

# LIMNOLOGY



Fig. 1. Limnology lab from Lake Mendota, c. 1964. [series 9/1, Lymonolgy [sic], jf-79]

*The limnology building was built in 1961 mainly at the instigation of Professor Arthur Hasler. Limnology is the study of lakes.*

Professor Arthur D. Hasler, who joined the University zoology faculty in 1937 and became department chairman in 1953, is largely responsible for the existence of the Limnology laboratory building. Hasler began studying freshwater lakes very early in his career. He was the first scientist to use the old lake lab (under the end of Park Street), and continued to lobby for expansion of lake lab facilities, throughout the 1940s. Finally in the late 1950s, when Hasler was a consultant to grant committees at the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), he was able to obtain a non-matching grant of \$480,000 for the University to build a new lake lab facility. The regents had voted in November 1958 (at the time of Hasler's proposal to the NSF) to authorize a site on Lake Mendota for such a building.<sup>1</sup>

In August 1960 at Hasler's request the state assigned to the design project, the architectural firm of Kaeser and McCloud of Madison. Hasler gave them a preliminary idea for the building which had been developed by a German architect who was married to a colleague of Hasler's, Holger Jannasch. The cantilevered inverted-pyramid nature of the building (see Fig 1) was Mrs. Jannasch's idea. Kaeser and McCloud made quick progress, and in February 1961, the regents approved preliminary plans for the new building. McCloud's estimate was for \$502,000. Hasler's goal was to have the building finished in time to host the 15th International Congress of Limnology to be held in Madison in August of 1962. In March 1961 the State Building Commission approved the plans. In April 1961, the required public hearing to present the

plans was held and there were no appearances in opposition. Planning continued through the summer, and final plans were approved by the regents on June 5, 1961.<sup>2</sup>

On July 13, 1961 the bids for construction were opened and it was discovered that cost estimates had been nearly \$200,000 low. On July 20, 1961 the regents voted to reject all bids and to have the building redesigned to fit in the available budget. According to a memo from the architects, the largest item in extra cost was the poor soil conditions encountered in cutting into the hillside where the building would rest. These conditions required moving the building toward the lake, increasing the difficult and expensive underwater work. The failure of the University to make up the difference of the bids and the NSF grant was a bitter disappointment to Hasler and the others involved in planning the project. Hasler argued that he had declined offers for directorships of other institutions based on his hopes for the department at the University. He urged president Elvehjem to expedite the project, and began to pursue other avenues for increasing funds. The redesign was approved by the regents on September 15, 1961. And in December 1961 revised final plans were approved. The new building was considerably smaller, but had lost no essential functions. Hasler maintains that most of the grace and beauty of the first design was lost.<sup>3</sup>

New bids were opened on January 23, 1962, and bids exceeded the grant funds by only \$14,423. Hasler had rounded up \$5000 in other grant money and asked the Graduate Research Committee for the \$9400 balance. This request was granted, and construction contracts were awarded on February 9, 1962. The general contractor was E. C. Knuth of Milwaukee with a contract of \$238,000. Total contracts were for \$494,423. Funds came from the NSF grant of \$480,000, the Research Committee grant of \$9423, and Hasler's \$5000 in gifts. The schedule for completion was set as November 30, 1962. Construction began with excavation of footings in the first week of April 1962. A Teamster's Union strike that prevented concrete delivery halted work on a large number of construction projects on campus in April 1962.<sup>4</sup>

The building was completed and occupied by August 1963. Hasler had by that time been appointed director of the laboratory of limnology. On April 5, 1963 the regents voted "that the new hydrobiology building be designated as the Laboratory of Limnology." It was explained that limnology refers to the study of lakes and was a more inclusive term than Hydrobiology which relates only to the biological aspects of lakes. The new Laboratory of Limnology was formally dedicated on May 9, 1964, nine months after it went into use.<sup>5</sup>

The building is an 86 by 81 foot rectangle of a basement and two stories of steel and reinforced concrete. It is the first building erected at the University to have no sheathing over the exterior walls, the exterior is concrete textured by the forms. The basement level contains a boat slip, boat and gear storage, lockers and fish holding tanks. The first floor holds offices, laboratories, and the main entrance on the east side. On the second floor are more offices and laboratories, a library and aquariums. As part of the agreement that the lakeshore path not be disturbed, the path continues through a covered walkway across the front of the building.

1) Oral History, Arthur Davis Hasler, 1977; *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 14, 1965.

2) Oral History, Arthur Davis Hasler, 1977; Muns to Peterson, August 17, 1960, Peterson to Elvehjem April 15, 1961, Peterson to Culbertson, March 26, 1962, Kaeser and McLeod, Proposed hydrobiology laboratory, February 2, 1961, series 24/9/2 box 12; *Regent's Minutes*, November 8, 1958.

3) Memo from Kaeser and McLeod, "Some Factors in the increased cost over estimate", Hasler to Elvehjem, August 23, 1961, Hasler to Willard, January 25, 1962, progress reports, March 27, 1962, April 10, 1962, April 24, 1962, series 24/9/2 box 13; *Regent's Minutes*, February 10-11, 1961, July 10, 1961, July 20-21, 1961, September 15, 1961, December 8, 1961; Hasler to Wendt, February 7, 1961, series 24/9/2 box 12.

4) *Regent's Minutes*, February 9, 1962.

5) Hasler to Young, February 5, 1963, series 24/9/2 box 13; *Daily Cardinal*, May 1, 1964.