

# RUSSELL LABS

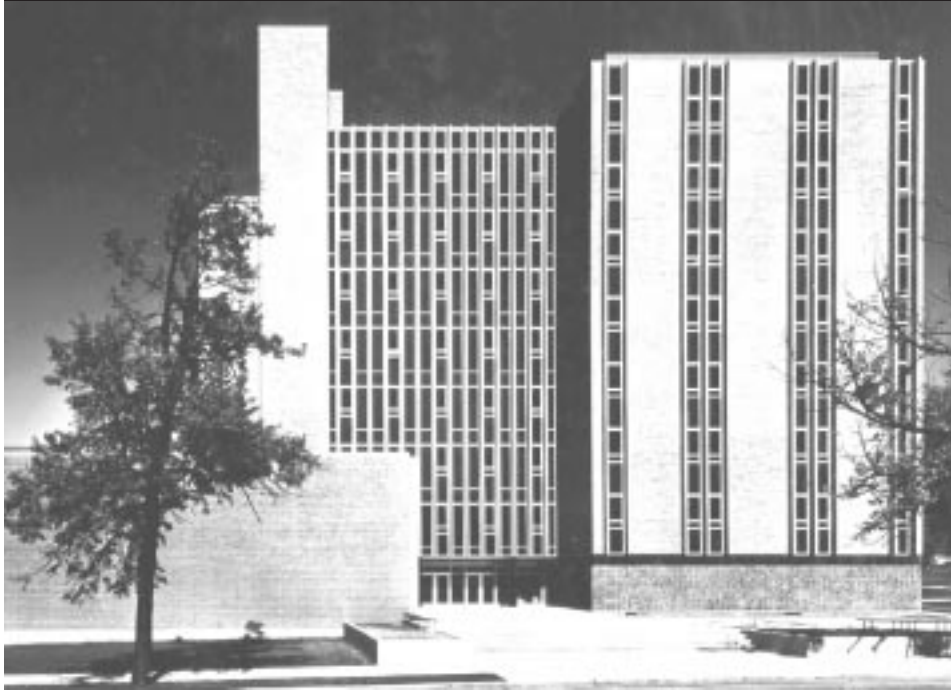


Fig. 1. Russell labs, from the south, c. 1965. [series 9/3, Russell Labs, ns-2833]

Russell Labs was built in 1962 to provide space for Entomology, Plant Pathology, Forestry and Wildlife Ecology. A major addition in 1989 provided space for the rapidly growing Forestry and Wildlife Ecology programs. The building is named for Harry Lumen Russell, long-term dean of the College of Agriculture.

In the 1950s the disciplines involved in studying insect-borne diseases of trees were scattered across the agricultural campus in a variety of facilities, all of them inadequate. The department of Forestry was housed in a few upstairs rooms in the old soils building (King Hall); the department of Wildlife Management was in an old frame house at 424 Farm Place (the former home of Dean H. L. Russell, since demolished); Entomology had parts of five buildings, including two temporaries, the old poultry building on University Avenue, and no greenhouse space at all. Plant Pathology in the Horticulture building was also cramped for space.<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs was exacerbated when the increasingly significant lumber and paper industry began to ask the University to solve some of their problems, which included oak blight, maple dieback, jack pine budworm, and Dutch Elm disease. It was pointed out that the lumber and paper industries were nearly as economically important to the state as agriculture. With gentle direction from president E. B. Fred, and dean of Agriculture R. K. Froker, these captains of industry began to lobby the state for new facilities, both personally and through the Trees for Tomorrow organization. They pointed out that alone among states in the area, Wisconsin had no forestry school.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of these pressures, a building for Entomology, Forestry and Wildlife, was placed on the University building priority list. This good news for the departments involved was modified by the fact that it was placed in 38th position. In tenth place was a plant pathology addition to the horti-

culture building. This placement would typically mean many years before the building was built. Throughout 1959 the departments continued to operate out of their inadequate facilities, and in fact took on even more work as well as an increased student load. Then in the spring of 1960 at the suggestion of the state department of administration, the University decided to combine the needs of Entomology-Forestry-Wildlife Management, with those of plant pathology. This effectively combined the Entomology-Wildlife-Forestry building and the addition to Horticulture into one request. This alteration resulted in a substantially higher priority.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1960 the building committee, appointed in September and chaired by professor R. J. Muckenhirn, had developed a plan acceptable to the school of Agriculture, and to president Elvehjem. The building would be located directly west of bacteriology across Babcock Drive. It was planned so that each of the three departments would retain separate identities. Estimated cost was \$4.3 million. In September the state appointed architects J. J. Flad and Associates to the project. During 1961, the committee had two major tasks. They proceeded with the planning of the building, and uncertain of sufficient state support, tried to raise funds to pay for it. They unsuccessfully asked for funds from the NIH, and the NSF. A tentative schedule was drawn up, which called for completion by August 1, 1964, then revised to February 1965.<sup>4</sup>

On February 9, 1962, the plans were presented to the regents by Dean Wendt and state architect Stanley Nerdum. The regents voted to approve the preliminary plans, at an estimated cost of \$4.6 million. They also named the building the "H. L. Russell Laboratories", after Harry Lumen Russell, dean of the college of Agriculture from 1907 to 1930. A month later the regents changed the name to "Harry L. Russell Laboratories", and shown on the building as "Russell Laboratories."<sup>5</sup>

On August 14, 1962, the regents executive committee voted to approve the final plans for Russell Labs. The building was to be a twin eight story tower, with a two story base section. Construction contracts were let on November 11, 1962. The general contractor was Anthony Grignano of Madison for \$1.4 million. Total cost was \$4.66 million, with \$4.5 million coming from state funds and \$145,000 from a federal grant. Construction began immediately. Official notification of the funding from the state did not arrive until February 1963.<sup>6</sup>

Dedication took place on January 28, 1965. The public was invited to tour the building, and a formal symposium was held in the Memorial Union Theatre. By the time of this dedication, many research projects were already under way, including insecticide research, studies on Dutch Elm disease, and sex attractant pesticides.<sup>7</sup>

The building is of reinforced concrete, sheathed with brick and precast panels. It is composed of a two story base, and two connected eight story towers. The base section's basement and two floors house Forestry, Wildlife Management, lecture halls and classrooms. The northern tower section holds departmental offices, labs and facilities for Entomology. The eastern tower contains the department of plant pathology. The base is 50 by 80 feet, and the towers are roughly 100 feet square. The top of the building is 123 feet high. Russell Labs was the first high rise building on the Agricultural campus. The only significant problems with the building were with the air-conditioning, a perpetual sore spot with modern lab buildings and a tendency for the basement to leak. These complaints were repaired in the mid 1960s. Russell Labs has been full for many years, and some departments had again begun to spread into small temporary quarters around the campus.

By the mid 1980s this piecemeal housing of the departments led to attempts to expand Russell Hall. The particular victims of the space squeeze were Forestry and Wildlife Management. Both had been very small and required little space when Russell Hall was opened. Forestry had taken over space in the Stock Pavilion which was constantly disrupted by large scale events, such as registration and rock concerts, held in that building. Wildlife Ecology had some substandard space in the basement of Steenbock Library. Both were growing quickly and attaining national significance in spite of poor

facilities. The proposed solution to these problems was a two story and basement wing added to the west side of the original west wing. By mid-1984 a plan had been developed. State money for the project was not available until November 1988. The regents approved a budget of 2.4 million in state funding. Construction was begun in October 1989 and completed in July 1990. At the urging of Dean Leo Walsh of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs), the regents named the new addition "the Aldo Leopold Wing". Leopold was a faculty member at the University from 1928 to 1948. He founded the department of Wildlife Management, and was heavily involved in forestry.<sup>8</sup>

- 1) *University directories*; Conference with Administration on need for Entomology-Forestry and Wildlife Management Building, August 25, 1956, Clark to Verhulst, December 22, 1960, series 4/0/3 box 177.
- 2) Minutes of special meeting of Trees for Tomorrow, December 27, 1956, Memorandum of conversation with M. N. Taylor, December 17, 1956, T. C. Allen to E. B. Fred, February 21, 1957, Minutes of meeting, Trees for Tomorrow and E. B. Fred, March 14, 1957, John Beale to Noble Clark, December 9, 1957, Conference related to facilities for forestry research, December 11, 1957, Memorandum re: Facilities for Forestry Research, December 27, 1957, Beale to Froker, March 28, 1958, Schorger to Fred, March 31, 1958, Froker to Elvehjem, July 12, 1958, Elvehjem to Klip, May 19, 1959, series 4/0/3 box 177.
- 3) Elvehjem to Klip, May 19, 1959, series 4/0/3 box 177; Froker to Elvehjem August 5, 1960, series 24/9/2 box 13.
- 4) Froker to Muckenhirn et al, September 13, 1960, Dietrich to Dorman, December 19, 1961, Yasko to Flad, August 31, 1961, Sites to Kozlowski, February 16, 1961, Sites to Froker, June 19, 1961, series 24/9/2 box 13.
- 5) *Regent's Minutes*, February 9, 1962; Wildlife Research Newsletter, June 11, 1962, series 4/0/3 box 177; *Daily Cardinal*, Fall Registration Issue, section II p. 13, 1962.
- 6) *Regent's Minutes*, August 14, 1962, November 9, 1962 exhibit H. *Daily Cardinal*, July 19, 1963.
- 7) *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 24, 1965; Dedication booklet and dedication in Archives Russell Hall subject file.
- 8) Russell Laboratories Addition program statement, July 1984, Giese to Shain, April 8, 1983, Giese relates a story of a professor finding urine running down his walls due to spectators at a "punk rock" concert using the room above his for a toilet, and one of the band members using his phone to call London, Building Commission Requests/Items, November 10, 1988, Ward to Brown, June 18, 1990, series 4/31/9-3 box 7; *Regent's Minutes*, October 7, 1988, September 7, 1990. In an interview with the author October 1994, building manager Chuck Kovall stated that the addition had originally been intended to be a vertical addition to the original west wing of Russell Hall, but the economies of the original construction had made that plan impossible, and the expansion was outward instead of upward.