

# ELIZABETH WATERS HALL



Fig. 1. Liz Waters front entrance c. 1950. [Series 26/1, Liz Waters, x25-1896]

*Built in 1938 with state and federal funds to alleviate the shortage of housing for women students, this dormitory is named for long time University regent Elizabeth Agnes Waters (1864-1933). It was opened in May 1940.*

The planning for additional women's dormitories began in 1937 at the same time as the planning that resulted in the construction of the Kronshage dorms for men. The women's dorm took longer than the men's for a number of reasons. The university officers in charge of housing had considerably more experience in the operation of men's housing. The existing dorms for women were now old, Chadbourne (1871) and Barnard (1912) provided little in the way of example for the operation of a modern dorm. Regardless of the causes for the priorities, planning for women's dorms proceeded in parallel with the planning of the men's units.<sup>1</sup>

The plans proceeded along lines similar to those for the Kronshage dorms; several small units were planned rather than large ones. In June 1937, the dormitory committee recommended the construction of two units, but since funding was still unresolved, the plans were still fluid. In a letter to business director Peterson, dean of women Greeley asked that the units be increased to three stories, based on medical evidence that the occupants would not be harmed by climbing the stairs.<sup>2</sup> The regents and building committees examined several different configurations of small units, estimating their cost both with and without financial assistance of the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). The vagaries of funding for the project were such that even after ground was broken, the exact configuration of the building was not complete.<sup>3</sup>

In October 1938, the regents accepted \$162,000 in grants from the WPA, implying a project of about \$360,000. After further planning and correspondence, the WPA grant was increased to \$363,088 in March 1939. The new project was to cost about \$806,000. Still the plans remained flexible. The foundation contract was awarded in October 1938, to George Nelson and Son of Madison. Groundbreaking took place on October 19, 1938, and the foundation was to be completed by



Fig. 2. Liz Waters c. 1940 looking northeast. Note the student observatory near the bottom of the picture, the observatory hill office is across Observatory Drive from the front of Liz Waters. [Series 8/3, jf-102]

February 1939. Near the time this phase of construction was completed the design for the building appears to have been completed. The regents describe it as "Five connected units of dormitories for women including kitchen and dining rooms. Total capacity is 478."<sup>4</sup> In February 1939 the regents decided, with the recommendation of D. L. Halverson, directory of dormitories and commons, to name the new dormitory Elizabeth Waters Hall.<sup>5</sup>

Contracts for construction of the women's dormitory were let by the regents in April 1939. The general construction contract went to the Maurice Schumacher Co. for \$158,000. Subcontracts brought the total to \$341,006. Construction proceeded smoothly and the building was ready for public inspection on May 19, 1940 during the annual Parent's Weekend.<sup>6</sup> The three story steel-framed lannonstone faced "superdorm" contains 239 double rooms, half of which have lake views, in five units, each unit with a kitchenette and date parlour.<sup>7</sup> The interior was designed by Leon Pescheret, the noted Chicago interior designer, who had designed the memorial union interiors. Different decorating and color schemes were used in each of the five units of Liz Waters.

The new dorm was integrated quickly into the growing university housing community along Lake Mendota. Elizabeth Waters Hall is one of the few dormitories on campus that was not integrated when the dormitories system went coed in the 1970s. This is because of the somewhat peculiar structure of the five connected sections which requires that to get to a rear unit from the front door, one must pass through all intervening units.<sup>8</sup>

1) *Regent's Minutes*, January 17-18, 1939, October 14, 1938, March 8, 1939

2) Greeley to Peterson, July 23, 1937, archives series 24/1/1 box 137.

3) *Daily Cardinal*, October 9, 1938, p. 8.

4) *Regents Minutes*, January 17-18, 1939; *Daily Cardinal*, October 20, 1938.

5) *Regents Minutes*, February 11, 1939. Elizabeth Agnes Waters had died March 3, 1933, and was one of the most mourned of University figures. In a memorial passed by the regents March 7, 1933, President Glenn Frank said " It is with difficulty that I associate the word shadow with Elizabeth Waters even in death. The memory of her radiance belies the word." The Wisconsin legislature passed a joint resolution (#67, A) on March 7, 1933 honoring her life and career. Waters served as a University regent from 1911 to her death, at which time she was vice president of the regents.

6) Teicher and Jenkins, *A History of Housing at the University of Wisconsin*, p. 38; Regent's papers, April 25, 1939.

7) *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 18, 1940.

8) *Badger Herald*, January 31-February 3, 1974 p. 2.