

## ST. LOUIS' OLD OLYMPIC STADIUM A PHOTO ESSAY

by June Wuest Becht

One hundred years ago, St. Louis in the state of Missouri (USA) hosted the Games of the Third Olympiad as a part of its *Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (World's Fair). It was not a popular decision because the Games had been awarded earlier to the city of Chicago, about 350 miles away in the state of Illinois.

Chicago was better known to members of the international community, both in the United States and elsewhere. In 1893, Chicago held its *Columbian Exposition* (World's Fair), which attracted an international gathering on its shores of Lake Michigan.

St. Louis had not had an international attraction to rival Chicago's up to the time it delayed its Fair from 1903, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Louisiana Purchase*, to 1904. Rather than have two inter-

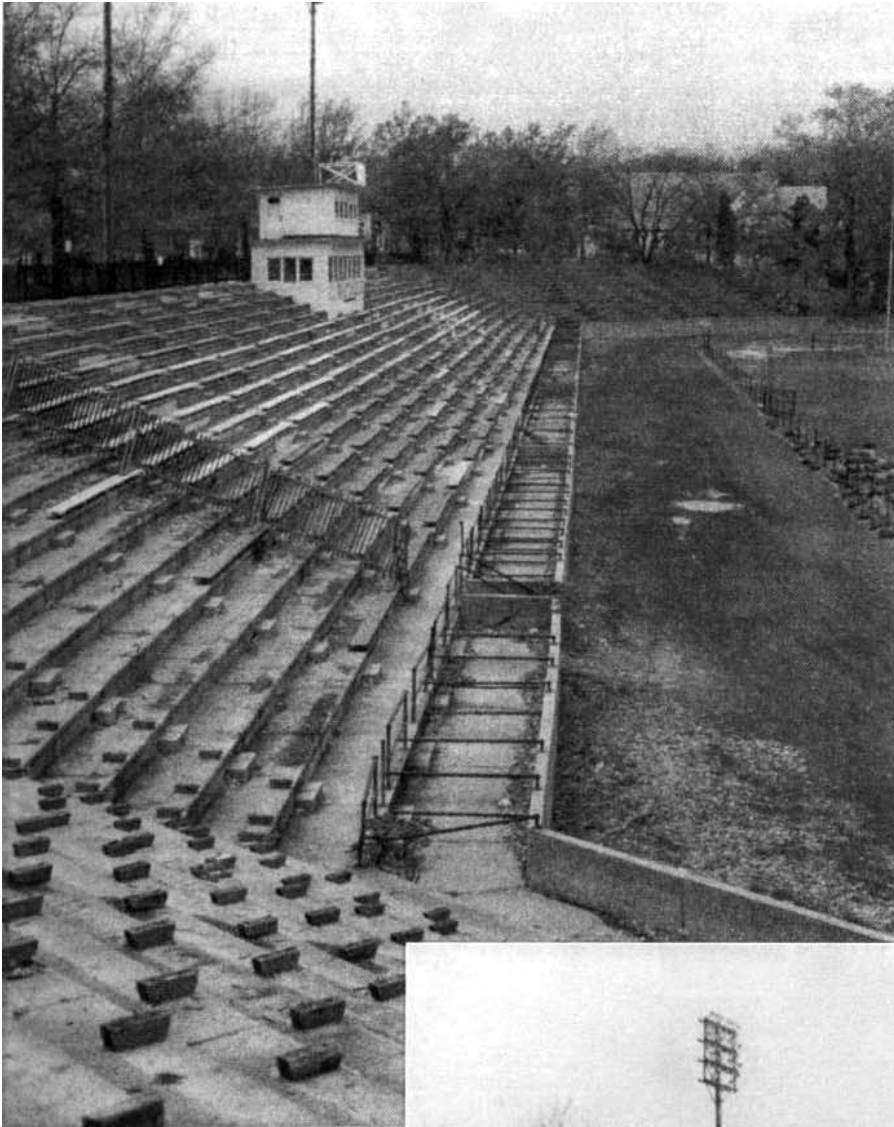
national events in cities near one another, the Third Olympiad was finally scheduled to go to St. Louis as a part of its Fair. This would have been a better solution, except David R. FRANCIS, who was President, had already planned multiple athletic competitions to be held in St. Louis during the Fair. Thus both athletic contests - Olympic and World's Fair - were intermixed.

From July 1 through November 23, 1904 most Olympic events were held in the Stadium, a new facility which was leased from Washington University for the duration of the fair.

Today this Stadium is celebrating its centennial with great pride. The U.S. women's Olympic Marathon Trials will be held here in Spring, 2004. The start of the 2004 marathon will be at the approximate start of the 1904 marathon.



Runners in the St. Louis' Olympic marathon round the Stadium track after running one lap inside the Stadium. Runners are: #9 Frank PIERCE, *Pastime AC*, Seneca Indian, USA; #32 Charilaos GIANNAKAS, Greece; #12 Arthur NEWTON, *New York Athletic Club*, competitor in Paris, USA; #20 Thomas HICKS, *Cambridgeport YMCA*, second in the Boston in 1904 and the eventual winner in St. Louis, USA; #10 Sam MELLOR, *Mohawk Athletic Club*, Boston Marathon veteran, USA. The white line appearing in center of Stadium (to the left of #32) is the canvas cover rolled over posts in three rows of seats to protect the press from sun and rain. (Press Box) Top of the Stadium shows the Intramural Railroad Station. Its tracks circled the World's Fairgrounds. (*Missouri Historical Society*)



Shot of Stadium on South side (with old Washington University Press Box in white) taken November 15, 1983, the day before bulldozers arrived to remove the concrete. The track was original third mile, cinder track, perhaps the last in a United States college. The wings of the Stadium on the East and West ends were removed. Although there were no permanent seats on the North side of the Stadium, in 1904 some spectators stood behind a fence to watch on the North side.



The East wing was removed in 1983.



Close-up of renovation in 1983. (top)

These gates were erected on the East side of the Stadium in 1914 in honor of David R. FRANCIS, who was President of the Fair. James E. SULLIVAN was named "Chief of the Department of Physical Culture", which was selected to handle the Games. He had been assistant chief of the department in Paris in 1900. Francis was named Ambassador to Russia in 1917. The gates still stand.

This marker is placed on the left side of the gates.



This picture was taken recently. The Stadium has been enhanced to look its best for the U.S. Women's Olympic marathon Trials to be held in Spring, 2004.

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