

¹ *The Daily Cardinal*, May 11, 17, and 24, 1894 and September 19, 1894.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

and trusses and wide wood boards above. A very few rooms have gypsum board, acoustical tile, or masonite ceilings. The Armory mixes modern suspended fluorescent lights and older bare incandescent bulbs in porcelain sockets. Most of the rooms have old paneled wood doors, although there are a few steel doors at the exits.

There were a few alterations to the Armory in the early twentieth century. None of these changes affected the drill hall. In 1902, the bowling alleys were converted into a locker room. In 1905, the rear wall of the Armory was strengthened with brick buttresses. When the buttresses were built, the bottom two feet of the clerestory windows were bricked in. In 1906, an exterior fire escape was erected on the rear of the building. In 1911, a one-story annex was built on the east side of the building. The Armory's second floor windows were raised to accommodate the annex.²

Fire safety concerns led to the remodeling of the staircase in the west section in 1916. A broad stairway running east-west replaced the double flight of stairs that ran north-south. Three pairs of doors were installed in the west wall of the drill hall.³

In 1923, isolationism and anti-militarism movements had gained such strength in the state that Wisconsin became the only state in the country to eliminate compulsory military education for male students at a land-grant university. The Armory was used for student registration beginning in 1928. By that time, enrollment in military training had plummeted and other athletic facilities had been erected. Registration was the only time that large numbers of students congregated in the building.⁴

With this severe decline in use, few alterations or improvements were made to the Armory after 1930. By the early 1950s, planning for the demolition of the Armory and its annex was begun, and in 1956, the annex was razed. The Armory continued its use as a gymnasium while plans for a new gymnasium were under discussion. With the opening of new athletic facilities in the early 1960s, the Armory was regularly referred to as the "old red gym," and its demolition considered imminent. While various campus groups debated the future of the site, the Armory continued to be used heavily during the 1960s as a gym and as headquarters for the

² Executive Committee Minutes, October 6, 1902, p. 25 and July 10, 1905; Arthur Peabody to Riley, March 3, 1906, in Business Administrator, Physical Plant, Correspondence, Box 1; Regents' Annual Report (hereafter referred to as RAR), 1906-08, pp. 22, 66 and 205; and RAR, 1910-12, pp. 233-35.

³ Executive Committee Minutes, March 29, 1916.

⁴ Edwin G. Pike, "Historical Update of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, University of Wisconsin-Madison," May 1, 1975, pp. 4-5.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). However, by 1967, space was at a premium on campus, and the Regents began to consider the possibility of retaining the Armory and finding new uses for it.⁵

In 1970, the Armory was firebombed by arsonists protesting the presence of the ROTC on campus. The first floor southeast corner was heavily damaged; most of it was never repaired. The drill hall was unaffected. The ROTC moved to another building in 1973. Today, the Armory is still used for recreational purposes.⁶

⁵ Floor plans, Department of Buildings and Grounds, February, 1928, revised November 1953; ECM, Vol. 17, May 12, 1956, p. 4; *The Daily Cardinal*, June 17, 1960 and July 19, 1963; and Regents' Minutes, Vol. 34, January 13, 1967, p. 8; February 10, 1967, p. 9; and May 5, 1967, p. 4.

⁶ *Capital Times*, January 3, 1970.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme(s):

Areas of Significance: Politics/Government

Period(s) of Significance: 1904

Significant Dates: 1904

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: Allan Conover and Lew Porter, Architects

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**SUMMARY**

The Armory is significant at the national level under National Historic Landmark criterion 1, the theme of Political and Military Affairs. The subtheme is the Progressive Era. The Armory's second floor drill hall and assembly room (drill hall) was the site of the 1904 Wisconsin Republican Convention, a seminal event in the history of the Progressive Movement. At this convention, Robert M. La Follette's Progressives defeated the Stalwarts for control of the Wisconsin Republican Party. Widespread favorable publicity launched La Follette on the national scene. The controversy and legal suit engendered by the "Gymnasium Convention," and La Follette's subsequent vindication by the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, led the Progressives to victory that November, giving the Progressives a majority in the 1905 Wisconsin legislature. This allowed the enactment of substantial reforms. In addition, La Follette's principal platform plank, comprehensive direct primaries, was passed in referendum. The direct primary and much of the 1905 legislation was subsequently adopted by many states across the nation.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The University of Wisconsin was established by the state legislature in 1848. The legislature directed that the University be governed by a board of regents and administered by a chancellor.¹

Prior to the Civil War, military training at the University of Wisconsin was sporadic. In 1866, the legislature reorganized the university in accordance with the Morrill Act of 1862. This act authorized land grants to the states for the support of colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts. The act specifically required that colleges include "military tactics" in their curricula. Many Southern states had long supported military training, and laymen and professionals alike felt that this military education had greatly benefitted the South at the opening of the Civil War. Beginning with the 1866-67 school year, all male students were required to undergo military training. The arms were furnished by the university.²

¹ Arthur Hove, *The University of Wisconsin: A Pictorial History*, (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), page 7.

² Paul W. Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development*, (Washington, D.C.: Public Land Law Review Commission, 1968), pp. 22-23; Earle D. Ross, *Democracy's College*, (1942; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), pp. 61, 196-97; and *Regents' Annual Report (RAR)*, 1865-66, p. 3.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

By the end of the academic year 1869-70, a "building for drill and gymnastic exercises" had been completed at a cost of \$4,000. Located northwest of Bascom Hall, it had a large room measuring about 100 feet by 50 feet and a smaller wing that housed an arsenal and the professor's office. Despite legislative mandate, many students were strongly opposed to military training. They objected to the hours required for drill and to the subordination of one student to another. After 1870, drill was required only of first and second year students.³

Military drill was also seen as important in providing exercise for male students. Other facilities or programs intended specifically for physical education were apparently given little attention at the university until the 1880s. The 1870 "drill and gymnastics" building could not keep pace with the steadily increasing numbers of students and the growing importance of physical education in university curricula. In 1881, at the behest of the University Athletic Association, the Regents requested that the legislature provide support for a gymnasium for male students. In an 1884 report to the Regents, university President John Bascom called for a new gymnasium, envisioning the gymnasium as also providing "a suitable arsenal for arms."⁴

Bascom's successor, President Thomas Chamberlin, continued to lobby for an armory and gymnasium. A bill proposing an appropriation for an edifice with an armory, drill room, and gymnasium was approved by the Legislature on March 12, 1891.⁵

The Regents appointed the Armory Building Committee to oversee the design of the armory and gymnasium. On April 9, 1891, the Regents chose the Langdon Street site. In order to gather information on the latest developments in design, the Regents authorized committee members, President Chamberlin, and various professors to visit other institutions. In May 1891, representatives of the university visited several eastern cities to view armories and ten university campuses to view gymnasiums.⁶

³ Reuben G. Thwaites, *The University of Wisconsin: Its History and Alumni*, (Madison: J.N. Purcell, 1900), p. 98; RAR, 1869-70, pp. 30-31; 1870-71 Map of Experimental Farm and College Grounds, Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin: A History*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), pp. 412-419.

⁴ RAR, 1870-71, p. 15; 1875-76, p. 35; 1878-79, p. 35; 1880-81, p. 7; 1881-61, p. 6; and 1883-84, p. 36.

⁵ *Laws of Wisconsin*, Chapter 29, March 14, 1891.

⁶ Regents' Records (hereafter, R Records), Vol. D, April 9, 1891, pp. 93-94, 96; University of Wisconsin student newspaper *The Aegis*, May 1, 1891, p. 497 and June 5, 1891, p. 575.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Colleges began building gymnasiums about 1860. Early gymnasiums were simple in design and soon outgrown. By 1890, the college gymnasium had developed into a complex building with a large span gymnasium and many specialized single purpose rooms.⁷ When the University of Wisconsin was planning its building, the gymnasium at Yale University was considered to be the premier facility. Representatives of Wisconsin visited the Beaux Arts style Yale gym in 1891. There were bowling alleys in the basement of the Yale gymnasium. On the first floor was a swimming pool. The main gymnasium, which had an area of 10,000 square feet, took up the top floor. A running track encircled this hall at the gallery level. Yale's floor plan apparently directly influenced Wisconsin's building.⁸

While the exteriors of late nineteenth century gymnasiums were designed in a wide variety of architectural styles, armories were not. A series of riots and violent strikes, beginning with the New York City Draft Riots of 1863, caused a fear of class warfare to become widespread among upper and upper-middle class Americans. As a result, there was a surge of armory building beginning in the late 1870s. It was believed that armories would be necessary as places for troops to assemble and arm in order to quell mob violence that would be led by the so-called dangerous classes--socialists, communists, and labor unionists. The armory was a new building type, and, in developing a style for this new building type, architects sought to project an image of force and power that would inspire fear and foster respect for authority among the masses. Architects found the castellated medieval fortress an appropriate image. Its rusticated features were compatible with the Richardsonian Romanesque style which was then sweeping the country. Should these armories be attacked by mobs, their massive walls, few entries, and strategically placed small windows, towers, turrets, and battlements were expected to be practical defenses. The castellated medieval fortress clearly expressed the armory's military function.⁹

Among the first armories built in the medieval fortress style was the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue in New York, which opened in 1880 (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986). During the 1880s, major armories were erected in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Illustrations and

⁷ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 152-55; and H.A. Cushing, "The Development of the College 'Gym,'" *Leslie's Weekly*, February 18, 1893, p. 67; Moses King, *Harvard and Its Surroundings*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Charles W. Sever, 1880), p. 37.

⁸ William E. Decrow, *Yale University*, (Boston: n.p., [189?]), pp. 51 and 53.

⁹ Robert M. Fogelson, *America's Armories: Architecture, Society and Public Order*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press 1989), pp. 13-47 and 150-157.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

descriptions of these armories that appeared in architectural magazines and in the popular press probably made these armories familiar to both the Wisconsin Armory Building Committee and the architects selected to design the Armory and Gymnasium, Allan Conover and Lew Porter. The Eighth Regiment Armory in New York City, begun in 1888 and completed in 1890, was widely published and seems to have been the inspiration for the exterior appearance of the Wisconsin Armory.¹⁰

In June 1891, the Madison architectural firm of Conover and Porter was hired to design the Armory. Conover and Porter worked with the Armory Building Committee over the next year to finalize the plans. The working drawings were completed May 14, 1892. In July 1892, the Regents selected T.J. McCarthy, of Madison, as general contractor. His bid was \$97,373.¹¹

By January 1893, the foundation work had been completed and Charles Adams had succeeded Thomas Chamberlin as president of the university. In his report to the Regents four months later, President Adams noted that the plans of the Armory showed floor space well suited for use as a large assembly room which could seat nearly three thousand persons. Adams believed that such an assembly room was essential for the university. He recommended changes be made to the 1892 design that would provide additional access to the second floor drill hall. In response, Conover and Porter prepared plans for a section housing a stair to the second floor to be placed on the west side of the building. The plans were approved, and the cornerstone was laid on June 20, 1893.¹²

The Armory opened in May 1894. Classes were canceled and festivities held to celebrate the opening. From the outset, the Armory was used for more than university athletic and military functions. Large university functions, such as dances and banquets, were regularly held in the second floor drill hall. Students watched away-football games plotted on a "gridograph" there. For many years, the largest space in Madison, the drill hall was also the center for major city and county social and political events. A rally held in October 1894, at which future U.S. President William McKinley spoke, was probably the first

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 79-80, 127-33 and 136-47; and Mesick Cohen Waite Architects, "The University of Wisconsin Armory and Gymnasium: Historic Structure Report," draft prepared for the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Facilities Development, p. 9.

¹¹ Blueprints, on file in the University of Wisconsin Department of Planning and Construction; and R Records, July 25, 1892, p. 74.

¹² *The Aegis*, December 2, 1892; R Records, Vol, C, April 18, 1893, pp. 438-440; and *Wisconsin State Journal* (hereafter, *WSJ*), June 20, 1893.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

political use.¹³ The best known political gatherings at the Armory were the Republican state conventions of 1902 and 1904, at which Robert M. La Follette (1855-1925) was renominated governor of Wisconsin. The 1904 convention is of national significance in the history of the Progressive Movement.¹⁴

At the opening of the 1904 campaign, La Follette had been governor for two terms. The Stalwart faction of the Republican party had retained control of the state senate, thwarting the Progressives' efforts to enact reforms. This set the stage for a bitter campaign. The goal for each faction was control of the state Republican Convention, where the Republican slate of candidates would be selected, and which would be held in Madison on May 18.¹⁵

La Follette went on the offensive with what was then a new tactic, the "roll call." He would go to each Stalwart legislator's district, speak about populist Progressive issues the legislature had recently acted on, and then disclose the voting record of the local legislator. This may very well have had an effect on the Republican caucuses held around the state to select delegates for the convention. Many of the decisions were close, and several required additional meetings, yet still resulted in uncertainty.¹⁶

In the weeks preceding the convention, the Stalwarts produced contesting delegations, which they planned to present to the State Central Committee (SCC). The SCC, which had the authority to decide who were the legitimate delegates, was controlled by the Progressives. In preparation for a possible withdrawal from the convention, the Stalwarts rented Madison's Fuller Opera House (demolished). On May 17, the SCC met in the Armory to decide the disputed contests and make up the roll of delegates entitled to seats at the convention. By unanimous vote, including the agreement of the Stalwart committee members, the SCC awarded a majority of seats to the Progressive delegates. The Stalwarts adjourned to the Opera House. They denounced the SCC and

¹³ *The Daily Cardinal*, October 9, 1894; and October 10, 1894.

¹⁴ A concentrated effort to find a photograph of the convention failed. Various experts consulted agree that there probably is no such photo.

¹⁵ Herbert F. Marguiles, *The Decline of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin: 1890-1920*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1968), pp. 68-70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 70 and 73.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

resolved to march with their delegates to the Armory, as the convention was getting under way the next day, and demand to be seated.¹⁷

The Progressives, expecting trouble, took precautions to prevent the Stalwarts from rushing for delegate seats. A wire partition, 4-1/2 feet high, was erected east-west across the Armory's second floor drill hall, separating the part of the hall for the delegates from that for the spectators. The delegates were to enter from the west, up the west staircase. Spectators were to enter through the main entrance and up the headhouse stair. A narrow barbed wire passage was constructed leading up to the delegates' door, forcing the delegates to enter single file. All the entrances were aggressively guarded by University football players and wrestlers, past and present. Both delegates and spectators were required to show tickets countersigned by the SCC. The guards refused to admit those that did not have these credentials.¹⁸

As soon as the convention was called to order, the leader of the Stalwart members of the SCC filed a report contending that the SCC did not have the authority to determine who should be seated among the contested delegates. He claimed that the only valid credentials were certificates signed by the chairman and secretary of the county committees. The chairman of the convention ruled that all delegates seated by the SCC were entitled to vote on all questions except their own right to a seat in the convention. The Progressives carried the motion; the Stalwarts had been outmaneuvered at their own game. Once the La Follette delegates were officially seated, the Stalwarts stalked out. They convened the next morning at the Opera House, resolved to contest the legitimacy of the "Gymnasium Convention," and selected their own slate of candidates and their own delegates to the Republican national convention.¹⁹

The controversy at the Gymnasium Convention was widely reported. National attention was directed at the Wisconsin Progressives, and Robert M. La Follette received much favorable publicity, launching his rise on the national scene. The Wisconsin Supreme Court handed down a decision legitimizing the Gymnasium Convention on the eve of the 1904 election. Progressives swept into office and took control of the state legislature. The 1905 legislature enacted a large number of major reforms, including the creation of a commission to oversee the railroads, a measure

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73; and Belle and Fola La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 174-175.

¹⁸ Marguiles, pp. 73-74; Belle and Fola La Follette, vol. 1, p. 175; and "Burly Guards at Doors," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 19, 1904.

¹⁹ Marguiles, p. 75; and Belle and Fola La Follette, pp. 175-177.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

to reduce the lobbying influence of special interest groups, and a civil service law. In addition, comprehensive direct primaries, La Follette's principal platform plank, was passed in referendum in November 1904. With this law, Wisconsin became the first state in the nation in which the people directly elected all candidates for public office. Optional and piecemeal primaries already existed in a few states, but this marked the first time that a comprehensive statewide system was put in place. The institution of direct primaries and the reforms enacted by the 1905 legislature established Wisconsin as the national model of the Progressive Movement.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The Armory is historically significant under Criterion 1. The theme is Political and Military Affairs, the subtheme the Progressive Era. On May 18, 1904, the "Gymnasium Convention" was held in the second floor drill hall of the Armory. At this convention, Robert M. La Follette was renominated governor of Wisconsin and defeated the Stalwarts at their own game to gain control of the Wisconsin Republican Party. The Stalwarts withdrew and held their own convention. A lawsuit to determine which convention was the legitimate one was finally decided by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in favor of the Progressives. The 1904 Wisconsin Republican Convention was a seminal event in the history of the Progressive Movement. National attention was directed to the Wisconsin Progressives, and favorable publicity launched La Follette on the national scene. He would later resign the governorship in December 1905 to become a U.S. Senator. On the heels of the Gymnasium Convention controversy, and La Follette's subsequent vindication, the Progressives swept to victory in November 1904 and dominated the 1905 Wisconsin legislature. This legislature enacted a large number of major reforms. In addition, La Follette's principal platform plank, comprehensive direct primaries, was passed in referendum in November 1904. With this primary election law, Wisconsin became the first state in the nation in which the people directly elected all candidates for public office. Wisconsin instantly surged to the forefront of the national Progressive Movement.²¹ The previous State Capitol Building, where the State Legislature met until 1909, no longer stands. It was the only building which would have had a more important association with Wisconsin's

²⁰ Albert O. Barton, *La Follette's Winning of Wisconsin*, 2nd ed. (Madison: n.p., 1924), pp. 200-01, 207; Robert S. Maxwell, ed., Emanuel Philipp, *Political Reform in Wisconsin*, 2nd ed., (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1973) pp. xvii-12; Robert S. Maxwell, *La Follette and the Rise of the Progressives in Wisconsin*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin Press, 1956), pp. 28, 53-54, 74-75 and 176-200; and Marguiles, pp.75-83.

²¹ Barton, pp. 200-201; Maxwell, ed., pp. xvii-12; Maxwell, pp. 28, 53-54, 74-75 and 176-200; and Marguiles, pp. 75-83.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Progressives than the Armory.²² The University of Wisconsin Armory is the only extant building with such an outstanding association with Wisconsin's Progressive Movement.

The Progressive Movement, directly or indirectly, affected every institution and every person in the United States.²³ Wisconsin's direct primary law, and much of the 1905 legislation, provided a national model for the Progressive Movement.

²² C.A. Holst, ed. *The Wisconsin Capitol: Official Guide and History*, (Madison: Lathrop and Cook, 1920), p. 7.

²³ Maxwell, p. 195.

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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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: # _____

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ARMORY AND GYMNASIUM

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 21

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository): University Library Archives

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
A 16 304770 4771860

Verbal Boundary Description:

The east 15.0 feet of Lot 7 and all of Lots 8 and 9, Block 2, original plat of Madison, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 14, T.7.N.-R.9.E., County of Dane, State of Wisconsin.

Boundary Justification:

This property includes the entire parcel that is historically associated with the University of Wisconsin Armory and Gymnasium.

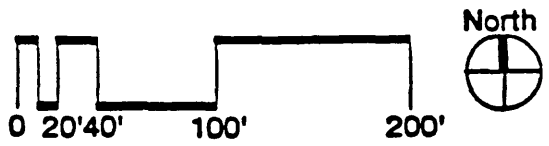
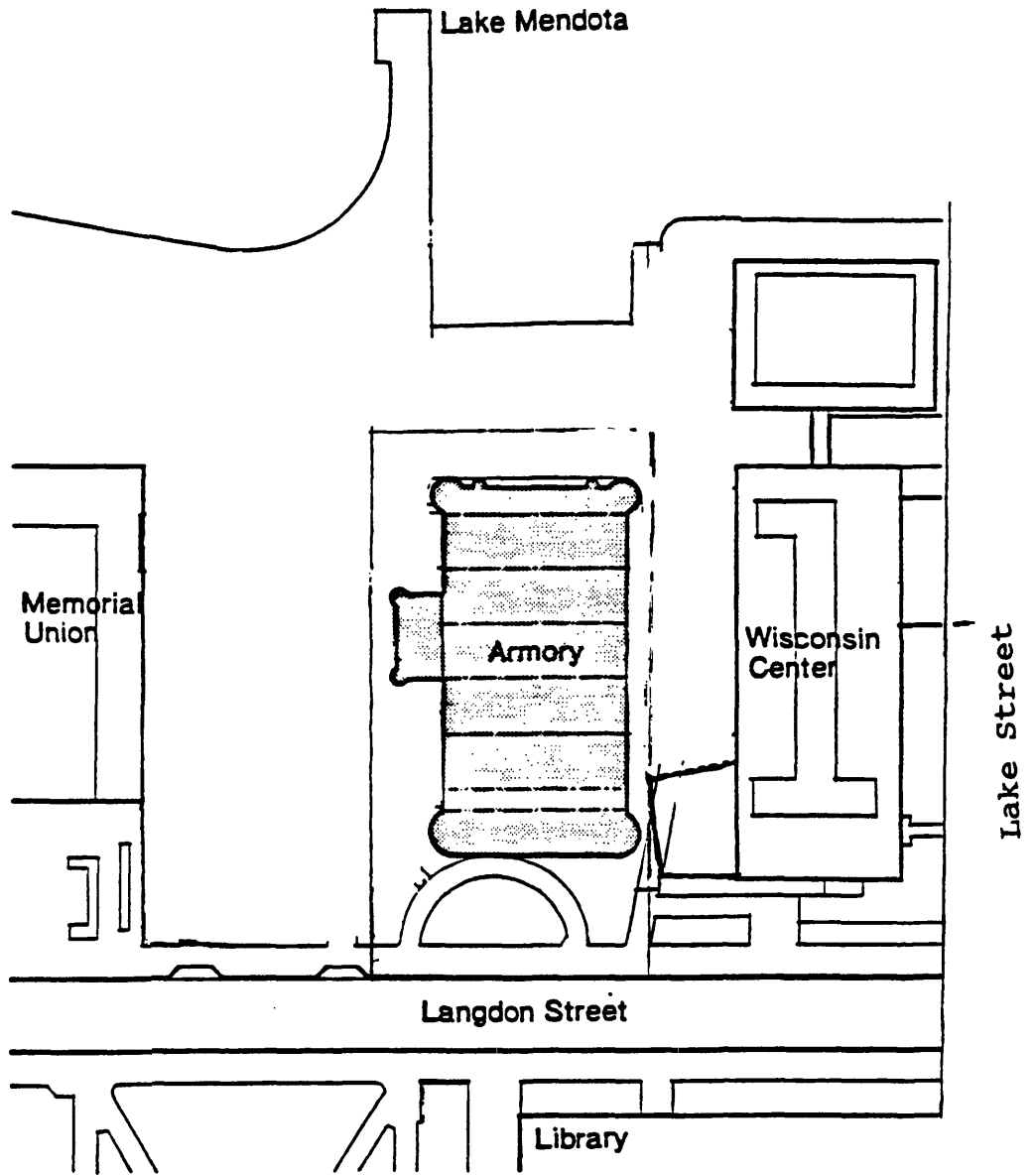
11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Ms. Elizabeth L. Miller, Consultant; edited by James H. Charleton, Historian, National Parks Service, Washington Office, History Division, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127

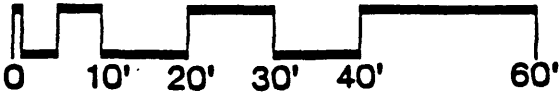
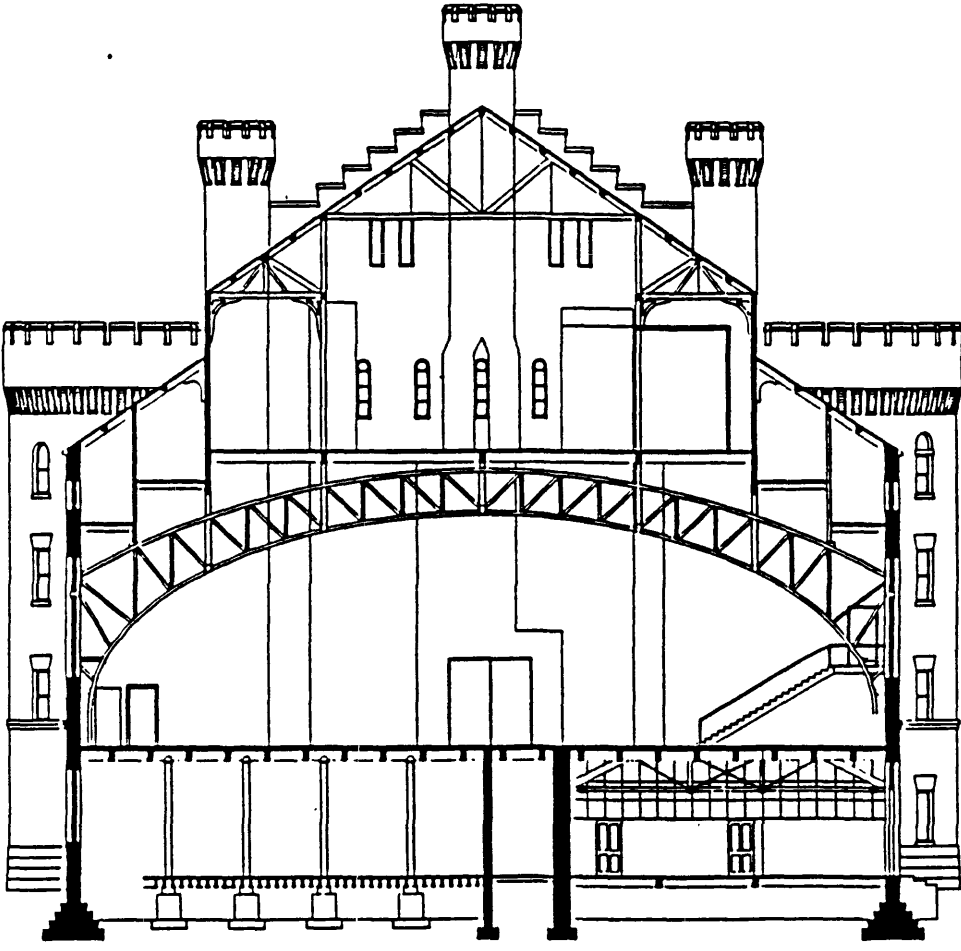
Telephone: 202/343-3793

Date: May 11, 1993

University of Wisconsin
Armory and Gymnasium, 1992
Madison, Wisconsin

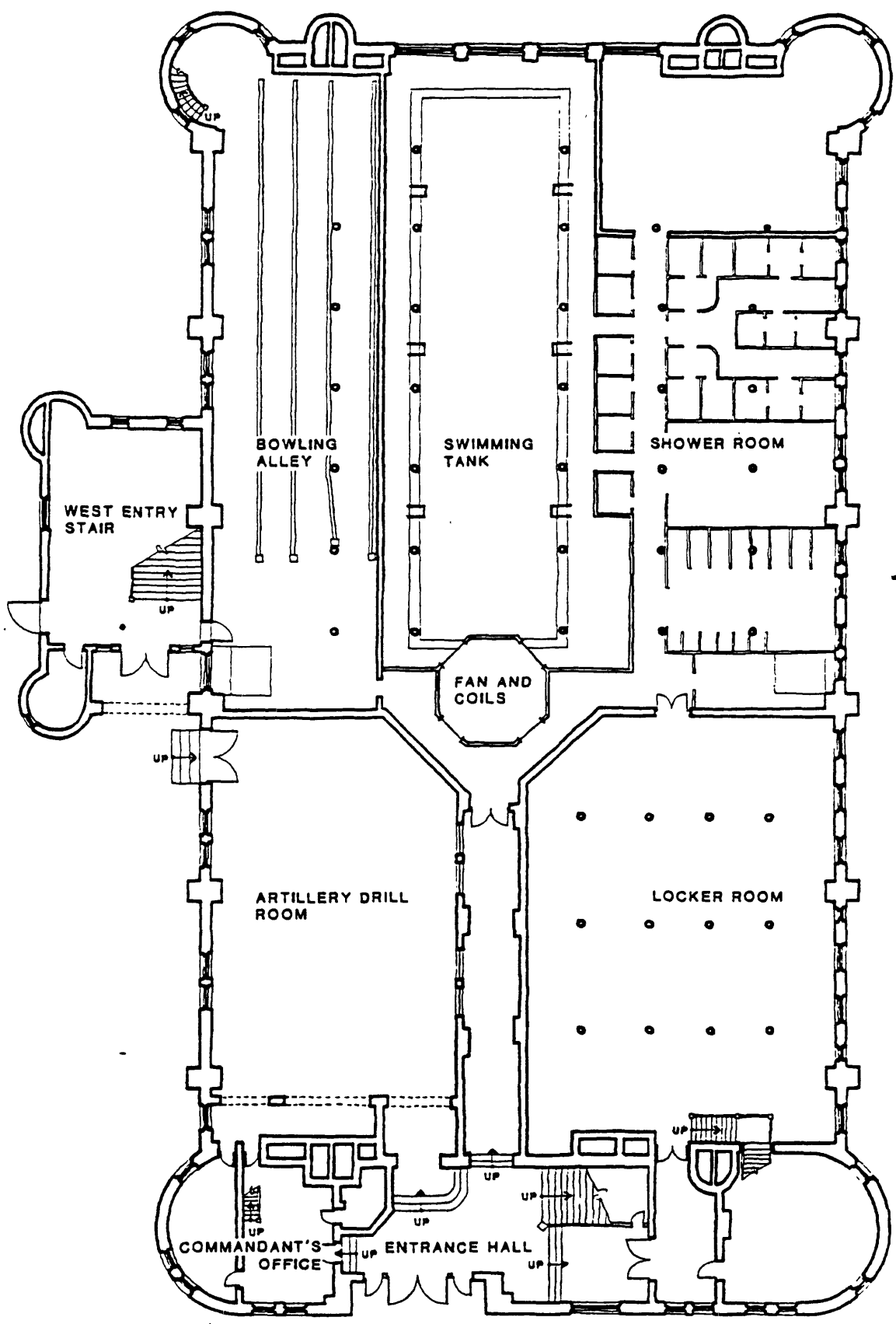


University of Wisconsin
Armory and Gymnasium, 1894
Madison, Dane County, WI



Transverse Section

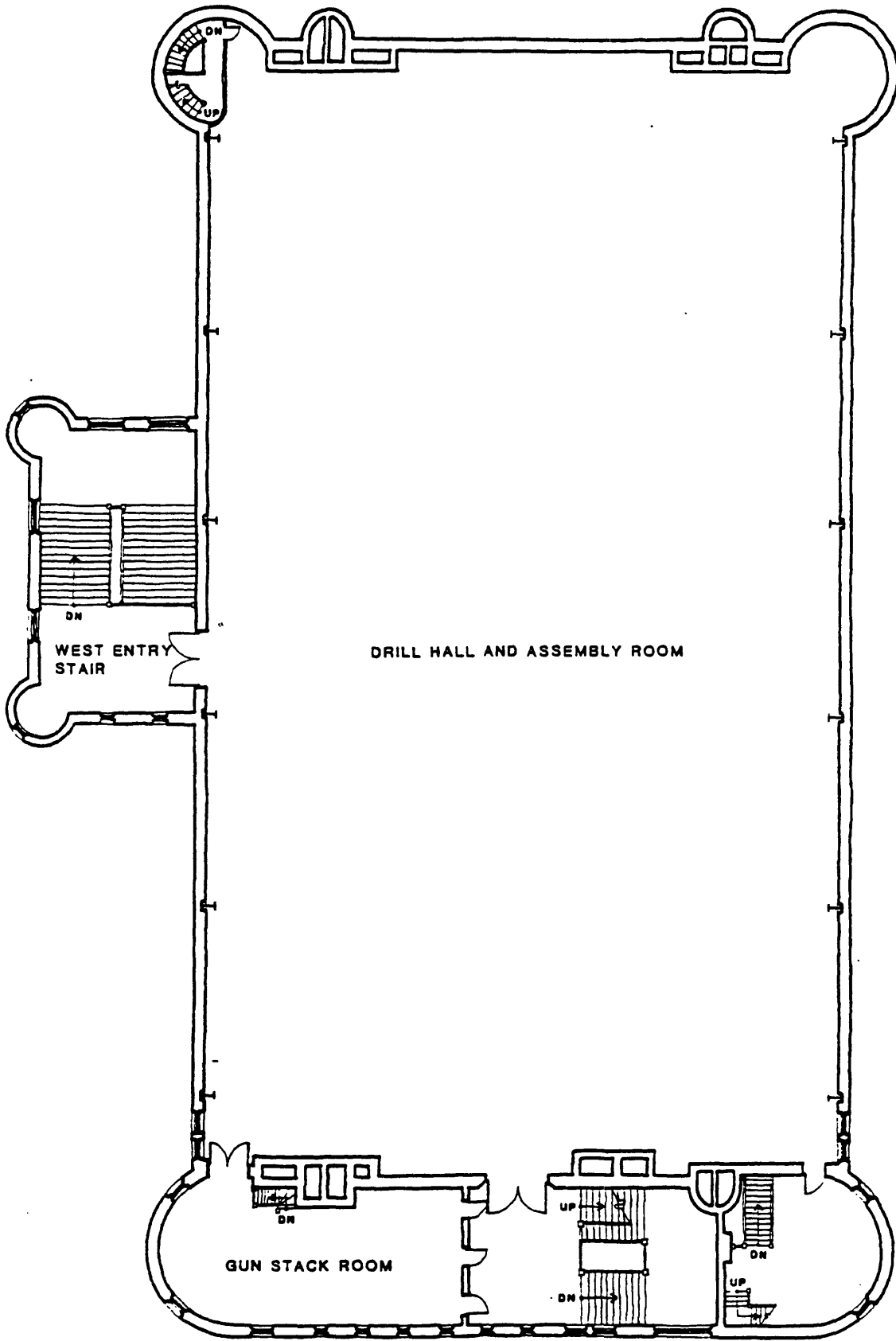
Armory and Gymnasium, 1894
Madison, Dane County, WI
Approximate Scale: 1" = 25'



Reconstructed as-built first floor plan



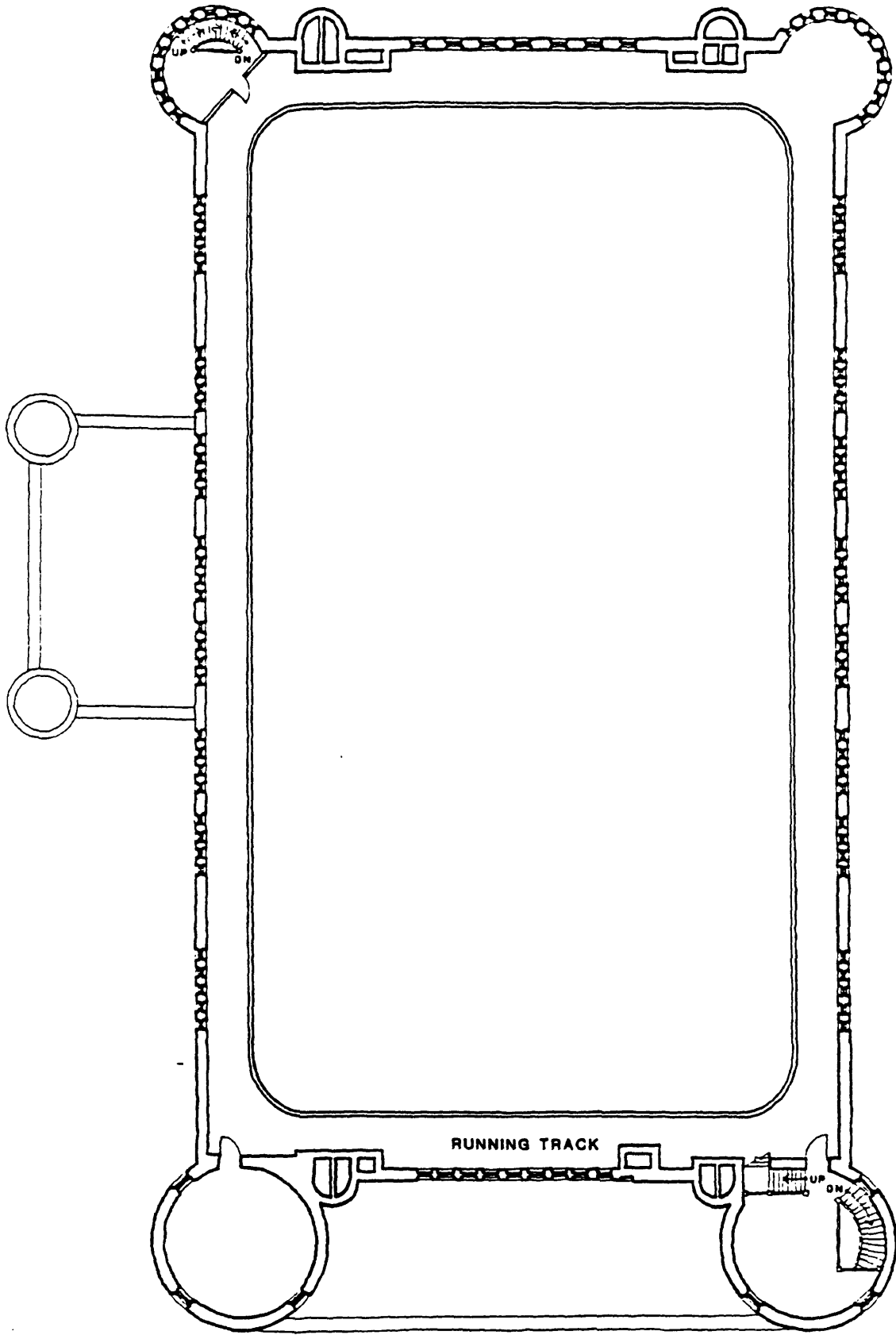
University of Wisconsin
Armory and Gymnasium, 1894
Madison, Dane County, WI
Approximate Scale: 1" = 25'



Reconstructed as-built second floor plan



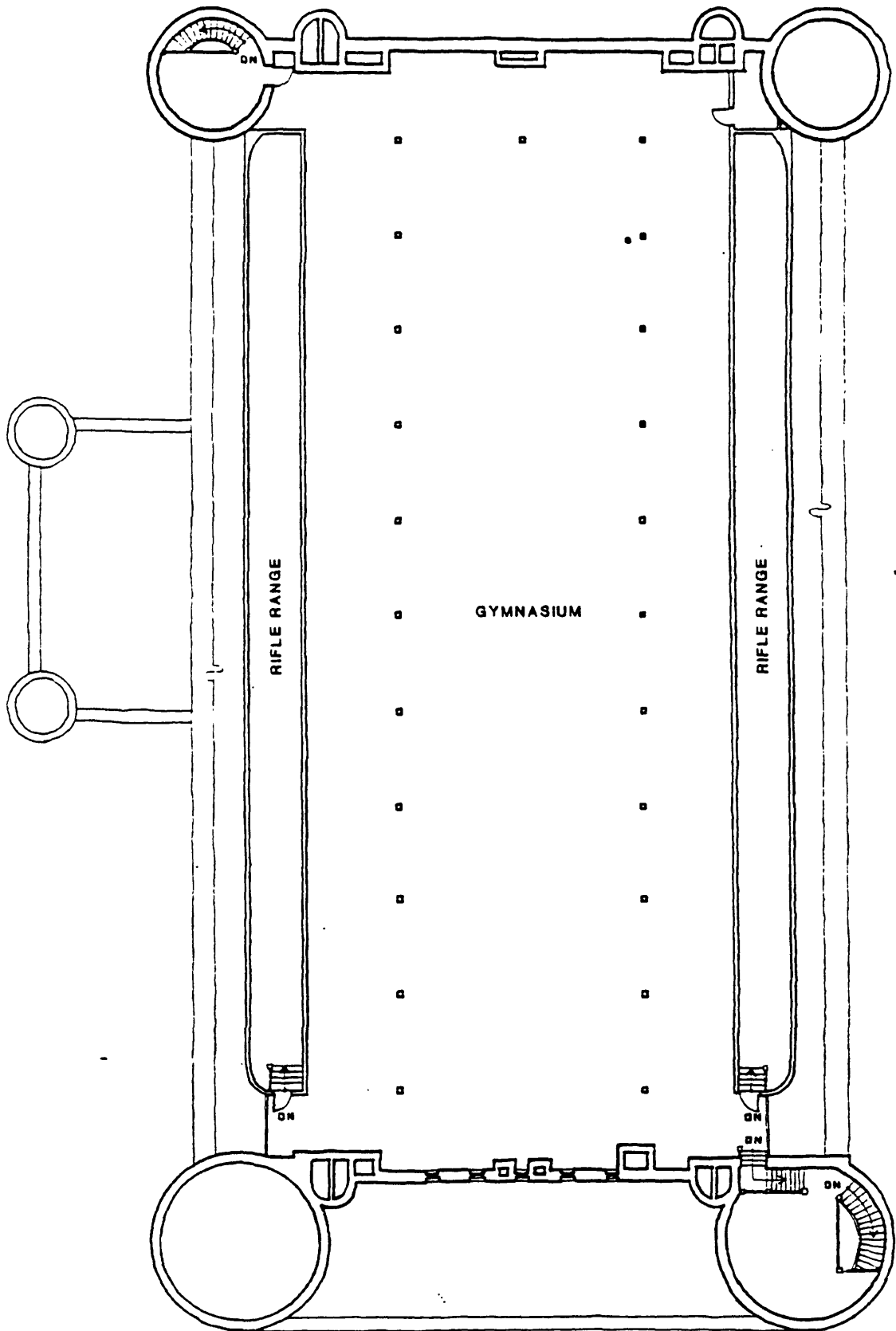
University of Wisconsin
Armory and Gymnasium, 1894
Madison, Dane County, WI
Approximate Scale: 1" = 25'



Reconstructed as-built third floor plan



University of Wisconsin
Armory and Gymnasium, 1894
Madison, Dane County, WI
Approximate Scale: 1" = 25'



Reconstructed as-built fourth floor plan

