

VETERINARY MEDICINE



Fig. 1. The veterinary school building, designed by Flad and Associates of Madison, is a four story and partial basement 375 by 225 foot structure of steel and concrete sheathed with face brick and aluminum. The first floor contains the entire teaching hospital and associated services. On the second and third floors are offices, laboratories, classrooms and lecture halls. [photo courtesy of Bernard Easterday]

Built with state funds in 1981, the veterinary school was first proposed by the regents in 1947. Because of the financial difficulties of the times, there was much acrimonious debate over the construction of the school.

The creation of the School of Veterinary Medicine had strong parallels to the founding of the University's medical college a half century before. The founding of both colleges was used as political fodder by both backers and opponents. In both cases legislatures believed the costs to be too high, finally relented and appropriated funds, only to be vetoed by cost-conscious governors. In both cases the resistance of the governor was removed by the appearance of new governors.

The first clear call for a school of veterinary medicine came from the regents when in 1947,

they called for the "establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine when the necessary funds are available for that purpose." It would be decades before this resolution bore fruit.¹

In the mid 1960s the new dean of the college of Agriculture Dean Glenn Pound presented the regents with a report that pointed out the great need for a school of veterinary medicine in the state of Wisconsin. There was no action on the recommendation because of a lack of funding. A year later in May 1969 the regents took up the matter again. Dean Pound's report was re-discussed and a resolution passed resolving that the regents "reaffirms its desire to establish a school of veterinary medicine as of veterinary medicine and that the preferred site was at Madison. The estimated cost of the new School was about \$20 million. The rest of 1974 was occupied with interpretations of the report, discussions among the regents, and meetings with the University and legislature of Minnesota about a regional school; no definite decision was made regarding the establishment of a new School of veterinary medicine at Madison.³

In January 1975, University officials recommended to the regents that a new veterinary medical School be built at Madison, but only on the condition that money for the project come from outside the University budget. It was part of the recommendation that a clinical facility be built at U.W.-River Falls. At their January 1975 meeting the regents adopted a resolution supporting the building of a veterinary medical School at Madison if the state provided enough money to build it without ignoring any of the University's existing programs. This resolution was so ambiguous that regent Fish asked "if this resolution is passed will it be interpreted as having approved or defeated the Veterinary School?"⁴

The state passed legislation in early 1976 to approve the founding and financing of the veterinary School, but this action was vetoed by governor Patrick Lucey. In a close fight, the Assembly overrode the veto, but the Senate only overrode the part of the bill establishing the School. This odd turnabout meant that the University could establish the veterinary school, but that it would not be funded, since the line-item veto had killed the funding part of the bill. Lucey asked the University to investigate other funding sources for the School. During 1977 the state asked the University if additions to the veterinary research programs would satisfy them, the regents declined, since it would not provide education leading to the degree of DVM. The legislature then voted to provide funding for the School and was again vetoed by Lucey, whose veto was again upheld by a very narrow vote.⁵

In March 1978 the state appropriated \$250,000 in planning money for the new program and facility with the explicit approval of the new governor Martin Schreiber. The rough estimate of cost was about \$16 to 28 million for the Madison facility and the satellite campus at River Falls. By May 1978 Chancellor Shain had appointed an acting dean for the new School, Bernard C. Easterday, previously chairman of the department of veterinary science. The regents closely questioned dean Easterday about the need for a veterinary School. They discussed the "Arthur Little Report" which stated that 70 per cent of veterinarians were employed in the dog and cat field, the so-called "Fifi and Mimi trade" that governor Lucey had argued (calling it "vets for pets") would be the main beneficiary of the school. The regents decided to proceed with the planning of the School. In March 1979 the regents asked the state for \$30 million for the veterinary School in the 1979-81 biennium, to be built at Madison with a clinical facility at UW- River Falls. The state approved \$28 million for the project, stipulating that the school be ready for students by September 1983, and be sized to graduate 80 veterinarians per year.⁶

A site was selected in February 1980, on Linden Drive, south of the Natatorium. Regent Erdman had not abandoned her resistance to the building of the veterinary medical school, and voted against the site. Then in September 1980, just before the legal deadline for letting construction contracts, the regents asked the state to delay the construction. They argued that the project was causing existing programs to lose funding, and that the funds for veterinary medicine should be reallocated to sustain existing programs. In November, 1980 the regents heard arguments that there was no longer a

shortage of veterinarians. The regents discussed for hours the issues surrounding the building of the Veterinary school in a time of financial cutbacks. In December 1980 the regents voted on a measure that asked the state to reconsider the construction of the Veterinary School. After long discussion, the motion was put to the vote and adopted on a 9-6 vote. The regents were deeply divided on the issue, mainly whether the state could afford to fund the program at a time of severe budgetary shortfalls, and to some degree on whether or not the state needed a veterinary school. To some it did not appear that the regents insistence on the preservation of existing programs in the face of the new one was being respected.⁷

Then suddenly, after strong pleas from president O'Neil and a reiteration of purpose from the regents in February 1981 that stated unambiguously the need and desire of the University for a School of Veterinary Medicine the politicking came to an end and the state building commission let building contracts on February 19, 1981. The general contractor was Anthony Grignano of Madison for \$ 7.46 million. The total contract amount for the Madison facility was \$15 million. The total for all three facilities, Madison, River Falls, and Charmany farms was well under the \$28 million limit. As a result of these favorable bids, a number of features that had been deleted were put back in the plan. Among these features was an solar panel wall on the south side of the building that is a principal visual feature of the building.⁸

Construction of the Madison building went smoothly and quickly. Ground-breaking took place in March 1981, and the shell was closed in by Thanksgiving 1981. The regents toured the partly completed facility in October 1982; faculty and staff began the move into the new building in March 1983, about five months ahead of schedule. The first class was admitted in November 1983.⁹

On the fourth floor are classrooms and research labs. The River Falls facility, consisting of one building, was intended for use as a food animal clinic. It was however used only as a field consultation facility, with two faculty members to consult with local veterinarians. Later the state veterinary lab at Barron, Wisconsin was moved to the River Falls site, and later still the facility was transferred to the possession of the River Falls campus for use as an agriculture center.¹⁰ At the June 10, 1983 dedication dean Easterday (who retired in 1994) pointed out that the first class of veterinarians would graduate in the spring of 1987, just forty years after the regents first called for a Veterinary School at Madison.¹¹

1) *Regent's Minutes*, April 12, 1947.

2) *Regent's Minutes*, May 9, 1969.

3) Consultant's Report to the University of Wisconsin System, February 8, 1974, series 1/1/3 box 176; *Capital Times*, March 9, 1974 ; *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 9, 1974, March 11, 1974, April 9, 1974, April 14, 1974, November 24, 1974, January 11, 1975 ; New Academic Program Request, July 15, 1974, series 4/31/9-2 box 22.

4) *Capital Times*, January 11, 1975; *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 6, 1975, March 13, 1975, September 25, 1975;

5) *Capital Times*, June 1, 1976, October 15, 1976; *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 15, 1976, June 17, 1976, June 19, 1976, December 18, 1976, February 26, 1977, March 12, 1977, June 8, 1977.

6) *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 26, 1978, February 16, 1978, March 9, 1978, June 21, 1978; *Madison Press Connection*, March 8, 1978; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, May 1978, p. 18; *Regent's Minutes*, September 7, 1979, March 9, 1979, October 6, 1978; Steering Committee Minutes, October 22, 1979, Agency Requests for State Building Commission Action, March 1979, October 1979, series 4/31/9-2 box 22; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, September/October 1979 p. 18, January 1979, p. 18.

7) *Regent's Minutes*, February 8, 1980, September 5, 1980, November 7, 1980, December 5, 1980.

8) *Regent's Minutes*, February 6, 1981, March 6, 1981 exhibit A V-7 and V-8, April 10, 1981 exhibit A; *Milwaukee Journal*, December 3, 1981.

9) *Regent's Minutes*, October 8, 1982; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, March/April 1983 p. 4.

10) Plans in the plans room of the Physical Plant; interview with Bernard Easterday, February 1995.

11) *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, September/October 1983 p. 5, March/ April 1986 p. 4, May/June 1987 p. 13;