

QUONSET HUTS

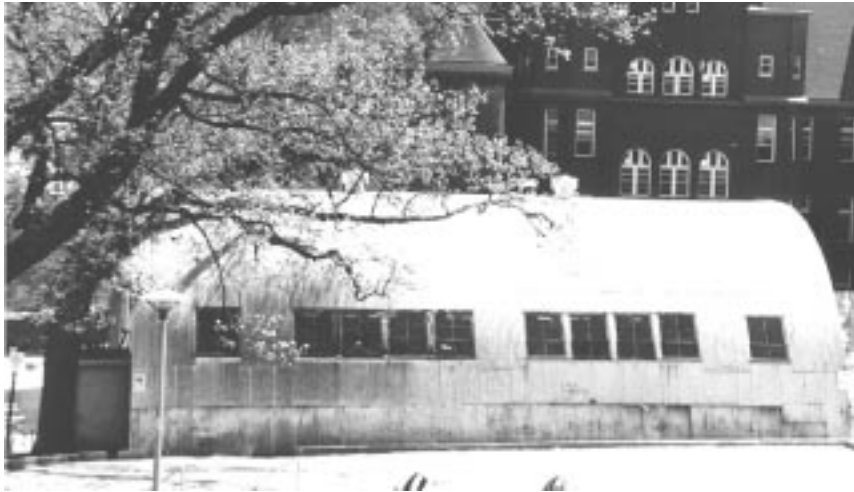


Fig. 1. 1993, Q15, the last Quonset sits behind Education, with Science Hall in the background. Q15 has survived by staying generally out of sight, and supplying useful space for engineering, the art department, and general storage. Since the space on which Q15 stands may never be built on, due to its steep terrain, the last quonset may yet have a long life ahead of it. [Author Photo, AP-24]

In the desperate search for classroom space that accompanied the doubling of student enrollment in 1945-1946, came the quonset huts. On May 24, 1946 the regents officially began to erect quonset huts on campus. They approved the erection of a 40 foot wide by 240 foot long temporary structure, connected by covered passway to the State Historical Library for university library reading room facilities on the lower campus. This was expanded to a total of twelve quonsets on the lower campus in the next six years. Although in photos, there appear to be only six connected to the main quonset each of the six were double. The lower campus quonsets were used as general purpose classrooms as well as library space.¹

All through the summer of 1946 quonsets sprang up around the campus. In July, the regents approved contracts for library, classroom and chemistry labs quonsets. In August came approval for nine units at a total cost of \$189,110 including the buildings, assembly, foundations and utilities. The general contractor was George Nelson and Son of Madison. This money came from state appropriations, and \$60,000 from the fines and unclaimed library fee deposits. There appear to have been about fifteen quonsets built during the late 1940s. Q1-Q13 were temporary library facilities on the library mall. Q14 was an engineering lab near the hydraulics building. Q15 was another engineering lab located behind the old engineering building (now Education) on Bascom Hill.²

Most of the rest of the quonset story involves getting rid of them. They were a great help during the post war crunch, but they were even colder, more poorly lit, and uglier than the much maligned transite temporary buildings scrounged from Camp McCoy. In July 1953, after Memorial Library was under way, the regents approved the removal of Q1-Q13. In the fall of 1953, the library mall quonsets were sold to Dane County and the city of Madison. The foundations were demolished and the area landscaped in 1954. Q14 was removed to build Helen C. White Hall.³

Alone among the quonset huts erected in the immediate post WW II period only Q15 in back of the Education building on Bascom Hill remains (see Fig. 1).

1) *Regent's Minutes*, May 24, 1946, July 25, 1946;

2) *Regent's Minutes*, August 15, 1946;

3) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, March 1947 p. 9, December 1951 p. 12, October 1953, p. 13; *Daily Cardinal*, October 8, 1953, November 12, 1953, November 2, 1954, January 26, 1960.