

B. A. V. I.



Fig. 1. Schlimgen building 1993. Designed by Claude and Starck and built in 1913 as Schlimgen Monuments, the building was purchased by the University in 1946, and used as a home for various extension departments. It became the home of the Bureau of Audio Visual Instruction in 1964, and now houses art studios. [Author Photo, AP-10]

As early as 1902 there was a commercial building at 1327 University Avenue. Then in 1913 a new one-story building (designed by local architects Claude and Starck) was built on that site by Fred M. Schlimgen. Schlimgen opened Schlimgen Monuments. The building was built with careful consideration of its intended purpose; support columns and beams are very massive, to carry the weight of the chunks of granite and marble. The front is decorated with slabs of Wisconsin red granite, and originally had large picture windows with "prism lights" above the windows (covered in the 1960s). Schlimgen operated the monument shop until his death in September 1931. The property passed into the hands of Fred's wife and children. It was rented to the Rundle-Spence Manufacturing Company, a maker of plumbing supplies.¹

They were the occupants as of August 7, 1946 when the regents purchased the land and building for \$75,000. The regents approved not only the \$75,000 purchase price, but a further \$25,000 for remodelling the building. The plans for the remodelling were carried out immediately after purchase and by the fall semester of 1947 the building was occupied by the university extension division. A shed built as a stable and storage shed by Schlimgen on the west side of the property used for years by the extension, was demolished during the rebuilding of Johnson Street in the 1960s, and it was discovered that the footings and foundations of the shed had been built from discarded tombstones, cracked, flawed, or misspelled. The 1947-48 catalogue lists debating and public discussion and Wisconsin idea theatre as having faculty and offices at the building. This was in the period which saw the Extension trying to lose its 'just agriculture' image, and the new building helped house services for the general, non-farming citizen.²

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s these community service programs came and went in the old Schlimgen building. Then in 1964 the building became the home of the Bureau of Audio Visual Instruction (B. A. V. I.) who stayed until 1994 when the art department moved in.

1) Madison city directories; Dane County Register of deeds.

2) University directories, University Archives.