

AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING SHOP

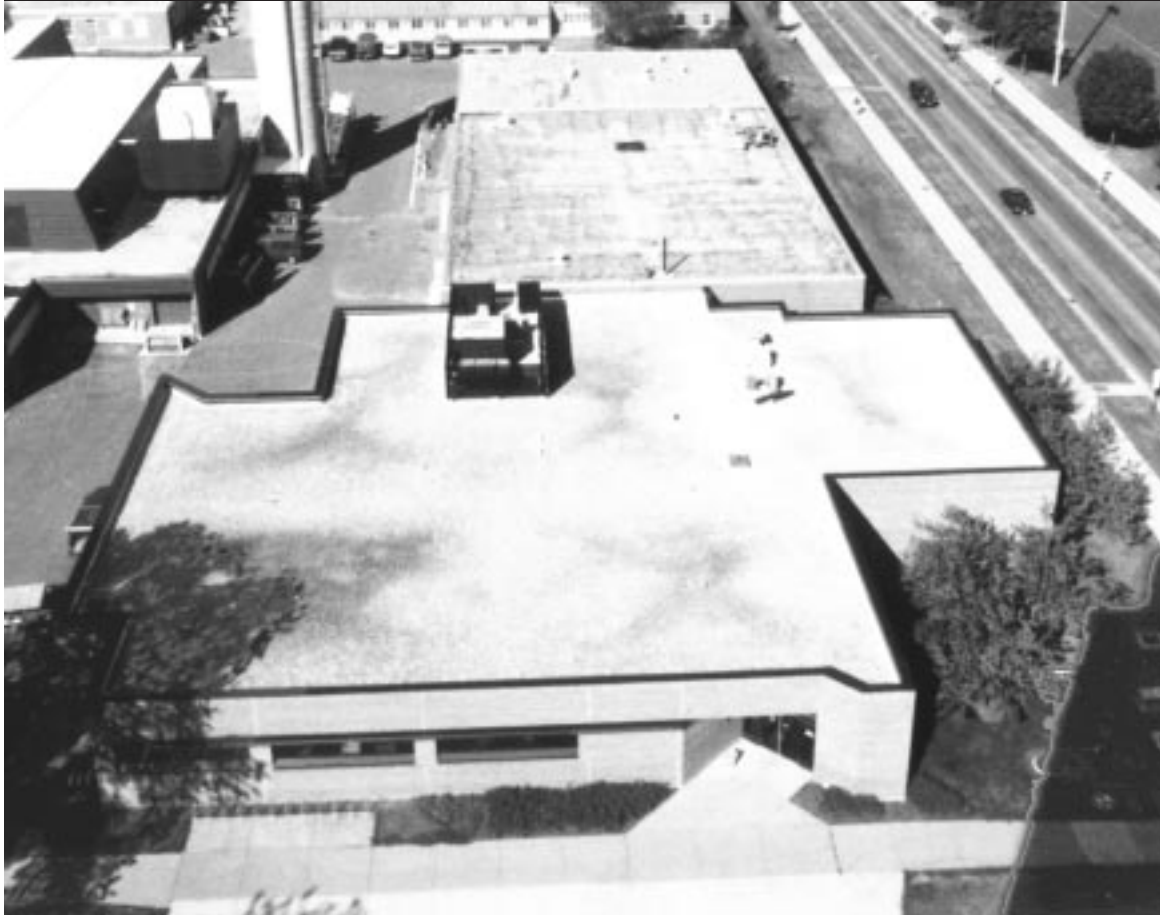


Fig. 1. The agricultural engineering shop. The first (1958) section is farthest from the camera. The second (1968) section is in the center of the building. The last (1981) addition is in the foreground.

Built in stages beginning in 1958, the Agricultural Engineering laboratory provides lab and classroom space for a department housed until 1959 in the tiny Agricultural Engineering building on Henry Mall.

The department of agricultural engineering had been in the same tiny building on Henry Mall for almost 50 years when they began to agitate for new quarters. Although the old building had been designed for expansion, the space for additions had gradually been usurped for other buildings, notably Horticulture and Biochemistry. Even though the early faculty and students in ag engineering had performed remarkably well in the old facilities. Among the developments of the first agricultural engineering department in the country were: the 1927 forage harvester, the seed corn dryer, hemp harvesting equipment, and a 1945 farm safety program. In spite of this preeminence in

the field, the steady rise in the scale of farming and its attendant machinery after WW II, quickly made the old shops completely obsolete. In 1955 the chairman of the department F. W. Duffee began to lobby president E. B. Fred directly for a new facility. He complained but that the facility was "very inadequate". A lot of departments were feeling that way in the post WW II student flood.¹

Funding for the shop building was obtained in August 1957, from the state building commission. In February 1958, the regents agreed to locate the new shop building at Linden and Elm Drives. When initial estimates came in, the department was forced to scale back on what they had believed was a modest sized building to begin with. They decided to present the plan as being buildable in stages, so that space could be added as more funds were obtained. Contracts for stage 1 were approved on June 9, 1959, with H. A. Sylvester Co. getting the \$70,546 general contract. Total cost for the building was \$125,000. Construction got under way immediately, and except for landscaping, the finished building was inspected and accepted on June 21, 1960. The building was 141 by 81 feet of concrete block faced with brick, aluminum window and a flat roof. It comprised a basement and one story. The architect was S. A. Witzel, a professor of agricultural engineering.²

Phase 2 of the building was needed within a decade. The architect for the addition was Kurtz Architects of Milwaukee, who added a 60 foot extension without windows or basement to the west end of the original. The general contractor was Vogel Brothers of Madison for \$51,030. It was completed July 9, 1968. Total cost of the addition was \$104,000, and was paid from receipts of the sale of Hill Farms land.³

In the late 1970s the Agricultural School intended to erect a \$13 million building for agronomy, soils, and agricultural engineering. This plan eventually failed through lack of state and University support. It was replaced by the plant science addition to horticulture and by a third addition to the agricultural engineering shops.

This third and final section of the building was designed by Miller-Waltz-Diedrick of Milwaukee in September 1980. This addition was originally intended to be a two story structure capable of holding all faculty and departmental offices. However the estimates of the cost of the project led the planners to divide it into two phases. Phase I was the first floor only. It was 125 by 140 feet added to the east end of the building. The general contractor was Anthony Grignano of Madison for \$682,295. Total cost was \$1.09 million. Phase I was completed in the winter of 1981, and was ready for use in the spring of 1982. Because of lack of funding, it is now unlikely that phase II will ever be constructed. This forces the department to occupy a split facility with labs and classrooms in the new building, but departmental and faculty offices in the old building on Henry Mall.⁴

1) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, October 1938, p. 12; *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, December 1937, p. 9; *Wisconsin Engineer*, May 13, 1913. vol. 17:388; *The Work of the Agricultural Engineering Department*, series 4/0/3 box 177 "Agricultural Engineering folder". Duffee to Fred, September 29, 1955, series 4/0/3 box 177 "Agricultural Engineering" folder.

2) *Regent's Minutes*, February 1, 1958, July 11, 1958, June 9, 1959; Duffee to Elvehjem, June 3, 1959, series 4/0/3 box 177, "Agricultural Engineering" folder; Small to Ahearn June 27, 1960, series 24/9/2 box 12 "Agricultural Engineering" folder; plans in the physical plant plans room.

3) Agency Request for State Building Commission Action, Gordon Orr to Knowlton Levenick, November 14, 1966, Gordon Orr to Jim Edsall, August 17, 1966, Culbertson to Lorenz, December 8, 1966, series 24/9/3 box 8; *Regent's Minutes*, September 15, 1967.

4) *Regent's Minutes*, December 14, 1979, December 5, 1980 exhibit B; Program Statement, July 1988, Converse to Shalala, May 22, 1990, series 4/31/9-3 box 1, "Agricultural Engineering" folder; interview Dr. James Converse, December 1995. Departmental files in the office of Dr. James Converse.