

# CAMPUS ASSISTANCE CENTER



Fig. 1. Campus Assistance Center  
c. 1980, Extension in background.  
[series 23/29, GC437]

The first recorded resident of 420 N. Lake Street is Angelina A. Hopkins, widow of James Hopkins, in 1888. She lived there until 1902 when the house became the home of the Elvin Wiswall family who ran a grocery store at 120 State Street. The Wiswalls stayed until 1914. In 1929 it became the home of its longest lasting tenant John A. Willison who developed the house as student housing. He lived there as resident manager of the Willison House until 1952. At this time [1951] the house was home to 18 women students as well as Willison and his wife. The city started to complain about lack of compliance with city fire codes. Shortly afterwards the house was sold to Rita Heiser and her husband Robert Scherrer who owned it throughout the 1950s. During this period a number of remodellings took place with the purpose of adding space for more tenants. By March 1957 the Scherrers were classic absentee landlords, living in Seattle and complaining about the unfairness of the city's demands to upgrade the quality of student housing, since, they argue, the house will only "last 2-3 years, as it is to be taken for university expansion." By this time there are 24 students in the house, the first floor apartment of two rooms, one bath, four students; second floor six rooms, one bath, fourteen students; third floor, six rooms, one bath, 10 students. The only kitchen was in the basement. In January 1960 the property was purchased by the university for about \$32,000. The property remained student housing through 1969. In 1970 the university opened the newly created "Campus Assistance Center" (CAC) an information and referral service for students and faculty. The CAC is under the dean of students. The building also houses a number of student organizations. The future of the building is uncertain. Its life is threatened by a historic preservation project. The plans now [1993] being finalized to restore the old Red Gym include moving the CAC to the gym, and there is a possibility that the real estate owned by the university on Lake Street may be slated for demolition.

1) Sources: University and Madison City Directories; Madison building permit file; *Daily Cardinal*, November 7, 1970, *Capital Times*, August, 20, 1973.