

# UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES



Fig. 1. University Health Services, 1994. The one-story front section could be enlarged to four, and the four story back section to seven if desired. [Author Photo, AP-31]

*Built in 1952 as the home of the state psychiatric hospital, this building became the property of the University in 1970. By that time it was already in informal use as part of the medical school. It now houses the student health center.*

With the rise of the study of psychology after WW II came the desire to delve into the origins of mental disease. The state legislatures of 1945 and 1949 appropriated a total of \$1.2 million for the establishment of a state diagnostic center. This center would provide temporary residence and diagnosis of state persons committed to institutions under the State department of Public Welfare. The center was to be staffed by the faculty of the University medical school, appointed by medical Dean Middleton, and administered by the public welfare department. Principal among the founding of the diagnostic center were Dr. Leslie Osborn (director of the Wisconsin Psychiatric Institute of the UW medical school), governor Kohler, and Mr. John Tramburg (director of the State Department of Public Welfare).

As passed by the legislature, the diagnostic center was to be constructed "near the Wisconsin general hospital". The area set aside by the University for the medical school was nearing saturation, and where the new facility was to be built was not obvious. Beginning in May 1951, Tramburg, President E. B. Fred, and governor Kohler began to work on this problem. The earliest idea, was to locate the center in the general hospital itself by adding two extra floors. This idea was rejected because the available space was less than that desired by the state. The second idea was to build a separate building on land owned by the state on north Orchard Street across from the University heating station, the building to be connected to the hospital by tunnel under University Avenue. The Orchard Street solution was rejected by governor Kohler for unstated reasons. Other suggestions were rejected by both parties. Finally in July of 1951, the regents voted that the state build the diag-

nostic center on the triangle of land bounded by University Avenue (on the south), the railroad tracks (on the north), and the naval ROTC building (on the west). The regents agreed to exchange this piece of property for the state owned one on Orchard Street. To this arrangement the state agreed. The following week the regents exercised an option on a lot in the triangle from John and Francis Meyer for \$15,000, thereby completing the land they had offered the state. Dr. Osborn gave approval, but asked that part of the triangle site be reserved for a Child Center program at a later date.<sup>1</sup>

Once the site was decided, the project moved ahead at a deliberate pace. The architects selected by the state were Eschweiler and Eschweiler of Milwaukee. By December 1951 they had delivered rough drawings. 1952 was taken up with finalizing plans for the building, and resolving disagreements about utility service. The University's heating plant was nearing its capacity, and the enormous new Memorial Library was about to come on line. The University in the person of Albert Gallistel, director of buildings and grounds was loath to add the state building to University steam lines. Likewise governor Kohler would not approve of a separate heating system for the building. To resolve this disagreement, the University hooked up the building by running a new steam line from Babcock Drive, and the state installed a temporary boiler in the Diagnostic Center in case of insufficient heat from the University. Work on the building was begun by general contractor J. P. Cullen in September 1952. Construction took almost two years. The diagnostic center received its first patients on August 9, 1954.<sup>2</sup>

The building was 63 by 178 feet of steel and reinforced concrete, four stories high except for the front (south) half, which was one story. The building was sheathed in brick, the first floor brick being dark like the older buildings on the agricultural campus, and the upper, more visible stories in buff brick to match the nearby Enzyme Institute. The one story front section was designed to be extendable at a later time to four stories, and the four story north section was extendable to seven stories. Neither of these additions have taken place.

There were beds for 76 short term psychiatric patients. The entire second floor was devoted to children. The first floor held professional offices, classrooms, and therapy rooms. The fourth floor was reserved for men. In the basement were laboratories, occupational therapy rooms, and a kitchen.

The number of psychiatric patients in state institutions began to decline shortly after the diagnostic center was opened, and its use as a mental health facility was never heavy. According to the State Blue Book, the maximum number of patients at the center was 37 in 1960 and thereafter was zero. After 1960 the medical faculty increasingly, though informally, began to use the building as part of the medical school. In 1967 they petitioned the state to assign the building to the University Student Health Center, Pediatric outpatient service, and University child health service. These programs had been forced to rent space around the University for several years. These programs were allowed to use the building.<sup>3</sup>

In 1970, the secretary of the regents reported for the record, that the state had discontinued the use of the Diagnostic Center, that the University had been using the facility on an informal basis for several years, and that the state had now quit claimed the property to the University, including land and building. Thus as surely anticipated by both president Fred, and the state, the diagnostic center became a part of the University physical plant.<sup>4</sup>

1) Minutes of the Executive Committee, July 6, 1951; *Laws of Wisconsin* 1955, chapter 244; Clarke to Tramburg, July 9, 1951, series 24/9/2 box 3.

2) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, June 1954, p. 16, October 1951 p. 12.

3) Wisconsin Blue Books, 1970 p. 762, 1954 pp. 388-389, 1956 pp. 450-451; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, June 1954, p. 16; *Regent's Minutes*, January 11, 1952;

4) *Regent's Minutes*, December 18, 1970. A quit claim is a legal document that relinquishes all claims to ownership of property. The state gave the building to the University.