West Point’s football stadium was built in 1924 in an open area just to the west of Lusk Reservoir that is alternately described in the literature as a “natural amphitheater”, “a meadow” and a “frog pond”. A 1925 USMA pamphlet entitled, The West Point Stadium, talks about the site being “opened up, drained and filled in”.

Previously football had been played on the plain with temporary stands regularly constructed and removed. In 1922, Superintendent Fred Sladen directed the Athletic Board to fix upon a location for a permanent facility. Although several sites were considered, the site at Lusk was eventually chosen due to its central location and the promise of better traffic regulation. Concerns about an influx of traffic hampering events on the drill and parade grounds are mentioned in several 1920s editions of the Annual Report of the Superintendent.

Photo: Army vs. Notre Dame on the Plain in 1922, with West Point Club and Cullum Hall in the background.
The Athletic Board eventually opted for a football facility with stands to seat 20,000 fans and a cost not-to-exceed $100,000. In April 1923, the Engineer Officer submitted plans for grading the field and construction of wooden bleachers ("like those at Yankee Stadium") at an estimated cost of $125,000. Expected to take less than a year to complete, work on the project was slow to develop and complicated by proposals to diversify the facility to accommodate other sports.

Photo: Aerial view of Michie Stadium from the west, circa 1928, showing the chosen location for the new stadium along the western shore of Lusk Reservoir.

The resulting delay led to the appointment of a board in December 1923 to consider the further development of the new athletic field. The board’s charter included “the character and design of the stands, comfort and other facilities.” With the cost of steel stands now under consideration in lieu of the wooden bleachers initially proposed, the Osborn Engineering Company also presented figures for concrete construction. At the time, the USMA Finance Officer had a revolving loan from the U.S. Treasury in the amount of $150,000. By further extending this loan to fund construction, a concrete
stadium would become feasible. In May 1924, a provision in the Military Academy Bill re-appropriated the $150,000 for improving the athletic field with the condition that the money be repaid by January 1, 1930. With the loan secured, the simple concrete bleachers were significantly enhanced, raising the construction estimate to $200,000. The construction contract was awarded on May 12, 1924, to the Newport Engineering and Contracting Co. of Newport News, VA for a contract price just under $209,000. The original stadium was U-shaped with the open-end facing Lusk Reservoir; it held 16,000 people.

The stadium was not fully completed until October 1924 but was substantially complete at the beginning of the 1924 football season and was able to be used for all home games. A New York sportswriter described the new facility as the "loveliest in the east". All told, the project cost about $300,000, with appropriated funding for initial site and grading work and proceeds from ticket sales used to repay the loan and additional expenses. This figure did not include permanent fencing and entrance construction.

The Stadium has been expanded several times. There was a modest renovation to add 3,838 seats completed in time for the first game of the 1962 season using non-appropriated funds from the Army Athletic Association. Permanent east stands were also constructed on the open (reservoir) side of Michie Stadium in 1962. To accommodate the renovation, Mills Road was straightened by altering the shoreline of the reservoir. The permanent east stands replaced portable bleachers that had been used as an interim means of increasing the stadium’s capacity. The use of temporary stands dated to the stadium’s very first season in 1924, when steel stands were erected along the east side to add 5,000 seats for the game against Columbia. It was in a
ceremony prior to this game that the stadium was dedicated in honor of Dennis Mahan Michie.

Photo: View of Michie Stadium from the east, circa 1957. The shaded area along the reservoir highlights the portion that would be filled in to accommodate the new East Stands in 1962.

The permanent east stands were completed in time for the homecoming game of the 1962 football season and increased the stadium’s capacity to 29,425. The renovation that added the east stands also added restrooms, concessions, a visiting team room, a room for officials, and provided for the renovation of the old stands. The $1,600,000 cost of the east stands project was borne by the Army Athletic Association.

In the fall of 1967, a feasibility study for the further expansion of Michie Stadium was authorized. In December, a proposal for a linear-cantilevered upper deck expansion of the west stands prepared by Michael Baker, Jr. Inc. was accepted. The plan would add 12,900 seats and replace the Superintendent’s Loge and the Press Box for a cost estimated at just over $2,000,000. The construction contract was ultimately awarded to A.A. Salerno at a cost of $2,196,000 with the caveat that the construction needed to be completed between the end of the 1968 football season and the start of the 1969 season. The stadium was not fully completed in time for the first game of
1969, but the new seats were available for the entire season and new attendance records were set. Once again, the Army Athletic Association funded the expansion.

Photo: Aerial view of Michie Stadium in 1970, showing the East Stands addition (1962) and the upper deck addition (1969).

For its first fifty-three years Michie Stadium featured a grass playing field. Artificial turf (AstroTurf) was installed in 1977 funded by a combination of gift and locally generated non-appropriated funds. The artificial surface has been replaced over time with newer improved turfs (AstroPlay 2001; FieldTurf 2008). The field at Michie Stadium was named for famed Army Football Coach Earl “Red” Blaik in 1999.

In the aftermath of the 1976 review of Athletic Facilities, there were a few MCA projects at Michie Stadium. These included additional locker facilities, structural repairs, upgraded public latrines and improved lighting projects during the period 1979-82.

In 1998, a seismic evaluation of the stadium revealed the need for a significant upgrade of the west stands at an estimated cost of $10,000,000. Repairs were completed in 2001.

Gift-funded additions to the Michie Stadium Complex in recent decades have included:

- The “A” Room for boosters donated by Mr. George C. Alvord, the West Point Fund and the Army Athletic Association in 1980.
- The $8,000,000 Hoffman Press Box completed atop the west stands in 2003. The Press Box is named in honor of the principal donor, Mark B. Hoffman, USMA 1969.
• The Kimsey Athletic Center completed at the south end of Michie Stadium in 2003. Named for donor James V. Kimsey, USMA 1962, the Kimsey Center is a three-floor facility that houses locker and equipment rooms, sports medicine facilities, a 20,000 sf. strength development center, meeting rooms, a media room, and coaching and support staff offices, as well as the Kenna Hall of Army Sports and the Blaik Gallery. Its location caused the rerouting of Stony Lonesome Road, which formerly passed behind (west of) the stadium and along its south end before exiting onto Mills Road. A new by-pass road was also built at the north end of the stadium in conjunction with this project.

• Randall Hall, a $10,000,000 project named for lead donor Robert D. Randall, USMA 1956, added to the southwest corner of the Michie Stadium Complex in 2005. Although primarily dedicated to the men’s and women’s basketball teams, it includes 4 skybox booths with seating for 21 spectators overlooking Michie Stadium and its Main Concourse connects with the Kimsey Athletic Center.

The following synopsis provides a time-lapse of the modifications to Michie Stadium over the last 60+ years, highlighting how the Academy adapted this “portal” to meet its evolving needs.

Synopsis: Evolutions of the “portal” at Michie Stadium since the 1950’s.