

STOCK PAVILION



Fig. 1. Stock Pavilion shortly after completion c. 1915. series 9/3 Stock Pavilion, jf-35]

The Stock Pavilion was built in 1909 to provide a home for the University horses, and for state-wide livestock shows. Because it had more seating than any building in Madison until 1930 it was a common host to large public performances. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

In 1905 agriculture in Wisconsin was carried on by horse power. The development of the tractor was a few years in the future and the breeders and sellers of horses were a powerful elite in the state. Among them was Wisconsin's Secretary of State Walter Houser. Beginning in 1903, a horse show and auction was held on the university campus in February for the states farmers. Because of the importance of the horse to the farmers, these shows were heavily attended. Finally in 1905, the show (featuring the famous six horse team of Pabst Percherons), became too large for the existing facilities at the Dairy Barn pavilion, and Agriculture Hall. Dean of agriculture William Henry proposed to president Van Hise (who never saw a building proposal he didn't like) that a committee be appointed to investigate the building of a large pavilion for the campus. This committee included Pabst, and other well known horse breeders. They recommended to the governor in 1906 that the legislature appropriate \$80,000 for such a pavilion. This was accomplished, and in the following year, university supervising architect Arthur Peabody, and animal husbandry professor George Humphrey, toured other facilities around the country for ideas on the new building.¹

In January 1908, Van Hise offered Laird and Cret, the universities architectural planning consultants the job of designing the pavilion. The design was done principally by Laird and Cret with

input from Peabody, Van Hise and the university faculty. The size of the building was unusually large for a stock pavilion and was decided by the university horse foreman, careening around the proposed site in a fast gig, for the architects.² The final plans were approved by the regents on April 29, 1908. The estimated cost was \$83,000 including steam tunnels to the site from the new central heating plant. It was desired that the pavilion be ready for the Farmer's Course in February 1909.³ The building contract was let June 18, 1908 for \$69,464 to local and regular contractor T. C. McCarthy, and the steam tunnel contract to the Mueller Co. of Milwaukee for \$24,472. The contracts specified a completion date for the building of June 15, 1909, a few months later than the regents had hoped.

The monthly reports of supervising architect Peabody show that by January 1909 the shell of the building was almost entirely enclosed, and that by February the agricultural department was using the building and interfering with the work. One dramatic use of the building before its completion was the famous slaughter of the University dairy herd to prove the accuracy of the new bovine tuberculosis test. The keys to the completed building were turned over to the dean of agriculture in July 1909, only a month over schedule. By the time of the completion of the stock pavilion, Dean Henry had retired and his place taken by Dean Russell, who is often given credit for the genesis of the building.

The completed building was 115 X 212 feet, two stories and an attic in height, though the irregular massing of the structure makes it seem much larger. It was mainly occupied by the amphitheater, a two story, sawdust floored, 66 X 164 foot elliptical arena with fixed seating for 2,000 people, expandable with chairs to about 3500. Curtains enabled the space to be partitioned into smaller areas for classes. Under the amphitheater seats were about 40 horse stalls, including veterinary stalls. Offices, tack rooms, and operating rooms filled out the first floor. The second floor plan had more offices and storage space, some of which was intended to become living quarters. The amphitheater was large and convenient enough to be used as indoor recreational space for the agriculture students, and was used for that purpose, including football games, with "shower baths and other conveniences on the upper level."⁴ The building is designed in a United States indigenous style using elements from Medieval English and Tudor Revival styles. The foundation and first floor are red brick with concrete trim. The upper stories are of yellow brick with applied concrete beams for a half-timbered effect. The roof is covered with green tile, unusual on a UW building.

At the time of its completion, the stock pavilion was the largest gathering place in Madison, and remained so until 1930 when the field house was built. The stock pavilion also had unexpectedly fine acoustics. As such it quickly became the site of much more than animal shows and animal husbandry classes. University president Glenn Frank once referred to the building as the "cowlesium". Various sources list performances in the stock pavilion by: The U. S. Navy Band, Paderewski, Galli-Curci, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Marion Anderson, Nelson Eddy, the Chicago and London Symphonies, and speaking appearances by William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and William Howard Taft.⁵

The structure of the stock pavilion is almost completely intact. The only alterations to the building have been minor changes to the interior rooms. The draft horse built the Stock Pavilion and it remains a useful part of the university even now when the words 'draft horse' conjure up a picture of an era long gone.

1) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, February 1954 p. 5, February 1937, p. 8, February 1949, p. 6; Nomination Papers National Register of Historic Places, State Historical Society Historic Preservation Office; Communication from Secretary of State Walter Houser to the Regents, Papers of the Regents, April 17, 1906.

2) *Early History of Animal Husbandry and Related Departments*, Gustav Bohstedt, 1973, p. 35.

3) *Minutes of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin*, February 18, 1908.

4) Report of the Director of the Wisconsin Experimental Station #25-26, p. 3. The showers and lockers were added in 1910.

5) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, February, 1951, p. 8.