

Resolution to Preserve the Façade of South Stadium

Background

In the Chattanooga Times Free Press today (10/10/09), UTC officials announced plans to use \$450,000 to demolish South Stadium. According to Vice Chancellor Richard Brown in a report he gave to the UPRAC last week, no fewer than three architectural restoration firms have declared the building unsafe for occupation and unfit for preservation. While I have no doubt the bulk of South Stadium is beyond saving, the Oak Street façade of the structure one of the most historic and artistic pieces of architecture on campus and is worth some extraordinary conservation methods.

South Stadium was almost certainly designed by W. T. Downing, the famous architect from Atlanta responsible for many early 20th Century buildings in Chattanooga, especially those associated with the Chamberlain, Lupton and Patten families: the older buildings at Baylor, the Patten Hotel, the first Chattanooga Public Library, and the homes of John A. Patten and J. T. Lupton. Downing also designed the oldest buildings on the campus of UTC, including Patten Chapel, and Race, Hooper, and Founders Halls, all produced around 1915-18. Missing drawings and ambiguous documentation make it difficult to assign a precise date to South Stadium, which once served as the entrance and grandstand to Historic Chamberlain field. On stylistic grounds alone, though, South Stadium appears to be the work of Downing. This makes sense given that the chief benefactor for Chamberlain Field, the iron foundry magnate Hiram S. Chamberlain, was among the founders of Baylor School, and Downing was the architect for Baylor during the first decade and a half of the 20th Century. South Stadium suffered a major fire in 1925 and was rebuilt by 1927. The façade on Oak Street, though, appears to have survived this fire and to originate well before the mid-1920s, perhaps as early as 1908, the year Chamberlain field was dedicated. If so, this would make the façade of South Stadium the oldest extant building on campus. Whatever the case, the façade makes a perfect complement to Downing's similar Collegiate Tudor Revival buildings across the street.

Resolution:

As the façade of South Stadium is among the earliest and most distinguished architectural landmarks on campus;

as it serves to complete the architectural fabric of the buildings along Vine Street at the summit of the campus;

and as it is rich with the history of UTC and dear to the alumni of our institution,

the Faculty Senate of UTC urges the administration to seek every means possible to preserve the Oak Street façade of South Stadium. The presumption here is that the façade will have to be completely repointed and even rebuilt in parts, and that it will be supported from the rear by a new structure. As much as possible, all original windows, trim and brickwork will be preserved in their current form and position, ready to serve as an old face for a new building. It is understood that the concrete wall above the brickwork, along with its railing and radio tower, will not be preserved.