CHAMBERLIN HALL

Fig. 1. The chemistry building in 1908 taken from the chimney of the heating plant; visible in the background are Bascom Hall, North Hall, the red gym, mining and metallurgy (with smokestacks), taken before construction of Sterling, Lathrop, Barnard Halls, any of the later additions to chemistry, or the construction of Charter Street. [series 9/1 Chamberlin Hall, x25-299]

Built in 1905 as a home for chemistry, this building was added to in 1912, 1939, 1956 and 1973. Chemistry was renamed Chamberlin Hall in 1975. It now houses Pharmacy and some physics.

When the first chemistry building was built in 1885, following the fire at the original science hall, there were complaints that the building would be so large (designed for about 150 students) it could not be filled in a hundred years. It was bulging within twenty.

As the plans for a new chemistry building began to take shape in 1902-03, the lessons learned by the regents were applied. They knew that good facilities attracted more students, and that chemistry was increasing in importance as a general science requirement. The older parts of the campus were crowded by the lake shore and city development. These considerations led the regents, after

considering a Bascom Hill site, to select a location on the south western edge of Bascom Hill, and to plan a building that could take advantage of that sprawling site. The regents directed university architect J. T. W. Jennings consult with noted architect Warren Laird to prepare plans for presentation to the board by September 1, 1903. The planning was assisted by the new president of the university, Charles Van Hise.[1]

The legislature of 1903 had been asked for $150,000 but appropriated only $100,000,[2] which was insufficient for the envisioned building. The architects therefore decided to erect a fairly small building, but one which was capable of very great expansion. The form of the finished building (after all considered additions) would be a large square with the center divided in four by a cross. The first building erected would be this cross, and additions would connect the points of the cross until the square was completed. Since the $100,000 would barely finish the structure, an additional appropriation was passed by the legislature of 1905 to equip the new building.

The plans were approved by the regents in January 1904.[3] They called for a building in the shape of a three story cross with attic over a full basement, the north south arm 80 X 184 feet, and the two cross arms 50 x 60 feet. It would contain a two story auditorium seating 500 in the center, labs, offices, and classrooms capable of providing instructions for about 600 students.

On April 19, 1904 the regents opened bids for construction, and selected as the lowest the bid of T. C. McCarthy, a Madison contractor who had done many previous university buildings. The contract (signed May 15, 1904) was for $99,965 and stipulated that the construction was to be finished by May 1, 1905. To get the bids under the appropriation Jennings had removed certain items (iron stairs, toilets, washbowls etc.) from the specifications, but the contract specified that those items could be required of the contractor at a fixed price for one year after completion. McCarthy ran into unspecified problems; in October 1905 the regents began to discuss withholding payment to McCarthy for failure to meet the time clause.[4] But in November 1905 the regents accepted the chemistry building as completed and classes were first held in the building on November 9, 1905.[5]

The building contained lecture halls, laboratories, and offices to provide for about six hundred students. It also contained the pharmacy department and the state dairy and food commission chemist. It was first occupied in January of 1906. Within two years it was being asked to provide space for 1200 chemistry students, it had desks and equipment in the halls and students without lockers. The regents pleaded with the legislature for an expansion, which could not be ready before the 1912-13 school year. They estimated the cost at $90,000-$150,000.[6]

In November of 1911, the governor approved a $69,000 contract with C. B. and A. K. Fritz for the construction of the west wing of the chemistry building to be finished by August 1912. It consisted of a 110 X 51 foot four story extension along University Avenue, and a single story wing with basement north 92 feet along Charter Street. The brick exterior and limited limestone facing used made clear what the finished building would look like. The interior was of concrete and tile to make the new part of the building fireproof, a feature that the 1905 section did not have. This wing was entirely occupied by laboratories.[7]

This (1912) 30,000 square foot expansion proved generally adequate for the chemistry department for about fifteen years. The east wing, another fireproof L-shaped addition was begun in July 1927 and was occupied by January 1929. It extended 110 to the east along University Avenue and then back to the north for 192 feet. This addition added 60,000 square feet to the building. It contained more large laboratories, classrooms, departmental offices, and in the basement, new equipment for ventilation, glassblowing rooms and darkrooms.

In 1939 the single story Charter Street wing was raised to the full four stories of the rest of the building. This construction obliterated from view (except from the main entrance and the back)

Fig. 2. Chamberlin Hall, February 1997. Eighty nine years later, all additions are complete. The intersection in the picture is University Avenue and Charter Street. The link to Sterling Hall at the back of the building is visible in this picture. [Del Brown Photo, AP-63]

the original 1905 structure.

The pharmacy department, perpetually out of space, built the north wing in 1956 at a cost of $390,000. This was a six story addition on the north end of the west wing. The Pharmacy wing, with its separate entrance on Charter Street was opened October 22, 1955, although construction continued for most of the following year.[8]

In November of 1951 four graduate students were doing a routine experiment in the east wing when the lab exploded. None were seriously hurt by the accident but the damage amounted to several thousand dollars.[9] This was not the last time the chemistry building would hear an explosion. In August of 1970 a huge bomb was detonated in the alley between Sterling Hall and the chemistry building's west wing. Although the blast was aimed for the Army Math Research Center in Sterling Hall next door, nearly a quarter million dollars in damage was done to the chemistry building.

Plans to rebuild and remodel the building after the Sterling Hall bombing were approved by the regents in January 1970 at a cost of $330,000. The architect was Fitzhugh Scott, and the contractor was Vogel Brothers. It was three years before these plans were finished. In 1973 after seventy years, the last steps of the structure were taken. The original cross-shaped structure was removed from inside the now enclosing brick additions; only the classical revival entrance facade on the Uni-

versity Avenue side remains. By 1980 real estate on campus was too valuable to leave an empty court in the center of the building, and the old space had been developed as a two story entrance hall, a large physics library and computer rooms; added to the back were a large auditorium and offices. A 1989 phase added the connecting link to Sterling Hall on the north. In December 1975 the regents voted to name the building "Thomas C. Chamberlin Hall".

By the time of this last construction phase, not even the enormous expansion envisioned by Jennings, Cret, and Van Hise could accommodate the chemistry department. That department was long gone (c. 1965) into new high-rise buildings occupying a whole block on the south side of University Avenue. Most of the old chemistry building is now occupied by pharmacy, except for the newly rebuilt center section which is mostly physics. There are currently plans in the works to build a new building for Pharmacy near the clinical sciences complex. The future use of Chamberlin Hall is not decided.

1) *Regent's Minutes*, January 19th, 1904, the regents approved the payment of $524 to "Professor Warren Laird for consultation and expenses respecting the location and design of the new Chemical Building." Also on the new site a very old brick tenement house obtained in the 1850s when the land was purchased known as the Hobbie house after the original owner (it appears on an 1878 map as a "student club house". *Minutes of the Board of Regents* of the University of Wisconsin June 16, 1903.
2) *Laws of Wisconsin,* 1903 Chapter 344 section 3.
3) *Regent's Minutes*, January 19, 1904.
4) *Regent's Minutes*, October 10, 1905.
5) *Regent's Minutes*, November 27, 1905; *Daily Cardinal*, November 9, 1905 p. 1.
6) *Regent's Report*, 1909 p. 37.
7) *Regent's Report*, 1913-14 p. 340.
8) *Daily Cardinal,* September 22, 1955, p. 4. The contracts were awarded by the regents at their March 6, 1954 meeting; series 24/9/2 boxes 5, 6, 7, and 8, Pharmacy folders.
9) *The Daily Cardinal*, November 16, 1951 p. 1.