

# MATHEWS CHEMISTRY LABORATORIES



Fig. 1. The Chemistry Research building (now Mathews) looking northeast c. 1963. This photo was taken several years before the Daniells chemistry building was erected attached to Mathews. Visible above the chemistry building are Lathrop Hall, and the Methodist church on University. [Series 8/3, jf-104]

*The post WW II enrollment surge made chemistry's quarters in Chamberlin Hall inadequate. To alleviate the crowding as much as possible a chemistry research unit was built in 1960 on Johnson Street. It was finished in July 1962 and in 1972 was named for ex-chairman J. H. Mathews.*

In the 1950s both the Pharmacy and Chemistry departments were approaching a crisis level of crowding. They shared the chemistry building (now Chamberlin Hall) at the corner of University Avenue and Charter Street. That building had been designed with expansion in mind, but even after all of the envisioned expansion had been carried out, the building was still too small. Great strides in the field of chemistry and the growth of the sciences, all of which required chemistry as a support course, combined to crowd the chemistry department to a critical point.

In the post WW II era plans for further expansion were made by chemistry chairman J. H. Mathews, his successor, Farrington Daniels and dean of pharmacy Arthur Uhl. These plans called for either expanding old chemistry to the east, or building entirely new facilities across University Avenue to the south. In the 1950s legal restrictions interfered with the southern expansion plans, so most effort went into planning an eastern expansion. In 1956 the University asked the state for \$6 million for a new chemistry building. At this time a decision had not been made as to which plan to pursue.<sup>1</sup>

By 1958 it was decided to expand across University Avenue and build an entire new chemis-

try facility. Chairmen Uhl and Daniels agreed that rather than wait for the state to put up the whole amount for the entire complex envisioned, they would try to build in stages. The first stage would be a purely research unit. Two reasons for this choice were first it would free up the maximum amount of the old building for pharmacy and second since it was a research project they could ask Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) for funding (WARF would generally fund research facilities, but not general classroom ones). The estimated cost of the research building phase was \$1.75 million. By October 1959, enough money was promised that the regents moved the chemistry building from 10th to 6th on the building priority list. WARF would contribute \$1.45 million, the Nation Institute of Health \$497,000, the Nation Science Foundation \$97,000, and the state was asked for \$562,000. This made a total of \$2.61 million.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the fall of 1959 was taken up with finishing the details of the planning, and the purchase of land on the Johnson Street site. Much of the state appropriation was used for land acquisition. Planning and funding included the alteration of the old chemistry building, especially the west wing for use by the pharmacy department. In October 1959 the regents approved the preliminary plans and specifications for the first unit of the new chemistry building. Final plans were approved in March 1960. Construction contracts were awarded for Chemistry first Unit, on August 8, 1960. The general contractor was the Walch Construction Company of Chicago, for \$904,648. Total of all contracts was \$2.83 million. The state had increased the amount of their funding to \$777,000.<sup>3</sup>

Demolition on the Johnson Street site began on July 6 1960. Groundbreaking took place on August 3, 1960. Completion was projected for July 1962, the first time the University had planned for a two year construction project. There were no major difficulties. In the winter of 1961, the *Badger Chemist* reported that the building shell was completely enclosed. On schedule the Chemistry Research Building was completed and occupied by the department in early July 1962. Into the news building moved all the research labs and offices from the old chemistry building, the instrumental analysis group, and the Theoretical Chemistry Institute under professor Hirschfelder (housed since 1962 in the old Naval Research Lab on Babcock Drive). The pharmacy department relaxed gratefully into the vacated space in old chemistry.<sup>4</sup>

The new building is a rectangular sub basement, basement and six stories of 92 by 117 feet and 97 feet high. The construction is steel reinforced concrete, with brick sheathing on the east and west faces, the front (south) side being window-wall construction with some brown precast concrete panels to relieve the extreme regularity that is a hallmark of this building style. The new Chemistry Building was one of the first University buildings to be built with air-conditioning. Plans were already being advanced to complete the chemistry complex, which was intended to take the entire block except for the Methodist Church. This expansion would not be complete until the late 1960s. In 1972 the regents voted to name Unit I the "Mathews Laboratories for Chemistry Research."<sup>5</sup>

1) Aaron Ihde, *Chemistry as Viewed from Bascom's Hill*, pp. 625-627; Daniels to Ingraham, June 24, 1955, series 24/9/2 box 7; Pharmacy-Chemistry Building plans, by Arthur Uhl and Farrington Daniels, October 29, 1957, series 24/9/2 box 10.

2) *Regent's Minutes*, November 8, 1958, October 12, 1959 exhibit E; For real estate transactions see *Regent's Minutes*, February 7, 1959, September 12, 1959.

3) *Regent's Minutes*, March 12, 1960, July 8, 1960 exhibit D; *Daily Cardinal*, October 24, 1959, January 12, 1960, *The Badger Chemist*, Fall, 1960, series 7/6/00/3.

4) *Daily Cardinal*, July 7, 1960, August 4, 1960, *The Badger Chemist*, Winter 1961, Spring 1963, series 7/6/00/3.

5) Plans in the physical plant plans room, Aaron Ihde, *Chemistry as Viewed from Bascom's Hill*, pp. 635; *The Badger Chemist*, spring 1963, series 7/6/00/3.