

HORTICULTURE



Fig. 1. The original horticulture building from the Linden Street face, c. 1911. [series 9/3 Horticulture, jf-37]

The horticulture building was built in 1910 to alleviate the crowding of the horticulture department in King Hall. The east wing, called Moore Hall, was erected in 1930, and the plant science addition to the west and south was built in 1980.

Horticulture was one of the earliest disciplines established in the college of agriculture. In 1893 dean Henry had convinced the legislature to fund the construction of King Hall, constructed for the study of horticulture and agricultural physics. Over the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, the ground-breaking work of professor Franklin King and his colleagues in the soils department needed an increasing amount of space, both in King Hall and in the attached greenhouses. This expansion by soils put more and more pressure on the horticulture department. In his report to the regents of 1908, president Van Hise says: "As soon as practicable an entirely new horticulture building should be constructed to accommodate the department, and the quarters now occupied by horticulture should be turned over to the soils department."¹

Pursuant to this goal the board of regents instructed the university's supervising architect, Arthur Peabody, to prepare plans for the "horticulture building to be located on the south side of Linden Drive immediately south of the drive to the dairy building at a cost of approximately \$50,000..."² On August 22, 1910, Mr. Peabody informed the regents that plans would be ready for bids on September first. The executive Committee of the Board of Regents opened bids for the horticulture building on September 26, 1910, and awarded the contract to the lowest bidder George Keachie of Madison for the sum of \$47,295. The contract called for the building to be begun by October 3, 1910 and complete on or before October 15, 1911.

Following the monthly reports of supervising architect Peabody we see that by November eighth, 1910, the foundations and basement were poured. In that same month a large shipment of brick arrived on site but was so different from the sample given the maker that the brick was rejected. By March 1911, the brick walls were up to the second floor, but work was halted for a week when



Fig. 2. Horticulture after the addition of the Agronomy wing (Moore Hall), on the left. c. 1932. The tower at the junction of the old building and the addition, disguises the fact that a three story addition had been put on a two story building. [series 9/3 Horticulture, jf-38]

the Madison Brick yard ran out of brick. Roof construction began during June, 1911. But in August 1911, the project was delayed by a metal worker's strike. In late August the strike was settled and work resumed. Final trim work in the horticulture building was started during October, 1911, and equipment for the departments was ordered, as were furniture and electrical fixtures. Peabody's November 1911 report says that the building is "rapidly approaching completion. Varnishing and painting have been going on steadily during the month." The lowest bid for equipping the laboratories was awarded to J. H. Findorff. The bid requires that the basement laboratory be complete by December 1, 1911. The date of completion was about December 1, 1911.³

The completed building was two full stories and an attic in height, 48 feet X 128 feet, built of brick, trimmed with Bedford limestone, and a brown glazed tile roof. [see Fig. 1]. Interior trim was of blue-veined Italian white marble. Floors were of concrete with linoleum covering. Total cost with furnishings was about \$60,000. Alden Aust credits the design of the building to James Law, an employee of Mr. Peabody's office, calling it a copy of the Russell Sage Foundation Hall in New York City.⁴

As often happened when planning facilities for new departments, particularly in the college of agriculture, the new building was too small for its purpose. Dean of agriculture Russell's first report to the regents after the completion of the horticulture building says: "The extremely rapid development of the plant pathology work has already made it necessary to proceed with the finishing off of the attic for student use, and add another greenhouse for the existing needs of the department."⁵ The pent-up demand for the study of horticulture and plant pathology quickly swamped the new facility; also the space vacated in King Hall was insufficient for the soils department which also needed a larger facility within a few years.

The planning for further expansion began almost immediately after the new horticulture building was opened. In his 1913 report to the regents dean Russell explains: "The work of this department [horticulture] has been of inestimable value to the upbuilding of the agriculture of the state. Its importance is such and the need for adequate quarters so imperative that the consideration of this problem should receive the attention of the coming legislature." Russell describes the extent of the crowding, "The total student registrations have increased from 23 [in 1909-1910] to 211 in 1913-1914 ... The situation with reference to greenhouse space is as badly congested as is laboratory and

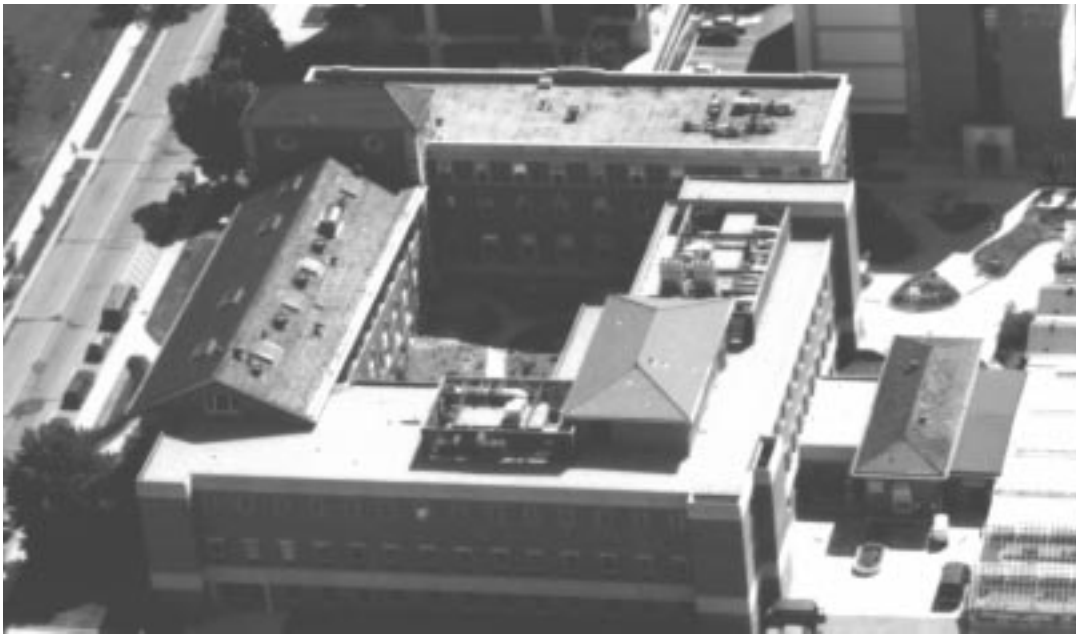


Fig 3.
Horticulture after
the 1983
addition.
[photomedia
album p.]

class room space." As a solution dean Russell proposes to build a wing on the horticulture building to "concentrate most of the plant industry operations of the college under one roof ... in this way the three departments of Horticulture, Plant Pathology, and Agronomy could use the larger lecture rooms in common, thus materially increasing the utilization of such space. Such a structure should be three stories in height, including the basement and will permit the utilization of the attic... For the purposes of these two departments would require \$85,000 for the building."⁶ Not for seventeen years would this excellent plan be carried out.

Horticulture and plant pathology stayed in the horticulture building, constantly subdividing the available space. Agronomy even shared its very limited space with genetics and some work in plant pathology. Finally in 1929 the crowding in these departments became so severe that action was finally taken. In a memorandum to the legislature, probably written by Glenn Frank, the suggestion is made: "The most feasible plan to meet the needs of these departments would be to construct a wing on the east side of the present Horticulture Building as here requested. Making this wing follow the structure of the present Horticulture Building, in which both the attic and the basement are utilized for regular use, the advantages of a four story building can be secured with only a two story and basement cost."⁷ This is substantially the suggestion made by Russell in 1913. Architect Peabody designs the wing including a tower on the front facade to disguise the fact that a three story wing has been added to a two story building. [see Fig. 2] Aust credits an employee of Peabody named Sheldon.⁸ The addition was built in 1930-1931 and in 1932 the regents voted to install a plaque in the new Agronomy wing and that "this wing of the building be named Ransom A. Moore Hall."⁹ Moore was the founding father of the Agronomy department, and long-time director of the short course program. The work of Moore, E. S. Goff, R. H. Roberts, and others made the university's horticulture and agronomy departments among the best in the country throughout the century. The new Moore Hall wing and the relocation of most of the plant study departments alleviated the crowding for a long time.

As early as 1960 a Plant Science addition was proposed. Not until 1978 did the University requested funding from the state. This was for a \$7.8 million addition to and remodelling of the old building. The addition took the form of a west wing. This "Plant Science" wing was built by the Anthony Grignano Co. with a contract of \$2.4 million (awarded April 10, 1980) and was dedicated

on April 8, 1983. The work was not satisfactorily completed until late 1984. This wing brought the horticulture building into its present form [see Fig. 3].¹⁰

- 1) *Report of the Regents*, 1906-1908, p. 35.
- 2) *Regent's Minutes*, June 21, 1910 vol. G, p. 580; *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, September 26, 1910.
- 3) Architect's Reports in the Executive Committee's papers, November 1910 through December 1911.
- 4) Alden Aust, *A Tabular History of the Buildings of the University of Wisconsin*, 1932
- 5) *Regent's Report*, 1910-1911, p. 120.
- 6) *Regent's Report*, 1913-1914 p. 117-118.
- 7) Legislative Memorandum, Agronomy Wing to Horticulture Building, series 4/0/1 box 3.
- 8) Alden Aust op cit. fn. 3.
- 9) *Regent's Minutes*, December 12, 1932.
- 10) *Regent's Minutes*, January 9, 1960, April 10, 1980. A commemorative plaque is mounted in the building.