

GENETICS RESEARCH BARN



Fig. 1. Genetic research building, 1994, from southeast. It is a 53 by 180 foot one story reinforced concrete building, faced with brick. [Author Photo, AP-37]

On July 22, 1955, the genetics barn on Linden Drive burned to the ground in a fire which killed hundreds of birds and small animals used in genetics experiments. This was the last straw for a department housed in quarters so cramped that the teaching of basic laboratory courses had been discontinued for lack of space in the genetics building on Henry Mall (now Agricultural Journalism). About one quarter of the animals had been saved from the fire, and were moved to the basement of the stock pavilion, and the old dairy barn. Within a week of the fire, dean of agriculture Rudolph Froker wrote to president E. B. Fred, with a proposal for a new building to house genetic research. The proposed prefabricated metal structure was to cost about \$130,000. The insurance on the old barn was \$25,000, leaving a need for about \$100,000. The same day, president Fred wrote to governor Kohler, outlining the problem and asking him that the state building commission appropriate up to \$104,600 for Froker's plan. A week later, the regents approved the use of the insurance money and a requested \$104,600 to build a new genetics barn.¹

Late in 1955 the need for new facilities for the poultry department and a \$222,000 appropriation, caused the university, at the request of governor Kohler, to combine the two building projects (the genetics and the poultry barns). This would save money on the architects and contractors, and utility hookups. The sites of the buildings were to be back to back between Linden and Observatory Drives, just east of the agronomy seed building.²

Rough plans and estimates were sent to the University by the architects, Law, Law, Potter and Nystrom in August of 1956. On October 6, 1956 the regents approved final plans and called for bids on the combined project; in January of 1957, the contracts were awarded. The general contractor was the J. R. Sutton Construction Company of Madison for \$249,313. The total of all contracts for the combined project was \$436,074. Ground was broken in late January 1957. By May 29, 1957 the buildings were 95 per cent complete. The genetics department occupied the new building in the fall of 1957. It contained cages, animal pens, a few small labs, and one office. Not until the new Henry Mall genetics building was erected in 1962 did the department finally have enough office and lab space.³

1) *Daily Cardinal*, July 26, 1955; Fred to Kohler, July 27, 1955, series 4/0/3 box 182; Froker to Fred, July 27, 1955, series 4/0/3 box 182. *Executive Committee Minutes*, July 29, 1955; *Regent's Minutes*, July 29, 1955, November 12, 1955.

2) Muckinhirn to Kirchhoff, December 15, 1955, Kirchhoff to Muckinhirn, December 8, 1955, series 24/ 9/ 2 box 8.

3) *Regent's Minutes*, November 10, 1956, October 6, 1956.