

VAN HISE HALL



Fig. 1. Van Hise Hall from Van Vleck Plaza, c. 1967. Although slightly shorter than the capitol building, Van Hise's site on a hill gives it the distinction of being the highest structure in Madison. [Series 9/1, Van Hise, jf-86]

Van Hise Hall was built in 1965 to house the scattered language departments, and to provide them with classroom and laboratory space. Van Hise also houses the offices and meeting rooms of the regents of the University.

There is no "language department" at the University; each foreign language or group thereof is a separate department. In the early days of the University, these various departments were all housed in Bascom Hall. But the growth of enrollment, the introduction of more and more languages coupled with University-wide language requirements for all students, soon made this centralization impossible.

As early as 1960, some languages began to move to spaces off Bascom Hill; Hebrew and the Slavic languages took up residence in a building on Irving Place Throughout the 1960s this process of diffusion continued, as Chinese and other Asian languages moved to the State Street area. Linguistics was housed in the new psychology building, and Scandinavian in the law building. This scattering was unwieldy because of the need to share resources, including lecture halls and tape recorded learning



Fig. 2. This photo, taken at the beginning of excavation for Van Hise Hall in May 1965, shows the steep and wooded site that was the last large building site available on the central campus. This site between the Home Economics Building and Charter Street was approved as the site of the Classroom #1 Building in May 1963. The first plans for the site were modest, but at the suggestion of the state building Commission, plans for the site were dramatically expanded. This picture was taken from the Van Vleck Plaza, and is almost

the identical position to Fig. 1. [Series 9/1, Van Hise, ns-108]

labs.¹

A language building first appears on the regents building priority list in late 1958 in 58th position at an estimated cost of \$2 million. The earliest plan called for a building of 96,000 square feet to hold only the language departments. Little was done to advance the project until 1963, when the state building commission approved \$164,000 to prepare plans for several buildings, including \$35,000 for "Classroom Building #1". On May 1963, the regents voted to approve the preparation of preliminary plans for "Classroom Building #1".²

In April 1964, at the suggestion of the state building commission, the regents voted to increase the funding for the Classroom Building #1 from \$2.7 million to \$4 million, with the additional money to come from the federal government under a new Educational facilities Act. This version of the plan called for a two story base section and a fourteen story tower. Four months later the regents were informed that the University planning committee, with permission of the state building commission, had decided to enlarge the language building still further, and the estimated cost had grown to \$5.5 million. It was also now believed that federal funds were not going to be available.³

Since the University had to stay within the total amount appropriated by the state for all buildings in that biennium, this meant that some other project on the building list had to be deferred. They decided that the second stage of the gymnasium could be deferred until the next biennium's appropriation. The regents were told that projections for space required for the language departments had been far too low and that classroom space was crucially low. At the end of the discussion the regents approved the "preliminary plans and specification for the Classroom #1 (the Language Building) at Madison at an estimated cost of \$5.5 million." The new plan called for three levels of classrooms in

the base, and 18 stories in the tower. The top four floors were devoted to University administration. It was scheduled to be completed by February 1967.⁴

The plans for this new enlarged version of the building proceeded throughout late 1964, and the architects, Frelich-Angus & Associates of Janesville, came up with another major alteration. At their December 1964 meeting, the regents voted to add underground parking facilities for about 35 cars, under the west classroom wing at a cost of \$100,000. This extra cost to the project would be self-amortizing through University parking fees. Also by this time the tower had been extended to 19 floors, with the nineteenth floor being designed for mechanical systems and a regents meeting room. Except for changes in the parking area, and some fiddling with the uppermost floors, this brought the plan to its final stage of expansion.⁵

In February 1965 the regents approved the final plans for the "Madison Classroom Building #1 (Languages)". The exterior would be faced with tan stone and precast concrete panels. The schedule called for completing the base section containing the classrooms by September 1966, and the office tower by January 1967.⁶

Construction contracts were let by the regents on May 7, 1965, with the general contract going to J. P. Cullen and Son of Janesville for \$3.5 million. Total contracted costs were \$5.65 million. The source of funds was entirely state money. Later that month the University received word that \$1.1 million in federal money might be available after all. At their June 11, 1965 meeting, the regents voted to discontinue the name of Charles R. Van Hise to designate the refectory at the Lakeshore dorms, and that the Madison Classroom Building #1 (Language Building) be named Charles R. Van Hise Hall. In September art professor James Watrous tracked down a bronze bust of Van Hise that had been donated to the University by Thomas Brittingham, but had been on display at the Van Hise school in Madison, and arranged for its return to be placed in the new building. The University department of Civil Engineering sought and obtained permission to attach strain measurement gauges to the structure of Van Hise. A December meeting between the University and the contractor determined exactly which parts of the building were supposed to be finished by September 1966.⁷

In February 1966 the University received notification that 1.4 million in federal money had been approved. On February 15, 1966 the contractor stated that "barring strikes or acts of God", the west classroom wing would open in September 1966. Some minor strikes in the summer did not seriously affect the project. In June the University showed a financing summary included \$4.27 million in state funds, and \$1.47 million in Title I and Title II federal funds.⁸

On September 8, 1966 the University and the State inspected Van Hise Hall and accepted for occupancy 50 classrooms, the lobbies, and facilities on floors 1 through five. The most critically needed part of the building was completed, except for certain mechanical systems that were not accepted. Construction continued on the tower section, with great care and trepidation on all sides, regarding safety and security. Landscaping estimates were higher than expected and all bids were rejected.⁹

In October 1967 the regents (still housed in Bascom Hall) began to discuss the plans of the regents section (floors 18 and 19) of Van Hise. In November they appointed a small committee to investigate obtaining furnishings through gifts instead of spending state funds. This in part reflected the growing realization that the size of the building had grown so large that the original budget for furnishing the building had been spent on construction costs and that the project was now almost \$500,000 short of money needed for furnishing the tower section. The regents appealed to the state for the additional \$490,000 for furnishings, and the state granted this request in March 1967.¹⁰

Fifteen more classrooms were accepted by the University on January 26, 1967. Contracts for the revised landscaping plans were let to L. H. Bruce and Son of Middleton for \$24,000 in May 1967. A steam fitters strike in April 1967 made it impossible to install the air-conditioning system, making

the use of the building "unbearable" during the summer months. During August disagreement arose over the use of the parking facility in Van Hise. The \$120 per space cost led professor William Cleland to charge that the central administration had feathered their own nest with the parking garage, by pricing out faculty members in the new building. The main result of this controversy was that the regents voted in October to raise the fee to \$140. On October 4, 1967, the University space management department issued a schedule to the University administrators for the move to floors 15-19 of Van Hise. The move was completed by October 14, 1967. By the 1967-68 school year all the scattered language departments had moved into Van Hise. An additional \$75,000 air-conditioning project in 1969 corrected deficiencies in the tower section. By 1972 in spite of reduced language requirements by most degree programs, so many students were enrolling in foreign language classes that the classroom and lab facilities were overtaxed.¹¹

Van Hise is a 160 by 205 foot, classroom base, the west wing of five stories with a 45 stall garage underneath. The east classroom wing is only three floors with a plaza on the roof. There are fifty classrooms in these sections. To the north of the east wing is the nineteen story 40 by 140 foot tower section with the language department offices on floors one through fourteen. University Administration occupies floors 15-19. The structure is of steel and reinforced concrete, sheathed with stone and precast concrete panels. The steeply sloping site means that the several entrances to the building are on different levels; the Linden Street main entrance is at the first floor, while other entrances are at levels four and five. This layout is responsible for one of the oddest elevator services ever seen. The elevators at floors 2, 3, 4 and 5 require a key. A casual visitor who enters on levels four or five must either hook a ride with a key holder or walk those levels down to level one. This arrangement provides some minimal security to the administrative offices on the highest tower levels. Van Hise is the tallest structure in Madison with a height above sea level of 260 feet.¹¹

1) University directories.

2) *Regent's Minutes*, November 8, 1958 exhibit C, October 24, 1959 exhibit E.

3) *Regent's Minutes*, May 10, 1963, April 10, 1964, August 14, 1964.

4) *Regent's Minutes*, September 25, 1964, October 16, 1964.

5) *Regent's Minutes*, December 11, 1964; *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 18, 1964; *Capital Times*, August 14, 1964; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, October 1964; Harrington to Rothwell, September 9, 1964, Harrington to Coordinating Committee, August 19, 1964, series 4/0/3 box 192.

6) *Regent's Minutes*, February 5, 1965.

7) *Regent's Minutes*, April 9, 1965, May 7, 1965, June 11, 1965; du Von to Harrington, May 28, 1965, series 40/1/2-1 box 131; Watrous to Chaffee, September 28, 1965, series 40/1/4/1-3 box 78; Brittingham to Watrous, June 1, 1962, series 40/1/4/1-3 box 78; Orr to Culbertson, September 23, 1965, series 24/9/3 box 7; Meeting Held on Classroom Areas..., December 1965, series 24/9/3 box 7; *Daily Cardinal*, March 3, 1966.

8) Bruder to Doremus, January 26, 1966, Buelow to Edsall, undated, Orr to Bruder, June 29, 1966, Edsall to Fleming, June 6, 1966, series 24/9/3 box 7.

9) Buelow to Cafferty, September 9, 1966, series 24/9/3 box 10; *Regent's Minutes*, September 9, 1966.

10) *Regent's Minutes*, October 20, 1967, Memo re: move to Van Hise, October 4, 1967, series 40/1/2-1 box 131; *Regent's Minutes*, November 4, 1966, December 9, 1966; Lorenz to State Building Commission, December 1966, Report of Meeting of Special Regent Committee, January 13, 1967, series 24/9/3 box 10.

11) Buelow to Cafferty, January 30, 1967, Landscape work - Classroom building #1, May 19, 1967, series 24/9/3 box 10; *Regent's Minutes*, June 9, 1967; Cleland to Clodius, August 9, 1967, series 40/1/3/2 box 32; *Capital Times*, August 8, 1967; *Janesville Gazette*, August 12, 1966; Memo for presentation at December Meeting, State Building Commission, November 20, 1969, series 40/1/7-1 box 126, *Daily Cardinal*, October 24, 1972.