

HOLT DORMITORIES



Fig. 1. Cole Hall on left, Sullivan Hall center, Holt commons at right, 1997. In the background are some of the Kronshage dorms. [Del Brown photo, AP-78]

The first of the post WW II dormitory construction binge, the Holt dorms were built in 1958 with federal funding guarantees. They are named after three faculty members (Sullivan, Holt and Cole) who had recently died when the dorms were planned.

In the early 1950s undergraduate men's housing was becoming very scarce. Not since Slichter Hall in 1946 had the University erected men's dorms on campus. Since enrollment had risen drastically (roughly from 7500 to 10,000) in the postwar era, new housing became a high priority.

In 1956-57, the University's developed an overall plan to build housing for 1300 men and 1200 women by 1959. The first project in this plan was housing for 500 men to be built south of Kronshage. This site was then occupied by intramural playing fields for the Kronshage dorms. Planning began in the spring of 1956. In January 1957 the regents applied to the federal HHFA for loan assistance to build the dorms. The HHFA granted approval in December 1956. Projected cost was \$2 million. As with almost all University dorm projects the cost was to be amortized by student rentals. Final plans were approved by the regents in March 1957. The plans called for two dormitory units each to house 250 men students in double rooms, and a two story dining hall to be attached to the Kronshage kitchen unit. No parking lots were planned in the belief that the lots for the Kronshage and short course dorms would provide enough parking.¹

In June 1957 the general construction contract was awarded to the J. L. Simmons Company in

the amount of \$1.06 million. Construction began late in June 1957 with completion scheduled for fall 1958. The regents decided to name the buildings after three recently deceased faculty members; Frank O. Holt, University director of public relations, Llewellen Cole, coordinator of graduate medical education, and Richard E. Sullivan, chairman of the extension division commerce department. Houses in the dorms were named for former faculty members: George Bryant, Aldo Leopold, Julius Olson, Philo Buck, William Kiekhoffer, Edward Ross, and Benjamin Snow, and former regent secretary Maurice McCaffrey.²

The dorms opened on schedule in the fall of 1958 at a cost of \$2.1 million. Rentals were set at \$780 per year per person. Following the tradition of a dorm group being known by the name attached to its commons building, they became known as the Holt dorms. Because a planned women's dorm between Tripp Hall and Liz Waters, was cancelled due to concerns about interference with the view from Observatory hill, it was decided to use Cole Hall as a women's dorm. This is the first time in the history of University housing that men's and women's dorms shared a commons.³

The two dorm units were four story structures of reinforced concrete columns and beams with concrete slab floors, and concrete block walls, faced with brick. Sullivan Hall is 'L' shaped with one wing 162 feet and the other 132 feet. Cole Hall is more nearly linear, with two 110 foot wings projecting from a center section. Holt commons is a two story brick on block structure 100 by 115 feet, containing dining cooking and student service areas. It was intended that the dining facilities at Holt would serve only the 500 residents of the Holt dorms, but that recreational spaces, meeting rooms, and service areas would be used by all University students. With the completion of the Holt dormitories, the first phase of the post WW II housing construction boom was ended. In quick succession would come the Elm Drive Dorms, and new Chadbourne Hall.

Like all the Lakeshore dorms these units are popular with students. Since changes in the commons at the Van Hise, Kronshage and Elm Drive dorms, Holt commons dining facility now serves dorm residents from all the Lakeshore dorms.

1) *Regent's Minutes*, April 7, 1956, July 14, 1956, January 12, 1957, March 9, 1957, June 20, 1957, September 7, 1957;

2) *Regent's Minutes*, June 20, 1957, February 1, 1958, July 13, 1957; *Daily Cardinal*, February 8, 1958;

3) Teicher and Jenkins, *A History of University Housing at the University of Wisconsin*, p. 63; *Daily Cardinal*, Registration Issue September 1958, March 6, 1958, March 24, 1959; *Regent's Minutes*, April 11, 1959, December 6, 1958.