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Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field and Ole Miss: 100 Years in the Making

*by Chad S. Seifried
and
Milorad M. Novicevic*

“Whenever there is mentioned ‘Hemingway Stadium’ at Oxford, there instantly flashes within the minds of thousands of Mississippians the Ole Miss Rebels, the voices of the excited spectators cheering, the sounds of the band playing, the waving of flags, a large enthusiastic, noisy crowd of spectators; they are watching their team on the field because no game or sport offers greater glory, or greater pain than football.” - W. Eugene Morse, 1974

In August of 2011, the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) announced the creation of a new \$150 million capital campaign named “Forward Together.” Ole Miss created the campaign to help build a new basketball arena and to renovate Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field, home to the Rebels football team since 1915. Organizers of the campaign promoted Phase 1 including the addition of thirty luxury suites and 770 club seats to the south end zone of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium. They further promised that new lighting, sound systems, and video boards would help enhance the facility for spectators while redesigned locker rooms would provide more room and safer access to the field for participants and event personnel. The completion of Phase 2 enclosed the north end zone and increased the capacity of Vaught-Hemingway to 64,038 in August 2016. The newly developed end zone plaza created “an impressive north entry point to

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Hollingsworth Field” and a “true connection to the historic Grove as part of our ‘front door’ vision.” Other projects associated with the new construction involved “improvements to the concourses, concession areas, and restrooms of the stadium ... to improve the aesthetics of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium and enhance the game-day experience for our [Ole Miss] fans.”¹

The initial promotion of the renovation was a huge success as Ole Miss sold all thirty luxury suites and over 60% of the available club level seats by December 2014. Enthusiasm for the project also increased the Forward Together campaign goal to \$222 million, shortly after a generous \$25 million donation from Dr. Gerald M. “Jerry” Hollingsworth.² New additions to the revised Forward Together project primarily involved improvements to the west side luxury suites. Estimated at \$3.9 million, the west side luxury spaces received their first updates since 1988. Specifically, the west side luxury suite renovations involved carpet replacement and new appliances for each room, new window installation, and the creation of new lounge space for catering and hospitality activities. With respect to the north end zone, the University altered its initial plans by increasing the size of the student section from 8,200 to 10,000 seats and adding a new 104’ x 49’ high definition video board. The aforementioned entry plaza received additional upgrading through the construction of the Jake Gibbs Varsity Letter Walk, which recognizes all past letter winners from all sports at Ole Miss.³

This effort to enhance the game-day experience, to connect with

¹ Ole Miss Athletics Foundation, “Forward Together Capital Campaign,” Oxford, MS, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://givetoathletics.com/forward-together/>. To accommodate for the expansion the main concourse in the south end zone was expanded by 2,500 square feet, as well as forty-three new restroom facilities and thirty-two more points of sale for concessions. The two corner south end zone video boards were 30’ by 50’. See also Austin Miller, “Upgrades Continue To Vaught-Hemingway, IPF,” *Ole Miss Sports*, July 16, 2013, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/071613aad.html>.

² Lasherica Thornton, “Vaught Construction Nears Conclusion,” *The Daily Mississippian*, March 7, 2016, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://thedmonline.com/vaught-construction-nears-conclusion/>.

³ Cooke Douglass Farr Lemons. “The University of Mississippi Vaught-Hemingway West Sky Box Renovation,” 2013, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.cdf.com/what-we-do/the-university-of-mississippi-vaught-hemingway-west-sky-box-renovation/>. Jake Gibbs is a former quarterback, baseball player, and coach at Ole Miss. He led Ole Miss to the 1960 National Championship in football and 1959 SEC baseball title.

alumni, and to promote the school's athletic history is nothing new as the stadium experienced many renovations with similar goals since its erection as a small 600-seat facility.⁴ With the facility's 100th anniversary now passed, it appears fitting to investigate what specific individuals were responsible for the development of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium into the largest stadium in state of Mississippi. Moreover, a descriptive history of changes made to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium seems necessary to better understand how it evolved into an important social anchor for Ole Miss during Saturdays each fall.⁵ The physical structure of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium supports the cultural activity of football, which creates, promotes, and maintains group and individual identity for Ole Miss fans.⁶

Social historian Brian Ingrassia stated "well intentioned progressives ... made sport permanent by creating athletic departments, constructing concrete stadiums, and hiring a corps of professional experts."⁷ Sport historian Ronald A. Smith emphasized many colleges began to build their own large stadiums by 1905 to capitalize on the mass popularity/appeal of college football in particular.⁸ The popularity of college football was "consummated through commercial facilities (i.e., stadia) built on campus made mostly of concrete" to demonstrate

⁴ "Many Improvements on Campus Buildings," *The Mississippian*, September 30, 1914, p. 8, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS. See also: "Football Stadium," *The Mississippian*, March 24, 1915, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁵ William Foster and Craig Hyatt, "Inventing Team Tradition: A Conceptual Model for the Strategic Development of Fan Nations," *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8 (2008): 266, 269. Foster and Hyatt defined fan nation as "comprised mostly of fans who are not [actual] citizens of cities" and who come together through utilizing "an imagined cohesiveness they share" with others through the use of myths, symbols, tangible objects, and rituals.

⁶ Chad Seifried and Aaron Clopton, "An Alternative View of Public Subsidy and Sport Facilities Through Social Anchor Theory," *City, Culture and Society*, 4 (2013): 50. "Social capital was described as the aggregate of the quality relationships and networks of individual members within a community and showed to be both an individual attribute and a community asset."

⁷ Brian M. Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University: Higher Education's Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football* (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 2012), 9. See also Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 98. "Condoning the commercial and business aspects of athletics, governing boards increasingly agreed to the hiring of professional coaches and the erection of large stadiums, which could seat far more than the number of students and staff."

⁸ Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 82.

their grasp on modernity and imply supremacy of their environment to further bind their community.⁹ The emphasis on permanency through concrete is significant to acknowledge because wooden venues are temporary. They also cannot adequately accommodate the needs of the press, spectators, or participants; nor can they effectively adapt to meet evolving expectations, practices, and/or traditions.¹⁰ Ole Miss was an important participant in the development of football in the South, and Vaught-Hemingway Stadium is notable because it emerged and changed as a special investment opportunity similar to other institutions focused on expressing modernity and permanency.¹¹

Ole Miss Football Begins

In 1893, a movement to develop intercollegiate athletics started at Ole Miss to address not only the “love for healthful out-of-door sport” but with the specific purpose of developing relationships with current students (i.e., future alumni).¹² Dr. Alexander L. Bondurant of the Classics Department and later dean of the Graduate School introduced football to Ole Miss in 1893. Familiar with the game in his native Virginia, Bondurant coached Ole Miss to a 4-1 record and chose the colors of “Cardinal red of Harvard and the Navy blue of Yale ... to have the spirit of those two good colleges.”¹³ In support of athletics at Ole Miss, Dr. Bondurant stated:

No phase of college life has had a more rapid development in American institutions than athletics ... The college student of today has concluded that ‘All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,’ and in all leading institutions athletics have attained a prominent place ... Objections may be urged with propriety against athletic sports when carried to excess, but when kept within proper limits it is clear that the result is

⁹ Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 171; Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, ix.

¹⁰ Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 5, 151.

¹¹ Blake Gumprecht, “Stadium Culture: College Athletics and the Making of Place in the American College Town,” *Southeastern Geographer*, 43 (2003): 28.

¹² “Athletic Department: History of the Football Team,” *University of Mississippi Magazine* 26.6 (1903): 32, 39.

¹³ William G. Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem* (West Point, NY: Leisure Press, 1982), 4. See also William W. Sorrels and Charles Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels: Mississippi Football* (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, Inc., 1976), 11-12, 16.

very beneficial.¹⁴

One student, James “Bobo” Champion concurred in 1893 by suggesting the “athletic fever has now taken full possession of the university ... and the time is already here when, in order to rank high in college or society, one must join the running crowd and play on the football team.”¹⁵

Despite early enthusiasm, football games were not very profitable for the tiny school (enrollment under 250) located in a small county (Lafayette County estimated population- 20,553). Ole Miss did not manage games very well, although it like most colleges and some spectators accepted admission charges by the 1890s.¹⁶ For instance, the October 27, 1894, game in Jackson against Mississippi A&M attracted a crowd of 1,000 but only generated gate receipts of \$180, suggesting many people snuck into the State Fairgrounds to see the game without paying.¹⁷ The University also did not provide any financial support to the early teams nor did they bestow any official university status to coaches. A coach’s pay often depended on the meager revenues generated by the Athletic Association, a body comprised mostly of students with some faculty advisors such as Bondurant, who managed the events.

The lack of University support also explains the poor condition of on-campus facilities over the first ten years of the program. The graduation of students leading the Athletic Association contributed to other difficulties associated with home scheduling, arranging a competitive travel schedule, and procuring adequate equipment.¹⁸ Such problems were typical of other southern institutions around this time. Lovick P. Miles reported in *Outing* that many Southern schools experienced poor financial standing, and he cited extensive travel for football teams as a necessity to make them self-sufficient. Miles also

¹⁴ “Football in Rebtown: Early-Day Struggles Behind the Scenes,” *Alumni Review*, 1948, p. 50, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

¹⁵ Christopher J. Walsh, *Where Football is King: A History of the SEC* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2006), 193.

¹⁶ David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 172-173. See also Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 169.

¹⁷ Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 27.

¹⁸ “Football in Rebtown,” 50.

suggested that inadequate alumni bases and the small size of towns associated with southern schools prevented them from paying coaches well or from developing suitable facilities, which would have advanced football in the South.¹⁹

To get alumni attention, students suggested the future success of football depended on getting more home games scheduled.²⁰ However, University Park, a baseball diamond and first on-campus home of Ole Miss football, was a small, simple, and dusty facility that used rope to separate the playing field from spectators. It was not a desirable location for football games nor did the seating conditions accommodate spectators well.²¹ As a result, the few games scheduled between 1893 and 1905 occurred primarily on the road and in larger towns such as Memphis, New Orleans, and Jackson.²²

In 1905, Ole Miss played against Mississippi A&M in Jackson making \$594.00, the largest gate ever for a single event.²³ The scheduling of the game in Jackson is notable as many other institutions in the South also sought large metropolitan locations because their on-campus facilities could not deliver sufficient gate returns.²⁴ The Board of Control for the Athletic Association at Ole Miss advised the Athletic Association during a December 5, 1905, meeting to place their earnings into a “savings bank in Mississippi where it will begin to draw interest.” With this action as a foundation, the board believed it could “make a concerted appeal to the alumni and all other friends of

¹⁹ Lovick P. Miles, “Football in the South,” *Outing*, 25, (January 1894), 258.

²⁰ Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 38.

²¹ Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem*, 9, 19. A report from the *College Reflector* of Mississippi A&M shows in November of 1903 the match-up at University Park was dusty as “the boys were almost choking.” Referenced ropes used at previously A&M and Ole Miss on-campus facilities were not present at Jackson, which allowed spectators to freely move with the ball and get closer to the playing field, in some instances detrimental to the play on the field according to the *Daily Clarion-Ledger*.

²² Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem*, 4. See also Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 36. Ole Miss only played one game a year at home from 1893 to 1898. Further, the 1897 season was cancelled because of a yellow fever epidemic that delayed the opening of school. The 1905 season was almost cancelled due to delay of start of classes from a scarlet fever outbreak.

²³ Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 50. Final year balance of \$664.18 for the Athletic Association, their first profit.

²⁴ Grumprecht, “Stadium Culture,” 35, 39. As an example, the University of Florida scheduled neutral site games in Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa, while the University of Oklahoma played games in Oklahoma City and Dallas during this time. Gate receipts were the primary source of income for all college football teams of this era.

the institutions to assist us in putting up an athletic building on the campus.” The State Fairgrounds Field in Jackson supported more seats, but many, including alumni, criticized the grandstand as being too far away from the field of play and too small when 5,000 fans packed into the 1,000-seat facility.²⁵ In the end, the Athletic Association took the board’s advice and selected The Commercial Bank of Trust Company of Laurel as its bank and worked with Dr. P. H. Saunders, a former Ole Miss faculty member, employed at the bank. Yet despite their efforts, no immediate work surfaced on the construction of a new on-campus facility because student members of the Athletic Association were not available to help build a new facility.²⁶

An eligibility controversy in 1907 led to a brief discussion at the University on whether to abolish football or not. The charge that the Athletic Association helped violate an unofficial “Purity Code” by hiring ‘ringers’ without believing them to be members of the student body, delayed the construction process. *The Varsity Voice* reported on February 22, 1908, that hardly any southern school could claim innocence with respect to the hiring of ringers. Exchanges among Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) members did little to stop this behavior.²⁷ State Representative C.W. Doherty of Tunica County proposed legislation to help athletics at the University improve ‘actual’ student play in order to discourage the hiring of ringers. The proposal involved an annual state supplement for athletics of \$2,000 to each institution of higher education. Although voted down, the legislation demonstrated parties from outside the university community were beginning to take interest in athletics and football at Ole Miss.

In 1909, the university responded to appeals by athletic teams and their growing alumni base by establishing a Director of Athletics

²⁵ “Varsity Team Lost to A&M,” *The Commercial Appeal*, December 1, 1905, p. 1.

²⁶ “Football in Rebtown,” 61. See also Chad S. Seifried and Patrick Tutka, “Southern Methodist University Football and the Stadia: Moving toward Modernization,” *Sport History Review*, 47 (2016), 174. It was not unusual for students to help build sport facilities throughout the country.

²⁷ The SIAA was the first intercollegiate sport league in the South. It was formed to facilitate partnerships with peer institutions by establishing minimum stadium sizes, determining gate receipts shares, formalizing start times, and standardizing game schedules. An additional goal of member schools involved the desire to capitalize commercially on consumer interest in football.

faculty member.²⁸ The *Alumni Review* quoted the university as stating, "The arrangement is already in vogue at many institutions and seems to be a success." The University hired Dr. Nathan P. Stauffer through a combination of student fees and monetary support from the Athletic Association matching his salary as a medical doctor. Stauffer's three-year commitment from 1909-1911 was recognized as a major reason football contributed to high spirits across campus and among alumni. The team recorded a winning record of 17-7-2 versus the previous four-year period of 7-15.²⁹

In 1910, many were excited about the improvements made to the State Fairgrounds Field in Jackson prior to the annual Ole Miss and Mississippi A&M game. Specifically, Jackson constructed a bleacher addition to the east side of the facility doubling the grandstand capacity to nearly 3,500. With both teams enjoying 6-1 records, a large capacity crowd jammed the stands. Near the beginning of the game, the new east side addition collapsed creating a mass of broken timber and injured spectators. Detailing each injury, the *Jackson Daily News* reported that approximately sixty people were seriously hurt.³⁰ As a result, many called on Ole Miss to provide more on-campus home games and to do so in a more modern and safer facility, particularly since school officials wanted to grow the enrollment beyond the 480 students it had in 1911.³¹

The University made funds more readily available for the creation of a new on-campus football stadium shortly after the tragedy. For instance, although it was never publicly recognized, the University started charging students an "Association Fee" of \$10 beginning in 1911 to support this initiative.³² Promoted by *The Mississippian* as "one of the very best in the South, and one of which any institutions should be proud," a new Athletic Field was eventually built southeast of University Park. Costing \$1,500, the facility was completed in 1915 for exclusive use by football and track & field teams. The Ole Miss student body built the 600-seat wooden grandstand on the west side of the facility and received a full day off from school for their work.

²⁸ "Football in Rebtown," 63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁰ "Many Hurt in Collapse of Stand," *Jackson Daily News*, December 2, 1911, p. 1.

³¹ Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem*, 49, 59.

³² "Athletic Department: History of the Football Team," 39.

The University Athletic Association recognized head coach Billy Driver as a major reason for construction of the facility claiming his good management of association finances improved confidence there would be a return on investment emanating from the new facility in the near future.³³

A New Athletic Field

Like other institutions throughout the eastern and midwestern regions of the United States that constructed permanent football stadiums during the early years of the twentieth century, Ole Miss desired to establish and improve relations with students and alumni, to improve donations, to create revenues (e.g., gate receipts), and to expand its institutional brand awareness, and to attract more students.³⁴ In the Northeast, both Harvard University (1903- Harvard Stadium) and Yale University (1914- Yale Bowl) developed steel and reinforced concrete football stadia that were aesthetically beautiful and technological wonders in order to demonstrate the modernity, permanence, and robustness of their schools.³⁵

According to sport historian Andrew Doyle, "Southern colleges and universities belatedly adopted football in the early 1890s, and this late start combined with endemic poverty and tiny enrollments ... to

³³ "Football Stadium," *The Mississippian*, March 24, 1915, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS, "Athletic Field is the Pride of University," *The Mississippian*, n.d., folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS. "Many Improvements on Campus Buildings," *The Mississippian*, September 30, 1914, p. 8, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS. See also "Back in University Park," *Alumni Review*, 1948: 66, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

³⁴ Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 9. See also Arnaud C. Marts, "College Football and College Endowment," *School and Society*, 40 (1934): 14; Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem*, 100. The Ole Miss enrollment for 1917 was 573.

³⁵ Chad Seifried, "An Analysis of the American Outdoor Sport Facility: Developing an Ideal-type on the Evolution of Professional Baseball and Football Structures," (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 2005), 16, 151. Ron Smith, "Far More than Commercialism: Stadium Building from Harvard's Innovation to Stanford's 'Dirt Bowl,'" *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (2008): 1457.

render southern football decidedly inferior to the rest of the nation.”³⁶ Predictably, eastern and midwestern teams rarely considered playing southern schools as serious competition and regularly positioned games against them around the turn of the century as practices in preparation for more established institutions. Initial travel difficulties made it costly for southern schools because payment depended on gate receipts emanating from both home and road team fans.³⁷ However, improving roads and rail lines linking southern schools and higher populated southern cities helped lower transportation costs and increase gate receipts; thus improving profits. Accessibility to other cities also prompted the formation of the Southern Conference in 1921, which further facilitated and improved play.³⁸

In the 1920s, Southerners utilized football to demonstrate their modernity but they were “embarrassed by the lack of stadiums to stage games.” Many southern institutions, like Ole Miss, did not play in modern steel and concrete stadiums but instead “played games in roped-off portions of college campuses and city parks” or in tiny wood facilities which prevented them from scheduling attractive opponents. To address this deficiency, civic leaders and university boosters across the South organized campaigns to finance the construction of new stadia that were frequently considered “gilt-edged business propositions.”³⁹ Doyle argued “staging mass market sporting events in modern stadiums was a highly visible way to showcase the progressive urban society of the 20th century South.”⁴⁰ Further, the recognition of football as a mass entertainment product enabled stadium supporters to position it as the “most visible icon of civic progress even at the apogee of the machine age.”⁴¹ The level of economic progress made from

³⁶ Andrew Doyle, “Causes won, not lost,” *College Football and the Modernization of the American South*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1994): 231. See also Mike Butler, “Confederate Flags, Class Conflict, a Golden Egg, and Castrated Bulls: A Historical Examination of the Ole Miss-Mississippi State Football Rivalry,” *The Journal of Mississippi History* 59.2 (1997): 127.

³⁷ Fuzzy Woodruff, *A History of Southern Football* (Atlanta: Walter W. Brown Publishing, 1928), 142.

³⁸ “Confederate Flags, Class Conflict, a Golden Egg, and Castrated Bulls,” 128. See also Walsh, *Where Football is King*, 11.

³⁹ Lawrence Perry, “The Stadium and College Athletics,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, 56 (November 1914): 573.

⁴⁰ Doyle, “Causes won, not lost,” 243. See also Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University*, 39.

the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century corresponded with increases in technological improvement, building construction, and rationalization of space and business activities. Advertising and public relations became important tools to universities, communities, and businesses throughout the South as they realized the power symbols had in controlling image. Football stadia emerged as proof of the region's modernness and progressiveness.⁴¹

Despite initial praise, many regularly criticized the new Athletic Field at Ole Miss for its small capacity and poor quality based on standing water resulting from inadequate draining. Workers had to help "pipe up a creek and excavate into the west bank to make room for the field" during the initial construction of the facility in 1915.⁴² Because of the field's condition, the largest or most prestigious games continued at neutral site locations. Several Mississippi cities competed against one another for the rights to host the burgeoning rivalry between Ole Miss and Mississippi A&M.⁴³ Tupelo outbid Jackson, Greenville, and Clarksdale to host their games from 1915 through 1917 on the strength of its facility, which could seat 5,000 and supported parking for 200 cars. Sport historian Raymond Schmidt highlights the growing importance of cars during this time as he suggests improvements in roads and increased "automobile ownership" continued the "rise of the stadium."⁴⁴ In 1919, Clarksdale outbid Greenville and Tupelo for rights to the 1919 game. The primary reason for its victory was the new \$100,000 stadium built for Elizabeth Dorr High School described as having "velvety grass" and ample space for parking and spectating.⁴⁵ Greenwood won rights to the 1920 and 1921 contests primarily because of its willingness to share a large percentage of the gate receipts. Delighting many hotel owners and train operators, Jackson won back the rights to the contest in 1922 at the new City Ball Park on the Mississippi State Fair Grounds, which could seat 15,000.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Doyle, "Causes won, not lost," 244.

⁴² "Back in University Park," 66.

⁴³ William G. Barner and Danny McKenzie, *The Egg Bowl* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

⁴⁴ Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*, 41. Registered cars in the United States increased from 2.5 million to roughly 20 million between 1915 and 1925.

⁴⁵ Barner, *Mississippi Mayhem*, 85.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71, 85, 100.

Businesses near Oxford were not pleased and to some extent, the college also suffered financially from the lack of a quality on-campus facility. The Athletic Department was \$27,000 in the red at the start of 1927, even with financial benefits emanating from neutral site games.⁴⁷ Local businesses and the University wanted the prospective economic impact other cities and institutions enjoyed through the incredible interest college football produced. Schmidt identified confidence in college football as a revenue source that was strong during the 1920s because it “was believed to have an estimated drawing power of \$50 million a year with well over 50 percent of that representing profit.”⁴⁸

To capitalize on this interest, Ronald A. Smith suggests that the commercialization and professionalization of intercollegiate athletics produced stadiums as “the logical result of student, alumni, and general public interest in the phenomenon.”⁴⁹ New stadiums, in particular, were attractive because they “made it possible for new fans to feel as though they were part of an emerging tradition.”⁵⁰ Large on-campus stadia were further justified to the public and alumni through suggestions that large cities involved evil influences (e.g., gambling and drinking) not present on college campuses. Colleges and universities positioned stadiums to be the beacon of moral character building because institutions of higher education “were far more interested in imbuing moral values than in instilling intellectual depth.”⁵¹ In summation, stadiums were “icons representing what universities recognized were important to their image-building as institutions of higher learning; competing among themselves for honor and emulation.”⁵²

To better capitalize on the national and local interest in football, Ole Miss organized a campaign to generate financial and community support from students, alumni, and friends of the University. In a letter sent to all former students and friends of the University, Chancellor Albert Hume noted his “whole-hearted and enthusiastic

⁴⁷ Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 98.

⁴⁸ Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*, 6. See also Smith, “Far More than Commercialism,” 1453.

⁴⁹ Smith, “Far More than Commercialism,” 1454. See also: Robert C. Trumbour, *The New Cathedrals: Politics and Media in the History of Stadium Construction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 17.

⁵⁰ Walsh, *Where Football is King*, 207.

⁵¹ Smith, “Far More than Commercialism,” 1455.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1454.

support” for rebuilding the existing campus facility into a modern steel and concrete structure. In this letter, he also suggested it was time for the “sons and daughters of ‘Ole Miss’ to awaken” to their obligation that they should help the University fulfill its goals of producing intellectually, physically, and morally sound graduates for the good of the state. Hume also highlighted a potential gift to the University, which came with no conditions, from its partner, Lamar Life Insurance of Jackson.⁵³

C.W. Welty, vice president and general manager of the Lamar Life Insurance Company, offered to assist the university alumni society, chancellor, and faculty in their efforts to raise money for a stadium and gymnasium fund. Agreeing to waive any potential profit from the sale of insurance policies, Lamar Life Insurance created a special five-year endowment policy with the goal of providing \$200,000. Through policies ranging from \$100 to \$500, Welty suggested the company desired to help the University because a stadium renovation was needed and would be a “source of pride not only to all former students of the University but to all citizens of our State.” The advertisement for this campaign also argued that the Mississippi legislature was unlikely to appropriate funds for a building project such as a 14,000-seat, seven-acre football stadium. Thus, appeals were made to alumni, students, and friends of the university to help. Emphasizing that this appeal was the “first time in the history of the University” that these groups were asked to contribute monetarily to building improvements, advocates promoted the new stadium as helping to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual health for generations and as a means of producing income for the school.⁵⁴

Another source of funding came from an indirect gift via the Field Co-operative Association, Inc., which allowed the shifting of some university money back to the stadium and its new stands. The Field Co-op remains a foundation organization created by bankers and oilmen Bernard B. and Montfort Jones to help fund charitable, educational, and scientific pursuits. In 1925, the Association developed a fund to

⁵³ Letter from Alfred Hume, Chancellor of the University of Mississippi, May 30, 1925 “To all Former Students and Friends of the University of Mississippi,” University of Mississippi Alumni Association, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁵⁴ Letter from C. W. Welty of Lamar Life Insurance in Jackson, Mississippi to L. A. Donaghey of the University of Mississippi Alumni Society, June 9, 1925, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

help colleges with building initiatives, libraries, and student loans.⁵⁵ Reflecting its \$100,000 price tag, the facility was simple. Although steel and concrete, only one scoreboard and press box were installed in the stadium, and little to no information exists on the quality or quantity of restrooms and concession stands.

The big game against Mississippi State moved to Oxford in 1927 because of the new construction. Judge William M. Hemingway was the most recognized individual involved in the project. Hemingway began work at Ole Miss in 1921 as a professor of law and shortly thereafter became the chairman of the University Committee on Athletics working closely with Judge L. A. Smith, president of the Alumni Association, and Jeff Hamm, secretary of the Athletic Department. A supporter of Ole Miss football for several years, Hemingway made individuals well aware of the physical need for a new facility to not only address image concerns but safety worries as well. Hemingway had been a spectator and one of the injured at the 1910 contest in Jackson when the “wooden” stands collapsed crushing his ankle.⁵⁶

1937: The Birth of William Hemingway Stadium

Heading into the 1930s, Ole Miss improved significantly in football under the tutelage of Homer Hazel (1925-1929) and Ed Walker (1930-1937), but two other factors greatly affected the program’s growth. First, Hemingway’s work with other southern schools facilitated Ole Miss’s invitation to join the Southeastern Conference (SEC), created in 1932. Hemingway helped keep the “plane of eligibility of athletics on a high level,” provided guidance on how to stabilize the athletics budget, and created the contracts that allowed thirteen schools to break away from the Southern Conference. His obituary in the *Commercial Appeal* also noted that he handled image and financial problems experienced by the SEC “regarding football and college athletics” during the early years of

⁵⁵ Ibid. See also: Dudley J. Hughes, *Oil in the Deep South: A History of the Oil Business in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida 1859-1945* (Jackson, MS, University Press of Mississippi, 1993): 25.

⁵⁶ W. Eugene Morse, “Judge William Hemingway, 1869-1937,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, 36.4 (1974): 345.

the conference as its vice president.⁵⁷ The second event suggesting Ole Miss's improvement emerged during 1935 when the school secured an invitation to the Orange Bowl, the institution's first postseason game. Combined, the popularity of football and Ole Miss's strength as a SEC member sparked new interest in renovating the stadium.⁵⁸

Ole Miss began to pursue Works Progress Administration (WPA) money to help enlarge the stadium. In September of 1936, Ed Walker, as director of athletics, proposed a redevelopment of the stadium into a brand new facility. Walker suggested to Chancellor A. B. Butts that Ole Miss should have a new concrete and steel addition that followed the dorm-in-a-stadium model previously developed at Louisiana State University (LSU). Walker's plan was to place a sixty-room dorm that could house 180 students under the 10,000-seat west stands. Walker argued that by doing so the University could gain valuable revenue at \$5,400 per year to help liquidate any loans needed to complete the facility.⁵⁹

In August of 1937, work began on renovating the stadium following approval from the WPA Office in Jackson. Ole Miss estimated the cost of the renovation to be \$96,000 and positioned the work as a "joint effort between the WPA and the Athletic Department of Ole Miss." In this case, the WPA provided \$50,000 in funding, similar to the \$55,000 provided to Mississippi State the year before for the expansion of Scott Field to 26,000.⁶⁰ The WPA offered funding to public works projects based on a need-based prioritization system where it could help do the most good but only in those states "with sound administrative practices and minimal political corruption."⁶¹ Its goal was to avoid pork-barrel

⁵⁷ Morse, "Judge William Hemingway," 349. See also Walsh, *Where Football is King*, 12. "In a departure from the previous associations, the president of each school became the primary representative to the conference with the goal of having athletics to better serve the overall educational aims of the institution."

⁵⁸ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 192.

⁵⁹ Letter from Ed Walker, Director of Athletics, to A. B. Butte, Chancellor of University of Mississippi, September 22, 1936, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS. Walker estimated the cost of the dorm-football stadium to be \$150,000.

⁶⁰ Adam Pflieger and Chad S. Seifried, "A Celebration 100 Years in the Making: The Modernization of Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field from 1914 to 2014," *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4: 12. See also Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 254.

⁶¹ Edwin Amenta, Kathleen Dunleavy, and Mary Bernstein, "Stolen Thunder? Huey Long's" Share Our Wealth," Political Mediation, and the Second New Deal," *American Sociological Review*, 59 (1994): 692.

projects that cost taxpayers money.⁶² Harry Hopkins, national director of the WPA, suggested WPA work was critical because it reduced the amount of idleness and involved projects capable of being “an inspiration to every reasonable person.”⁶³ The work completed on Hemingway Stadium assisted out-of-work locals and addressed real needs of the University to be more self-sufficient and to retain home games.

The goal for the construction was to be complete by the annual Thanksgiving Day game against Mississippi State. Judge Hemingway passed away on November 5, 1937, from a heart attack prompting the Mississippi Alumni Association to pass a resolution, which asked the Board of Trustees to name the renovated stadium in his honor.⁶⁴ T. G. Gladney, WPA engineer from Jackson, and University Professor A. B. Hargis, supervising engineer, were in charge of the project emanating from the work of architectural firm Stevens & Johnson from Starkville.⁶⁵ The south stands for the soon-to-be Hemingway Stadium rose first followed by work on the west, adding about 10,000 seats to surviving parts of the venue. The ‘dorm in a stadium idea’ did not happen as it appeared to be too costly (i.e., \$150,000) and was not a priority over the school’s immediate needs to provide for a better “enlarged press box, radio broadcasting booths, telephone connections, and rest room facilities.”⁶⁶ Several other southern institutions were also using WPA money and investing heavily in not only expansions but upgrading of amenities and technology in their facilities. For example, Arkansas, LSU, and Mississippi State were all renovating their football stadia

⁶² Gavin Wright, “The Political Economy of New Deal Spending: An Econometric Analysis,” *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 56 (1974): 30-38.

⁶³ “Hopkins, Crutcher Featured Speakers at Dedication of L.S.U. Stadium Addition,” *Times-Picayune*, November 29, 1936, p. 18.

⁶⁴ The Board of Trustees approved the resolution and officially named the facility “William Hemingway Stadium” on October 21, 1939.

⁶⁵ “Build Stadium, Will Seat 10,000,” *The Mississippian*, July 30, 1937, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

“Work Progressing on Grid Stadium,” *The Mississippian*, October 30, 1937, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

during this time with identical objectives to better support the press.⁶⁷ Christopher Walsh's work in *Where Football is King: A History of the SEC* suggests such improvements were necessary because radio broadcasts emerged as an important source of income for those with the capability. Starting in 1934, the SEC negotiated for the A. J. Norris Hill Company (Retail Trade Extension of Hearst Magazine) to sponsor local broadcasts.⁶⁸ Ole Miss was unsuccessful in securing this money until successful renovations of its stadium were complete.

Although seating 24,000, follow-up reports on the progress of the stadium construction suggested more seats should be added to accommodate the growing crowds already exceeding the capacity of the facility while in-progress and to match that provided at Mississippi State. *The Mississippian* also reported some worries about where students would sit once the new facility was complete for the Mississippi State game.⁶⁹ These were not the only worries at Ole Miss. Sportswriter Harry Martinez pointed out "the system of arranging schedules by the Southeastern Conference is very unsatisfactory" because the conference did not create uniform schedules. Instead, the SEC allowed schools to negotiate their own schedules with conference opponents. Ole Miss petitioned the SEC for new rules, which required all SEC schools to play a balanced road and home schedule. Others also supported such an initiative and argued it would improve the caliber of the conference and possibly attract more prestigious football-playing schools from the Big Ten and Ivy League to travel south.⁷⁰ However, change was slow due to the subsequent outbreak of World War II, and needed expansions to facilities such as Hemingway Stadium remained minimal until a few years after the conclusion of the war in 1945.

⁶⁷ Chad S. Seifried, "The Development of 'Death Valley' in Louisiana: Modernization and Tiger Stadium, 1924-2013," *Louisiana History*, 57.2 (2016): 202-203; Chad S. Seifried, Carli Wheeler, Samantha Baker and James Piker, "The Development of Arkansas Football Stadia: A Comparison of Razorback and War Memorial Stadium," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 3: 11-12.

⁶⁸ Walsh, *Where Football is King*, 13.

⁶⁹ "Work Progressing on Grid Stadium," *The Mississippian*, October 30, 1937, folder 15, box 1, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁷⁰ Harry Martinez, "Gottlieb, Leveck for Better Schedules," *Times-Picayune*, November 24, 1940, S4 p. 6. See also John Leveck, "Leveck's Plan to Improve Conference," *Times-Picayune*, November 24, 1940, S4 p. 6.

Post-World War II Building

A building boom of sport construction at colleges and universities was foreseeable toward the end of the 1940s. First, the development of football as a tool to manage the mobilization, training, behavior, and morale of troops participating in the armed forces improved the quality of play and knowledge of the game.⁷¹ Second, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (i.e., G.I. Bill) affected the growth of Mississippi college enrollments as many returning troops took advantage of the government's assistance to attend college. In the case of Mississippi, one year after the conclusion of World War II, enrollment increased approximately 75% at Ole Miss.⁷²

In competition to boost enrollments, rival and SEC peer, Mississippi State, spent \$500,000 on improvements to the stadium at Scott Field in 1947. Tulane Stadium (New Orleans) also experienced a \$500,000 renovation, which expanded that stadium to 82,000 in 1947. The University of Tennessee spent \$1.5 million to upgrade and expand Shields-Watkins Stadium to 50,000 for 1948. Elsewhere, the University of Texas enlarged Memorial Stadium by 20,000 through a \$1.4 million addition, which brought the capacity to 66,000 in 1948.⁷³ Architect H. F. Brown argued in *The Architect's Journal* that renovations to existing football stadia emerged from the shared notion that all sport venues should support "good visibility from all parts of the facility," be "safe, flexible, and convenient for all users," and "accommodate the needs of sponsors."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Chad S. Seifried and Matthew Katz, "The Process and Determinants of Organizational Innovation: The Story of the United States Military Creation of 'Bowl' Games from 1942 to 1967," *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 22 (2015): 231-247.

⁷² David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1990), 126, 129. See also Chad S. Seifried, "The Huey P. Long Field House: Examining the Lifecycle of the Louisiana State University's Once Magnificent Daily Social Anchor and Future Prospects," *Louisiana History*, 55 (2012): 70.

⁷³ Frank Eck, "Nation's Colleges Busy Building New Athletic Plants: \$30,000,000 Ready for Construction Work Use," *Times Daily*, February 20, 1948, p. 9. Other schools mentioned: Wyoming, Maryland, New Mexico, Wisconsin, San Diego State, Arizona State, and Michigan State. See also Patrick Tutka, "An Ideal-type through Innovation Diffusion: Recording the Construction History of Football Stadiums in the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Bowl Subdivision" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2016), 222-225. Approximately, forty-five schools either built a new facility or renovated their existing one from 1947 through 1949.

⁷⁴ H. F. Brown, "Stadia 1," *The Architect's Journal*, 169 (1979): 142.

Geographer John F. Rooney, Jr. added that the federal and state governments facilitated the growth of stadium capacities by providing better infrastructure in the form of paved roads and the development of parking areas to accommodate the car-loving American.⁷⁵ Martin Miller, president of Mississippi's State Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning expressed frustration to Chancellor John D. Williams with the lack of parking spaces and quality of roads connecting the highways and railroad with campus and the town of Oxford.⁷⁶ With such improvements occurring at other facilities in addition to the accommodation of advancement made with telephone and radio communication technology, Ole Miss traveled more than they played at home despite increasing enrollments. For instance, beginning in 1942, Ole Miss moved a majority of its prospective home games to Memphis's Crump Stadium when competing against the likes of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt through 1948. In both 1949 and 1950, Ole Miss played a majority of its conference games on the road prompting head coach Johnny Vaught to say, "We felt like a bunch of strangers when we returned to Hemingway Stadium."⁷⁷ Chancellor John D. Williams added that without a new stadium Ole Miss would be relegated to second-tier status and would continue to fail to get big name opponents like Tulane and Tennessee to visit. Williams also cited concerns about a potential decrease in enrollment to emphasize the need for a new venue.⁷⁸

Major planning to enhance the capacity and amenities for spectators and other participants (e.g., media) drove efforts to improve Hemingway Stadium. The Hemingway Stadium Renovation Committee (HSRC) led the effort following approval by the State Building Commission for a

⁷⁵ John F. Rooney, Jr., "Up from the Mines and Out from the Prairies: Some Geographical Implications of Football in the United States," *Geographical Review*, 59 (1969): 475.

⁷⁶ Letter from Martin V. B. Miller, President Board of Trustees State of Mississippi, to Chancellor John D. Williams, January 6, 1949, p. 1, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁷⁷ Harry Martinez, "Rebels Play Five of Six Conference Games on Road," *Times-Picayune*, October 1, 1950, S6-3.

⁷⁸ Annual Report of the Chancellor of The University of Mississippi to the Board of Trustees for Institutions of Higher Learning: For the Period July 1-1951 to June 30, 1952, Board of Trustees Reports, p. 157, John D. Williams Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

\$300,000 renovation.⁷⁹ All material purchases to complete the stadium renovation required approval “in accordance with the instructions set forth by the Building Commission and the State purchasing laws.” This action compelled the University to send out a bid for price quotes from vendors.⁸⁰ As an example, in November 1948, the University advertised that Portland cement was needed for the stadium renovation. The Elliott Lumber Company of Oxford won the bid with a guarantee of \$3.69 per barrel for the soon-to-be 34,500-seat venue.⁸¹

The project architect’s Report of Expenditures showed total expenditures for the stadium additions and improvements to have been \$318,515 through March 1950. Architect fees for Benson and England of New Orleans, designers of the aforementioned Tulane Stadium addition, were approximately \$18,000.⁸² The various materials used to build the facility came from a variety of local and regional companies. For instance, sand and gravel came from Russell Fudge. The Moore Lumber Company and Fieishel Lumber Company supplied lumber while Kemp Electric Company provided labor and materials for electrical work. The Asbestos Corporation fitted asbestos, Reynolds P&H installed the plumbing, and Freeman Truck Lines transported many of the purchased materials.⁸³

The completed facility improved conditions for a variety of

⁷⁹ Letter from John D. Williams, chancellor of University of Mississippi, to H. W. Stevens, October 14, 1947, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS. The HSRC included Carroll W. North, acting comptroller, C. M. Smith, director of athletics, J. K. Hamm, Business manager of Athletic Department, Harold Haney, superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, Dr. T. A. Bickerstaff, chairman of the Faculty Committee on Athletics, and Johnny Vaught, head football coach. See also Letter from H. E. Haney, acting comptroller, to Chancellor John D. Williams, November 26, 1948, p. 1, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸⁰ Letter from John D. Williams, Chancellor of University of Mississippi, to Houston L. Vaughn, Superintendent – Hemingway Stadium Project, June 26, 1950, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸¹ Letter from John D. Williams, Chancellor of University of Mississippi, to Houston L. Vaughn, Superintendent – Hemingway Stadium Project, June 13, 1950, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸² Letter from Herbert A. Benson, Architect, to Carroll W. North, Comptroller, March 10, 1950, p. 1, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸³ Interdepartmental communication from Carroll W. North, Comptroller, to Chancellor John D. Williams, April 5, 1950, p. 1, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

stakeholders. For example, a 10,000-space parking lot was added to exceed the industry standard of one car per every four seats.⁸⁴ Next, new concession stands and ladies' and men's restrooms were added to meet additional industry standards.⁸⁵ The expansion also improved spectator safety because aisle space had previously been used for overflow seating.⁸⁶ The most significant change proved to be the new press box. Chancellor Williams argued that the new press box was the first real facility offered by Ole Miss for the press, telegraph (e.g., Western Union), and radio personnel because it had the capacity to support all their equipment. Overall, the press box could accommodate 150 members of the media in sixty-six newspaper-reserved seats, five radio booths, and one observation deck for photography and scouting purposes. The press box also supported special space for the participants' coaching staff and provided them with field-level telephone access.⁸⁷

The Impact of Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium: The 1960s and 1970s

The impact of these changes were positive because football was profitable, giving back at least \$72,000 since Johnny Vaught took over as head coach in 1947. Unfortunately, the lack of an airstrip kept big name opponents out of Oxford and forced the more prestigious contests to Memphis and Jackson in the 1950s. For example, through 1956, six of twelve SEC rivals had not visited Oxford in approximately twenty years.⁸⁸ Built in 1950, Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium in Jackson was expanded to seat 46,000 in 1961, which made it the third largest stadium in the SEC. The facility developed in a fashion

⁸⁴ Williams, "Annual Report of the Chancellor July 1-1951 to June 30, 1952," 159.

⁸⁵ Annual Report of the Chancellor of The University of Mississippi to the Board of Trustees for Institutions of Higher Learning: For the Period July 1-1952 to June 30, 1953, Board of Trustees Reports, p. 97, John D. Williams Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸⁶ Annual Report of the Chancellor of The University of Mississippi to the Board of Trustees for Institutions of Higher Learning: For the Period July 1-1949 to June 30, 1950, Board of Trustees Reports, p. 133, John D. Williams Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸⁷ Williams, "Annual Report of the Chancellor July 1-1952 to June 30, 1953," 130. See also letter from Herbert A. Benson, Architect, to Martin V. B. Miller, President Board of Trustees State of Mississippi, June 9, 1949, p. 1, folder 24, box 5, Dr. Gerald Walton Collection, University of Mississippi Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁸⁸ Tom Siler, "He Made Ole Miss a Menace," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 12, 1956, p. 130.

similar to other state or city government-funded stadiums in Little Rock, Birmingham, Shreveport, Memphis, Dallas, and New Orleans.⁸⁹ The state of Mississippi desired to bring events to Jackson, the state's largest population center. In 1960, the Mississippi legislature took over control of the stadium with the goal to create an entertainment complex including a 6,000-seat auditorium and a 10,000-seat coliseum capable of producing a positive economic impact for Jackson and television opportunities for the state's institutions of higher education (e.g., Ole Miss, Mississippi State, Southern Miss, and Jackson State).⁹⁰

James Saggus, writer for the *Associated Press*, suggested a weekend football contest could bring over 100,000 people to Jackson. The Jackson Chamber of Commerce added that just one game at full capacity could generate \$600,000 in income and produce \$100,000 in tax revenue. Further, hotels, gas stations, and restaurants within a fifty-mile radius would likely benefit. The incredible success and attention Ole Miss received from 1957 through 1960 where the Rebels finished the season ranked 7th, 11th, 2nd, and 1st (i.e., *Associated Press* National Champions) prompted the aggressive action to expand the facility. Subsequent success in 1961 (#5 ranking), 1962 (#3 ranking), and 1963 (#7 ranking) seemed to justify the decision.⁹¹

With the big games occurring in Jackson, Hemingway Stadium received little attention during the 1960s and 1970s. The only real changes that surfaced with Hemingway Stadium concerned a conversion of temporary bleachers to permanent bleachers in 1968, raising the capacity to 37,500, and the addition of AstroTurf for \$300,000 by the Monsanto Company of St. Louis in 1970. Ole Miss Athletic Director Tad Smith suggested there was not anything wrong with the grass at Hemingway Stadium. However, he believed change was necessary because "with more and more schools putting in synthetic stuff, a real-grass team will be at a disadvantage." He added, "In time, we'll be

⁸⁹ Rusty Hampton and Butch John, "Memorial: Mississippi State, Ole Miss Officials Concerned with Stadium Procedure," *The Clarion Ledger*, December 23, 1984, 1D, 3D.

⁹⁰ Mississippi Code Title 55 – *Parks and Recreation*, Chapter 23, Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium § 55-23-6 - Transfer of operational, administrative and managing powers and duties over Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium to Jackson State University (Miss. 2013).

⁹¹ Andy Ross, "A History of Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium," *Mississippi Sports Magazine*, 2.3 (2009): 23, 25. See also Hal Halbrooks, "Roden Pulls Switch," *Times Daily*, May 30, 1961, p. 10; James Saggus, "Jackson Braced, Waiting," *Tuscaloosa News*, October 28, 1965, p. 14.

playing on artificial turf everywhere we go.”⁹²

By 1970, artificial grass was widely popular in the South. For instance, only two schools in the Southwest Conference did not play on the surface. Moreover, many SEC opponents played home games (e.g., Alabama, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt) and/or practiced (e.g., LSU) on artificial turf. In the case of Ole Miss, Smith, Vaught, and the University Committee on Athletics, who approved the addition, suggested there was a consensus amongst football elites that adjusting from artificial grass to natural grass was easier than vice versa. Sports writer Bob Roesler also added the move was critical for Ole Miss because they played so many games on the road. Further, without ‘laying a rug’ on Hemingway Stadium, Ole Miss would be subject to maintenance expenses and scheduling delays many of their rivals or peers did not experience.⁹³

A survey of twenty-four athletic directors published by the *Journal of Health, Physical Education, & Recreation* supports these notions and others. For instance, 91.7% claimed benefit from artificial turf as a daily practice field because it was more weather resistant and 95% reported reduced maintenance costs ranging between 30-50%. A majority also believed artificial turf was able to decrease injury suggesting familiarity improves play and health. Finally, 75% agreed artificial turf was “instrumental in the recruitment of athletes.”⁹⁴

In 1979, Ole Miss lobbied hard along with Mississippi State and Southern Miss that the state legislature should approve a \$3 million state-backed bond issue to enclose Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium. They thought that by increasing the capacity to 62,529, the more prestigious opponents would generate added profits for them each to enjoy.⁹⁵ Television revenues were gaining a greater presence in the renovation of stadiums beyond gate receipts and sponsorships. American consumers increasingly expected the opportunity to watch games from their homes. “Major college conferences and the National

⁹² “Rebels to Add Artificial Turf,” *Times-Picayune*, June 9, 1970, S2, p. 5. “Ole Miss Getting the Turf,” *Times Daily*, June 4, 1970, p. 15.

⁹³ Bob Roesler, “Here to Stay,” *Times-Picayune*, May 28, 1970, S5, p. 1; Bob Roesler, “Rebels Roll Out Carpet,” *Times-Picayune*, June 9, 1970, S2 p. 2.

⁹⁴ Lynn Lashbrook, “The Facts about Fake Grass,” *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation* 42.9 (1971): 28. Regional participants in the survey included Alabama, Ole Miss, Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Kansas, Kansas State.

⁹⁵ Ross, “A History of Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium,” 27.

Collegiate Athletic Association worked diligently to maximize television revenues in a manner that parallels professional sports.⁹⁶ However, television required space for various camera locations and auxiliary production space for broadcasting equipment and announcers that previous stadiums did not provide.⁹⁷ Hemingway Stadium was not constructed or renovated for television so all of Ole Miss's support went toward Jackson to help continue the existing television broadcasting capabilities there.

Shortly after gaining approval, the legislature "authorized the stadium commission to implement a new rental fee charging Mississippi State, Ole Miss, and Southern Miss, 10 percent of the pre-tax value of each ticket sold, plus 50 cents per ticket." This action took away a considerable amount of revenue from each school and prompted them to look back to their own campus for better paydays. By 1988, Southern Miss had left Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium for good. Mississippi State followed shortly thereafter in 1990, and Ole Miss stopped playing after the 1993 season. Ole Miss Athletic Director Warner Alford stated to the state's Stadium Committee, "We have a 42,000-seat stadium in Oxford. I have constituents to answer to. They don't understand why I play games in Jackson when we can draw the same crowd to Oxford."

Supporting these feelings was the perceived diminishing quality of the facility in Jackson over that improving in Oxford and elsewhere.⁹⁸ Ole Miss's constituents were worried about the image the decaying and partially full Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium provided with its lack of amenities (e.g., luxury suites, concessions, etc.), rusty façade, and inadequate press box capabilities.⁹⁹ The lack of a modern electronic scoreboard was also problematic. Large electronic scoreboards were typical in football stadiums and were used to supply spectators with game information, to stimulate crowd noise, desired by television broadcasters, and to convey safety information among other public address announcements. Advertisers also benefitted from the presence of large electronic scoreboards by using their messaging

⁹⁶ Trumbour, *The New Cathedrals*, 48.

⁹⁷ Seifried, "The Evolution of Professional Baseball and Football Structures," 66.

⁹⁸ W. Cantrell, "Trying to Sell 2,000 Seats – 1st Expansion Since the '40's – Say Crowds to Benefit this City," *The Commercial Dispatch*, July 22, 1982, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Rusty Hampton and Butch John, "Memorial: Mississippi State, Ole Miss Officials Concerned with Stadium Procedure," *The Clarion Ledger*, December 23, 1984, 1D.

systems to promote their products and services. This practice, in turn, provided additional revenues to schools.¹⁰⁰

Improvements to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium: 1980s and 1990s

Citing a survey conducted by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in 1988, sportswriter Mike Butler said that “Nowhere is the game’s [i.e., football] supremacy so complete as in the Deep South.” Each year of the 1980s ended with the SEC having the greatest percentage of seats sold in relation to stadium capacity.¹⁰¹ Compared to other SEC peer on-campus facilities, Hemingway Stadium was lacking, but Ole Miss made some changes to the facility to boost its reputation. In 1980, the University installed permanent aluminum bleachers to both end zones to enclose the facility, bringing the capacity to 42,000. In 1982, shortly after the addition, Ole Miss enhanced the image of the facility by renaming it to honor Johnny Vaught. Vaught had served as the head coach for twenty-five seasons, taken Ole Miss to eighteen bowl games, won six SEC championships, and the school’s only national championships in 1959, 1960, and 1962. His total win-loss record at Ole Miss was 190-61-12.¹⁰²

In 1984, Ole Miss removed the stadium’s artificial turf and replaced the surface with natural grass. Alford argued the decision “goes down to preference ... We have a lot of games in September and October, and the artificial surface is extremely hot ... And when I talked to our trainer about going back to grass, he was very pro. We were looking at replacing our artificial surface at a pretty high cost. That’s one thing in this part of the country we can do -- grow grass.”¹⁰³

In 1988, former Ole Miss quarterback Archie Manning served as

¹⁰⁰ Seifried, “The Evolution of Professional Baseball and Football Structures,” 66-67. See also Grumprecht, “Stadium Culture,” 44.

¹⁰¹ Mike Butler, “Confederate Flags, Class Conflict, a Golden Egg, and Castrated Bulls: A Historical Examination of the Ole Miss-Mississippi State Football Rivalry,” *The Journal of Mississippi History*, 59.2 (1997): 125.

¹⁰² Richard Goldstein, “John Vaught, 96, Longtime Mississippi Football Coach, Dies,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2006, accessed August 5, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/07/sports/ncaafootball/07vaught.html?_r=1&_ Ole Miss received shares of the national championship from ratings services like Berryman, Billingsley, Dunkel, and Sagarin.

¹⁰³ Steve Richardson, “Grass vs. Turf,” *The Dallas Morning News*, October 27, 1988, p. 1b.

the national chairman for the two-year campaign called the “Drive for Athletics at Ole Miss.” In order to raise \$8 million for the athletic department, Manning asked fans to consider:

Everything ages, including athletic facilities at Ole Miss. That’s why I’ve accepted the National Chairmanship of the Drive for Athletics. It’s time to invest in the future of athletics, to do something about the needed facilities of our beloved alma mater.

The focal point of this campaign (i.e., \$5.1 million) centered on providing upgrades to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium to make it more comparable to the University’s SEC peers. The initial enhancements included structural repairs, the construction of a new press box with special amenities for television broadcasters, replacement of aluminum sideline seating, the addition of restrooms, and the development of a club level for 700 spectators on the west side of the stadium.¹⁰⁴

Luxury suites were also introduced to the facility for the first time and proved popular. Alford pointed out that twenty-three of twenty-nine boxes were quickly sold helping to inspire campaign organizers to increase their fundraising goal to \$10 million.¹⁰⁵ Lights added at this time addressed the goal of moving most of the prestigious games away from Jackson.¹⁰⁶ Night football games had been a regular part of the Mississippi football fan experience as part of SEC Doubleheader Saturdays in Jackson.¹⁰⁷ However, Vaught-Hemingway Stadium was the only on-campus facility in the SEC without lights. Ole Miss previously considered the addition of lights for Vaught-Hemingway Stadium in 1982 when TBS offered to broadcast the Ole Miss-Tulane game in Oxford. Considerably poorer at that time, Ole Miss decided to move the game to Jackson rather than invest any of the \$150,000 they

¹⁰⁴ David Davidson, “Inside Colleges: Dye Worried about His – Heart,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 3, 1988, D22; David Davidson, “Inside Colleges: Auburn become Gator Opponent for Homecoming,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 13, 1988, D22; David Davidson, “Inside Colleges: Olympics Used for Recruiting,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 11, 1987, C26.

¹⁰⁵ Davidson, “Inside Colleges: Dye Worried about His – Heart,” D22.

¹⁰⁶ Davidson, “Inside Colleges: Auburn become Gator Opponent for Homecoming,” D22.

¹⁰⁷ Ross, “A History of Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium,” 25.

were being paid by TBS.¹⁰⁸

The next advancements made on Vaught-Hemingway Stadium came in 1995 and continued to 1998, costing approximately \$13 million and increasing seating capacity to 50,000. Chancellor Robert C. Khayat's administration desired to improve existing buildings and to build new complexes in an effort to improve alumni relations and conditions for students. The renovation of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium facilitated this effort to improve the on-campus environment so that Ole Miss could be "perceived as a great public university" and "in the front ranks of American collegiate institutions."¹⁰⁹

To begin improving the game-day experience, Ole Miss added a new Sony JumboTron scoreboard to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium. Next, a 10,000-seat expansion effort involved the construction of the Guy C. Billups Rebel Club on the east side of the stadium. Adding luxury accommodations like this at stadiums became more common during this era because it was a "lucrative source of revenue, and more colleges are turning to them to help support the ever-rising cost of athletic programs."¹¹⁰ Named after local banker Guy C. Billups, who donated over \$1 million to Ole Miss Athletics, the Billups Rebel Club seated 1,000 and required a donation of \$1,000 per seat in a 5-year commitment to the Loyalty Foundation (i.e., UMAA Foundation). Within the club, climate controlled accommodations provided complimentary concessions and a lounge from which patrons could watch Ole Miss football games. The new club section sold out quickly, generated important revenues for Ole Miss, and enticed enough people to create a waiting list of people who were not previous donors to Ole Miss or athletics.¹¹¹

Another person deserving recognition for renovations at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium during the 1990s is Dr. Gerald M. "Jerry" Hollingsworth. On September 5, 1998, Ole Miss named the field at

¹⁰⁸ "Ole Miss May Put up Lights," *Gadsden Times*, May 13, 1982, p.15. See also Dave Moormann, "Ole Miss Appreciates Windfall," *The Advocate*, June 2, 1988, F1.

¹⁰⁹ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 344.

¹¹⁰ Pete Coates, "College Stadiums are Adding Luxury Boxes to Help Revenue," *The Journal Record*, January 16, 1998, accessed August 5, 2016.

¹¹¹ "Rebel Club Seating Area to be Dedicated Saturday," *Olemisssports.com*. September 9, 1998, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/091098aae.html>. See also "Ole Miss Makes Major Announcements," *Olemisssports.com*, August 31, 2015, accessed August 5, 2016.

Vaught-Hemingway Stadium after Dr. Hollingsworth following his \$5 million donation to Ole Miss Athletics, including \$3 million that went to the Vaught-Hemingway Stadium renovation. Commenting on Hollingsworth's contributions, Chancellor Khayat offered:

It's difficult to find words to express adequately our gratitude for the tremendous support Dr. Jerry Hollingsworth continues to give to academic and athletic programs of the University. We simply would not have the Vaught-Hemingway Stadium expansion and indoor sports facility without his help.¹¹²

Vaught-Hemingway Stadium and the 21st Century

In 2002, Vaught-Hemingway Stadium expanded again through a \$25 million seating addition primarily situated in the south end zone. In this renovation, new seats replaced old bleachers to complete a new student section. Luxury accommodations involving the construction of twenty-eight suites and 1,700 club seats also helped increase the capacity of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium to 60,580, the largest football facility in the state of Mississippi. Improvements to concession stands (i.e., quantity and quality), restrooms, and a concourse connecting to the east side along with a detention area for misbehaving fans also added to the cost and burgeoning notoriety of the facility.¹¹³

The recognition of luxury suites and club seats expanded in importance for Ole Miss as peer institutions in the SEC were continually improving their own luxury accommodations. As an example, at Mississippi State, fifty luxury suites and 2,000 club seats, along with a 17,000 square foot lounge area cost roughly \$18 million in 2000.¹¹⁴ In 2004, the University of Georgia expanded Sanford Stadium at a cost of \$71 million, adding 688 new seats to the luxury suites. In 2005, LSU spent \$60 million expanding Tiger Stadium, adding 3,255 club

¹¹² "Field Takes Hollingsworth Name Sept. 5," *Olemisssports.com*. September 1, 1998, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/090198aab.html>.

¹¹³ "Ole Miss Excited about Expansion," *Gainesville Sun*, September 2, 2002, 2C. See also "Ole Miss Holds Ceremonial Groundbreaking For South End Zone Expansion Project," *Olemisssports.com*, November 8, 2000, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/112800aaa.html>. Stone Architecture and Roy Anderson Corp. of Gulfport, MS were the contractors.

¹¹⁴ Smith, "A Building Project." See also Baswell, "MSU Announces Stadium Expansion."

seats to the stadium as a significant portion of this expense. The SEC, now considered the premier college football-playing conference, had member schools with facilities containing as many as 157 luxury suites in 2011.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, a beneficial tax code assisted the explosive growth of luxury suites in the SEC and elsewhere. For instance, prospective ticket and suite holders across the U.S. were encouraged to make large contributions to athletics because 80% of their contribution could be deducted on their tax returns. Combined with the intense, growing interest in college football, institutions of higher education could price these products high.¹¹⁶

Other changes, in 2003, concerned the playing surface again. Ole Miss replaced natural grass with a synthetic turf system called AstroPlay, a grass-like surface that allowed for quick drainage under all types of weather conditions.¹¹⁷ Although it promised a life of twenty years before replacement, Ole Miss installed FieldTurf in 2009. Following a generous gift from two anonymous donors, athletic director Pete Boone and head coach Houston Nutt justified the \$500,000 expense by suggesting FieldTurf not only looked and felt like grass but its revolutionary infill system provided important cushioning to absorb dangerous impacts; further, it allowed for better and safer traction by players when planting and cutting versus natural grass.¹¹⁸

The last major change to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium prior to those associated with the 2016 Forward Together campaign involved the replacement of the Sony JumboTron scoreboard with a new Daktronics High Definition Video Display. Occupying over 4,000 square feet in the north end zone, the \$6 million video board and sound system surfaced

¹¹⁵ Peter Titlebaum, Carries DeMange, and Robert Davis, "Professional vs. Collegiate Facilities: Perceived Motivations of Luxury Suite Ownership," *Journal of Venue and Event Management* 4.1 (2012): 3-4. The average SEC institution averaged sixty luxury suites.

¹¹⁶ E. J. Fagan, "Eliminate Luxury Suite Tax Deductions," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2010, accessed August 5, 2016 <http://www.theyankee.com/2010/04/new-york-times-op-ed-eliminate-luxury-suite-tax-deductions-16482>.

¹¹⁷ "AstroPlay? - The Revolutionary, State-Of-The-Art Synthetic Playing Surface Quick Facts," *Olemisssports.com*. April 15, 2003, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/genrel/041503aac.html>.

¹¹⁸ "FieldTurf Being Installed At Stadium," *Olemisssports.com*, 2009, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.olemisssports.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/081309aaa.html>. Claims supporting the safety of FieldTurf can be found with Michael C. Meyers, "Incidence, mechanisms, and severity of game-related college football injuries on fieldturf versus natural grass a 3-year prospective study," *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, 38.4 (2010): 687-697.

as the high definition screen in the SEC.¹¹⁹ TeleSouth Communications, Inc. provided the largest financial support for the construction of the communication structure. The enormity of the scoreboard is recognized because it required operation by a thirteen-person work crew.¹²⁰

Conclusion

This review demonstrated that pressures to capitalize on the growing interest in football required the improvement of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field across several stages. Vaught-Hemingway Stadium received a number of renovations during its lifetime suggesting that football is an important activity in Mississippi and in the history of Ole Miss. This work documents that the changes to the stadium depended on the perceived need to build or adapt space as technology and consumer preferences changed. The efforts of special individuals and groups in competition with peer institutions and cities, and the availability of resources influenced the development of the facility.¹²¹

Initially, Vaught-Hemingway Stadium began as a small wooden structure built to promote health through outdoor sports; however, business and university leaders foresaw football as a suitable activity representing southern progressivism. Business progressives frequently sought stadium improvements to represent modernization, which at each stage required certain era-specific comforts to demonstrate that their region was keeping pace with modernity and robust growth. The University made appeals to alumni, students, and friends to emphasize that a new football stadium would help develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual health for generations and would produce income for the school.

In the 1930s, Ole Miss made use of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to help enlarge the stadium, highlighting that the uni-

¹¹⁹ David Hopper, "Green Initiative tries to improve Jumbotron," *The Daily Mississippian*, October 24, 2008, accessed August 5, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090801022148/http://www.thedmonline.com/news/green-initiative-tries-to-improve-jumbotron-1.844493>.

¹²⁰ Harman International, JBL Professional. *Daktronics delivers great sound to the Ole Miss gridiron with JBL VLA line arrays* [Press release], November 26, 2008, accessed August 5, 2016, http://www.jblpro.com/press/dec08/JBL_OleMiss.PDF.

¹²¹ Sample list of individuals include: Alexander Bondurant, Albert Hume, C.W. Welty, William Hemingway, Ed Walker, John Williams, Johnny Vaught, Archie Manning, Robert Khayat, and Gerald Hollingsworth.

versity's administration of government funds was morally strong. The featured changes involved improving technology (e.g., creating radio broadcasting booths and establishing telephone connections) to make Vaught-Hemingway Stadium similar to its regional peers. Post-World War II, Ole Miss expanded its stadium in response to increasing interest in football and the explosive growth of student enrollment. Advancing technology in the press box remained a priority. Without such efforts, Ole Miss believed it would be relegated to second-tier status; thus, losing gate receipts, national media attention, and potential enrollees.

The emergence of Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium in Jackson during the 1960s delayed the development of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium, but a gradual deterioration of venue, and subsequent improvements to transportation options for Oxford, as well as the emergence of television and sponsors, prompted Ole Miss to reexamine its relationship with Jackson. During the 1990s and 2000s, Vaught-Hemingway Stadium evolved into the largest football stadium in Mississippi based on a variety of goals to better connect with students, alumni, and friends of the University. Specifically, the stadium adapted to embrace evolving consumer preferences by incorporating luxury accommodations, embracing telecommunication technology, and improving spectator amenities (e.g., restrooms and concessions). Further, Ole Miss made significant effort to establish a legacy connection with alumni through various nostalgia-related constructions. The recent strategy employed by administrators to recruit private donors secured the future of Vaught-Hemingway Stadium as an important social anchor for Ole Miss and the state.

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