

MEAT AND MUSCLE LAB



Fig. 1. The Meat Lab February 1997. The original section is at the far left. The 1959 addition is the 'L' shaped section around the original rectangle. The 1969 addition is at the right. The dairy center is in the left background. [Del Brown Photo, AP-67]

The muscle and meat lab was built in three major sections, in 1930, 1959 and 1969. It became the home of one of the best animal research departments in the country. It saw the discovery of niacin by Conrad Elvehjem, and the seminal studies of animal nutrition by Gustav Bohstedt and E. B. Hart.

The first section of this three part building was the section to the west, built in 1931 as the animal science lab. It was erected at the request of dean of agriculture H. L. Russell, to accommodate the highly acclaimed work of E. B. Hart, Gustav Bohstedt and Harry Steenbock. Bohstedt received a job offer from the University of Iowa in 1930, and told President Frank that Iowa's modern facilities for animal research were a strong attraction, since the work at Wisconsin was carried out in very inadequate facilities in the old wooden farm buildings on campus. Frank promised to help rectify this situation, and the first section of the animal science complex was built. The regents approved the preliminary plans on August 6, 1930. Bids were opened on March 20, 1931 and the general contract let to George Nelson and Son for \$22,580. The state appropriation for the building was from the emergency fund, and was for only \$35,000. Because the equipment was projected to be fairly expensive it was necessary in architect Arthur Peabody's words: "that the building be made very plain and of inexpensive materials." It was intended at the time that this structure be a part of a quadrangle for animal research. The depression prevented these plans from being carried out.¹

The animal science building, designed by state architect Arthur Peabody, was a basement and

one and a half story, 40 by 60 foot rectangle just to the west of the stock pavilion. The basement held cattle pens, feed storage rooms and holding pens; the first floor contained labs, offices, an autopsy room, and refrigerated cool rooms. The first bids on the equipment for the building were about \$1000 over available funds and were rejected by the regents on June 20, 1931. After respecification by the college of agriculture, the equipment was rebid in August 1931, and satisfactory bids were received. The building went into use in the fall of 1931.

The second section was designed by the staff of the Agricultural Engineering department in January 1959. It was entirely devoted to meat science. It was 77 by 73 feet on the east side of the animal science building and contained meat processing labs, offices, coolers, slaughter rooms.³

The third and last major addition was for muscle biology research, and was designed by the state department of engineering in April 1969. It was a 76 by 82 foot section built onto the east of the old part of the building. It contained biochemistry labs, coolers, offices, and instrument rooms. It was built by Anthony Grignano and cost about \$625,000. The designers used some curved brick shapes on the south side of the building to break up the extremely blocky shape of the building. Unfortunately, the effect on the appearance is minimal when seen from the south, the only side usually visible.⁴

1) Bohstedt, Gustav, oral history, University Archives; H. L. Russell to Glenn Frank, June 15, 1930, series 24/1/1 box 3. Peabody to Phillips December 2, 1930, archives series 24/1/1/ box 63; Regent's Minutes, June 21, 1930, August 6, 1930; Peabody to Phillips, December 2, 1930, series 24/1/1 box 63.

2) *Minutes of the Executive Committee*, March 27, 1931.

3) Files of the department of planning and construction, blueprints in physical plant plans room. *Regent's Minutes*, May 9, 1959 exhibit B.

4) Files of the department of planning and construction, blueprints in physical plant plans room; *Regent's Minutes*, April 19, 1968, December 6, 1968, July 25, 1969, exhibit A.