

BABCOCK HOUSE

Fig. 1. The Babcock house at 432 N. Lake Street just before demolition in 1955.

The Babcock house was erected in 1892 as a private home by Dr. Stephen Babcock. On Babcock's death in 1931, the house became the property of the University. It was used as a student housing cooperative until its demolition in 1955.

When Stephen Moulton Babcock died on July 1, 1931, his will left the bulk of his estate to the University. This estate included his private home at 432 North Lake Street, which he had built in 1892. Both he and his wife, May Crandall, lived from their 1896 marriage until their deaths in the house.¹

At the time of Babcock's death, the depression was cutting deeply into enrollment in the college of Agriculture. In recognition of the fact that room and board were the main factors keeping farm boys from attending the University, a committee (Drss. E. R. Jones, I. L. Baldwin, J. A. James, V. E. Kivlin and A. J. Haas) was appointed to look for suitable quarters for a cooperative house for agricultural students. Professor W. A. Sumner suggested the Babcock home to the committee. This suggestion solved the problem of a building, but the house was unfurnished. Thus it was that Madison was treated to the sight of a group of distinguished professors in overalls, hauling used furniture out of Barnard and Chadbourne Halls. This and faculty donations provided the coop house with furnishings. The first group of agriculture students took up residence in the fall of 1932. Babcock was the first student cooperative house on campus. The boys paid actual cost; in the first year this came out to about \$97 per boy per year. The coop was a success from the first. There were normally about fifteen resident students, and another 15 "chompers", or students who took their meals there.² The unfortunate result of charging no maintenance fee can be seen in Fig. 1.

In October 1955 the house had deteriorated to a degree that the University had no compunction about demolishing it to make way for a parking lot.³ At that time the Babcock cooperative was moved to new quarters on Clymer Place, and later still to its current ones on University Avenue. The original site later became the site of the University Extension building.



1) Will of Stephen Babcock, University Archives, Madison city directories, and records of Madison register of deeds.
2) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, October 1949, May 1938, May 1955.
3) *Regents Minutes*, October 16, 1954.