

OLD CHADBOURNE HALL



Fig. 1. The initial configuration of Ladies Hall c. 1880. [series 9/1 Ladies Hall ns-1649]



Fig. 2. Remodelled Ladies Hall c. 1899. The bay windows were part of the 1895 remodelling. [series 9/1 Ladies Hall, x25-02655]

Old Chadbourne Hall was built in 1870 as home to the Normal School, then called the Female College. Old Chad was the first University building built with direct state funding, rather than the University's own fund. After the removal of the Normal School in the 1870s, Ladies Hall was used exclusively as a women's dormitory with a capacity of 80 students. Its capacity was enlarged to 125, and a gymnasium added in 1895. In 1957 it was demolished to make way for a new, larger, and fireproof dormitory.

In 1865 the regents of the University had two particular problems. Firstly, their prospective new president, Paul Chadbourne, did not want the post because of his disinclination to preside over a coeducational University. Secondly, the University needed more room for students and had damaged their financial standing so badly with the 1850s Main Hall project that they could not construct a building from their own fund. The way in which these problems were overcome is a testimony to the ingenuity of the officials of the University and is the story of Chadbourne Hall.

They first dealt with the coeducation problem¹. The regents explained to the legislature in their 1866 report that they were finding it "extremely difficult, if not impossible, to secure the services of a thoroughly competent and experienced educational man at the head of the institution"² unless the coeducation law was modified. They deemed essential the "necessary authority for the erection of a separate female department."³ In the 1867 legislative session the offending law was amended to read: "The University shall be open to female as well as male students *under such regulations and restrictions as the board of regents may deem proper.* [italics added]"⁴ With this change and some others, Paul Ansel Chadbourne agreed to take the job and on June 22, 1867 was formally elected by the regents. The regents had solved the problem of getting a suitable leader.

For the second problem, that of expanding the physical plant, the regents had begun the campaign as early as 1867: "... it is confidently expected by the regents that the State will provide for the erection



Fig. 3. February 1957, the oldest coed dorm at a public institution in the U.S. is demolished to make room for a new one. Some stone was saved to trim the entrances to the new Chadbourne Hall. [series 9/1 Ladies Hall, ns-1673]

of another building." ⁵ Then in 1868 the regents state: "*The University must have another building* [italics original] It is impossible to put up such a building from its own resources, and it has therefore, to rely upon the generosity of the state to furnish the means." Under Chadbourne's administration the blame for the intense crowding of the young men at the University was laid directly at the door of the space the young ladies of the Normal School were taking up (including all of South Hall and part of University Hall) for want of a building for the Female College. "We need for the young men every particle of the room occupied by the young ladies, and to this end, we are in immediate want of a building to be used as a Female college."⁶

Under Chadbourne and Edward Salomon, former governor and president of the board of regents, the pressure on the legislature now became sharp. The pair made a very strongly worded argument (written by Salomon) that the state had done almost nothing for the University and that it could and should rectify that policy by making payments to cover what should have been given in the past and to follow the lead of Michigan in liberally supporting the state University. In 1870 the three years of high-powered lobbying paid off. In September 1870 the regents report:

The Female college, for the erection of which \$50,000 was generously appropriated at the last session of the legislature, is fairly underway. The basement is fully completed, and it is expected that the building will be ready for occupancy at the opening of the next term.⁷

The problem of erecting a new building had been solved. This direct appropriation for a University building set an important precedent in that it represented the end of the idea that the University could

build itself up using the income of the original land endowment, and the beginning of the idea that state funds should be used to support the University.

The building was designed by Chicago architect G. P. Randall and contracted to John Fellenz of Milwaukee in August of 1870 for \$41,500. It was 50 by 75 feet with a 40 by 88 foot wing with three stories above the basement all of stone, and located 133 feet southeast of South Hall.⁸ It was ready to open in time for the 1871-72 year. It had dormitory rooms in the wing and recitation rooms in the main building. Ladies Hall had the first indoor privies of any University building. The Board of Visitors says of it: "The Ladies Hall, recently erected, is a model of neatness, comfort and convenience. It seems to be complete in all its appointments and must be homelike and pleasant to the occupants."⁹

Note that the appellation Female College has already disappeared. Chadbourne had resigned at the end of the 1870 school year. His system for a separate educational system for women at the University was cheerfully guaranteed as far as the door. Chadbourne's successor, President Twombly, spoke out strongly for complete coeducation, and in 1874 the Regents passed a resolution completely accepting full coeducation: "The University shall be open to female as well as male students, with no other regulations or restrictions on the part of the Board of Regents, than those that may be deemed necessary and proper for the preservation of order and discipline."¹⁰

Within a few years the building was used, except for music classes, entirely as a dormitory. There followed a relatively calm period in which the only question surrounding the Ladies Hall seemed to be the degree of oversight the young women required. "With the Ladies Hall in the university standing on the same footing of entire freedom from any restraint of authority (except the statute laws of the land) as are all the other halls of the university, the fear of loving parents is increasing."¹¹

By the late 1880s the building had some serious problems. The 1888 legislature appropriated \$5000 for improvements of Ladies Hall including fire safety, steam heat, and modern plumbing.¹²

Within a short time increasing age, rising enrollments of women, and the lack of a gymnasium for the women forced the regents to remodel again: "The condition of the old building was so extremely unsatisfactory that practically a new building seemed to be required. The Regents ... adopted a comprehensive scheme not only for improving the building as it stood, but also for very considerably enlarging it."¹³ The job (designed by Ferry and Clas), begun in the fall of 1895 and completed in the summer of 1896, included a whole new west wing which held a two story gymnasium, and a complete reconstruction of the old sections to provide more and larger rooms, elevators, lighting both by electricity and gas, and a new and large dining room on an upper floor. [See Fig. 2]. The ceiling of the old section had been found to be high enough that another floor could be added, and the entire remodelled building became four levels and a basement. It was said to be sufficiently large to accommodate all the young women likely to be in attendance at the University for many years to come. Its new capacity was 125. The Board of Visitors saw the new building as a complete success and for several years had nothing adverse to report about it, except that the presence of the school of Music in the building was a distraction to those trying to study, and indeed the students affectionate nickname of "Howling Hall" must give something of the flavor of the problem.

Around the turn of the twentieth century there were some efforts to apply a more dignified name to the building than Ladies Hall. The 1896 *The Daily Cardinal* reports an attempt by the women to rename the remodelled building Sterling Hall.¹⁴ It was not until the combination of the new president E. A. Birge and the petitions of the Ladies of 1901 (the "Naughty Ones") that the name Chadbourne Hall became official. In a letter to a friend Birge explain the choice of name:

First President Chadbourne secured the appropriation for the building. [Second] I thought it was only fair that Dr. Chadbourne's contumacy regarding coeducation should be punished by attaching his name to a building which turned out [to be] one of the main supports of coeducation.¹⁵

Starting around 1905, the University began to encourage the women to live in the sororities springing up around the Langdon Street area. In WW I Chadbourne Hall served as a men's dormitory and drill hall to house the Student Army Training Corps. As early as the 1940s there was talk of tearing down the oldest housing unit on campus usually based on its fire dangers and expense of operation. The severity of the post WW II housing shortage saved it from the wrecker for several more years. In 1952 Slichter Hall was converted to a women's dorm to empty Chad for demolition, which was again delayed. Finally in 1957 the end came [See Fig. 3] and the oldest women's dormitory on a coeducational public campus in the U. S. was demolished to make way for a new, fireproof, larger and more modern dormitory on the same site. Some stone from the old building was saved and used to trim the entrances to the new one.

- 1) Chadbourne had no specific objection to women obtaining an education, but believed that they should not attend classes with the men, and therefore favored the establishment of a physically separate school.
- 2) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1866 p. 10. The previous president Barnard had been gone since 1861, and the University was floundering through lack of leadership.
- 3) *Ibid* p. 11
- 4) Chapter 117 of the General Laws of the State of Wisconsin of 1867.
- 5) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1867 p. 13
- 6) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1869 p. 28.
- 7) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1870 p. 30.
- 8) *University Press* August 1870 p. 23. The original plans for Old Chad are in the University Archives map case drawer #11.
- 9) *Report of the Visitors of the University of Wisconsin* 1874, p. 11.
- 10) Curti and Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin* V. 1, p. 373-374.
- 11) *Report of the Visitors of the University of Wisconsin* 1883-1884, p. 53.
- 12) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1888 p. 46. The regents remark, "It is gratifying to note that with these improvements and the most excellent management of the hall it is now fully occupied, indeed, fails to meet the demand."
- 13) *Report of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, 1896 p. 35. Some of the pressure for a women's gym was due to the fact that the gymnasium and armory, opened in May 1894, was available only to the men.
- 14) *The Daily Cardinal* Dec. 3, 1896.
- 15) E. A. Birge to Rudolph Schuchardt Mar. 11, 1922. Quoted in *The University of Wisconsin*, Curti and Carstensen, vol. 1, p. 138.