The Laughlin Bowl was a natural outdoor amphitheater originally built to use in the celebration of Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine's 40th anniversary. Early construction crews of mules, horses, and workmen pictured to the far right, began the excavation work on the Laughlin Bowl in the summer of 1932. One interesting incident occurred during the blasting of the grounds; a tree stump went through the roof of the book store, which was located a block away. A hole, a yard in diameter, was torn through the roof, and luckily, no one was injured.

The workers were employed by the Works Progress Administration, which was a federal government program organized under President Roosevelt's New Deal. During the depression of the thirties, the WPA had the authority to recommend and complete useful projects designed to create employment in many areas, such as building bridges, painting murals, and writing local histories.

Pictured to the right is a view from the top of the seats as if you were watching a performance on the large stage area. Notice the grass floor of the bowl. The first major event held in the Laughlin Bowl was a pageant devoted to and outlining the life of Dr. Andrew T. Still, founder of osteopathic medicine, on October 5 and 6, 1932. This play was part of the annual national convention of osteopaths which was held in Kirksville at that time.

Another view of the amphitheater, as it looked in 1932 just prior to being completed, is pictured below. Once completed, the bowl had a seating capacity of over 7,000 and a stage area of 35 feet by 90 feet.

Although built for school and public use, the Laughlin Bowl was not as widely used as anticipated by the KCOM administration. For several years the bowl was used by KCOM for graduations, until the fall of 1941, when it was filled during the construction of the Timken Burnett Building.

Today, what was once the Laughlin Bowl is now a parking lot behind the Timken Burnett Building.