

DAIRY BARN



Fig. 1. The Dairy Barn shortly after completion in 1898. Much detail, including cupolas, silo windows, the north side window pattern, and assorted trim, has been lost over the decades. [series 9/3 Dairy Barn, jf-24]

The Dairy Barn was built in 1897 with \$19,000 in state funds obtained by Dean Henry. The silo was an early experiment in round silo design. The building has lost some detail and been added to over the years, but is still sound, and is now in limited use for animal experimentation.

In 1895 as a result of lobbying on the part of dean of agriculture William Henry, the state legislature appropriated \$5,000 for the construction of a dairy barn for the university experimental station. Dean Henry felt based on his examination of barns at other colleges, that this amount would not build a barn suitable to the kind of instruction and research envisioned for the university. Henry decided to hold off on construction, and in 1897 a further appropriation was made and Henry began to plan the new barn.

Henry employed J. T. W. Jennings, a Chicago architect, who had already designed King Hall and the Agricultural Heating Station. The interior layout of the barn was done by members of the faculty and staff, particularly by Franklin Hiram King, whose developments of farm building ventilation and the use of the tower silo have become standard practice throughout the world. Construction was begun in 1897, the building was finished in time for classes in the fall of 1898 at a total cost of about \$19,000. The contractor was J. H. Stark.

Jennings designed the building's exterior to emulate the style of barns in Normandy. The main building was 50 X 96 feet, three stories high above a high basement. Two 40 by 70 foot one and a half story cattle stable barns projected toward the south from the east and west ends of the main barn. Between the two stables and connected to the main barn was a two story stock judging barn. The fact that the barn was lighted with electricity in that long ago day caused amazed comment.¹ Other features of the building were an office and apartment for the director, and a long steel ramp on the west side, navigable by teams of horses from the ground to the hay loft on the third floor. (See Fig. 2.).² These features have been mostly lost in the last 100 years. Much other detail has been lost. The original slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles.



Fig. 2. The Dairy Barn about 1905 showing spiral ramp in rear (west) of barn. A team of horses pulling a loaded wagon could enter the third level hay loft directly by climbing this ramp. [x25-336]

The silo on the northeast corner is one of professor King's first tower silos, was cylindrical brick, plastered on the inside, 18 feet in diameter and 30 feet tall, and was surmounted by a large water tank which supplied water to all the farm buildings. In those days of experimentation and suspicion on the part of farmers toward their work, Henry and King would no doubt be amazed and delighted to hear the present caretaker of the building refer casually to it as the "little silo". The little silo is no longer in use. The silo in 1898 was an experiment, in which cut corn was matured in the silo then fed as ensilage to the stock. The success of the experiment is obvious to anyone travelling in Wisconsin or any other farming area, the biggest difference is that modern silos are very much larger.

The silo is only one way in which the UW dairy barn served as a model to farmers across the country. In 1907 a series of single plant feeding experiments on cattle by Elmer McCollum which led to the discovery of vitamin A in 1913, and revolutionized agricultural nutrition. Testing of early models of milking machines were carried out here on a special herd.

The walls of the upper levels are noticeably bulged outwards as the result of a century of loading and unloading sixty ton crops of hay. Two flanking barns were added to the barn complex some time between 1908 and 1942. A building report to the regents in 1946 recommended that the barn be torn down and replaced. The Dairy barn is still in use for cattle and goat raising and experimentation, but those functions are gradually being shifted to more modern facilities on campus. It is hoped that this handsome and significant piece of Wisconsin history can be returned to and maintained in good condition and stand for another hundred years, a monument to men who believed that farming could benefit from research and instruction.

1) Wisconsin State Historical Society Historic Preservation Office site file. This and other features led to the derisive nickname "cow palace", a nickname later attached to the stock pavilion.

2) *Daily Cardinal*, December 15, 1897.

3) Other sources include: *Daily Cardinal* October 15, 1898, December 15, 1897; and *The Capital Times*, Aug 8, 1969.