

WEST DAY CARE



Fig. 1. Day care buildings, 1994. The 1935 flat-roofed building is at left, with the 1965 gabled-roofed one at the right. [Author Photo, AP-22]

The U. S. Forest Products Laboratory occasionally erects a building to test the practicality of a building material or technique. These experimental buildings were usually erected near the main building at the west end of campus. In 1962 the FPL bought several acres of land near parking lot #60. They intended to use this land to relocate their experimental buildings to provide space to extend their main building. When in the mid 1970s the University needed to reclaim this land to facilitate the construction of the new medical complex, the FPL's experimental buildings were already on the land. The land became the property of the University, but the FPL maintained ownership of the buildings. In 1979 the University negotiated an agreement with the FPL to use the two buildings as a day care center and pay rent to the FPL in the amount of \$330 per month. The agreement would expire September 1983. The University also contracted with Child Development Incorporated to establish a day care center in the buildings.¹

The buildings were altered to provide offices, and play areas for the day care center. The plans for the alterations are dated a few months before the lease was made. The plans insulated parts of the buildings, replaced windows, and returned experimental panels to the engineers at the FPL.

The smaller flat-roofed building was constructed in 1936 as a test bed for "stressed-skin" prefabrication techniques, and according to the FPL is the first of its kind in the world. The flat building is 25 by 38 feet, built from stressed skin panels, and a flat wood-framed roof. It houses offices and day care space.²

The larger building to the east was probably built about 1965 to test some other prefabricating techniques. This building is 28 by 40 feet, with a gable roof, and a basement. It houses the day care offices, and play space for the children.

Plans are occasionally broached to replace these shabby, cold and draft buildings with a modern day care facility. The Forest Lab retained the right to reclaim the buildings if the University decides to raze them.

1) Bruce and Sandbank, *A History of Prefabrication*, January 1944, NA 8480 B75 1972, library of the Forest Products Laboratory; Draft of a request to negotiate a use permit with the Forest Products Laboratory, Papers of the Regent's Meetings, July 1978; Regent's Minutes, November 1979, exhibit III, October 10, 1980.

2) *Automated Builder*, October 1994, p. 22.