

TEMPORARY BUILDINGS



Fig. 1. The temporaries go up, T15 & T16, in 1946. [Series 9/3, Temporary Buildings, jf-62]



Fig. 2. The temporaries come down, T17, in 1962. [Series 9/3 Temporary Buildings, ns-3040]

The temporary buildings were barracks and offices transported from U. S. army bases, principally Camp McCoy to be erected on the University campus in the summer of 1947. Twenty seven temporaries were built in clumps scattered around campus. They were demolished as new permanent buildings took their places. A few "temporaries" still survive, mostly on the engineering campus.

The largest enrollment increase in the history of the University came in 1946, when fueled by the influx of returning WW II veterans, the number of students attending the Madison campus in the spring semester of 1946 was 99 per cent higher than the previous year, and 25 percent higher than the previous record high.¹ This meant that 12,400 students attended the Madison campus that semester. In the face of this enormous rise in attendance, the regents instructed the steering and master plan committee to report the best solution available to the problem of securing emergency and temporary classroom and office space.

In October of 1946 the regents hired architects Weiler and Strang to furnish services needed for the removal of twenty six government buildings from "Camp McCoy and other bases" and their re-erection on the Madison campus. These buildings which had been army barracks and office buildings, were declared government surplus, and offered to other government bodies free of charge. Wisconsin was the first University in the country to file a request with the Federal Works Agency for surplus army buildings.² The principal job of Weiler and Strang was to plan for foundations and the running of utility lines for the temporary buildings. The locations of the buildings were selected by the campus planning committee. This committee in the person of Mr. Leroy Luberg reported the selected locations to the regents in December of 1946.³

The locations are a good indication of the trends in enrollment of the new influx of students. By far the heaviest concentration of temporary buildings were on the west end of campus, in the areas

of the schools of engineering and agriculture. These areas got fourteen of the twenty six total temporary buildings. Other clumps were located more centrally behind Bascom Hall and at the corner of University and Park Streets. It is not surprising then that the first burst of permanent building after WW II consisted mainly of engineering and agricultural facilities.⁴

Foundations and utility construction began in early 1947. The buildings were erected in the summer and fall of 1947. By the beginning of the 1947 school year 120,000 square feet of temporary classrooms, labs and lecture halls were ready. Some of these buildings were very large: 50 by 200 feet. By spring 1948 the buildings were all complete. The total cost had been about \$490,000. Students and staff alike complained that the buildings were drafty and cold, and a visual blot upon the beauty of the campus.

Even with their faults the temporaries were a lifesaver for the overstuffed campus. Particularly Engineering, Commerce and Chemistry could hardly have gone on without them. In addition, three of the temporaries at Breese Terrace and University were made into a student cafeteria to serve the increasing number of students at that end of the campus. The campus had become so large and classes so scattered that the traditional ten minute period between classes was extended to fifteen to allow enough travel time.

Within four years after they were erected, the temporaries began to disappear. As permanent buildings were constructed the temporaries began to be demolished. Among the first were T-20 in the way of the state diagnostic center, and T-8 through T-11 behind Bascom, torn down for the construction of the new Commerce building. In the early 1950s nearly every new building project involved the removal of some temporaries. By 1957 they had dwindled to seven. The Breese Terrace cafeteria burned in 1968. Because Union South was in the planning stage, this loss was not severe. Periodic exposes regarding the increasingly permanent temporaries appeared in the newspapers throughout the 1960s.

Still, a site with sidewalks, roads and utilities installed is not a thing to be lightly discarded, and some of them were not. T-16 in front of bacteriology housed the ROTC departments as late as 1968. A few more remain in use even today. T-21, the remains of the cafeteria damaged by fire, still house engineering student organizations at Breese Terrace and University as does T-23. The union food service uses T-22 as storage at the same site. T-24 just to the west of the mechanical engineering building has been resided, remodelled and connected to the mechanical engineering building; it is now called General Engineering, and is no longer temporary. T-26 has retained its original use as automotive research east of mining and metallurgy.

These buildings cannot, after nearly a half century of use, be regarded as temporary in any sense other than the geologic. There are long range plans for an Engineering Center at the Breese Terrace corner that will remove four of the remaining five temporaries. No one could have foreseen the huge expansion of the campus that caused the old army barracks to be needed by another group as fast as they were emptied. Ugly, cheap, and unloved, they helped the University survive a great crisis. Their ongoing utility has enabled them to survive the century in which they were built.

1) Kenneth Little: Report of the Registrar to the regents, May 4, 1946.

2) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, December 1946 p. 9

3) *Regent's Minutes* December 14, 1946

4) The locations of the 26 buildings were: T1-T3 at NE corner of Park and University, T4-T6 at NW corner of Park and University, T7 behind Art Education, T8-T11 behind Bascom Hall, T12-T13 Charter and Linden, T14 north of Nurses dorm, T15-T16 Babcock and Linden, T20 east of Naval ROTC, T21-T24 Breese Terrace and University, T25 east of Mechanical Engineering, T26 south of Mining and Metallurgy.