

WARF BUILDING



Fig. 1. The WARF building from the north c. 1975. Fourteen stories of concrete and granite, with two triangular floors for WARF at the top. Note how triangular the whole building looks, although only the top two floors are actually triangular in plan. The building will be presented to the University when rents have amortized the costs of erecting the building. [Series 9/3, WARF, jf-91]

Constructed in 1969 by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the WARF building houses WARF's offices on the top two floors, and University surge space on the lower 12 floors. The building will be donated to the University by WARF in 2002.

In 1967 the University was renting a million dollars worth of Madison real estate space and needed more. In a letter to Ward Ross, the Managing Director of Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), Vice President Robert Clodius asked if the Trustees could provide appropriate space "so that our grant and contract programs will not suffer." The necessary space was offices, conference rooms and dry labs, and Clodius estimated the ongoing space need as about 60,000 square feet.¹

The trustees of WARF were already thinking about erecting a new building to house their own offices. Serious negotiations between WARF and the University went on in late 1967 and 1968 to determine the size, cost, location and financing of a "surge space" office building, for use by WARF and the University. In April of 1968, WARF engaged architects J. J. Flad and Associates, to produce a preliminary plan for a fourteen story rectangular building surrounded by a plaza, and a parking ramp for 264 cars. In May 1969 they hired J. H. Findorff as general contractor.²

An agreement was presented for approval to the state in May 1968. It outlines the University's rental problem, pointing out that the problem is growing and will be much worse by the time any building can be erected. The agreement proposes that WARF will erect a building (with its own or borrowed funds) of about 140,000 square feet on a three acre plot north of and across from the existing WARF offices (on Walnut Street). WARF will then lease to the University 89 per cent of the building,

part of the parking, and reserve two floors for its own use. Both the University and WARF would pay rent on the property in an amount that would reimburse WARF for maintenance, and amortize the cost of land and building at a rate of 6 per cent for thirty years. At the end of the thirty year amortization period, WARF will present the building as a gift to the University. Legal opinions were sought from the state and city regarding the tax status of the project.³ The three acre parcel referred to for the site of the building did not actually yet belong to WARF, and the negotiations for the exchange of the property (owned by the University) for other land went on through the summer of 1968. In December 1968 the University regents authorized negotiation to trade the three acre building site for the land and building owned by WARF west of Walnut Street.⁴

A press release on April 1, 1969, announces the plans for the building. The site was the southwest corner of the intersection of Walnut Street and the proposed westward extension of Observatory Drive. The building was to be fourteen stories of triangular shape and 125,000 square feet. It is to have underground parking for 225 cars, with a landscaped plaza above the parking. The schedule now called for construction to start in May 1969 and be finished by fall 1970. The University, accustomed to a burden of state, regent and financial restraints, had reservations about the speed of this schedule, and the wisdom of the \$5-\$6 million cost (the cost would be reflected directly in the University's rental expense which had to amortize the buildings cost). In May 1969 the Wisconsin State Journal reported that construction had begun on the WARF building. A formal ceremony was held a few days later. In October WARF informed the University that because of excessive costs, the two level underground parking structure was being deleted from the plans.⁶

Building proceeded without serious delay, and a "topping out" party was held August 5, 1970. In that same month the University was notified that the building would be ready for occupancy by December 1, 1970. The University began planning which programs would move into the new space. In December the University decided that the first occupants would be the Mathematics Research Center, Educational Administration, Planning and Construction, Rural Sociology, Space Management, and medical research and administrative programs. These tenants moved in during January 1971.⁷

The building is 'L' shaped, 126 feet on a side and 181 feet high. The triangular appearance of the building is caused mainly by the top two floors, which bridge across the opening of the 'L' to form a triangle, with the hypotenuse facing the view of Lake Mendota to the north. The basement and floors 1-12 are essentially identical spaces, partition for offices and dry labs. The top two floor are occupied by WARF's offices and a large conference room on floor 14, mechanical systems are also housed on the 14th floor. The exterior of the building is sheathed in granite panels and porcelain spandrel panels. In March 1971 WARF made a gift to the regents of the 2 acres surrounding the building so that the University could operate and maintain the parking facilities and grounds at the building site. The building is scheduled to be presented to the University in the year 2001.⁸

1) Edsall to Lemon, August 25, 1967, Clodius to Ward, August 17, 1967, series 40/1/7/1 box 126; Engman to Atwell, January 30, 1967, series 40/1/4/3-1 box 95.

2) Todd to Atwell, February 24, 1967, series 40/1/4/1-3 box 95; Lemon to Clodius, February 1, 1968, New WARF Office Building, September 10, 1968, Memorandum, Lemon to Exo, September 23, 1968, Agreement for Construction, May 14, 1969, series 40/1/7/1 box 126.

3) Proposed New Office Building ... undated, Conrad to Ross, June 20, 1968, series 40/1/15-1 box 12.

4) Sites to Atwell and Lemon, November 18, 1968, series 24/9/2-1 box 11; Lemon to Kellett, July 25, 1968, Kellett to Lemon, July 17, 1968, series 40/1/7/1 box 126; *Regent's Minutes*, December 6, 1968.

6) Draft of New Release, April 1, 1969, Exo to Lemon, April 10, 1969, Ross to Lemon, October 31, 1969, series 40/1/7/1 box 126; *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 28, 1969; Harrington to Frautschi, June 3, 1969, series 40/1/4/1-3 box 96.

7) Hastings to Harrington, July 29, 1970, series 24/9/2-1 box 24; Rosten to Sites, August 3, 1970, series 40/1/7/1 box 126; *Capital Times*, December 29, 1970.

8) Certification, June 16, 1971, series 40/1/13/1 box 30; plans in the plans room of the University physical plant.