

Property Type:

Historic Preservation Research Office

Structure/Site Information Form

IDENTIFICATION 1

Street Address: 1300 E. Center
Provo, Utah County, Utah

UTM: 12 446370 4453660
Quad: Provo, Utah

Name of Structure: Recreation Center at the Utah State Hospital T. 7 S R. 3 E S. 5

Present Owner: State of Utah
Utah State Hospital

Owner Address: P.O. Box 270
Provo, Utah 84603-0270

Year Built (Tax Record): Effective Age: Tax #:

Legal Description: Beginning at a 1/2" steel pin which is S 2146.49 feet and E 1751.43 feet from the W Quarter Corner of Sec 5 T7S R3E, thence N 81°04'46" W 238.01 feet to a 16" diameter tree, thence N 09°59'26" E 261.13 feet to a 12" diameter tree, thence N 30°31'06" E 53.45 feet to a 14" diameter tree, thence S 70°19'02" E 175.78 feet, S 45°05'15" E 31.04 feet, S 22°37'12" E 39.90 feet, S 00°32'37" W 36.94 feet, S 12°07'36" W 189.46 feet to beginning. 1.58 acres. This parcel is part of the 309.55 acre property of the Utah State Hospital and is located on the hill E of the Administration Building.

STATUS/USE 2

Original Owner: State of Utah Construction Date: 1936-37 Demolition Date:

Original Use: Health Care/Recreation Present Use: Health Care/Recreation/Entertainment

Building Condition: Integrity: Preliminary Evaluation: Final Register Status:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Site | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant | <input type="checkbox"/> Not of the | <input type="checkbox"/> National Landmark | <input type="checkbox"/> District |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor Alterations | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributory | Historic Period | <input type="checkbox"/> National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Resource |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | | <input type="checkbox"/> Major Alterations | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Contributory | | <input type="checkbox"/> State Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Thematic |

DOCUMENTATION 3

Photography: Date of Slides: 1985 Slide No.: Date of Photographs: 1985 Photo No.:

Views: Front Side Rear Other

Research Sources:

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abstract of Title | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn Maps | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U of U Library |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plat Records/Map | <input type="checkbox"/> City Directories | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utah State Historical Society | <input type="checkbox"/> BYU Library |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tax Card & Photo | <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical Encyclopedias | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> USU Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Permit | <input type="checkbox"/> Obituary Index | <input type="checkbox"/> LDS Church Archives | <input type="checkbox"/> SLC Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sewer Permit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County & City Histories | <input type="checkbox"/> LDS Genealogical Society | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Bibliographical References (books, articles, records, interviews, old photographs and maps, etc.):

Provo Herald (Provo, Utah), 1936-37.

Architect/Builder: unknown/WPA

Building Materials: stone masonry

Building Type/Style: amphitheatre/

Description of physical appearance & significant architectural features:

(Include additions, alterations, ancillary structures, and landscaping if applicable)

The Recreation Center at the Utah State Hospital, built in 1936-37, is a three-acre facility consisting of an 800-seat stone amphitheatre with attached interior rooms and an accompanying grass-covered play area. The minor alterations that have been made to the facility since its construction in 1936 do not significantly affect its historical integrity.

The eighteen-tier amphitheatre is set against a steep hillside at the base of the mountains on the east side of Provo. It is constructed almost entirely of stone, as are the attached rooms and two-story towers at the southeast and northwest corners. The towers and the "battlements" of various sections of railing give the structure a castlelike appearance. Attached to the tower at the southeast corner is a large interior room with a fireplace, and above, on its flat roof, is another fireplace and an open-air area for social gatherings. Stone ramps at both the north and south sides provide access to the amphitheatre from the grass play area at the base of the facility.

Only minor alterations have been made to the Recreation Center. They include the removal of a brace-supported balcony on the northwest tower (n.d.), the installation of a metal railing along a portion of the walkway at mid-level in the amphitheatre (c.1976), the use of concrete coping on many of the wall sections to prevent water penetration (c.1976), and the installation of a new stage surface over the original flagstone floor. A one-story frame

Statement of Historical Significance:

Construction Date: 1936-37

Built in 1936-37, the Recreation Center at the Utah State Hospital is part of the Public Works Buildings Thematic Resource nomination and is significant because it helps document the impact of New Deal programs in Utah, which was one of the states that the Great Depression of the 1930s most severely affected. In 1933 Utah had an unemployment rate of 36 percent, the fourth highest in the country, and for the period 1932-1940 Utah's unemployment rate averaged 25 percent. Because the depression hit Utah so hard, federal programs were extensive in the state. Overall, per capita federal spending in Utah during the 1930s was 9th among the 48 states, and the percentage of workers on federal work projects was far above the national average. Building programs were of great importance. During the 1930s virtually every public buildings constructed in Utah, including county courthouses, city halls, fire stations, national guard armories, public school buildings, and a variety of others, were built under federal programs by one of several agencies, including the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the National Youth Administration (NYA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), or the Public Works Administration (PWA), and almost without exception none of the buildings would have been built when they were without the assistance of the federal government. The Recreation Center is also significant for its important role in providing therapy through play and recreation for the mentally handicapped patients at the Utah State Hospital. It was the first such facility constructed at the hospital.

The Recreation Center at the Utah State Hospital in Provo is one of 232 buildings constructed in Utah during the 1930s and early 1940s under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other New Deal programs. Of those 232 buildings, 133 are still standing and are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In Utah County 37 buildings were constructed. This is one of 27 that are left. Both of the public works buildings constructed at the Utah State Hospital are still standing.

Recreation Center at the Utah State Hospital
Description continued:

building was constructed in recent years immediately to the south of the amphitheatre to accommodate restrooms and service functions.

Total number of contributing buildings and structures: 1
Total number of noncontributing buildings: 1

History continued:

The Recreation Center was built in 1936-37 as one of several WPA projects undertaken at that time at the Utah State Hospital for the mentally handicapped. Other projects included the construction of the superintendent's residence, the remodeling of the Central Administration Building, upgrading of the heating plant, and miscellaneous repairs and maintenance to the grounds of the 320-acre facility.¹

The Recreation Center was to be the "first step in a great plan to transform the barren, pitted hillside behind the hospital into a park and playground." Dr. Garland H. Pace, superintendent of the hospital at that time, explained the purpose of the facility: "One of the best--and most neglected--ways to mental health is through play and recreation." The amphitheatre was to form "the nucleus around which will be developed play areas, including four tennis courts, a handball court, and many other improvements of the sort. There will be picturesque paths winding over terraces and into gardens sheltered by retaining walls."² Few, if any, of those improvements were made, however. The Recreation Center is the only facility set against the otherwise undeveloped hillside east of the hospital.

Plans for the Recreation Center and for the surrounding landscaping scheme were worked up by Lavar S. Morris, a professor in landscape architecture at nearby Brigham Young University. Morris also supervised the work at the site.³

The stone amphitheatre of the Recreation Center is one of three similar structures which have been identified in Utah. The other two are located at the Utah State Training School in American Fork and at Utah State University in Logan. All three amphitheatres were built as federal public works projects in either the 1930s or '40s. Although a complete study of amphitheatres has not been completed, it appears that these three are some of the largest and earliest amphitheatres built in Utah. The Recreation Center amphitheatre differs from the other two in that it has towers and substantial interior rooms. The facility is still used by the hospital, and it is also used as a theatre for public performances, operating under the name "Castle Theatre."

Notes

¹Provo Herald, August 19, 1936, Sec. 5, p. 4.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.