

# TRAILER PARKS



Fig. 1. The first 91 trailers of the Randall Trailer Camp, 1945. The Monroe Park would later be out of the picture to the left. Permanent buildings in the picture are the mechanical engineering building, top left, and the state highway laboratory center right. [Series 26/1, Randall Trailer Park, x25-1910]

**U**W Will Admit All Students It Can House". The headline demonstrates the depths of the housing shortage in Madison during the postwar enrollment surge that tripled the enrollment of the University between the spring of 1944 and the fall of 1946. The University's first response to the overload of returning veterans was the Randall Park Trailer Camp. Later responses included trailer parks, overnight cabins, houseboats, and permanent housing. Randall Park was the first "vetsville" on a college campus in the country, and drew national media attention. The State Emergency Board approved \$40,000 to erect the camp on April 11, 1945.

The trailer park was erected in August of 1945, with the installation of 64 standard, 27 "expansive" trailers, four toilet units, and two laundry units. The Randall trailers were leased by the University from the Federal Public Housing Authority for \$1 per month. The University set rates of \$25 and \$32.50 per month for small and larger trailers respectively in the non-profit camp. These rents paid for installation and upkeep only. Each trailer had sleeping for four, and a hot plate for cooking. The trailer camp was restricted to married veterans and their families, 75 per cent of whom had children. The fact that the trailers did not have running water did not detract from their attractiveness as temporary housing and as long as temporary housing existed at the University the Randall Park trailers were the most popular. Randall Park opened full in September 1945. In January and February 1946, an additional 113 trailers were erected to the south of the first camp. This group was called the Monroe Trailer Camp, and used the old women's field house as a community building.<sup>1</sup>

When construction of the east wing of engineering was approved in April 1951, the Randall trailers had to go. Residents were given priority in the Monroe park, which lasted until 1955. The trailers were discarded, having deteriorated under heavy use and a low maintenance budget.<sup>2</sup>

1) *Daily Cardinal*, May 3, 1946, September 25, 1945; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, October 1945, November 1946, December 20, 1945; *A History of Housing at the University of Wisconsin*, Teicher and Jenkins, p. 48-49; *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Winter 1969-1970 p. 83. *Regent's Minutes*, August 15, 1946.

2) *Regent's Minutes*, April 15, 1950, January 10, 1953; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, March 1953, p. 11.