

HORSE BARN



Fig. 1. Horse barn c. 1910, looking from the SE. [folder 9/3, Horse Barn, jf7]

The horse barn evidently was originally the 1868 farm barn. It was extensively reconstructed and enlarged in 1899. It is the oldest wooden building on the University campus. The building now houses sheep, classrooms, and offices for the Department of Meat and Animal Science.

There is some mystery surrounding the precise date of construction of this building. There are two dates commonly proposed. The most commonly used is 1899, in the University Fact Book, and other works who use the Fact Book as a source. The Fact Book mentions, without comment, that the date is sometimes given as 1868. The 1868 date is by far the most likely, partly because there is considerable evidence for the 1868 date, but especially because the evidence against the 1899 date for first construction is overwhelming.

Most of the plans and existing drawings pertaining to the horse barn, and a list of expenses for construction (in the regents report) are dated 1899 and signed by J. T. W. Jennings (the University's supervising architect from that date). But in a March 1899 letter to the regents Dean of Agriculture W. A. Henry's discusses *rebuilding* the horse barn: "It is very important that we begin the study of the re-arrangement and building over of the horse and carriage barn at the earliest possible moment."¹

A month later, Dean Henry reports to University president Adams that he wishes to place architect J. T. W. Jennings in a supervisory position on the project "owing to the uncertainties regarding the present structure and the difficulties which always follow the remodelling [of] an old building."² It is also significant that director of the Experimental Farm W. W. Daniels specifically says that the land as purchased by the regents contains no buildings, eliminating the possibility that the barn existed when the land was purchased.³ Clearly what was done in 1899 was the substantial



Fig. 2. Detail of 1878 etching, showing original Horse Barn. [etching on wall of Archives] reconstruction of an existing building.



Fig. 3. Horse barn with class of 1901, looking north. [folder 9/3, Horse Barn, jf8]

As for the original construction of that building, in Director Daniel's report to the regents in 1868, shortly after the formation of an Agricultural Department to take advantage of the Federal Morrill Act we read:

A farm barn 50 by 60 feet, with 24 feet posts, is completed. This barn contains horse and cattle stables, a granary, a carriage and tool room, besides bays for hay and grain. The stone basement, eight feet in height, has a fine fruit and root cellar 30 by 36 feet, a manure cellar 20 by 60 feet, and an apartment 24 by 30 feet, to be used for the present as a sheep fold.⁴

This describes the "farm barn" that later became known as the horse barn. This barn was constructed by William T. Fish, and A. R. Moxley at a cost of about \$1800.⁵

The examination of a surveying map published by the regents as a part of their 1871 report demonstrates that the building then called the farm barn was located at the spot now occupied by the Horse Barn. Since there is no indication of the construction of an entirely new barn, this strongly indicates that the original (1868) barn was the building made over in 1899 by Jennings. An 1878 commissioned artist's drawing of the building is shown in Fig. 2. The inexact nature of the etching as representational art does not allow any more than speculation about size and layout from this source.

The modern configuration of the horse barn is a cellar and three stories. The first level contains offices and classrooms, the second story holds animal stalls, and the attic level (once used for hay storage) is now empty. The cellar opens up to the animal pens on the west side of the building.

As the scientific method came into use in agriculture and animal husbandry in the twentieth century, the old, small, and deteriorating horse barn became more and more of an instructional liability. The University has not had a horse program since the late 1970s. The old barn's functions were gradually supplanted by other buildings, especially the livestock laboratory, and at the present time it is used mainly for sheep studies, classrooms and offices for the Department of Meat and Animal Science. Sometime before WW II, the picturesque ventilator towers and dormers on the building (see Fig. 1) were removed and power ventilation installed. Its slate roof was replaced with asphalt shingles in 1995.

1) Letter W. A. Henry to E. F. Riley, secretary Board of Regents, March 13, 1899. University Archives series 1/10/1-3.

2) W. A. Henry to C. K. Adams, April 18, 1899. University Archives series 1/1/3/ box 16.

3) *Report of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin* 1868 p. 25.

4) *Report of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin* 1868 p. 27.

5) *Report of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin* 1868 p. 38.