

PRIMATE LABORATORY



Fig. 1. 1994, Primate lab, original section in foreground, 1957 addition in background. [Author Photo, AP-12]

Built as a dairy plant in 1927, this building became the primate laboratory in 1955, and was added to in 1957. It is now named after Dr. Harry Harlow, the first director of the facility.

When Harry F. Harlow joined the psychology faculty of the University in 1930, his first question was "where is the animal holding facility?" His department chairman informed him that it had been torn down the previous summer. The chairman's wife suggested that the Vilas Zoo had a monkey house, and for the next two years Harlow carried on his primate studies from a basement room at the Vilas zoo monkey house.¹

In 1932 Harlow was given a small (24 by 24 foot) building at 1505 University Avenue (see Fig. 2.), recently vacated by the Forest Products Service. With his graduate students, Harlow remodelled and expanded this facility for the next twenty years. During this time, the building was considered an eyesore by the department of buildings and grounds, even after Harlow planted a thick hedge to obscure the off-the-record alterations being made to the building.²

In June 1946 the University notified property owners in a planned expansion region south of University Avenue that they should consult the regents before making large improvements to their property. One of these owners was the Madison Milk Co-op at 29 Coyne Court. On April 14, 1948 the Coop offered the Coyne Court property to the University for \$85,000. After nearly four years of haggling over price, the regents and the Coop agreed on a price of \$60,000 in January 1952. The purchase was to be funded through the Wisconsin University Building Corporation. The regents approved the outlay of \$90,000 to provide for both the purchase price and remodelling costs. The Co-op was a sixty foot square, two story building of reinforced concrete built in 1927.

There were political difficulties in the financing of the purchase³, which were resolved by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) purchasing and remodelling the property and leasing it back to the University.

Fig. 2. c. 1950. The first primate lab at 1505 University Avenue, originally built by the U. S. Forest Product Service. After the U.S.F.P.S. left in 1931 this twenty four foot square building was assigned to Harry Harlow as the primate lab. It was extended several times by Harlow in the next twenty years. After the primate lab moved to the Coyne Court location, this building was used by Dr. Farrington Daniels for solar energy research, and was finally demolished in 1975 (Wisconsin Alumni Magazine, May 1975 p. 17). [Photo courtesy of Helen Le Roy]



The regents at first intended the building to be used for garage facilities for the physical plant, but during the negotiations, the psychology department obtained a large research contract involving primate research. This contract and the inadequate facilities available to Dr. Harlow, led to the decision to remodel the Coyne court building into a primate laboratory. This remodelling, planned by Harlow and building supervisor Albert Gallistel, cost \$93,000. The lab was not ready until May of 1954 when Harlow and his staff moved from the University Avenue building to their new address on Coyne Court.

The success and increasing recognition of Dr. Harlow's work, led in July 1956 to the awarding of a large research grant by the National Institutes of Health involving rhesus monkeys, with the stipulation that the laboratory be expanded for the work. Again WARF provided funds for the expansion (\$200,000), and in the summer of 1957, the lab was extended easterly through the block to Charter Street. When this brick two story addition (designed by Law, Law, Potter and Nystrom) was finished in April 1958, the address of the facility was changed to 22 N. Charter Street. The building was donated to the University by WARF in July 1959. The only substantial modification since that time was the 1960 addition (by Karel Yasko) of several rooms on the roof of the addition to provide extra animal holding and observation rooms. Dr. Harlow retired in August of 1974, and died in 1981. The building is now known as the Harlow Primate Lab.

1) Harry F. Harlow: *My Life With Men and Monkeys*, address at the University Club, Madison Wisconsin 1959. Papers of Helen Le Roy.

2) Dr. Stephen Suomi and Helen LeRoy, Appendix 7 to oral history of E. B. Fred, University oral history project.

3) Regent's Minutes, January, 12, 1952, March 8, 1952, November 22, 1952, January 10, 1953, September 8, 1956; Governor Kohler was politically embarrassed by the appearance of approving the purchase through the WUBC and asked if some other means of financing could not be found; the solution was purchase by WARF.