

MEIKLEJOHN HOUSE



228 North Charter Street c. 1965. [series 9/1, Meiklejohn House, x25-2118]

Originally a private duplex, the Meiklejohn house became university property in 1928. It was the home of the Anderson house women's cooperative until 1968 when it was converted to academic use. It is now the home of the ILS program (Integrated Liberal Studies), a descendant of Alexander Meiklejohn's experimental college.

In 1914, after years of living in rental housing on West Johnson Street, mason contractor Samuel Oakey and his wife Ida built a three story craftsman style duplex on four lots of land on north Charter Street a few blocks from the university campus. The Oakeys and their children lived in the south half of the duplex at 228. The 230 side was occupied by a series of short term tenants. Samuel died about 1920.¹

In the spring of 1928 after years of living in the house with her children as they attended the university and taking in boarders, Ida May Oakey was approached by Miss Mary D. Andersen and Miss Nardin of the YWCA advisory board, and asked if she was interested in selling the house. She said that she was, and the women from the YWCA had university officers Gallistel and McCaffrey look over the property as a location for a women's cooperative house. They gave their approval and the women put down \$500, and took on a \$220/month mortgage for the \$19,000 purchase price and the Anderson cooperative house was started. The owner of the property was the University Women's Building Corp, under the supervision of the dean of women. The direct antecedents of this co-op were the Tabard Inn, the Mortar Board, and the Blue Dragon. In the same year, 1928, superintendent

of buildings Gallistel drew up and executed plans which modified the old duplex into a single dwelling.

There was room for 17 women, whose idea was to lower their living costs as much as possible by doing the work themselves, thereby doing away with the need for servants. The only employees were a housemother, a cook and a houseboy. Most inhabitants of the Anderson house worked part time to get through school. Rent was typically about \$200 per semester. They rotated a work schedule for the chores involved in running the house.²

In 1940 the co-op hired as a housemother Mrs. Grace Lord. She was destined to stay for more than twenty years. Mrs. Lord appears to have been something of a Tartar. In 1950 the women of Anderson house write a list of complaints to dean of women Louise Troxell. They say that Mrs. Lord is peremptory with them, that she doesn't allow the girls to know anything about the running of the house, that she 'makes a martyr of herself over the keys', and that she listens at their meetings from a vantage point near the stairs. In a memo regarding these complaints dean Troxell writes, "I do not know what will or can come of this as Mrs. L. is quite inflexible and operates best in an atmosphere of complete authority, I believe." A considerable amount of this conflict appears to have been caused by Mrs. Lord's stringent measures in keeping costs very low (e.g. only very small wash loads to preserve the washer). This was part of what made the Andersen House a success.

Mrs. Lord remained at her post at the Andersen house until 1964. At that time the name was changed to the Rosemound Residence under the control of Mary Tyrney. By that time most of the functions of the women's cooperatives had been taken over by the 'official co-ops' of Zoe Bayliss and Susan Davis houses. In 1969 the building was taken over by the university (the university held title to the properties controlled by the University Women's Building Corp) for use as the university history annex. The building was taken over the following year by the Integrated Liberal Studies program (ILS). In September 1969 the regents approved the naming of the building "Meiklejohn House". The ILS is a descendant of the Experimental College begun in 1927 by Alexander Meiklejohn. The ILS is the current resident of the old Oakey house.³

1) Madison city directories.

2) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, May, 1950; *Daily Cardinal*, April 13, 1951.

3) *Regent's Minutes*, August 14, 1964, Exhibit A, September 19, 1969; *Badger Herald*, January 26, 1972; Madison city directories.