

# MCARDLE LABORATORIES

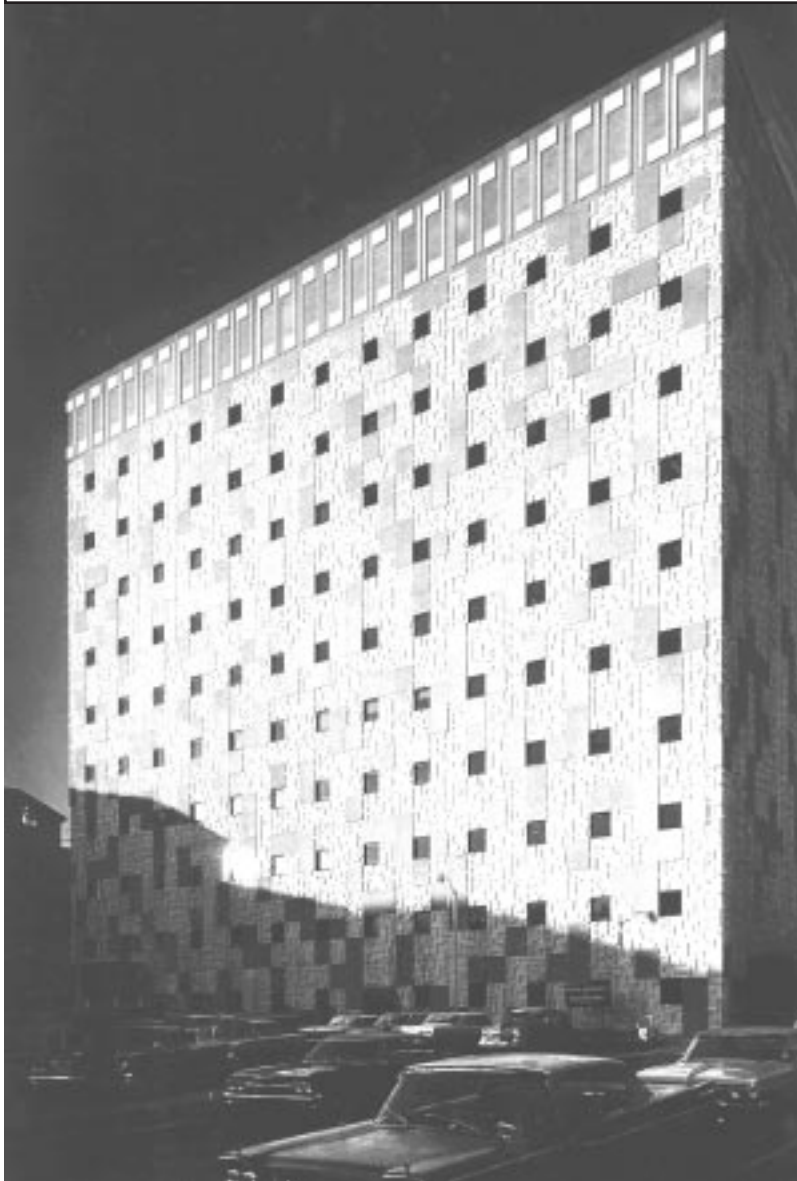


Fig. 1. The south face of McArdle Labs c. 1965. The decorative facing has no deliberate significance except for the stylized Cancer symbol that runs along the cornice; the standard myths that it represents a punch card or the look of cancer itself are false. The tiny windows were a result of an attempt to maximize wall space in the labs. [Series 9/4, McArdle Labs, jf-81]

*Built in 1962, this building provided additional research space for the McArdle cancer research laboratory, located until that time at 420 N. Charter Street. The unusual appearance of the building has no particular significance.*

As early as 1951 it was clear that the McArdle cancer research labs would need more room. Their success in obtaining grants, top flight researchers and their growing reputation, made the original quarters at 420 N. Charter Street increasingly cramped. This remained true even after the expansion made possible in the early 1950s by the enlargement of the Wisconsin General Hospital. The director of McArdle, Dr. Harold P. Rusch, obtained permission to remodel and occupy the space

in the attic of the old student infirmary building as supplementary space.<sup>1</sup>

But even while planning this expansion Dr. Rusch had begun the process of seeking funds for a completely new building. The Administration had made it clear that it would not provide any matching funds for construction, since all available money was needed for classroom expansion. Rusch spent 1958 and 1959 working on obtaining federal funding, which included lobbying Melvin Laird, the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee, and Congressman Fogerty, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Dr. Rusch emphasized to the congressmen that the appropriation for cancer research should not require local matching funds. In March of 1960, Laird notified Dr. Rusch that a non-matching funding bill had been passed. In August 1960, Dr. Rusch submitted a grant request to the NIH for \$2.75 million to build a new building for cancer research. The request estimated that the building could be completed by February 1964. The entire amount of the request, \$2.475 million was accepted by the regents on June 5, 1960. At the same meeting the regents granted authority to prepare preliminary plans for the new building. At this time the location was already decided.<sup>2</sup>

Late in the summer of 1961 the state appointed architects Schutte-Phillips-Mochon of Milwaukee to the project. By September 1, the architects had with the help of Dr. Rusch and his assistants Roswell Boutwell and Helen Baldwin, prepared an outline specifications for the building. Its cost was estimated at \$2.7 million and its scheduled completion as August 1, 1964. Rusch says that it was intended to be as austere a building as could be built, with corridors and stairs as narrow as allowed by law, and without frills, like lobbies. This was in an effort to get the maximum possible floor space for the money available. The regents approved the preliminary plans except for the exterior design on March 9, 1962.<sup>3</sup>

The exterior design of this building needs some explanation (see Fig. 1). According to Dr. Rusch, the first plan for the exterior was done by architect Mochon early in 1961. This design which featured various medical symbols impressed in the exterior concrete and embedded with colored glass, was pleasing to Rusch who describes it as Aztec-style but was rejected as too gaudy and conspicuous by the committee of Building and Grounds. The architect was asked to work with Mr. Frank Boggs, an art professor at Beloit College. The second attempt produced results acceptable to the University. There is no deliberate significance to the pattern on the building, except the stylized Cancer symbol on the cornice. How this exterior design could have been regarded as not gaudy or conspicuous is not recorded. But it is the only known example of the regents taking a separate vote on the external treatment of a building. The regents approved the exterior treatment as reworked by professor Boggs on June 4, 1962 after recessing to Bascom Hill to look at some scale models of the exterior panels. The lot 20 parking ramp erected in 1995 has masked the starkest view of McArdle.<sup>4</sup>

Two months later at their August meeting the regents approved the final plans for the building. They noted that the entire cost of the project would come from the NIH grant and University trust funds set up for cancer research. Construction contracts were let on November 9, 1962. The general contractor was the J. P. Cullen and Son Corporation of Janesville, for \$1.3 million. The total cost of \$2.852 million was divided between the NIH grant of \$2.475 million, and trust fund principal and income in the amount of \$188,733. A ceremonial ground-breaking had already taken place on October 13, 1962. The building began to rise in the spring and summer of 1963. Rusch says that he was "dismayed after the first few slabs of the exterior were attached ... I wished I had objected to Bogg's model". He further says that his wish for small windows to save energy and maximize wall space was a disappointment, that the windows looked like gun ports. Rusch says that many negative comments were heard about the building and that he felt apologetic.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the feelings about the looks of the new McArdle lab building, the occupants were pleased when they moved in September 1964. A formal dedication was held on October 17, 1964. Parts of the fourth and fifth floors were left unfurnished to provide later expansion space. This

extra space later became a point of contention between Rusch and other medical department heads, whose quarters were severely cramped. The finished building was 76 by 134 feet of steel reinforced concrete, a basement and eleven stories high, connected at floors 1-3 with the Orthopedic Hospital building to the north. There are no windows in the east or west faces of the building.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years the McArdle lab has been the site of many significant discoveries in the war on cancer. 1975 Nobel Prize winner Dr. Howard Temin, worked here. The name was transferred from the old building, to avoid confusion and to take advantage of the world wide reputation identified with the old McArdle lab. The word memorial was dropped, and the official name became "McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research."

- 1) *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 82-90. Much of this article's background was extracted from Dr. Rusch's book, found on the shelves at the University Archives.
- 2) *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 119-120; Peterson to Meader, October 19, 1960, series 24/9/2 box 12; *Regent's Minutes*, June 5-6 1961 exhibit A item 20.
- 3) Peterson to Culbertson, June 13, 1961, series 24/9/2 box 12; Postweiler to Schutte, Phillips, Machon September 1, 1961, Rusch to Elvehjem August 22, 1961, Outline Specifications Cancer Research Building series 24/9/2 box 13; *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 123-124.
- 4) *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 125-126. *Regent's Minutes*, March 9, 1962, June 4, 1962;
- 5) *Regent's Minutes*, August 1962, November 9, 1962; *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 127-128.
- 6) *Something Attempted, Something Done*, Harold P. Rusch M. D. p. 129-132. Plans at the physical plant plans room. *Badger Herald*, November 9-12, 1972.