

# OLD MCARDLE LABORATORY



Fig. 1. The McArdle laboratory building c. 1942. Later construction added two floors to the building. [Series 9/4, McArdle, jf-59]

*The original McArdle laboratory was built in 1939 with funds from the estate of Michael McArdle ('01). It remained the site of the McArdle laboratory for cancer research until the erection of the new building in 1965. The old building is now part of the medical sciences complex.*

Serious cancer research began at the university with the 1934 bequest by Jennie Bowman of \$420,000 for cancer research in memory of her father, Jonathan Bowman. The regents used the income from the Bowman bequest to hire several young and promising researchers, rather than spend the whole income on a single "name" professor. Among these bright young men was Harold P. Rusch, later director of the department of oncology, which formed around the cancer researchers.

For the first four years the Bowman researchers and their animals were housed in a few small rooms on the second floor of the Service Memorial Building. In 1937 with the encouragement of dean E. B. Fred, and Dean Middleton, plans began for a larger space, but no funds were available in the depths of the great depression. Fred and Middleton inquired without result, into the possibility of funding from the recently formed Federal program, the National Cancer Institute.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1935 a Chicago businessman named Michael McArdle (UW class of 1901) died and left in his will the sum of \$10,000 and residuary estate to the university to be used for study and research work in cancer. According to Harold Rusch, no one in the medical department knew about the existence of this money until the spring of 1938, at which time the value of certain stock in the estate was much increased and the total worth of the grant was brought to the attention of medical dean Middleton. Harold Rusch, with the backing of dean E. B. Fred, and professor Walter Meek, was

still agitating for more space for cancer research. Middleton obtained \$108,000 in matching funds from the federal PWA. The total projected cost of the building was \$240,000.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1938, the regents had approved the financing of the cancer facility, by the University of Wisconsin Building Corporation (UWBC), with PWA matching funds. During the fall and winter of 1938, Harold Rusch, selected by Dean Middleton, conferred with state architect Roger Kirchhoff regarding the design of the building. They designed a four story building connected at the third and fourth floors to the Service Memorial Building medical school. The first two floors of the new building would be occupied by the department of radiology, which was in very cramped quarters in the basement of the Wisconsin general hospital. Even with the restriction of using only the third and fourth floors, the cancer researchers were going from less than 1000 to 6500 square feet of space.<sup>3</sup>

The regents announced the selection of contractors January 17, 1939. The general contractor was Maurice Schumaker for \$143,985. Utilities and subcontracts brought the contracted total to \$200,188. The ground under the site was so poor ( a spring disrupted by the Service Memorial Building next door was saturating the site) that the state engineer had to redesign the foundations and the completion deadline was advanced from October 1939 to December 2, 1939.<sup>4</sup>

On March 1, 1940 the building was completed and named the McArdle Memorial Laboratory for Cancer Research. Dr. Rusch says that dean Middleton promised that the first two floors, used by radiology, would soon revert to the cancer researchers. Complete with equipment and furnishings the cost of the building was \$244,582. The finished building was 45 feet by 100 feet, basement and four floors of brick with stone sheathing on the lower two floors (see Fig. 1). The stupendous growth of some stock (Chicago Flexible Shaft Co., later the Sunbeam Corp.) in Mr. McArdle's estate made it possible to immediately liquidate the debt incurred by the UWBC in its construction. This left the building debt-free from its inception.<sup>5</sup>

The first ten years of the McArdle laboratory were marked with steady growth and the ongoing frustration experienced by all early cancer research. In July, 1941, the state legislature appropriated an annual sum of \$10,000 to supplement the McArdle and Bowman funds for cancer research. During the years of WW II, work at the cancer center went on, due in part to the IIA (essential to the general health and welfare) draft classification of the principle researchers, Rusch and Potter.<sup>6</sup>

In 1947 dean Middleton first broached the idea of adding two floors to the top of McArdle to house cardiovascular research. The huge remodelling project that transformed the Wisconsin General Hospital, was the impetus that completely rebuilt the McArdle laboratory building as well. The hospital additions (including the addition of two floors to McArdle) were carried out first. This work was finished in 1953. Radiology moved to the new hospital, and the remodelling of the first two floors of McArdle proceeded. The plans were done by July 1952, the work was begun January 1954, and completed in January 1955. The new space was funded by the regents, the National Cancer Institute, and the American Cancer Society. The total cost of the renovation and furnishing was about \$260,000. This remodelling destroyed any visual sense of the original building, since it has now been engulfed on three sides by the hospital. This is of course true of most of the older buildings of the old medical group.

After the construction of the new McArdle laboratory building in 1965, the McArdle name over the Charter Street door was covered by a sign reading 420 Charter Street. The building in 1993 houses parts of the medical school, including medical physics, and therapy offices.

1) Rusch Harold: *Something Attempted Something Done*, 1984, p. 46-7.

2) Ibid p. 48-50; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, June 1935 p. 276.

3) *Regent's Minutes*, October 14, 1938. March 7-8, 1939.

4) *Regent's Minutes*, January 17-18, 1939, April 25, 1939.

5) *Daily Cardinal*, July 23, 1940 p. 6., November 2, 1940, p. 3.

6) *Laws of Wisconsin* 1939, chapter 408. Rusch, Harold, op cit.