



The  
Memorial Union  
Terrace:  
A LANDSCAPE HISTORY

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# The Memorial Union Terrace:

## A Landscape History

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The Terrace history evolved from the Cultural Landscape Report for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a project funded by the Getty Foundation's Campus Heritage Initiative in 2003. The Terrace was one of eight historic campus landscapes identified in the report. After the Getty grant was exhausted, Ted Crabb applied for funds from both the Brittingham Foundation and the Trustees of the Memorial Union Building Association to expand a brief technical report on the Terrace in the Landscape Report into a comprehensive study written for a general audience. The result is in your hands.

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Location of the Memorial Union Terrace.

Source: UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning and Management; Quinn Evans|Architects, Madison.

As the Wisconsin Union strives “to be the heart and soul of a great university,” many would identify the Memorial Union Terrace as the embodiment of that credo. At groundbreaking ceremonies in 1925, University of Wisconsin President Glenn Frank declared that the new Memorial Union building would “give us a ‘living room’ that will convert the university from a ‘house’ of learning into a ‘home’ of learning.”<sup>1</sup> For generations of students, alumni, and faculty members, the Memorial Union Terrace has been the heart of that home. “What made the Union such a success?” wondered a *Badger* yearbook writer in 1960. “A multitude of memories,” he concluded. “The Rat...Tripp...the terrace...indoors and outdoors, the Union was ours.”<sup>2</sup>

But before the Terrace was “ours,” whose was it? What stood on this plot of land before it became the Terrace, and to whose stewardship and foresight do we owe its existence?

## The terrace before The Terrace

The land on which the Terrace stands—like the rest of the state of Wisconsin—fell under the jurisdiction of the United States government after the close of the Revolutionary War. In 1785, government surveyors began laying the groundwork for alienation of the vast expanse of land west of the Allegheny Mountains. Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, which set down the guidelines for governing the area north and west of the Ohio River, on July 13, 1787. As the westward tide of settlement progressed, the Northwest Territory was subdivided into smaller jurisdictions: Indiana Territory (1800); Michigan Territory (1805); Illinois Territory (1809); followed by a reconfiguration of Michigan’s territorial boundaries in 1818.<sup>3</sup>

Two years before the creation of Wisconsin Territory in 1836, government surveyors finally arrived in the area that later became Dane County. They began to lay out the boundaries of rectangular townships, each subdivided into 36 sections. Each section measured one square mile. In their field notes, they described the landscape through which they passed: vegetation, soils, creeks, rivers, marshes, springs, and Indian trails. After the survey was complete, a U. S. General Land Office mapmaker used the surveyors’ field notes to draw plats of each section.

In December 1834, government surveyor Orson Lyon and his crew laid out the section lines in Township 7 North, Range 9 East (now Madison township). Unfortunately, none of the section lines crossed directly over the future site of the Memorial Union Terrace, so Lyon’s field notes give us only general information about the appearance of the landscape before permanent American settlement. A short distance south of the Terrace site, along the line between sections 14 and 23 (now State Street), Lyon described the land as “rolling & 2nd rate,” supporting a forest of bur and black oak. Only a few decades later, the University of Wisconsin’s Main Hall (now Bascom Hall) would stand near the western end of this section line, with the state capitol at its eastern end. Lyon’s notes don’t describe the land stretching north from the section line to the lake shore—the tract in section 14 that eventually would become the site of the university’s Armory and Gymnasium, Science Hall, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the Memorial Union and Terrace.<sup>4</sup> The plat map created from Lyon’s field notes is similarly uninformative.

A more recent source reveals that a pond once existed not far from the future site of the Terrace. In 1854, Madison citizens presented a petition to the village trustees, complaining that a “deposit of water” in Block 8 of the University Addition was posing a threat to public health. Today, Block 8 is bounded by Lake Street, State Street, Frances Street and University Avenue; thus, the

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<sup>1</sup> Masthead, *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 27 (December 1925): 39.

<sup>2</sup> “Our Wisconsin Union,” *The Badger* 75 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Class of 1960, 1960), 93.

<sup>3</sup> Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin*, Vol. I: *From Exploration to Statehood* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 200–202.

<sup>4</sup> Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, Wisconsin Public Land Survey Records, surveyor’s field notes for Town 7 North, Range 9 East. University of Wisconsin Digital Collections: The State of Wisconsin Collection. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/SurveyNotes>

offending body of water would have been located one to two blocks south and east of the Terrace site. The village trustees paid the firm of Rogers & Kelly a fee of \$150 “for the ditching and drainage of the pond.”<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Orson Lyon’s field notes contain no mention of this pond, which certainly would have been visible from the section line that he had laid out exactly 20 years earlier along the future route of State Street. Nor does the pond appear in a drawing made in 1852 of State Street, viewed from College Hill (now Bascom Hill). The artist obviously took great care to depict houses, trees, and other landmarks, but the pond is not shown.<sup>6</sup> The village trustees’ 1854 proceedings reveal nothing about the size, depth, or exact location of the pond that they ordered drained, nor about its surrounding landscape.

In fact, the pond may have been part of a wetland that extended northward from State Street to Lake Mendota. In November 1925, a map purporting to show “sections of Madison which have been built over wet marsh lands” appeared in the *Wisconsin State Journal*. The city’s wetlands, indicated on the map by slanting lines, included an area surrounding the site of the University Boathouse, which was located between the Armory-Gymnasium and the lake, and thus directly east of the Terrace site (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup> Impetus for publishing the map and its accompanying article was a campaign under way at that time to lower the water level of Madison’s lakes, which supposedly would “add several square miles to the city.” Many Madisonians scoffed at the idea, wrote *State Journal* reporter Willett Main Kempton,

just as heartily as pioneer citizens of the Town of Madison jeered at the fantastic idea that the reed banked bay to which State Street ran might some day be a university campus with a million dollars worth of buildings standing over the places where they angled for black bass.<sup>8</sup>

Kempton provides no further description of the “reed banked bay to which State Street ran,” but presumably he was referring to a marshy area somewhere near the Terrace site. Elsewhere in the article, Kempton refers to “the low land site of the old planing mill...lost under the pavements of Lake and Langdon streets”—the intersection one block east of the Memorial Union.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Kempton failed to cite the sources on which the story and map were based; as a *State Journal* reporter, however, he may have used the newspaper’s archives.<sup>10</sup>

## The Native American presence

In all likelihood, the “reed banked bay” had been appreciated as a prime fishing spot long before those “pioneer citizens” arrived. The shores of Lake Mendota, called Fourth Lake by early Madisonians, were dotted with the villages and camps of the Ho Chunk (Winnebago) people when

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<sup>5</sup> Village of Madison Council Proceedings, July 31, 1854, and November 11, 1854; Dane Series 182, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Adolph Hoeffer, “Madison, Dane Cty, Wisconsin, from University Hill, August 1852,” Wisconsin Historical Images WHi11632, accessed via [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi). Hoeffer’s drawing is reproduced in David V. Mollenhoff, *Madison: A History of the Formative Years*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 64. In a paper written for a history course in 1994, UW student Paul D. Stoller maintained that Hoeffer’s drawing shows “a small stream which emptied into Lake Mendota along a path roughly in line with present-day Murray Street.” See Stoller, “The Union Terrace,” October 4, 1994, p. 2. I’ve examined this drawing with a magnifying glass, but I can’t see Stoller’s stream.

<sup>7</sup> The regents authorized demolition of the east bay of the University Boathouse on April 5, 1963, but the rest of the structure remained standing for nearly five years. On January 12, 1968, the regents authorized demolition of the remainder of the building.

<sup>8</sup> Willett Main Kempton, “Revive Agitation to Lower Lakes and Add to City’s Beauty,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 29, 1925.

<sup>9</sup> Presumably, Kempton was referring to the steam sawmill that had been built there in 1853 by Daniel Gorham. See John Y. Smith, “History of Madison,” in *Madison City Directory: A City and Business Directory for 1866*, comp. B. W. Suckow (Madison: Suckow, 1866), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Kempton, “Revive Agitation.” Kempton, who studied journalism at the UW and once wrote for the *Daily Cardinal*, joined the *State Journal* staff in June 1925. He subsequently became state editor. In 1936, he wrote a series of columns, “Before Our Day,” based on material from the newspaper’s archives.



Figure 1

Madison's former wetlands; note marsh at northern end of Lake Street, on site of University Boathouse.  
Source: *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 29, 1925.

the first permanent American settlers began to arrive in the 1830s. The Ho Chunk name for the Four Lakes region is “Tay-cho-pe-ra”; they called Lake Mendota “Wonk-shek-ho-mik-la.”<sup>11</sup> Initially, archaeological investigations in the Four Lakes region focused on the hundreds of effigy mounds that had been built by previous generations of native peoples.<sup>12</sup> With the arrival in Madison of archaeologist Charles E. Brown in 1908, however, the identification of habitation sites and “workshop” areas began to provide a broader picture of Native American life (Figure 2).<sup>13</sup> Brown (1872-1946), a member of the Milwaukee Public Museum staff and editor of the *Wisconsin Archeologist*, relocated to Madison to become the state historical society’s “field man.” He later served as director of the society’s museum.<sup>14</sup> Brown traveled throughout Wisconsin, mapping effigy mounds and advocating for their preservation. A prolific writer and lecturer, Brown also collected artifacts

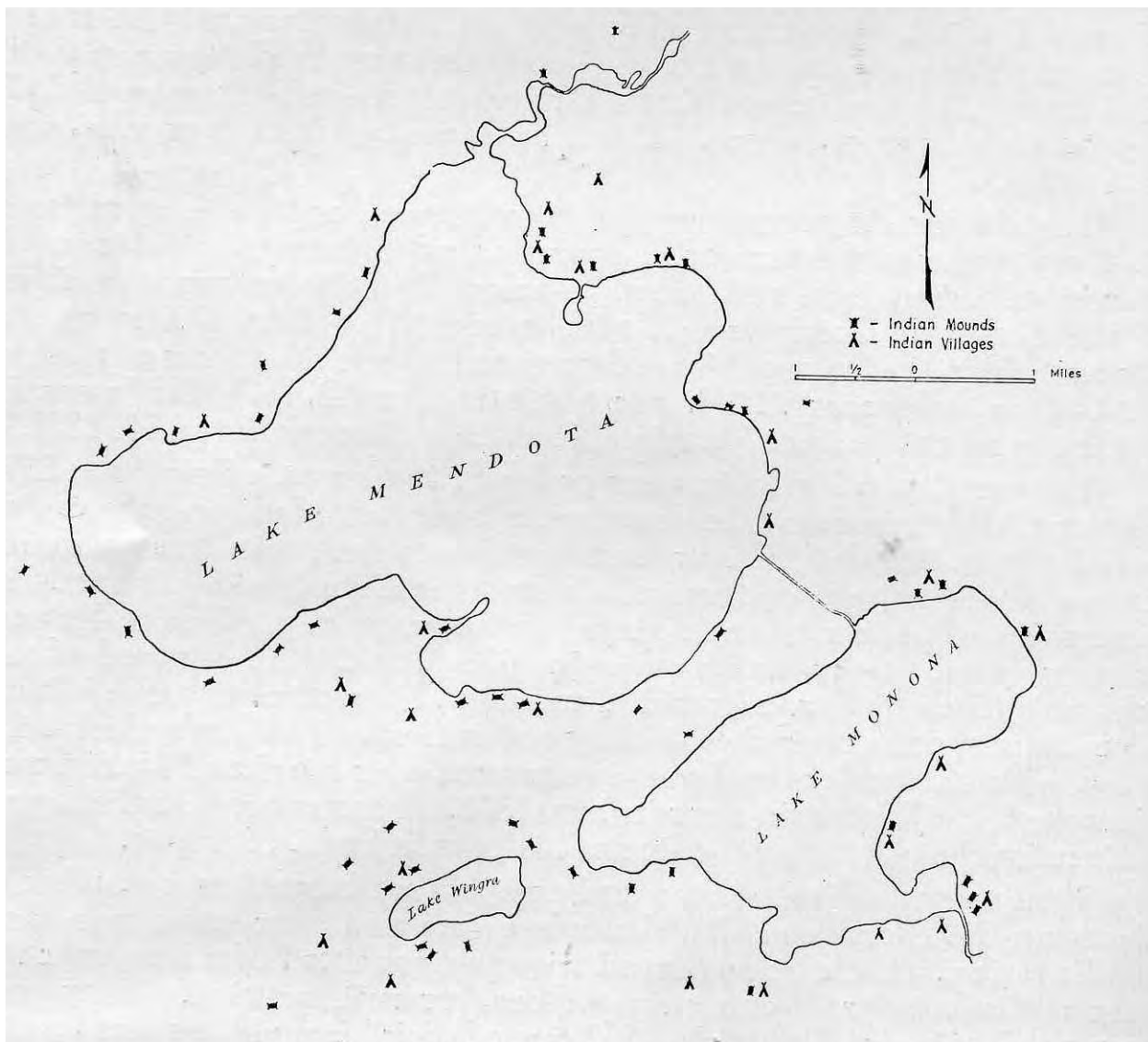
<sup>11</sup> Charles E. Brown, “History of the Lake Mendota Region,” in *Lake Mendota: Origin and History* (Madison: Technical Club of Madison, 1936), 13. Brown’s translation for “Wonk-shek-ho-mik-la” is “where the man lies.”

<sup>12</sup> Shortly before Brown’s arrival in Madison, a UW botany instructor named A. B. Stout surveyed many of the mound groups around Lake Mendota. Stout’s investigations did not include village sites, however. See letter from A. B. Stout to Charles E. Brown, April 13, 1929, in Charles E. Brown Papers (microfilm version, reel 3, frame 817). Stout, who also had surveyed Native American earthworks in Sauk County, left Madison in 1913 to pursue doctoral studies at Columbia University. While head of the laboratories of the New York Botanical Garden, Stout gained international renown as a daylily hybridizer.

<sup>13</sup> [Edward P. Alexander], “Chats with the Editor,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 28 (December 1944): 133.

<sup>14</sup> Clifford L. Lord and Carl Ubbelohde, *Clio’s Servant: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1846-1954* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967), 181-82.





**Figure 2**

Locations of Indian mounds and campsites near Madison's lakes.

Source: *Lake Mendota: Origin and History* (Madison: 1936).

and interviewed early settlers and local Ho Chunk people to glean information about Native American sites that had been obliterated. Brown's papers, housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society archives, continue to serve as a prime source for modern archaeologists.<sup>15</sup>

Brown amassed a great deal of information on effigy mounds and habitation sites surrounding Lake Mendota; unfortunately, his papers don't refer to the Terrace site per se.<sup>16</sup> Brown, whose office at the State Historical Society building was literally across the street from the Memorial

<sup>15</sup> Amy Rosebrough, Assistant State Archaeologist, Wisconsin Historical Society, personal communication with Susan Haswell, July 31, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> This conclusion is based upon a search of Brown's file on Lake Mendota, which contains research material spanning several decades.



Figure 3

Undated postcard showing the university's "Science Buildings from the Lake." Roof of the State Historical Library, dedicated 1900, is visible at far left. Homes occupying the future site of the Memorial Union and Terrace are (left to right): the Raymer House, 752 Langdon; the Olin House, 766 Langdon; and the UW President's House, 772 Langdon. The boathouse near the center of the image was built by John and Helen Olin in 1887. Source: UW-Madison Archives.

Union and Terrace, obviously would have been keen to collect any information about the Native American occupation of that portion of the shoreline. When Brown arrived in Madison in 1908, however, the land between Langdon Street and the lake had been a residential area for two decades. Photographs taken around the turn of the 20th century of the Terrace site show that whatever wetland may have existed there had disappeared beneath sloping lawns (Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> A continuous process of leveling and filling had been taking place throughout Madison since territorial days; it's possible that the Terrace site was among the thousands of acres "reclaimed" for development.<sup>18</sup> Such

<sup>17</sup> For example, see photograph labeled, "Shore of Lake Mendota, Madison, Wis.," UW-Madison Archives Photographic Collection, Series 7/2, Lower Campus/Mall Area, folder 2.

<sup>18</sup> According to Mollenhoff, *Madison*, 372, some 3,800 acres of wetland had been filled in Madison by 1920. Mollenhoff's map of leveled hills, filled marshes and extended lakeshores (p. 373) shows the pond that was drained in 1854 straddling State Street. There is no indication of filling and leveling along the Terrace shoreline, however. Elsewhere on the campus, much of the shoreline west of the Terrace site has been similarly disturbed, according to archaeologist Philip H. Salkin. See Salkin, *An Archaeological Survey of the Proposed Domestic Water Main Corridor on the Campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin* (Verona, WI: Archaeological Consulting and Services, Inc., 2004), 2.

activity was commonplace and totally unregulated; thus, the efforts of individual property owners to fill in any marshy areas that may have existed along the lakeshore probably attracted little attention from local authorities or the press. Another early development that may have changed the appearance and location of the lakeshore was the construction of a mill dam at Lake Mendota's outlet in 1849. The dam, which stretched across the Yahara River within today's Tenney Park, raised Mendota's water level by some three to four feet—perhaps creating a new, higher shoreline and inundating any marshland that may have existed near the Terrace site.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, any archaeological evidence of Native American habitation at or near the Terrace site probably had been buried or inundated long before Charles E. Brown arrived in 1908. As Brown was to learn during the course of his investigations, however, a linear mound once had stood atop the steep bluff overlooking the Terrace from the west (Muir Knoll). The mound survived into the mid-19th century, when it fell victim to grading or road-building by university crews.<sup>20</sup> Other mounds nearby included a group at the top of University Hill, destroyed while excavating the foundation of Main (now Bascom) Hall.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere along the shorelines of Madison's lakes, archaeologists have discovered a strong correlation between the locations of mound groups and habitation sites.<sup>22</sup> At Eagle Heights, along the Picnic Point peninsula, and on the grounds of the lakeshore dormitories, villages were located close to mounds. Thus, it seems quite likely that a Native American village or camp once stood on or near the Terrace site, which once had been overlooked by the Muir Knoll and Bascom Hill mound groups. The evidence to support such a hypothesis has yet to be found, however.

## The lakeshore changes hands

The land upon which the Memorial Union and Terrace now stand has been valued as prime real estate since territorial days, as evidenced by the people who owned the site and the prices they paid for it. In 1836, the land of Town 7 North, Range 9 E (known later as Madison township) was offered for sale by the U. S. government. Partners James D. Doty and Stevens T. Mason entered claims to a thousand acres on and around Madison's isthmus, including the Terrace site in Section 14.<sup>23</sup> Doty, whose lobbying efforts resulted in the selection of Madison as territorial capital, commissioned a plat of the new town site. Doty's plat, later found to be erroneous, was redrawn in 1839. The corrected version of Doty's plat, called the "Pritchette plat" for the land speculator who commissioned it, became the official map for all subsequent real estate transactions in Madison.<sup>24</sup>

Doty's plat (and its more accurate successor) called for two streets to be laid out running roughly parallel to the shore of Lake Mendota (Figure 4). King (now State) Street would follow an east-west route along the section line between sections 14 and 23. Between King Street and Lake

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<sup>19</sup> Charles I. Corp and Henry Gumprecht, "Lake Mendota Levels and Temperatures," *The Wisconsin Engineer* 26 (April 1922): 119; Adolph Kanneberg, "The Dam at the Outlet of Lake Mendota," in *Lake Mendota: Origin and History* (Madison: Technical Club of Madison, 1936), 17-19.

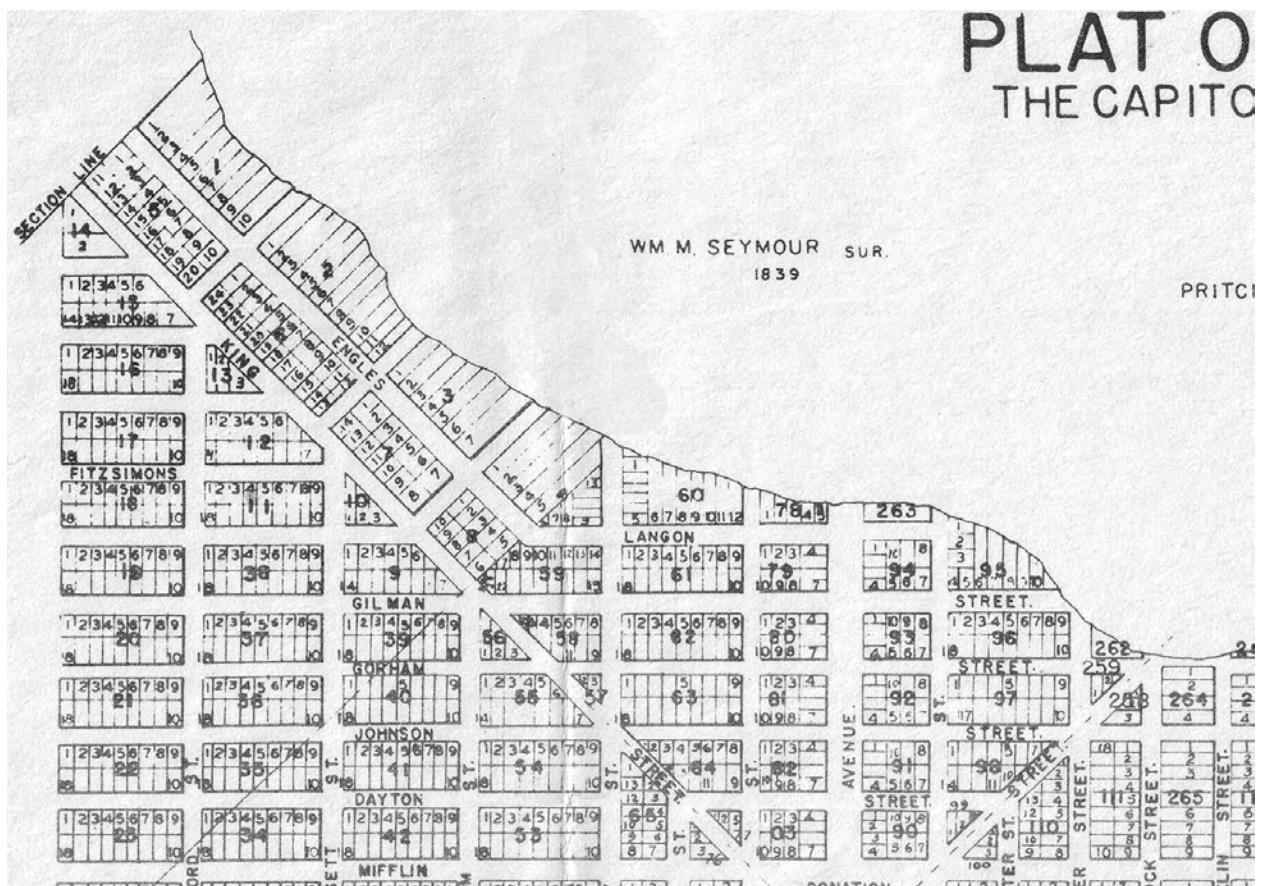
<sup>20</sup> The Muir Knoll site, recorded on Wisconsin's Archaeological Sites Inventory as 47DA1208, was surveyed in 2003. See Amy L. Rosebrough, *A Phase I Archaeological Survey of Muir Knoll, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, Office of the State Archaeologist, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Charles E. Brown, "Prehistoric Indian Monuments on the University Grounds," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 15 (June 1914): 384.

<sup>22</sup> Brown and more recent archaeologists have recorded this pattern. See University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Facilities Planning and Management, "2004 Archaeological Investigations on the University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus, City of Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin," prepared by George W. Christiansen III (Milwaukee: Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center, 2005), 27.

<sup>23</sup> United States General Land Office, Wisconsin Local Office Tract Books, 1835-1909, Vol. 30 (Town 7 North, Range 9 East; Wisconsin Historical Society (microfilm version, reel P46044).

<sup>24</sup> A copy of the Pritchette plat is on file at the Dane County Register of Deeds, Madison (Dane County Subdivision Plats, Vol. A, Document 102). It was surveyed by William M. Seymour, who later served as mayor of Madison.



**Figure 4**

Detail from the 1839 Pritchette Plat of Madison. Block 2, the future site of the Memorial Union and Terrace, is at left, between Lake Mendota and “Engles” (now Langdon) Street. The plat inaccurately shows Engles Street extending west from Park Street, directly to the top of the hill where the first university buildings later were erected.

Source: Dane County Register of Deeds, Madison.

Mendota, the Pritchette plat shows Engles (now Langdon) Street, from which four blocks of city lots stretch northward to the lake. Compared with standard-sized lots shown elsewhere on the plat, the lakeshore lots in Blocks 1, 2, 3 and 4 are significantly deeper.<sup>25</sup> The surveyor failed to explain why he assigned more generous proportions to these lakeshore lots. Owing to the irregular shape of the shoreline in this area, some of the deepest lots occur in Block 2, the future site of the Terrace.

The partnership of Doty and Mason, the original owners of Block 2 and much of the rest of the isthmus, soon dissolved. Mason served as the governor of Michigan, and Doty went on to become the governor of Wisconsin Territory.<sup>26</sup> By 1837, Block 2 had passed into the hands of others. The twelve lakeshore lots in Block 2 were held that year by twelve different owners, only one of whom lived in Madison: Nathaniel W. Dean (1817-1880). Village tax rolls for 1837 record Dean as

<sup>25</sup> The standard lot size recorded on the Pritchette plat is 66 feet wide by 132 feet long.

<sup>26</sup> Doty served as territorial governor from 1841 to 1844.



the owner of lot 1, the future site of the Union Theater.<sup>27</sup> Dean clerked at a general store operated by his cousin, Dr. J. D. Weston, on the Capitol Square. Later, he opened his own store, which apparently supplied the capital required for his growing real estate business.<sup>28</sup>

By 1851, all of Block 2 had fallen into the hands of other local entrepreneurs, the partners Delaplaine and Burdick.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps best known for developing the Lakeside House resort hotel on Lake Monona, George P. Delaplaine and Elisha Burdick owned real estate throughout Madison.<sup>30</sup> They frequently acquired property at tax sales, which were held by the county treasurer to recoup delinquent property tax. Such was the case with Lot 1, on which the taxes for 1849 went unpaid. In 1858, Delaplaine and Burdick released their interest on Lot 1—to its previous owner, Nathaniel W. Dean.<sup>31</sup> Dean recently had given up his general store to devote more attention to his extensive real estate holdings.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps Dean, who at that time served on the UW Board of Regents, may have considered building a home on the site, so convenient to College Hill.<sup>33</sup> A more likely scenario is that Dean was in a better position than most to envision the future growth of the campus, and had acquired Lot 1 assuming that the university would want it, sooner or later. Meanwhile, Dean and his wife, Harriet (Figure 5), resided in a large house facing the Capitol Square, at the corner of Carroll and Main streets, through the 1860s.<sup>34</sup>

By the late 1860s, Madison had become known as a stopping place for families making their way to new homes farther north and west. Margaret Allen, who arrived in Madison in 1868 with her husband, UW history professor William F. Allen, recalled many years later: “The land where the president’s home and the Clinic now stand was the favorite camping ground for the long trains of emigrant wagons that passed through every spring, often returning in the fall with tired, discouraged emigrants.”<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Harriet and Nathaniel Dean retained ownership of Lot 1 until Nathaniel’s death in February 1880. On July 1, 1880, Nancy Bross purchased Lot 1 from Dean’s estate.<sup>36</sup> Like previous owners of Lot 1, Mrs. Bross was a real estate investor. Unlike the previous owners, however, Nancy Bross built and occupied a home on Lot 1. She was the wife of Charles E. Bross, manager of the Wisconsin Union Telegraph office on Main Street.<sup>37</sup> Nancy Bross expanded her holdings in 1884 by purchasing a portion of adjacent Lot 2.<sup>38</sup> Although the exact construction date of the Bross family’s mansard-roofed house at 772 Langdon Street has not been established, it probably was built between

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<sup>27</sup> Madison, Wisconsin, Treasurer, Real Property and Personal Tax Rolls for 1837, Dane Series 328, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Lot 2 was owned by the partnership of Sweet & Medbury. D.

Upham owned Lot 3; I. N. Lockwood, Lot 4; Daniel Wells, Jr., Lot 5; and E. Brigham—possibly Ebenezer Brigham of Blue Mounds—Lot 6.

<sup>28</sup> “Death of Hon. Nathaniel W. Dean,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 28, 1880; “Eliab Dean,” Image 37792, Wisconsin Historical Images: [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi)

<sup>29</sup> Madison, Wisconsin, Treasurer, Real Property and Personal Tax Rolls for 1851, Dane Series 328, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

<sup>30</sup> Mollenhoff, *Madison*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed books, 46:106.

<sup>32</sup> “Death of Hon. Nathaniel W. Dean.”

<sup>33</sup> Dean served on the Board of Regents from 1849 to 1867. See *The University of Wisconsin Alumni Directory, 1849-1919* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1921), viii; University of Wisconsin Digital Collections: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UW.AD18491919>

<sup>34</sup> The Dean home was removed in 1870 to make way for the Park Hotel, of which Dean was one of the major stockholders. See “Main and Carroll Streets Intersection,” Image 38286, Wisconsin Historical Images: [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi)

<sup>35</sup> Mrs. W. F. [Margaret] Allen, “The University of Wisconsin Soon After the Civil War,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 7 (September 1923): 20. The UW president’s home once stood on the northeastern corner of Park and Langdon streets. The “Clinic” referenced by Mrs. Allen was the former Olin house, which was razed to make way for construction of the Memorial Union.

<sup>36</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 112:382-83.

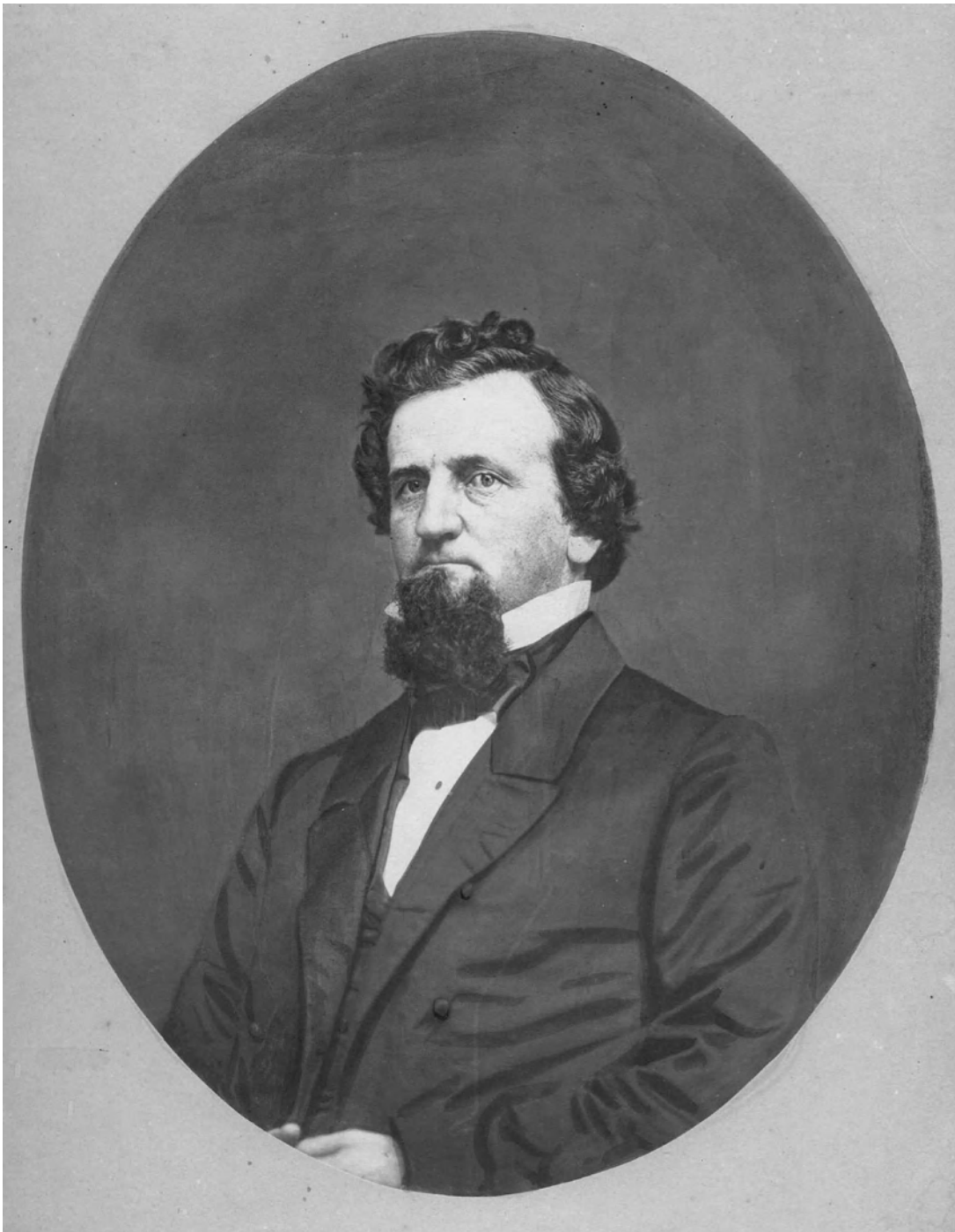
<sup>37</sup> *Madison City Directory*, ...1883-84 (Madison: Donnellon & Kain, 1883), 85; *Madison City Directory*, ...1886-87 (Madison: W. Hogg & Co., 1886), 49. University of Wisconsin Digital Collections: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.MadisonLocHist>

<sup>38</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 129:39.



Figure 5a

Harriet Morrison Dean (b. 1829), photographed ca. 1860. She and her husband, Nathaniel W. Dean, formerly owned the city lot on which the Wisconsin Union Theater now stands. Source: Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID # 38152.



**Figure 5b**

Nathaniel Dean (1817-1880), Madison business leader, land speculator, and politician.  
Source: Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID # 37789.



**Figure 6**

The former UW President's House, located on the northeast corner of Park and Langdon streets, shortly before its demolition in 1938 to make way for construction of the Wisconsin Union Theater. Source: UW-Madison Archives.

1884 and 1886. The Bross family had moved there by 1886 (Figure 6).<sup>39</sup> Their sojourn was short-lived, however. On July 27, 1887, the Board of Regents acquired the Bross property, which became the official residence of the university's president.<sup>40</sup> The first president to occupy the house was Thomas C. Chamberlin, who lived there until his resignation in 1892.<sup>41</sup> His successor, Charles Kendall Adams, and his wife, Mary, took up residence after Chamberlin's departure. President Charles R. Van Hise and his family moved into the executive residence after his election in 1903. They were to live there for 15 years, until Van Hise died in November 1918.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The Madison city directory for 1883-84 records the residence of Charles E. Bross as 29 E. Gorham. In the 1886-87 directory, the Brosses' home address was 772 Langdon. When the Memorial Union was completed in 1928, its street address was 770 Langdon. In 1967, city officials implemented changes to Madison's numbering system, and the street address of the Memorial Union became 800 Langdon. See memorandum from Dale Brostrom, Wisconsin Union Assistant Director and Business Manager, to All Who Receive Mail at the Wisconsin Union, June 12, 1967, Wisconsin Union Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 135:226.

<sup>41</sup> At the time of his resignation, Chamberlin received a visit from his neighbor and colleague, E. A. Birge. Years later, Birge recalled, "He was sitting on the back porch—it was in summer—and I asked him how he felt. He said, 'Dr. Birge, I feel as if about six large elephants had gotten off my back and had gone off down there into the woods.'" See "Recollections of Prof. T. C. Chamberlin—Oral Statement by Dr. E.A. Birge, at Madison, Wis., Dec. 18, 1928," in T. C. Chamberlin Papers, Beloit College Archives, Beloit, WI.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice M. Vance, *Charles Richard Van Hise: Scientist Progressive* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1960), 69.



Although the president's house was somewhat removed from downtown Madison in the late 1880s, it was not the only home on Block 2 at that time. A few empty lots to the east, at 744 Langdon, stood the modest frame house of Edward A. and Anna G. Birge. At the time, Birge was a zoology professor; he later became dean of the College of Letters and Science, president of the university, and a world-renowned authority on fresh-water lakes. Birge had acquired part of Lot 5 on May 5, 1882, and presumably built a home soon thereafter.<sup>43</sup> Birge owned this property for the next 40 years. In 1922, the *Wisconsin State Journal* described the neighborhood in the early 1880s:

The [Birge] house... was practically isolated. Next to it, where the University YMCA now stands, was a grove of trees, and a small wooden house occupied the ground where the gymnasium annex was built. The intervening space was used for pasture. A carpenter lived in a little frame house, almost directly opposite, on the lower campus. A grove of trees then took the place of the historical library which was not built until 1896. Almost a block away at Lake and Langdon stood two brick houses which still remain. On the east side of Lake street, a machine shop occupied the place of present fraternity houses. The university, at this time, was but slightly developed. Old Science hall, which was the only university building on that side of campus, burned the next year.<sup>44</sup>

The “machine shop” northeast of the intersection of Lake and Langdon streets was the Madison Manufacturing Company, the most recent occupant of the site originally developed in 1853 by Daniel Gorham, the sawmill operator. In the 1860s, Gorham's sawmill had been converted into a foundry, the Mendota Agricultural Works. Under the ownership of E. W. Skinner, the plant manufactured grain drills and reapers, in addition to such products as the Climax Sugar Cane Mill and Cook's Evaporators. During the Civil War, a workforce of 50 was employed there.<sup>45</sup> In 1865, Skinner took on a new partner, Samuel D. Hastings, who had just retired as Wisconsin state treasurer. Hastings lived across from the factory in a brick house at the southwest corner of Langdon and Lake streets. In 1869, Skinner and Hastings organized the Madison Manufacturing Company, produced well drilling equipment, sorghum mills, and steam engines over the next three decades.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1880s, as the Bross and Birge families were building their genteel homes on Block 2, the neighborhood below College Hill was dominated by the smoke-belching Madison Manufacturing Company (Figure 7). If not for the proximity of the university, the lakeshore may well have continued to develop into an industrial sector. As it turned out, Madison's economic climate did not favor the proliferation of heavy industry; and as the decade progressed, the Madison Manufacturing Company began sliding towards obsolescence. In 1889, the company hired a surveyor to subdivide the factory site into 12 building lots, with an access to Lake Street created via Mendota Court.<sup>47</sup> The chapter house of Delta Tau Delta, a temperance fraternity, arose in 1892 atop the former factory site at 616 Mendota Court.<sup>48</sup>

## The Olins and the Raymers

Meanwhile, prominent local attorney John M. Olin had acquired land in 1881 adjoining the Birge

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<sup>43</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 117:572.

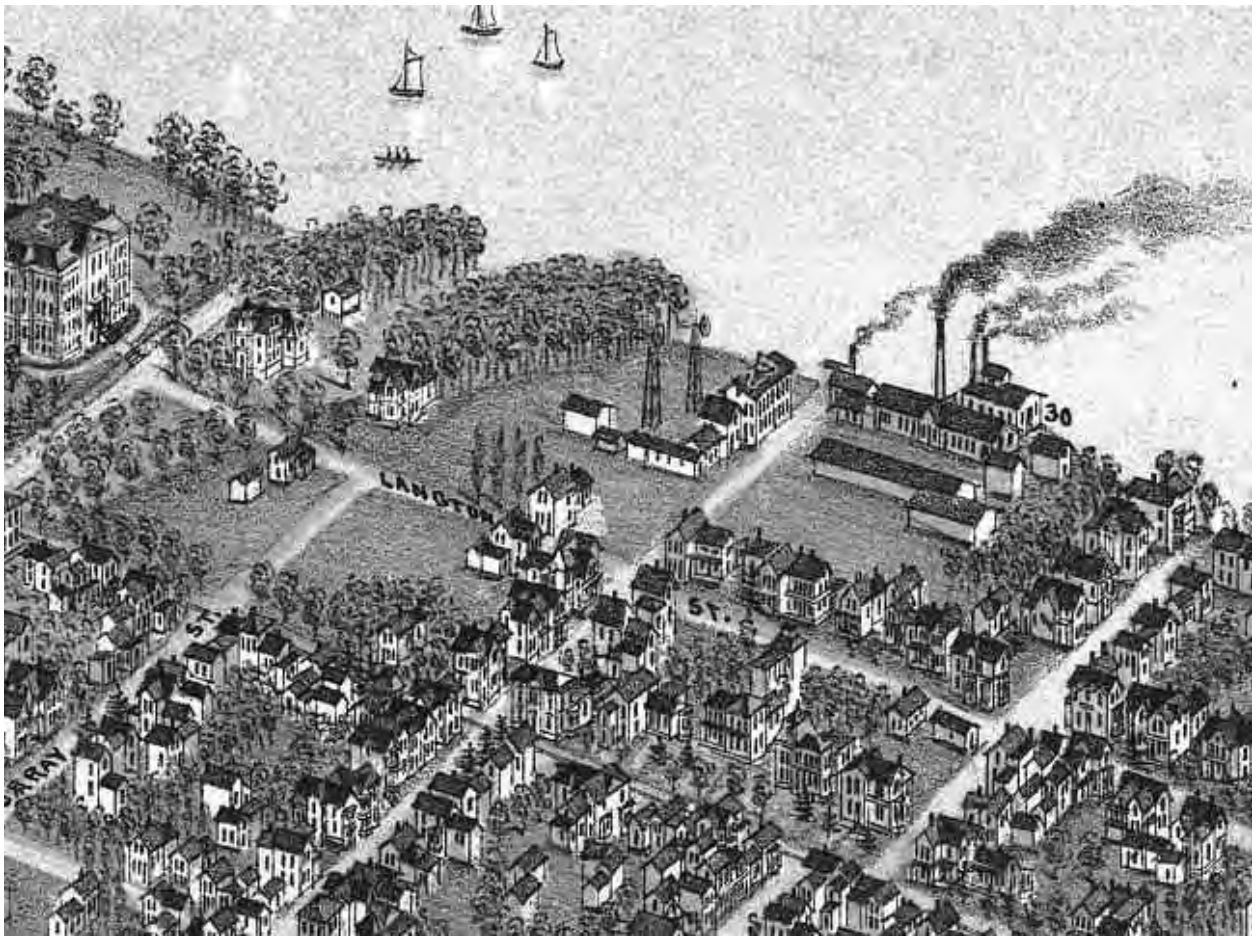
<sup>44</sup> “Birge Home, Union Site, Built in 1883,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 21, 1922. Wisconsin Historical Society, Local History and Biography Articles: [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whba/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whba/)

<sup>45</sup> Smith, “History of Madison,” 29.

<sup>46</sup> Frank D. Winkley, “Early Industrial Development; A Story of Progress in Madison,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 25, 1936.

<sup>47</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, “Madison Manufacturing Company's Replat of a Part of Lots 1, 2, 3, & 4, Block 3, City of Madison,” Plat Book A. The plat was recorded on June 14, 1889.

<sup>48</sup> Carol Lohry Cartwright, *The Langdon Street Historic District: A Walking Tour* (Madison: City of Madison, 1986), 27.



## Figure 7

Detail from 1885 panoramic map of Madison, showing future site of Memorial Union and Terrace. The house at the northeast corner of Park and Langton [Langdon] streets, then occupied by Charles and Nancy Bross, was acquired by the university in 1887 for use of the president. At right is the Madison Manufacturing Company foundry. Source: Library of Congress, American Memory map collection.

property on the west (Figure 8).<sup>49</sup> Olin, who had been a classmate of E. A. Birge at Williams College, was a prominent local attorney who later joined the UW law faculty and became president of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association.<sup>50</sup> His wife, Helen Remington Olin, was a UW alumna and a staunch advocate of coeducation.<sup>51</sup> Several years were to pass before the Olins moved to 766 Langdon Street, however (Figure 9).<sup>52</sup> Their tasteful home, which stood directly east of the UW

<sup>49</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 114:471. John M. Olin and Arthur L. Sanborn bought lots 2 and 3 and the west half of lot 4 on April 18, 1881.

<sup>50</sup> Olin was an instructor on the law faculty from 1885 to 1887. In 1894, he rejoined the faculty as a lecturer on real property, wills and torts. See "Death Relieves Lawyer of Long, Painful Illness," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 8, 1924.

<sup>51</sup> Helen R. Olin, "Segregation," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 9 (May 1908): 311-15; "The Under-Graduate Women of Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 10 (December 1908): 127-130; "Marriage of College Women," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 11 (November 1909): 56-57.

<sup>52</sup> The Madison city directory for 1886-87 shows John M. Olin's residence as 636 N. Frances. The 1888-89 edition records Olin's address as 766 Langdon.

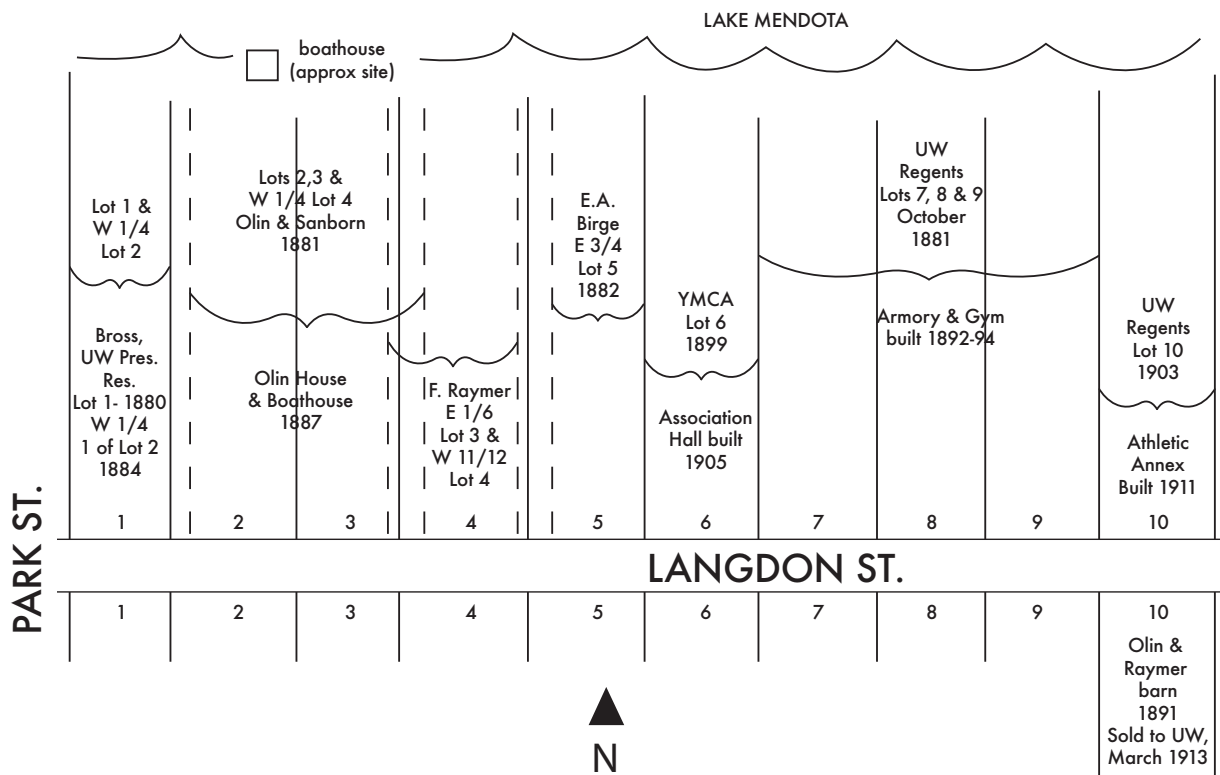


Figure 8

Property owners, 1880-1905, City Block 2 (future site of the Memorial Union and Terrace).  
Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department, based on sketch map by Susan Haswell.

president's house, was built in 1887.<sup>53</sup> It would have given the Olins ready access to the campus and its carriage drives, which at that time extended west from College Hill and across the grounds of the agricultural experiment farm (Figure 10).

A few years after moving to Langdon Street, the Olins welcomed another pleasure drive enthusiast, George Raymer, to the neighborhood (Figure 11). Raymer's wife, Frances Bradley Raymer, bought property directly east of the Olins' in July 1889.<sup>54</sup> At the time, George Raymer was a major shareholder in the *Madison Democrat* and also served on the UW Board of Regents, of which he subsequently became president.<sup>55</sup> Construction of the Raymers' impressive Queen Anne-style home, deemed "one of the most beautiful in the city," was underway by the end of 1889.<sup>56</sup> In addition to their residence at 752 Langdon Street, the Raymers also owned a farm a few miles to the

<sup>53</sup> "The Building Boom," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 23, 1887.

<sup>54</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 135:565. On July 19, 1889, John and Helen Olin sold the east half of Lot 3 and the west eleven-twelfths of Lot 4 to Frances B. Raymer for \$5,030.

<sup>55</sup> "Deaths," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 22 (August 1921): 247.

<sup>56</sup> "A Good Showing: Resume of the Building Operations in the City of Madison for the Year 1889," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 7, 1889.



Figure 9

John and Helen Olin House at the time of the Memorial Union site dedication, November 11, 1925. Sign at right reads: "Walk around/try to realize the magnitude of the undertaking." Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.





Figure 10

Contemporary map of proposed carriage drive route linking the “Wisconsin University” campus to George Raymer’s farm at Eagle Heights. Source: *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 20, 1892.

northwest, just beyond Picnic Point. On their farm, the Raymers built a carriage drive that climbed to the top of Eagle Heights, where it circled a group of Indian mounds and afforded a spectacular view of Lake Mendota.<sup>57</sup> In 1892, Raymer opened his Eagle Heights carriage drive to the public; encouraged, perhaps, by his Langdon Street neighbor John Olin, who in 1891 had helped to lay out a willow-lined pleasure drive along the shore of University Bay.<sup>58</sup> These efforts laid the foundation for the network of carriage roads that subsequently were built by the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, which was organized formally on July 10, 1894.<sup>59</sup>

As leaders of the pleasure drive campaign, Olin and Raymer undoubtedly used their commodious Langdon Street homes to entertain potential supporters. Both houses had been built facing Langdon Street (as had the pre-existing Birge and Bross houses), with their back yards

<sup>57</sup> See letter from George Raymer published in “Jud Stone’s Gleanings,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 1, 1907.

<sup>58</sup> “The Madison Drives,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 3 (June 1902): 348; A. W. Hopkins, “Some Campus Landmarks,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 63 (July 1962): 24. In the same year that Olin helped lay out Willow Drive, he and George Raymer built a stable for their joint use in Block 6, across Langdon Street and a short distance east of their homes. See “Madison is Booming,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 2, 1891. The regents acquired the Olin-Raymer barn in 1913. See Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 232:454. The structure subsequently housed the university’s Applied Arts laboratory. See “Campus Notes,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 17 (November 1915): 58. The city declared the building a fire menace in 1932 and it was dismantled. See “AA Lab to be Razed,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 33 (March 1932): 183–84.

<sup>59</sup> Carolyn Mattern, “Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association,” a brochure published by Historic Madison, Inc., in 1994 to commemorate MPPDA’s centennial.

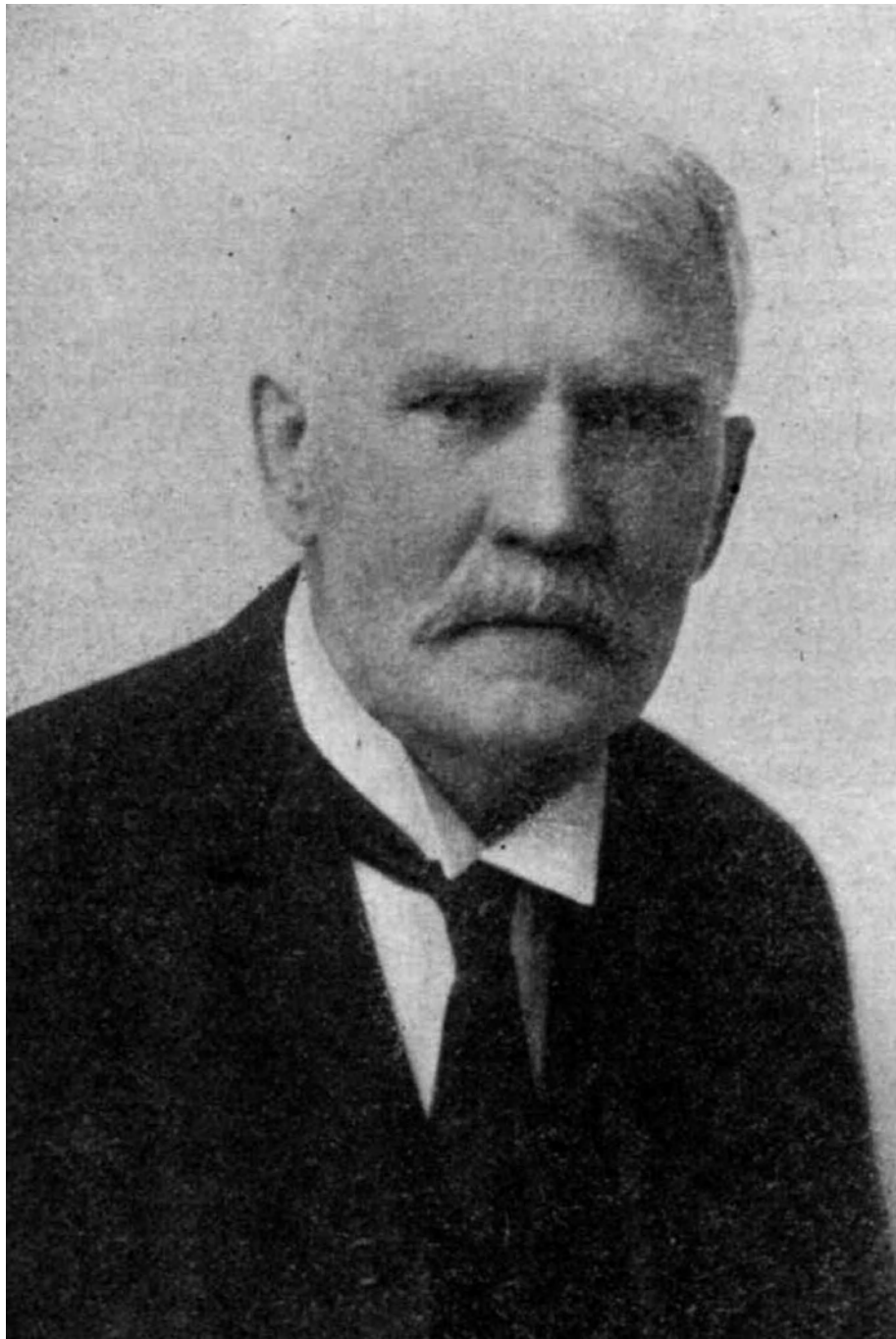


Figure 11

George Raymer (1842-1921), UW alumnus, regent and journalist. Source: *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, August 1921.

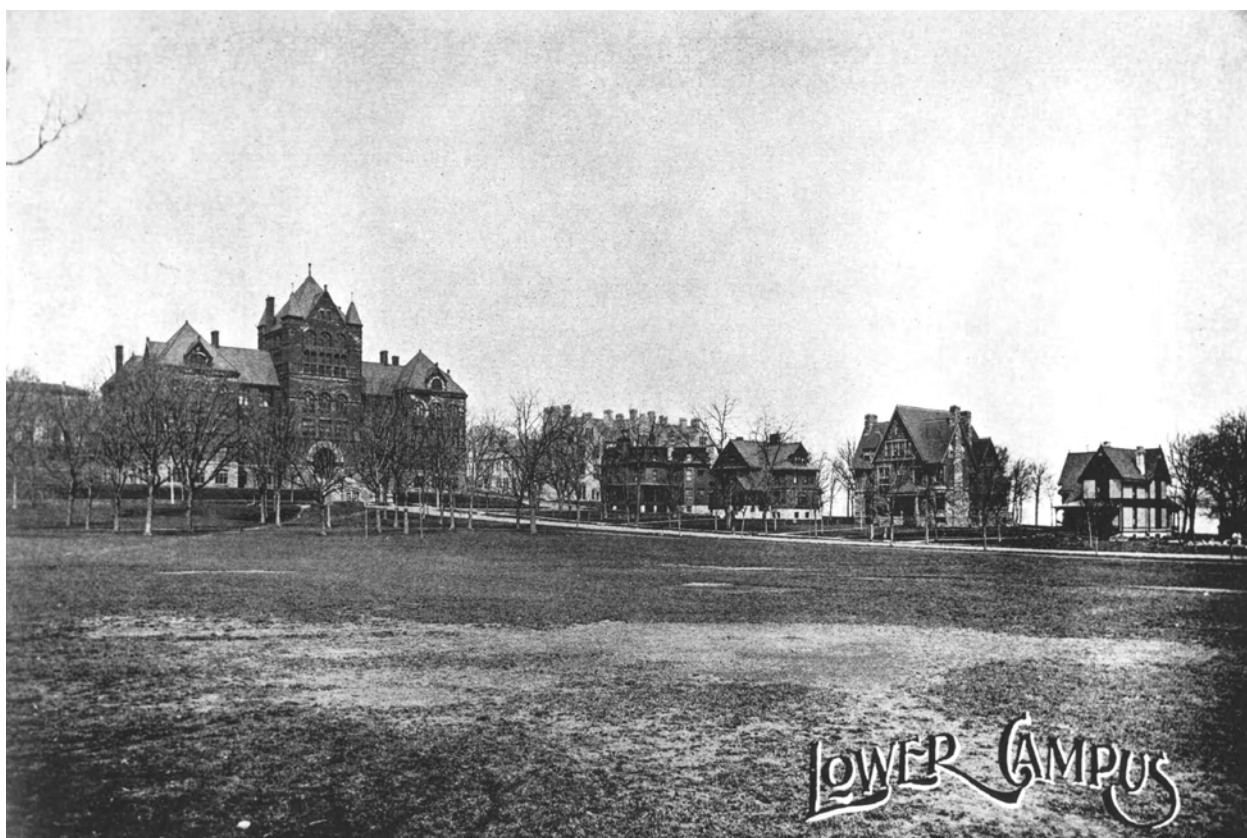


Figure 12

The Lower Campus, looking northwest, ca. 1894. Buildings fronting Langdon Street, from left to right: UW President's House, Olin House, Raymer House and Birge House. Source: UW-Madison Archives.

stretching down to Lake Mendota (Figure 12). At the water's edge behind the Olin home was a picturesque boathouse topped by a pavilion with an ogee-shaped roof.<sup>60</sup> Along the east side of the boathouse, a flight of steps led down the bank from the pavilion to the water. Behind the boathouse, the lawn sloped eastward. Between the lakeshore embankment and Langdon Street lay a gently rolling grassy area comprising the back yards of the UW president's house and those of the Olins, the Raymers, and the Birges. Their broad, shady lawns would have provided an ideal setting for festive boating parties, picnics, and croquet games. A more solemn event took place there in June 1909, when the Raymers hosted "a wedding around which local society interest [had] centered for many days." Their daughter, Ethel (Figure 13), chose to be married at 752 Langdon Street. Among her bridesmaids was Janet Van Hise, daughter of UW president (and neighbor) Charles R. Van Hise. During the ceremony, the bridal party stood before a "broad window facing the lake." Afterwards, Ethel and her new husband, Samuel C. Edmondson, repaired to "their sightly home at Eagle Heights farm."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The Olin boathouse was built in 1887. See "The Building Boom," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 23, 1887. A similar boathouse was built by Lucien Hanks at 216 Langdon St. See Wisconsin Historical Images, Image ID 37419; [www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi)

<sup>61</sup> "Raymer-Edmondson," *Madison Democrat*, June 13, 1909.



**Figure 13**

Ethel Raymer (middle row, center) and the UW Class of 1902 women's basketball team. In 1909, she married Samuel C. Edmondson in her family's home at 752 Langdon. Source: *The 1901 Badger*.

As the years passed, the advantages of living on the 700 block of Langdon Street significantly enhanced property values, a trend that was to yield considerable financial rewards for Olin and Raymer. Their proximity to the campus and its administrators may have suggested alternative development possibilities for their Langdon Street real estate. Perhaps they even entertained hopes of building an eastern extension of the university's carriage drive across their back yards.<sup>62</sup> It was with a similar goal in mind that Olin had acquired farmland west of the city. He and UW professor E. T. Owen planned carriage drives to link their property with Madison, thus enhancing land values.<sup>63</sup> As president of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, Olin frequently lobbied landowners to grant rights-of-way across lakeshore property for the extension of carriage drives.<sup>64</sup> Around the turn of the 20th century, Olin acquired a farm adjacent to Raymer's Eagle Heights carriage drive. His plan to subdivide the tract for exclusive home sites never materialized, however, and today the former

<sup>62</sup> Please note that this scenario is hypothetical and should not be taken as fact until supporting documentation can be found.

<sup>63</sup> John M. Olin to Edward T. Owen, July 30, 1892; John M. Olin Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

<sup>64</sup> For example, see John M. Olin to [Chris] Pfister, February 18, 1897; Olin Papers.

Olin farm is the site of Units 101-109 and 201-209 of the University Apartments complex.<sup>65</sup>

Whatever future the Olins and Raymers once may have envisioned for Langdon Street, both families eventually sold their property and moved elsewhere. The neighborhood had changed significantly since they built their homes in the late 1880s. Towards the eastern end of the block, on lots 7, 8 and 9, the massive Armory and Gymnasium had been completed in 1894. Five years later, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) acquired a lot on Langdon Street, east of the Birge house.<sup>66</sup> The YMCA's five-story Association Hall was erected at 740 Langdon Street in 1905.<sup>67</sup> In the meantime, another large-scale development, the State Historical Library, had been completed in 1900. The building covered eight city lots, with its northern façade fronting Langdon Street—just steps from the Olins' and Raymers' front doors.<sup>68</sup>

In October 1910, the regents authorized purchase of the Olin property, "one of the most valuable plots in the city." At that time, the board was considering plans to build women's dormitories on the lots occupied by the Olin house and the UW President's house.<sup>69</sup> Ownership transferred on October 22, 1910, when the regents paid \$55,000 to John and Helen Olin for their Langdon Street property.<sup>70</sup> The Olins moved to a new home at 130 N. Prospect Avenue in University Heights.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, George Raymer began planning to leave Madison permanently. He was 66 years old at the time of his daughter's wedding in 1909, and his health was failing.<sup>72</sup> After selling his 118-acre Eagle Heights farm to the university in 1911, he relocated to Pasadena, California, where he died in 1921.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, the Langdon Street house was vacated when the Raymers left for California, because by December 1911, the regents were discussing the possibility of altering "two private houses recently acquired [so] that they may be used as hospitals for sick students" (i.e., the Olin and Raymer houses).<sup>74</sup> Dane County Register of Deeds records show that Frances and George Raymer leased the property at 752 Langdon to the regents in 1914.<sup>75</sup> After Frances Raymer's death in October 1917, George Raymer conveyed the Langdon Street home to their daughter, Ethel Raymer Edmondson, in September 1918.<sup>76</sup> Mrs. Edmondson retained ownership for three years, selling the property to the regents in September 1921, just a few months after her father's death.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Leonard S. Smith, "Map of the J. M. Olin Farm," n. d. Original is in the files of the Division of Facilities Planning and Management, UW-Madison.

<sup>66</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 165:529. On March 18, 1899, Burr W. and Olive L. Jones sold lot 6 to the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association of the University of Wisconsin for \$5,200.

<sup>67</sup> F. O. Leiser, "Association Hall—The New University Y.M.C.A. Building," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 6 (May 1905): 279-81. Contracts called for completion of the building by October 1905.

<sup>68</sup> Carolyn J. Mattern, "A Centennial: Francis W. Grant and the Society's Headquarters Building," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 84 (Autumn 2000): 21-22.

<sup>69</sup> "University Legislation/Regents," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 12 (November 1910): 81.

<sup>70</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 227:420.

<sup>71</sup> Helen Remington Olin died in 1922; John Olin, in 1924. He bequeathed their home at 130 N. Prospect to the university as a memorial to his wife. It has served as the official residence of UW presidents and Madison campus chancellors since 1925.

<sup>72</sup> Almost two decades earlier, after selling his one-third interest in the *Madison Democrat*, Raymer had gone to California "to recuperate" in 1891. See "L. M. Fay at the Head," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 12, 1891.

<sup>73</sup> "Deaths," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 22 (August 1921): 247.

<sup>74</sup> "December Meeting of the Regents," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 13 (January 1912): 185-86. The two private houses were undoubtedly the former Olin and Raymer homes.

<sup>75</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Miscellaneous Books, 28:543. The regents signed a three-year lease with Frances and George Raymer of Pasadena, California, on June 13, 1914. By the same instrument, the Raymers granted the regents an option to buy the property on or before July 1, 1917.

<sup>76</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 268:230. Frances Raymer died on October 25, 1917, and was buried at Forest Hill Cemetery, Madison; see "Deaths," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 22 (August 1921): 247.

<sup>77</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 290:571. The regents paid \$45,500 for the property. Ethel Edmondson was a resident of Pasadena, California, when the deed was recorded.

In the meantime, the Olin house at 762 Langdon, purchased by the regents in 1910, had been converted into headquarters for the university's Department of Clinical Medicine. C. R. Bardeen, dean of the medical school, had been lobbying for a student infirmary since 1911.<sup>78</sup> The legislature that year failed to appropriate the full amount that had been requested by the university.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps it was for that reason that the regents abandoned their plan to build a women's dormitory on Langdon Street; instead, construction began late in 1911 on a women's dormitory on University Avenue (later Barnard Hall).<sup>80</sup> In any case, the Olin house remained standing, and in 1912, the regents granted its use to the Department of Clinical Medicine, appropriating \$15,000 for alterations. The funds were used to build a 66-foot-long addition onto the back of the house, for offices and a laboratory. The main floor of the addition was completed and furnished during the winter vacation of 1912-1913.<sup>81</sup>

By 1916, the student health facility, despite its spacious addition, had outgrown the Olin house, and the Raymer house next door at 752 Langdon was pressed into service as an infirmary.<sup>82</sup> Even these two buildings soon proved inadequate to meet the medical needs of the student body, however, and in 1917 the legislature appropriated \$50,000 towards the cost of a new infirmary.<sup>83</sup> The Raymer house continued to serve as an infirmary until 1919, after the new facility near Lorch Street was completed.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, the student clinic was to remain at the Olin house until the mid-1920s.<sup>85</sup>

## Homes of the Wisconsin Union

In its next incarnation, the old Raymer house became the home of the Wisconsin Union in October 1919. The Union had been homeless since 1916, when the YMCA board terminated its lease with the Union board for headquarters space.<sup>86</sup> By 1921, the Union was sharing the old Raymer House with the Federal Board for Vocational Education and the offices of the *Daily Cardinal*.<sup>87</sup> Union headquarters remained at 752 Langdon Street for six years, as fund-raising efforts for the Memorial Union Building continued. Early in October 1925, the Union offices, along with those of several other student organizations, relocated to the former UW president's house at 772 Langdon Street. Demolition of the Raymer House began soon afterwards (Figure 14).<sup>88</sup> When the Memorial Union site was dedicated on Armistice Day 1925, the Olin House (Figure 9) was still standing, although it soon would be razed to make way for the Union building's foundation.<sup>89</sup>

The ultimate home of the Wisconsin Union, the Memorial Union Building, was nearly complete when students returned to register for classes in September 1928.<sup>90</sup> A three-day celebration was planned to dedicate the building in October. A crowd of 5,000 gathered on October 5 at the

<sup>78</sup> C. R. Bardeen, "The Need of a Student Infirmary," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 12 (March 1911): 259-60.

<sup>79</sup> Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), 2:185.

<sup>80</sup> "Six Additions to the University," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 13 (November 1911): 94.

<sup>81</sup> C. R. Bardeen, "Medical Supervision at Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 14 (April 1913): 354.

<sup>82</sup> "The University Clinic," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 17 (May 1916): 300.

<sup>83</sup> "Campus Notes," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 19 (January 1918): 82.

<sup>84</sup> The 1919 Madison city directory identifies 752 Langdon Street as the "U. of W. Women's Infirmary."

<sup>85</sup> Madison city directories for 1919, 1921, and 1923 identify 762 Langdon as the "U. of W. Clinic."

<sup>86</sup> "Union Gets New Home This Year in Old Infirmary," *Daily Cardinal*, September 30, 1919; "Union Board Has Sponsored Many Interests," *Daily Cardinal*, April 22, 1923.

<sup>87</sup> *Madison City Directory... 1921* (Milwaukee: Wright Directory Co., 1921), 188.

<sup>88</sup> "Union Site Dedication Nov. 11; Plan Drive," *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 17, 1925.

<sup>89</sup> See Figure 9.

<sup>90</sup> "Activities," *The Badger* 44 (Madison: UW Class of 1930, 1929), 281.





**Figure 14**

The Raymer House was razed in 1925. The Wisconsin Union's headquarters, which had occupied the Raymer House since 1919, subsequently relocated to the former UW President's house. Source: *The 1927 Badger*.

"Lakeshore Terrace" to attend the opening ceremonies, which included several speeches from the Main Lounge balcony and a fireworks display (Figure 15).<sup>91</sup> The following morning, the varsity crew ran races in the bay just off the Terrace.<sup>92</sup>

## The Terrace takes form

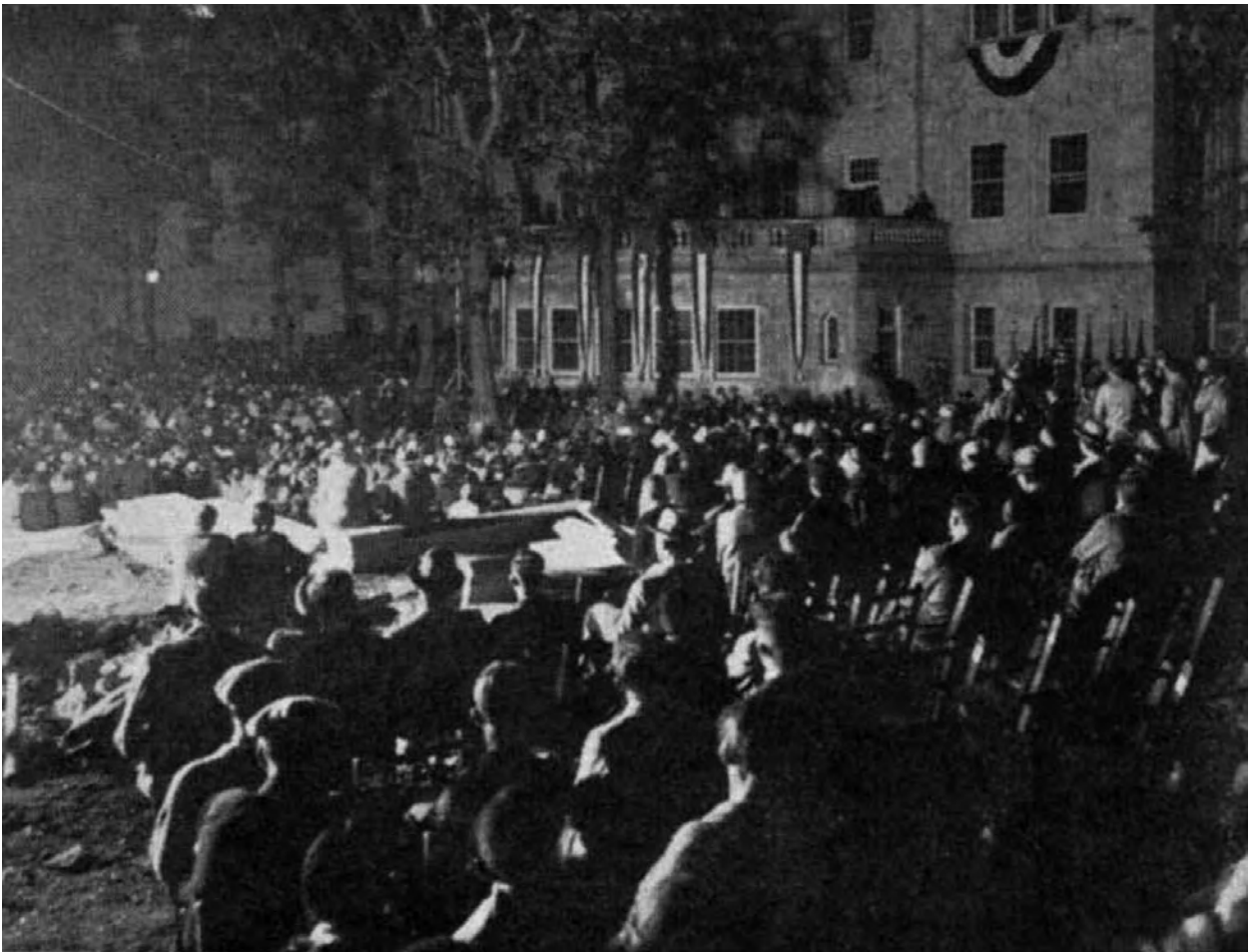
The fate of the area between the Memorial Union Building and Lake Mendota had been discussed for several years prior to the actual construction of the Terrace during the summer and fall of 1928. Three years earlier, architects Arthur Peabody and Alexander Eschweiler had disagreed on the placement of the Union building upon its site. Eschweiler (1865-1940), a distinguished Milwaukee architect of national repute, had argued that the Union should be placed closer to the lake, "to give it the proper setting from the Langdon street side." Peabody advocated placing the building close to Langdon, however, "because it would give a wide lawn between the Union and the lake as an undergraduate playground."<sup>93</sup> Peabody's vision prevailed. When approving the location of the Memorial Union in June 1925, the regents specified that the building should be sited in such a way as to leave room for a "long terrace stretching down from the Union to the Lake Mendota shore."<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> "Dedicate Memorial Union Building," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 30 (November 1928): 43, 46.

<sup>92</sup> "Union Opens Its 'Living Room' Doors," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 30 (October 1928): 18.

<sup>93</sup> University of Wisconsin Memorial Union Association, Executive Committee Minutes, Vol. 2 (1926-1950), April 9, 1925.

<sup>94</sup> "Approval Given by Regents to New Union Site," *Daily Cardinal*, June 27, 1925.



## Figure 15

The October 5, 1928, Memorial Union dedication ceremonies drew a crowd to the Terrace for speeches and fireworks.  
Source: *The 1930 Badger*.

Contemporary descriptions of plans for the Memorial Union refer to the terrace as an integral part of the project. “Toward the lake there will be a balcony [off the Main Lounge] with 160 feet of terrace sloping down to the lake shore for use for such events as Venetian night, Cap night, university sings, fetes and alumni gatherings,” reported the *Daily Cardinal* in April 1925.<sup>95</sup> “The central unit will contain on the ground floor, the tap room, billiard room, [and] trophy room, opening on the lake terrace,” the *Cardinal* reported several months later.<sup>96</sup> Describing the building plans in 1926, Porter Butts, secretary to the Memorial Union Building Committee, wrote, “On the lake side will be a colored tile terrace and a series of grass terraces down to the lake.”<sup>97</sup>

The landscape treatment depicted in the drawings from Arthur Peabody’s office was quite

<sup>95</sup> “Regents Favorably Receive Final Plans for Memorial Union,” *Daily Cardinal*, April 24, 1925.

<sup>96</sup> “Regents Approve Plans for New Memorial Union,” *Daily Cardinal*, September 30, 1925.

<sup>97</sup> Porter Butts, “The Union Building,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 27 (January 1926): 86.

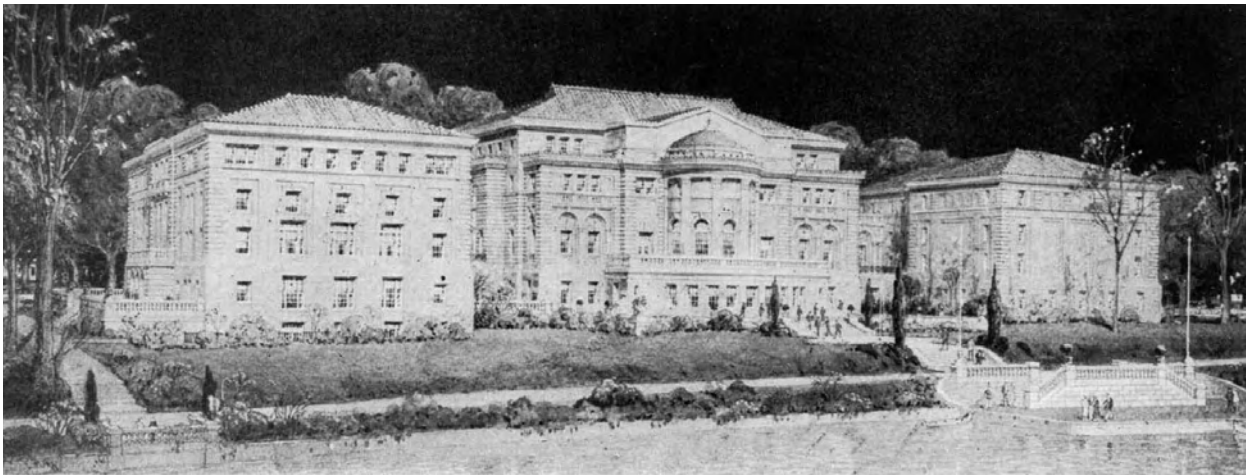


Figure 16

H. O. Jenkins' perspective drawing of the proposed north elevation of Memorial Union, 1926.  
Source: Memorial Union art collection.

formal, in keeping with his vision of the Memorial Union Building as an Italian Renaissance villa.<sup>98</sup> A perspective drawing of the Union's north elevation, dating from 1926, depicts a palatial staircase descending in stages from the center unit to the lake. At the shoreline, the staircase ends at a balustraded platform, from each side of which a set of stairs descends to the water. (This platform, with its bifurcated staircase, bears a resemblance to the grand staircase on the Langdon Street façade of the building). The 1926 rendering shows only a lawn and foundation plantings in the space between the Union building and the lake (Figure 16).<sup>99</sup>

Ultimately, a more informal (and less costly) treatment prevailed. In the fall of 1927, as the Commons unit neared completion, Peabody turned his attention to landscaping. "The architect has begun the study of the treatment of the grounds about the building," reported *The Capital Times* in November, "but on account of the approach of winter it is probable that actual work on the grounds will be deferred until spring."<sup>100</sup> Apparently, Peabody delegated the task of designing the Union grounds to his daughter, Charlotte. Charlotte Elizabeth Peabody (1899-1975) had graduated with the UW Class of 1921 (Figure 17).<sup>101</sup> In 1924, she enrolled in The Cambridge School of Domestic Architecture and Landscape Architecture, which had been established eight years earlier by two Harvard University faculty members to provide professional training for women. (Harvard at that time did not accept female applicants, and the landscape program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology had closed in 1900).<sup>102</sup> The Cambridge School offered a three-year course of study, upon

<sup>98</sup> Arthur Peabody, "The Memorial Union: Its Architecture Is Pure Italian," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 1, 1928; "Roman Villa Inspired Peabody," n. d., in Arthur Peabody Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, microfilm P82-5341, frame 1381.

<sup>99</sup> This rendering currently hangs over the west fireplace in the main lounge of the Memorial Union. A cartouche in the lower left corner bears the signature of H. O. Jenkins and the date 1926.

<sup>100</sup> "U. W. Building Work Is Going Ahead Rapidly," *The Capital Times*, November 1, 1927.

<sup>101</sup> "Seniors," *The Badger* 36 (Madison: UW Class of 1922, 1921), 139; "Deaths," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 77 (November 1975): 25; Social Security Death Index: <http://ssdi.rootsweb.com>

<sup>102</sup> Dorothy May Anderson, *Women, Design, and The Cambridge School* (West Lafayette, IN: PDA Publishers Corp., 1980), 21.

satisfactory completion of which students were awarded certificates.<sup>103</sup> Charlotte Peabody attended The Cambridge School for three years, from 1924 to 1927.<sup>104</sup> She then returned to Madison and took a position in the state architect's office, which at the time was headed by her father.<sup>105</sup> It was during this period that Charlotte Peabody became involved with designing the Terrace. In Arthur Peabody's memoir, written only six years after the Memorial Union's completion, her father recalled, "Charlotte had her chance with the terrace back of the [Memorial Union] building, leading to the lake. It was a very creditable bit of work."<sup>106</sup>

Work on the Terrace clearly had yet to begin on December 24, 1927, when a photograph was taken of the Union's northern façade. The picture shows a pile of bricks stacked on snowy ground near the east entrance to the Rathskeller (Figure 18).<sup>107</sup> As the year 1928 began, Porter Butts announced, "The grounds around the building will be developed next spring."

The plans include a broad 12-foot promenade walk in front of the building and the development of a flagstone terrace on the lake shore of the building. It is expected that this flagstone terrace will become one of the beauty spots of Madison and an open air gathering place for concerts, convocations, community sings, water spectacles such as Venetian night, the summer carnival and crew races. It is planned to have tables and chairs on this terrace, with refreshments being served from the soda grill within the building."<sup>108</sup>

In May, the Union Council set September 12, 1928, as the official opening date for the Memorial Union. "This means that the building will be fully equipped and completely organized for the use of



Figure 17

Charlotte E. Peabody, UW Class of 1921 and designer of the Memorial Union Terrace.  
Source: *The 1922 Badger*.

<sup>103</sup> Anderson, *The Cambridge School*, 23.

<sup>104</sup> The Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, [Cambridge, MA], Records, 1919-1986, Record Group 60, Box 1; Smith College Archives, Northampton, MA. (With thanks to Nanci A. Young, Smith College Archivist).

<sup>105</sup> Arthur Peabody, "My Story," Peabody Papers microfilm, frame 257.

<sup>106</sup> Arthur Peabody, "Short Resume of University Buildings," 1934, p. 44; UW Archives biographical file collection.

<sup>107</sup> "Christmas, 1927," *The Union News* 1 (January 1928): 4; in UW Archives series 26/8, Union Scrapbooks, vol. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Porter Butts, "Memorial Union Will Be Club for Students," *The Capital Times*, January 1, 1928; Annual Edition, University Section.



Figure 18

Exterior of Rathskeller, looking west, December 24, 1927. Note pile of building materials in foreground.  
Source: UW-Madison Archives.







Figure 20

Future site of the Terrace, Summer 1928. Source: *The 1930 Badger*.

all its facilities at that time,” the *Daily Cardinal* explained.<sup>109</sup>

A series of drawings prepared during the summer of 1928 by Charlotte Peabody documents the development of her plan for the Terrace.<sup>110</sup> Early in July, she drew a “rough survey of present contours,” a plan that shows the existing topography of the Terrace site (Figure 19).<sup>111</sup> A few days later, she completed grade sections for the site, showing how the slope from the Union building to the lake was to be terraced.<sup>112</sup>

Work on the project apparently didn’t start until mid-summer. “Contracts for grading the lake shore terrace and for constructing sidewalks to the Langdon street entrance have been let and work will begin in a few days,” the *Wisconsin State Journal* reported on July 19, 1928.<sup>113</sup> In September, Arthur Peabody approved two revisions to Charlotte’s plan.<sup>114</sup> When students returned that month to register for the fall semester, construction material was still piled atop the Terrace site (Figure 20).<sup>115</sup>

<sup>109</sup> “Union Will Open on September 12,” *Daily Cardinal*, June 2, 1928.

<sup>110</sup> The original drawings are on file at the Wisconsin Department of Administration’s Division of State Facilities, 101 W. Wilson St., Madison.

<sup>111</sup> C. Peabody, “Rough Survey of Present Contours in Rear of Memorial Union & Tripp Commons,” State Department of Engineering, Division of Architecture; approved by Arthur Peabody, July 3, 1928.

<sup>112</sup> C. Peabody, “Grade Sections in Rear of Memorial Union & Tripp Commons for Outdoor Development,” State Department of Engineering, Division of Architecture; approved by Arthur Peabody, July 6, 1928.

<sup>113</sup> “Install Equipment in Memorial Union/Will Soon Start Grading Terrace in Front of University Structure,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 19, 1928.

<sup>114</sup> C. Peabody, “Diagram of Rear Development for the Memorial Union & Tripp Commons-Revised,” approved by Arthur Peabody, September 7, 1928; “Diagram of Rear Development for the Memorial Union & Tripp Commons-2nd Rev.,” approved by Arthur Peabody, September 13, 1928.

<sup>115</sup> “Activities,” *The Badger* 44 (Madison: UW Class of 1930, 1929), 281.

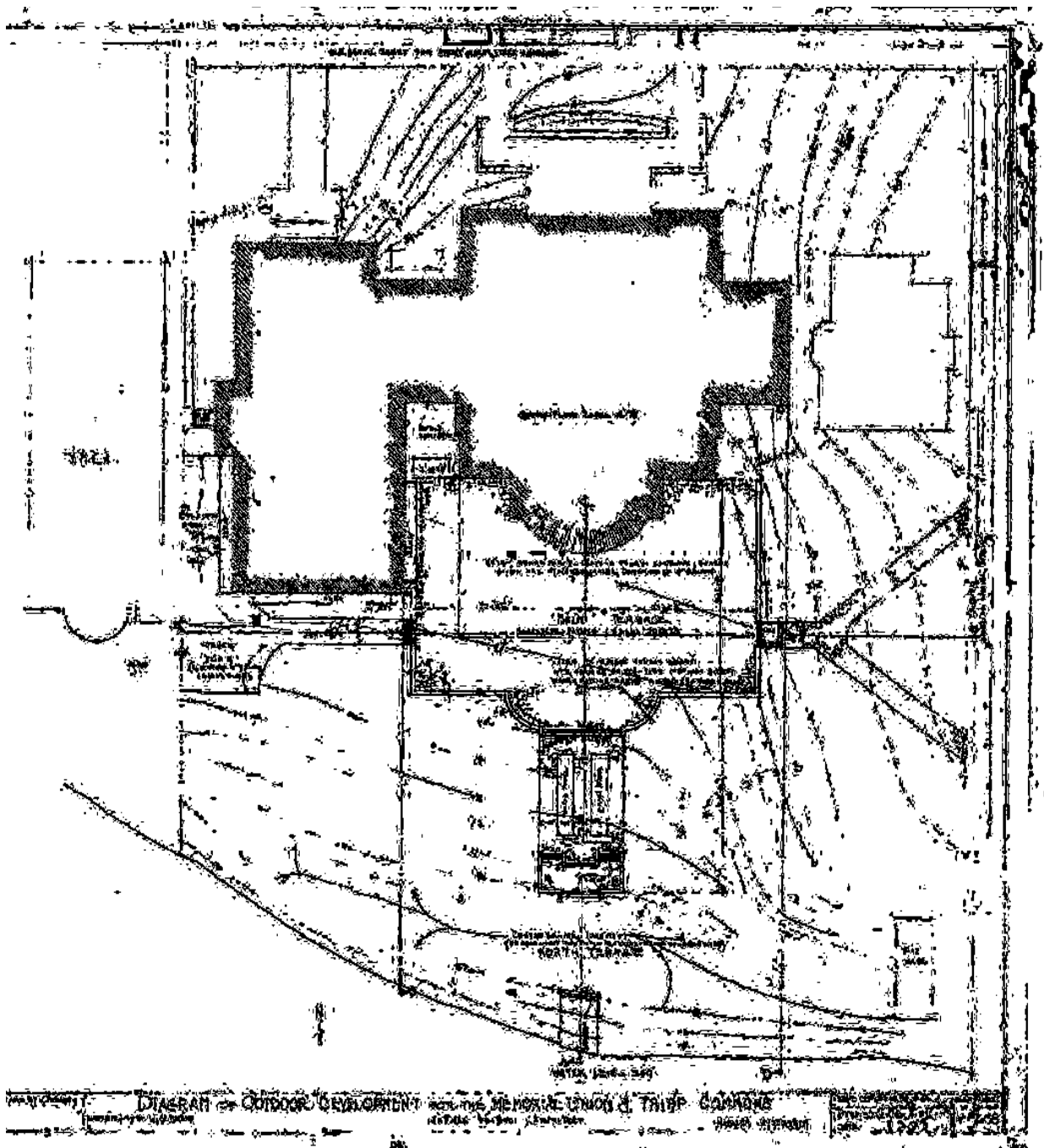


Figure 21

Charlotte Peabody's Diagram of Outdoor Development for the Memorial Union and Tripp Commons shows her design for a "Main Terrace" and "North Terrace."

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of State Facilities Management.



Figure 22

Taken in 1933, five years after the Terrace installation, this photograph looks southwest along one arm of the Y-shaped flagstone walk that once connected Park Street with the Terrace. Source: UW-Madison Archives.

In mid-September, newspapers reported that “construction of sidewalks and landscaping of the grounds will continue through September.”<sup>116</sup> Whether the flagstones and ashlar walls were completed in time for the formal dedication of the Memorial Union on October 5 is unknown. Figure 21 depicts the final stages of Charlotte Peabody’s plan for the “Main Terrace” and the “North Terrace.”<sup>117</sup> The photograph in Figure 22 shows one arm of the Y-shaped flagstone walk that once connected Park Street with the Terrace. (The picture was taken in 1933, about five years after the project was completed).<sup>118</sup>

Installation clearly had been achieved by the end of 1928, when the *Daily Cardinal* published an “official description” of the Memorial Union Building and its facilities by architect Arthur Peabody and interior designer Leon Pescheret:

The grounds on the lake side of the building are formed into an upper and a lower terrace. The first is paved with random flag stones and enclosed by low masonry walls.

<sup>116</sup> “Construction of Buildings for Education,” *The Oshkosh Northwestern*, September 12, 1928.

<sup>117</sup> C. Peabody, “Diagram of Outdoor Development for the Memorial Union & Tripp Commons.”

<sup>118</sup> UW Archives Photography Collection, Box 368, “Union Terrace” folder.

The lower terrace is less formal, being spread with gravel as representing a beach adjacent to the lake. The view from these terraces and from the building over the lake is hardly to be excelled.<sup>119</sup>

By the following spring, house director Porter Butts had some improvements in mind to ready the Terrace for its first warm-weather season. “Lake terrace will be the center of activities for the Memorial Union during the spring,” he announced in the *Daily Cardinal*. “Lighting facilities are available for the terrace at present, and fitting it out as an evening rendezvous...would entail little effort.” Butts also pointed out that “the shore of Lake Mendota could be made a suitable spot for swimming. As soon as the water warms up, the removal of rocks and debris which are there at present would be sought.”<sup>120</sup> On the evening of May 25, the Terrace hosted Venetian Night, a water spectacle involving gaily-lit shorelines and decorated boats. A few days later, counter service was initiated on the Terrace. “At a later date,” the *Cardinal* announced, “tables, which are now being constructed, will be placed on the terrace for the convenience of patrons.”<sup>121</sup> The *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, published by UW College of Agriculture students, featured the Terrace on its cover that spring (Figure 23), and Socialist congressman Victor Berger breakfasted there with his wife, Meta, during a visit to Madison in late June. Spotting the Bergers on the Terrace, a *Capital Times* columnist observed:

Scores of students, when they are unrushed by classes, go to a certain window on the terrace side of the Union building, seize a tray, order their toast, orange juice, and coffee, and walk carefully over the grass outlined stones to one of the little tables, and enjoy the view and coffee in idyllic contentment. As one student said, “Why dream of Heidelberg when you have this?”<sup>122</sup>

Despite all the positive publicity enjoyed by the Terrace during its opening season, apparently no journalist thought to ask the name of its designer. Perhaps everyone assumed that Arthur Peabody himself was responsible—a notion that the egotistical architect would have been disinclined to correct. In July 1929, Peabody introduced his creation to his peers with an article in *The American Architect*. (Leon Pescheret also contributed an article on the interior decoration of the Memorial Union Building). Peabody concluded his article with a few lines about the Terrace:

The description of the building cannot end without reference to the garden between it and the lake. The grounds are moulded to slope gently to the water in two terraces, the first paved with flagstones and enclosed with low stone walls. From this a broad pathway leads to the lower terrace, which, being close to the shore, is appropriately strewn with gravel to the point where it pitches down to the water. Here the landing stages for pleasure boats and canoes will float during the summer season and skating parties in the winter time will find convenient access to the ice. The terraces afford space for viewing such events as boat races, water carnivals and the like.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Arthur Peabody and Leon R. Pescheret, “The Union, How It Looks and Why,” *Daily Cardinal*, December 9, 1928, Sunday Magazine section.

<sup>120</sup> “Activity Planned on Lake Terrace,” *Daily Cardinal*, April 3, 1929.

<sup>121</sup> “Venetian Night Revived,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 30 (May 1929): 284; “Counter Service Made Available on Union Terrace,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 30, 1929.

<sup>122</sup> Ethel M. Max, “All Around the Town,” *The Capital Times*, June 28, 1929.

<sup>123</sup> Arthur Peabody, “The Memorial Union Building, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.,” *The American Architect* 136 (July 5, 1929): 7.



Figure 23

Close examination of this image affords a glimpse of the rustic hickory chairs that originally adorned the Terrace.  
Source: *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, June 1929.

Here, surely, was the perfect opportunity to acknowledge the designer of the Terrace; but Peabody doesn't mention the role that his daughter, Charlotte, played. Nor does he acknowledge the contributions made by architects Alexander Eschweiler and Paul Cret to planning the building and its site.

In 1930, however, an anonymous article, "The Terrace Idea," appeared in the July issue of *Architectural Progress*, a magazine published in Cincinnati. Accompanying the article were two photographs of the Memorial Union Terrace. While not specifically identifying the Terrace or its creator, the text describes problems that the designer of the Terrace would have encountered:

If the exposure of the contemplated terrace is on the north, and if it is to be used by large crowds of people, a grass terrace will be difficult if not impossible to maintain, no matter how 'natural' the committee in charge wishes to keep the landscape. If the members of such a committee will think it over, they will see that once a building is erected, the natural aspect of this landscape has been changed, and unless the building is to look as if it had been carelessly dropped on a piece of land, it must have a setting for a transition from the 'artificial' structure to its surroundings. We venture to say that, no matter how well the building has been studied to fit the topography, this transition cannot be effected in the majority of cases unless careful attention is given to the final grading of the surrounding area. This may mean terracing, especially if the building is on rapidly sloping ground... If tables for diners are to be set up, a paved terrace of some kind will usually be found preferable... Shade may be provided either by incorporating existing trees in the terrace, or by providing for those gay striped umbrellas, or by such new planting as seems suitable to the scheme.<sup>124</sup>

The author of "The Terrace Idea" almost certainly was Charlotte Peabody, who in the 1930s worked as assistant managing editor of *Architectural Progress*.<sup>125</sup>

A planting plan for the Terrace was completed in 1930 (Figure 24).<sup>126</sup> Its creator, G. William Longenecker (1899-1969), had earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture from the UW in 1924 and had begun working for the campus Department of Buildings and Grounds in 1926. He joined the faculty as an instructor in 1929, after earning his master's degree and shortly before designing the Terrace planting plan.<sup>127</sup> A few years later, he was responsible for the initial layout and planting of the UW Arboretum.<sup>128</sup> Longenecker's plan for the Terrace called for planting shrubs along the base of the low stone walls that divided the main terrace from the north terrace. A relatively simple plan, it includes only ten different species, many of them native to Wisconsin, including gray dogwood (*Cornus paniculata*), hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*), witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), and red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). Flanking the steps leading down to the north terrace, the plan called for climbing rose (*Rosa setigera*). To what extent Longenecker's plan actually was implemented is unknown.

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<sup>124</sup> "The Terrace Idea," *Architectural Progress* 4 (July 1930): 13.

<sup>125</sup> Masthead, *Architectural Progress* 4 (February 1930): 4; "Alumni Briefs," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 33 (July 1932): 318.

<sup>126</sup> Original plan is on files at the UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning and Management; see also UW Digital Collections: The Cultural Landscape of the UW-Madison Campus. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UW:UWCulturalLand>

<sup>127</sup> "University of Wisconsin (Madison Campus) Faculty Document 272, May 5, 1969: Memorial Resolutions of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin on the Death of Emeritus Professor G. William Longenecker," UW-Madison Archives biographical file collection; Letter from G. Wm. Longenecker to Prof. N. R. Elliott, University of Kentucky, July 17, 1942; in administrative files of UW Division of Facilities Planning and Management, 900 WARF Building, Madison.





## The first decade

The Terrace quickly became a favored gathering spot for students, parents, and alumni. At their fiftieth reunion in 1930, the Class of 1880 divided their time between the Union library and the Terrace, where they posed for a group portrait.<sup>129</sup> The following month, dancers attending the second annual Summer Session prom abandoned the overheated Great Hall to seek relief on the Terrace.<sup>130</sup> In 1934, Porter Butts captured the appeal of the Terrace, writing, “Where, other than at Wisconsin, may one step from university soil into a canoe, see the crews sweeping by, watch a glowing marine sunset while music plays from nearby student houses or the Union Terrace?”<sup>131</sup> The alumni magazine published a full-page photograph of the Terrace in July 1934, accompanied with the cutline, “A Favorite Summer Rendezvous.”<sup>132</sup> The magazine published another photograph in May 1935, labeled, “Idle Hours Spent on the Union Terrace: These students are as same as you and I.” It accompanied an article on an investigation of “subversive influences” at the university.<sup>133</sup> Coincidentally, the following month’s alumni magazine published an account of a notorious “lake party,” during which several members of a socialist students’ organization were “carried to the Union Terrace and given a dunking.”<sup>134</sup>

Meanwhile, as the depression wore on, the Union launched a variety of programs to help students cope with the rising cost of living. Among these initiatives was expanding food service at the Memorial Union, including lunch service in the Paul Bunyan Room, and further developing the Terrace as an outdoor dining and gathering place. House director Porter Butts counted on “the sheer power of attractiveness of these two units, coupled with their lower level of prices, to draw back a clientele that otherwise wouldn’t be here.”<sup>135</sup> In August 1935, the Memorial Union shut down for three weeks to renovate the cafeteria. When the students returned in the fall, the Terrace was opened to cafeteria patrons. “It is now possible to dine in perfect comfort on the lovely flag-stone area while enjoying a complete meal,” the alumni magazine reported. “Heretofore, food for terrace users could be obtained only from the Rathskeller.”<sup>136</sup>

As the end of its first decade approached, the Terrace manifested “the sheer power of attractiveness” on which Porter Butts had been counting. “Once again the Union Terrace has become the most popular student rendezvous on campus,” the *Wisconsin Alumnus* reported in June 1937. “The furniture has been spruced up, the umbrellas cleaned and the flag stones swept spick and span.”<sup>137</sup> Meanwhile, at the State Capitol, legislators that summer granted the regents authority to construct the Wisconsin Union Theater—an undertaking that would give the Terrace an entirely new aspect.<sup>138</sup>

## The Wisconsin Union Theater

Early designs for the Memorial Union building called for a three-part complex: a memorial unit, a

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<sup>128</sup> “Longenecker Named Arboretum Head,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 35 (December 1933): 75, 89; “Professor G. William Longenecker,” *Arboretum News* 18 (Spring 1969): 1.

<sup>129</sup> “Unanimously Voted—The Best Ever,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 31 (July 1930): 406.

<sup>130</sup> “When East Met West,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 32 (October 1930): 7.

<sup>131</sup> Porter Butts, “The University Adds the Lake to Its Campus,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 35 (January 1935): 100.

<sup>132</sup> “A Favorite Summer Rendezvous,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 35 (July 1934): 286.

<sup>133</sup> “Concerning the ‘Red’ Investigation,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 36 (May 1935): 232-33.

<sup>134</sup> “Student Mob Breaks Up Socialist Meeting, Dunks Student Speakers,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 36 (June 1935): 275, 291.

<sup>135</sup> Porter Butts, “Seven Years of Progress,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 36 (June 1935): 264.

<sup>136</sup> “Up and Down the Hill,” *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 37 (October 1935): 1.

<sup>137</sup> “Up and Down the Hill,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 38 (June 1937): 333.

<sup>138</sup> “Regents Empowered to Borrow,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 38 (July 1937): 411.



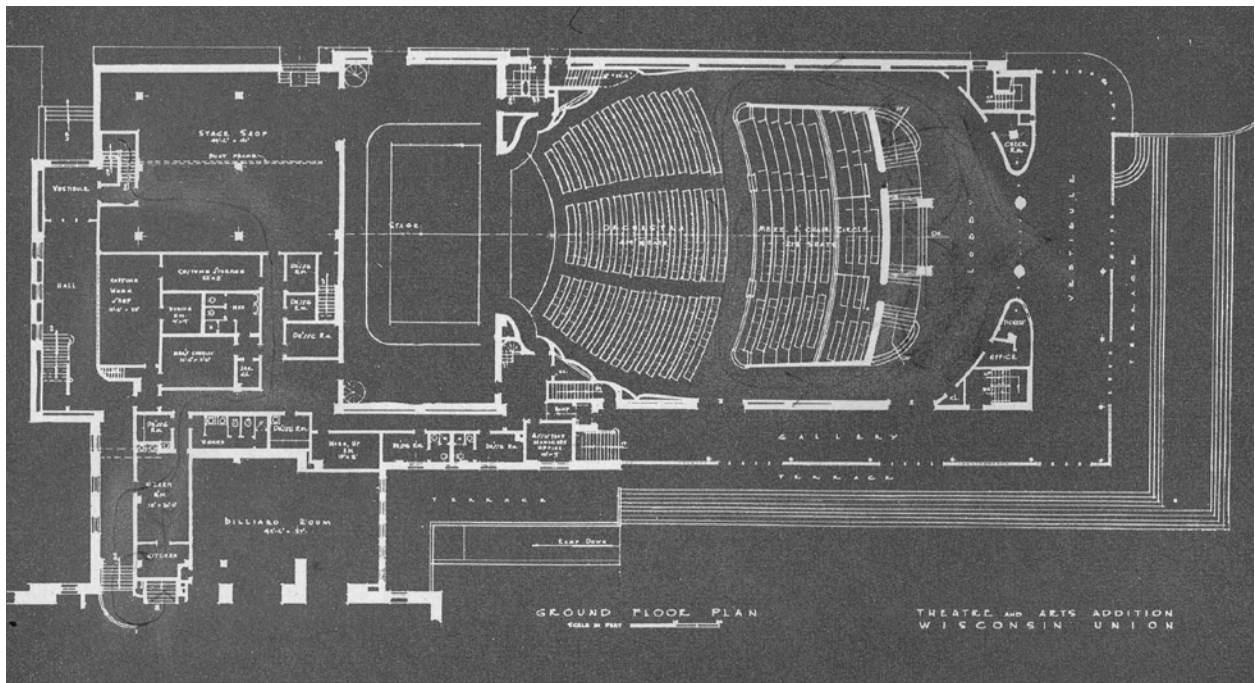


Figure 26

Ground floor plan, Wisconsin Union Theater; Michael Hare, architect. The theater's "outside promenade" served as a landing for an expansive course of steps that wrapped around its eastern and northern facades. By providing access to the lakeshore and the Terrace, the theater promenade gave an entirely new aspect to the space between the Memorial Union and Lake Mendota. Source: *For a Finer Wisconsin* (Madison, 1938).

commons wing, and a theater.<sup>139</sup> "Not the least important attribute of the unit plan is that the units can be built one at a time as the acquisition of funds permits," noted Porter Butts in 1926.<sup>140</sup> Lacking the funding to build all three units and eager to start construction, the Union building committee decided in April 1926 to press forward with the first two units.<sup>141</sup> Theater wing construction would be postponed for another decade. A site plan for the long-awaited addition to the Memorial Union was prepared in June 1937 by the Office of the State Chief Engineer (Figure 25). The footprint of the new building, initially called "the theater and arts addition," filled the space occupied by the Old Union Building (formerly the UW president's house) and extended toward the lake well beyond the northern edge of the Terrace flagstones. To prepare the site for construction, the Old Union Building was scheduled for demolition in January 1938.<sup>142</sup> In a retrospective article published by the *Daily Cardinal* a few months beforehand, State Historical Museum director Charles E. Brown related that a grove of trees once had stood on the site of the president's house. Students

<sup>139</sup> "The Plans for the Memorial Union Building," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 23 (January 1922): Memorial Union Supplement, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Porter Butts, "The Union Building," *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 27 (January 1926): 85.

<sup>141</sup> "Two Units of Union To Be Started Soon in Spite of Deficit—Committee Report," *Daily Cardinal*, April 15, 1926.

<sup>142</sup> Richard J. Davis, "Residents of Old Union Assigned to New Quarters," *Daily Cardinal*, December 1, 1937. According to this account, the date scheduled for demolition was January 8, 1938.

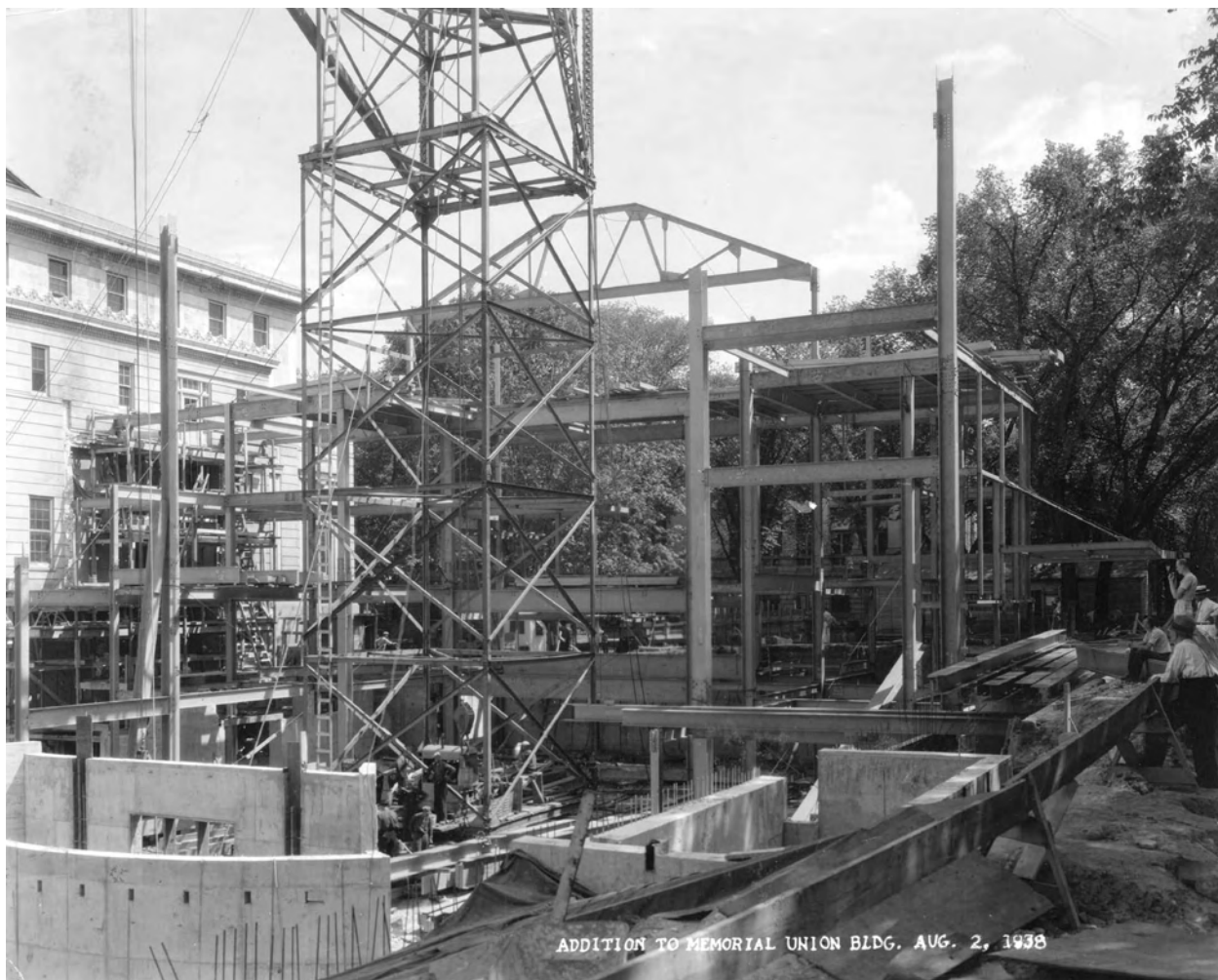


Figure 27

Wisconsin Union Theater under construction, looking southeast, August 1938. Source: UW-Madison Archives.

gathered here for picnics and “keg parties,” Brown said, adding, “That was the place where social activities were held, and closer to the lakeshore was the ‘neckers’ spot.”<sup>143</sup> Several trees growing on the sloping lawn between the Terrace and Park Street—perhaps remnants of the old picnic grove—were removed to make way for the new addition. The Y-shaped flagstone path across the lawn also disappeared.

A university bulletin issued in January 1938 envisioned the building as it would appear after construction. The auditorium would extend along Park Street toward the lake shore, “taking full advantage of the terrace and lake views.” On the ground floor, “a long promenade keeps the lake terrace in view on one side and provides a wall for art exhibitions on the other. In spring and summer, the whole flagged terrace, with its café tables under the trees, will be a standing invitation to

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<sup>143</sup> Ruth Goren, “Old Union Razing Recalls Keg Parties and Teas, Former Presidential Mansion, Student Hangout,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 29, 1937.

theater patrons.”<sup>144</sup> Excavation for the building’s foundation was in progress by March 1938, and the alumni magazine reported the following spring that “the new theater is really taking shape.”<sup>145</sup> When the Wisconsin Union Theater opened for public inspection in early October 1939, nearly 17,000 visitors passed through the building. On October 9, the theater hosted a formal banquet prior to the first theatrical performance, a Theatre Guild production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, “the reigning couple of the American stage.”<sup>146</sup> During the evening, “the wide foyers overlooking Lake Mendota, and the outside promenade, were crowded at intermission time by an enthusiastic audience.”<sup>147</sup>

The “outside promenade” served as a landing for an expansive course of steps that stretched across the eastern and northern facades of the theater, somewhat resembling the *crepidoma* of a Greek temple (Figure 26). By providing access to the lakeshore and the Terrace, the theater promenade, in effect, became an extension of the Terrace, giving the space between the Memorial Union and the lakeshore an entirely new dimension. Originally, the western edge of the Terrace had been flanked by a leafy, park-like space that in previous years had constituted the back yard of the UW president’s house. With construction of the new addition (Figure 27), the view from the Terrace changed dramatically. Suddenly, the “Monte Carlo of Wisconsin” was sharing its space with a modernistic building of a decidedly urban stamp (Figure 28).<sup>148</sup> Arthur Peabody’s beloved Italian Renaissance architecture could not accommodate the state-of-the-art performing arts facility envisioned by the building’s planners. Architect Michael M. Hare (1909-1968), then a junior partner in the New York architectural firm, Corbett and McMurray, who had helped design New York’s Rockefeller Center, faced stiff opposition from the state architect’s office. After a number of confrontations and compromises, Hare’s plan prevailed. He repositioned the main entrance to face the lake, to take advantage of the view.<sup>149</sup> Hare’s design for the approaches to the building further suggests his sensitivity to the site, and his awareness of the Terrace as a integral adjunct to the theater.

## War and peace

If the Union Theater cast a shadow over the Terrace, few of its patrons seemed to object. As war broke out in Europe, the Terrace continued to provide its customary diversions, along with a few new twists. Charles E. Brown, who with Dorothy Moulding Miller had organized the Wisconsin Folklore Society in 1938, initiated “sunset folklore meetings” on the Terrace. Attendees included Einar Haugen, the era’s foremost authority in Scandinavian-American studies, dialect scholar Frederic G. Cassidy, and musicologist Helene Stratman-Thomas.<sup>150</sup> In January 1940, the Wisconsin Hoofers flooded the Terrace flagstones to create a skating rink (Figure 29). “The latest campus fun spot was formally opened with an ice carnival,” reported the *Wisconsin Alumnus*.<sup>151</sup> “Music, specialty skaters, fun and food were featured. Even the waiters were on skates.” The following month, the 1940 Winter Carnival featured “an ice cabaret on the glass-smooth Memorial Union terrace.”<sup>152</sup>

<sup>144</sup> For a *Finer Wisconsin*, Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, Serial No. 2070, General Series No. 2286 (January 1938), n. p.

<sup>145</sup> “The Wisconsin Union,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 39 (April 1938): 264; “The Theater,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 40 (April 1939): 240-41.

<sup>146</sup> *Opening: Wisconsin Union Theater, University of Wisconsin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1939), 7.

<sup>147</sup> “The Wisconsin Union,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 41 (November 1939): 44.

<sup>148</sup> Comparisons of the Terrace to Monte Carlo began to appear in campus periodicals in 1930. See “Wisconsin’s Monte Carlo,” *The Union News* 1 (April 1930); “Lake Terrace Attracts Leisure Lovers,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 6, 1930.

<sup>149</sup> Porter Butts interview by Donna Hartshorne, UW Archives Oral History Project, 1979; tape index, 15. See also Fannie Taylor, “A Building for the Future,” *Wisconsin Academy Review* 36 (March 1990): 7, 9.

<sup>150</sup> James P. Leary, comp., *Wisconsin Folklore* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 27.

<sup>151</sup> “Up and Down the Hill,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 41 (February 1940): 190.

<sup>152</sup> “Winter Carnival Dates Feb. 5-11,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 41 (February 1940): 152-53.





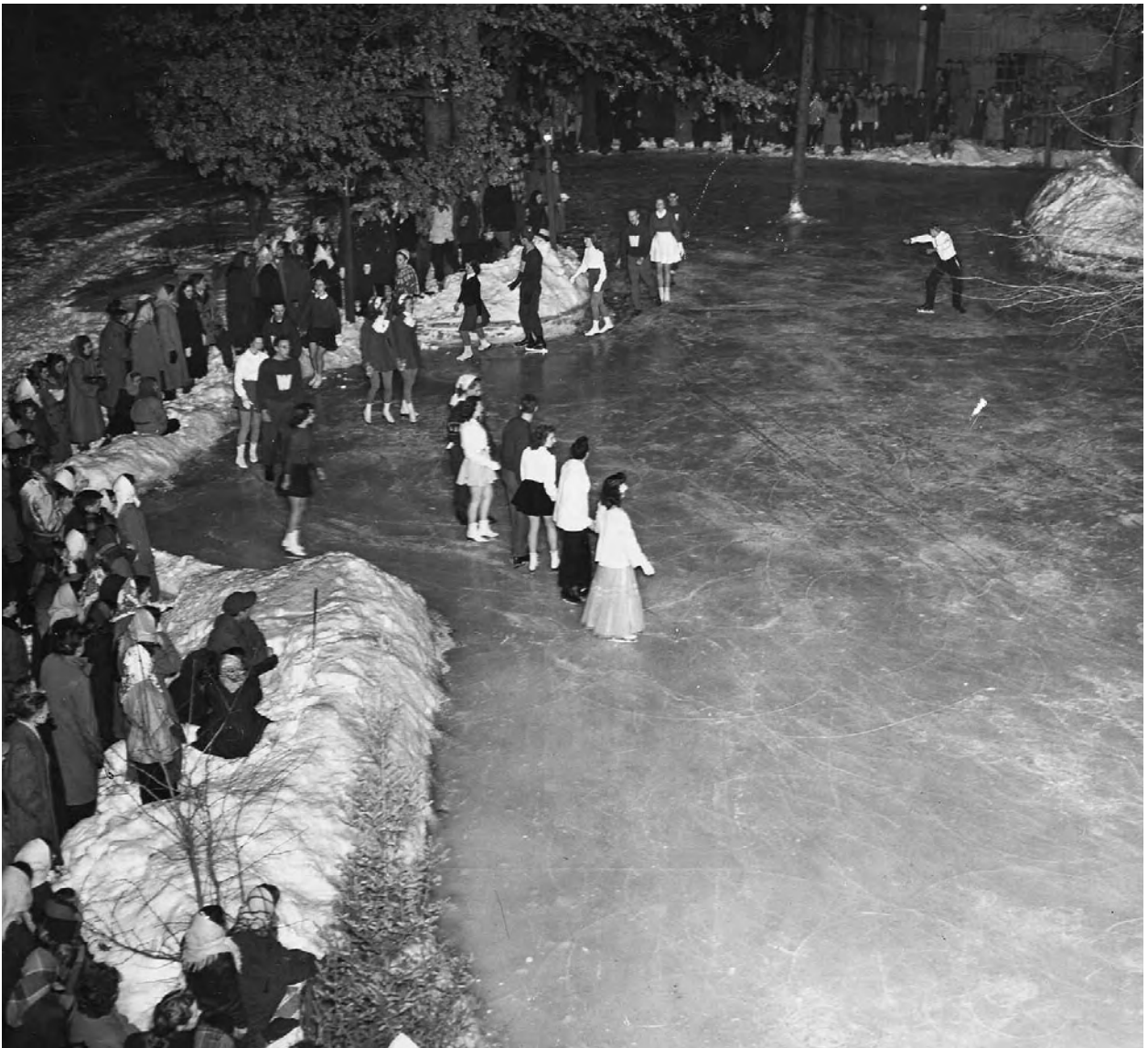
## Figure 28

Morning sun accentuates the bold silhouette of the Wisconsin Union Theater, in this ca. 1945 photograph looking southwest from the lower Terrace (foreground). Source: *The 1946 Badger*.

Although the United States officially maintained neutrality during the first two years of the war in Europe, the attack on Pearl Harbor forced an immediate declaration of war against Japan on December 8, 1941. “The Memorial Union...became a counting house of death as the lounge radio stopped its flow of afternoon music to pour out the tidings of war,” reported the *Daily Cardinal*.<sup>153</sup> Four days after Pearl Harbor, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States, and Congress passed a declaration of war against the Axis powers of Europe. The university took immediate action to support the war effort. The University Personnel Council initiated a counseling program for the 2,000 male students who found themselves struggling to make informed decisions about military service.<sup>154</sup> By the fall of 1943, the civilian student body numbered about 4,500—only half as large as it had been the previous year.<sup>155</sup> The campus population as a whole increased

<sup>153</sup> David Gelfan, “Campus Jolted by News,” *Daily Cardinal*, December 9, 1941; quoted in E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, *The University of Wisconsin, A History: 1925-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 3:407.

<sup>154</sup> Cronon and Jenkins, *UW: A History*, 3:410.



## Figure 29

In January 1940, the Wisconsin Hoofers flooded the Terrace to create a skating rink. The following month, a winter carnival featured “an ice cabaret on the glass-smooth Memorial Union terrace.”

Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.

dramatically, however, as groups of service men and women arrived to receive special training. Less than a year after Pearl Harbor, the campus was housing and feeding 40 percent more students than in pre-war times.<sup>156</sup> The Memorial Union played an integral role, providing meals for upwards of a thousand military personnel daily.<sup>157</sup> The Union also issued special guest cards to soldiers, and the Wisconsin Union Service Committee set up an information center near the main entrance.<sup>158</sup> Meanwhile, “Fighting Badgers” overseas wrote letters home to *Wisconsin Alumnus* editor Jeanne Lamoreaux, asking her to “give their regards to the Union Terrace.”<sup>159</sup> Pre-war customs were modified to fit the times. “As long as the Union Terrace remains so inviting, and as long as there are alumni in and around Madison who are able to come back, there will be reunions,” predicted the *Alumnus* in 1943. “This year, reunions will be simplified and streamlined...alumni will gather for informal breakfasts on the Union Terrace, an innovation of the past few years which has proved exceptionally popular.”<sup>160</sup>

Terrace patrons enjoyed another innovation during the summer of 1943, when a combination shuffleboard court and dance floor—subsequently dubbed the “Stardeck”—was installed. Dancing to the music of a jukebox was offered on Friday and Saturday nights.<sup>161</sup> As mobilization decimated the ranks of civilian students, it also reduced the size of the Union’s staff. A sign was posted on the Terrace: “Those who are able—clear their own table.”<sup>162</sup> The annual alumni dinner, held in May 1944 on the Terrace, was “a serve-yourself arrangement this year because of the shortage of waiters.”<sup>163</sup> As the war continued, the Terrace remained a popular spot for military personnel. “The Memorial Union...proves to be the hub of all activity when the sailors emerge on weekend liberty,” noted the 1945 *Badger* yearbook (Figure 30). “The lonely sailor can always count on meeting a girl at the Union. The Rathskeller, the billiard rooms and the bowling alley satisfy all in the winter, while the Union Terrace takes over [in] the summer.”<sup>164</sup>

The warm months of 1945 brought days of joyous celebration to the Terrace. May 8, 1945, was declared “VE Day” as Allied forces achieved victory in Europe. “VJ Day” followed less than four months later, when the Japanese signed their formal surrender on September 2, 1945. As the university returned to its pre-war routines, campus administrators began to prepare for a post-war enrollment boom. The lop-sided female-to-male student ratio that had prevailed during the war years started to return to normal. “The ratio of coeds to men students is still two to one,” reported the *Wisconsin Alumnus* in November 1945, “but the women are gradually taking a back seat to the veterans on campus.”<sup>165</sup> By 1946, the student body had swelled to some 18,000 members, and the Memorial Union was bursting at the seams. “Every chair in the building is occupied almost every hour of the day,” the *Wisconsin Alumnus* reported. “The small theater [Play Circle] has been thrown open to give students a place to sit during the lunch hour. Extra folding chairs have been put in every open corridor and lobby space.” Two Quonset huts were installed at the eastern end of the Commons unit, where they provided office space for the campus humor publication, *The Octopus*,

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<sup>155</sup> Cronon and Jenkins, *UW: A History*, 3:436.

<sup>156</sup> Cronon and Jenkins, *UW: A History*, 3:421.

<sup>157</sup> Cronon and Jenkins, *UW: A History*, 3:425.

<sup>158</sup> Cronon and Jenkins, *UW: A History*, 3:425, 435.

<sup>159</sup> Jeanne Lamoreaux, “The Morning Mail,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 44 (April 1943): 195.

<sup>160</sup> “Reunions Are Coming!” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 44 (April 1943): 204.

<sup>161</sup> “Moonlight and Music and You,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 45 (October 15, 1943): 9.

<sup>162</sup> “The Campus,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 45 (October 15, 1943): 7.

<sup>163</sup> “Alumni Program,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 45 (June 1944): 5.

<sup>164</sup> “Naval Training School: Radio, V-12,” *The Badger* 60 (Madison: UW Class of 1945, 1945), 318.

<sup>165</sup> “An Unofficial Though Easily Qualifying Badger Beauty,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 47 (November 20, 1945): cover.

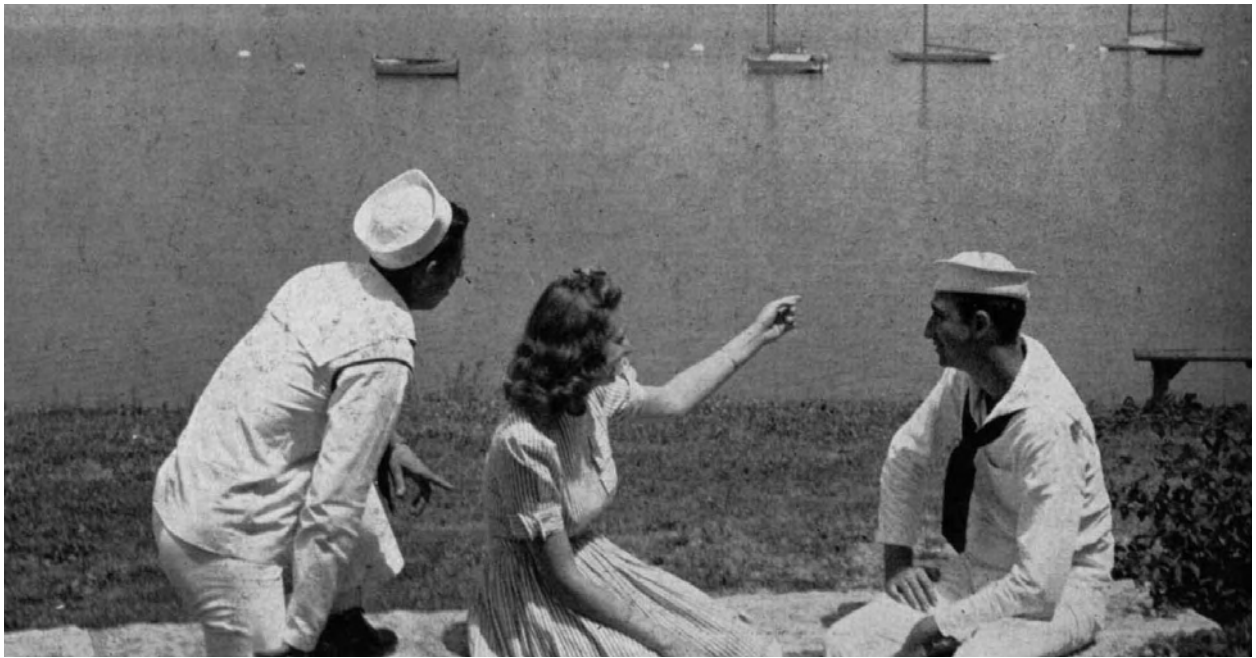


Figure 30

Sailors on liberty from the U. S. Navy training schools headquartered on campus enjoy the view from the Terrace, ca. 1944-45. Source: *The 60th Anniversary Badger* (1945).

and an extra meeting room.<sup>166</sup>

Director Porter Butts and his colleagues began planning to add meeting rooms and double the size of the cafeteria. Butts agreed with Harvard University president James B. Conant that “more souls are saved around the dinner table than through courses.”<sup>167</sup> To accommodate expansion along the east side of the Commons unit, the regents had persuaded the directors of the YMCA next door to relinquish a strip of land three-and-a-half feet wide along the western edge of the Association Hall property. In exchange, the regents gave the YMCA a three-and-a-half-foot strip of land along the western edge of the Armory and Gymnasium site. This transaction, which took place in February 1944, paved the way constructing a planned underground storage and scullery addition to the Memorial Union.<sup>168</sup> The highly regarded Madison architect, William V. Kaeser (1906-1995), completed concept drawings for a remodeling project in 1946.<sup>169</sup> Kaeser, an ardent proponent of

<sup>166</sup> “Building Program Moves Slowly,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 48 (September 1946): 5; Ted Crabb, personal communication, September 26, 2007.

<sup>167</sup> “Wisconsin’s Memorial Union Now Comes of Age,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 48 (November 1946): 13; Porter Butts, “The Real ‘Why’ of Wisconsin’s Student Union,” 13.

<sup>168</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Miscellaneous Books, 174:229-32.

<sup>169</sup> Kaeser’s drawings are on file at the administrative office of the Memorial Union’s Technical Maintenance unit. Kaeser, an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, is perhaps best known for his innovative residential designs. See Anne E. Biebel, “The Residential Architecture of William V. Kaeser,” master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985. During World War II, Kaeser served as area engineer at the Badger Ordnance Works near Baraboo. See “Fighting Badgers,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 46 (October 15, 1943): 19. In 1951, Kaeser formed a partnership with Arthur M. McLeod, and they collaborated on the design of the Hillel Foundation headquarters at 611 Langdon Street (1954) and the UW Limnology Laboratory (1963).

<sup>170</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication.

modern architecture, intended that the exterior of the remodeled Commons unit should complement the style of the Union Theater.<sup>170</sup> Kaeser's concept would remain unrealized for almost a decade, however. Cafeteria expansion was postponed when enrollment subsequently began to decline, and with it, the Union's ability to finance the project.<sup>171</sup>

By March 1948, more than 14,000 persons were entering the Union daily, and many of them were seeking dinner tables.<sup>172</sup> The line outside the Union cafeteria at lunch time frequently stretched 200 yards.<sup>173</sup> To ease crowding, university crews dismantled a mess hall at the Badger Ordnance Works near Baraboo and reassembled it on the southeast corner of Breese Terrace and University Avenue. After its grand opening in October 1947, the "emergency cafeteria" began serving some 4,500 meals daily. Although the cafeteria expansion project had been put on hold, other renovations went forward at the Memorial Union, adding two new offices on the third floor (the modern-day fifth floor), a new central accounting office on the second floor, and a coat check room on the ground floor near the Rathskeller.<sup>174</sup> "Workers in the Memorial Union are hurrying along renovation in the hopes of presenting as new a face as possible to reuniting Badgers," observed the *Wisconsin Alumnus* in June 1948.<sup>175</sup>

The following year, on November 4, 1949, a crowd of 3,000 squeezed onto the Terrace expecting to see and hear Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of India. Earlier in the day, Nehru had toured the campus with his daughter, Indira Gandhi. Following his speech to a capacity audience inside the Union Theater, Nehru moved to the balcony to address those gathered outside.<sup>176</sup> Nehru's audience stood on the site of a proposed outdoor theater. "A future outdoor theater is planned with its stage at the lake shore, the terrace at the lakeside of the lobby becoming a part of the amphitheater," according to a booklet commemorating the theater's tenth anniversary. "Thus the lobby and gallery will serve both indoor and outdoor theaters."<sup>177</sup> The plan later was dropped.

## Cafeteria expansion, redux

At the other end of the Terrace, the long-awaited Memorial Union cafeteria expansion project finally went forward in 1954, with preliminary plans by William V. Kaeser and his partner, Arthur M. McLeod. Funding for the project had become available at last, but other challenges arose.<sup>178</sup> In September 1954, the YMCA sold its property at 740 Langdon Street to the UW Foundation, which planned to raze the Y's Association Hall to make way for an open mall between the Union and the Armory-Gymnasium.<sup>179</sup> The mall was an integral part of William Hagenah's visionary plan for developing the lower campus (Figure 31).<sup>180</sup> The following spring,

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<sup>171</sup> Porter Butts, "Proposal Concerning the Remodeling and Expansion of the Union Cafeteria Floor and Main Kitchen," September 19, 1955; administrative files of Wisconsin Union emeritus director Ted Crabb.

<sup>172</sup> "Busy Union," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 49 (August 1948): 8.

<sup>173</sup> "Shortages Plague University Life," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 48 (November 1946): 11.

<sup>174</sup> "Looking Ahead to Next Fall," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 48 (July-August 1947): 16.

<sup>175</sup> "Reunion Weekend Will Lure Many Alumni to Campus," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 49 (June 1948): 45.

<sup>176</sup> "Pandit Nehru and Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 51 (December 1949): 14; University of Wisconsin News Service, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, Visits Wisconsin... November 4, 1949* (Madison: UW News Service and University Committee on Lectures and Convocations, 1949).

<sup>177</sup> *The Story of the Wisconsin Union Theater* (Madison, 1949), 13.

<sup>178</sup> Butts, "Proposal," September 19, 1955.

<sup>179</sup> Dane County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, Deed Books, 617:512. The UW Foundation paid \$77,860 for the property.

<sup>180</sup> William J. Hagenah, "Wanted: Front Door for the University," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 47 (February 1946): 11; "Up and Down the Hill," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 47 (June 1946): 4.

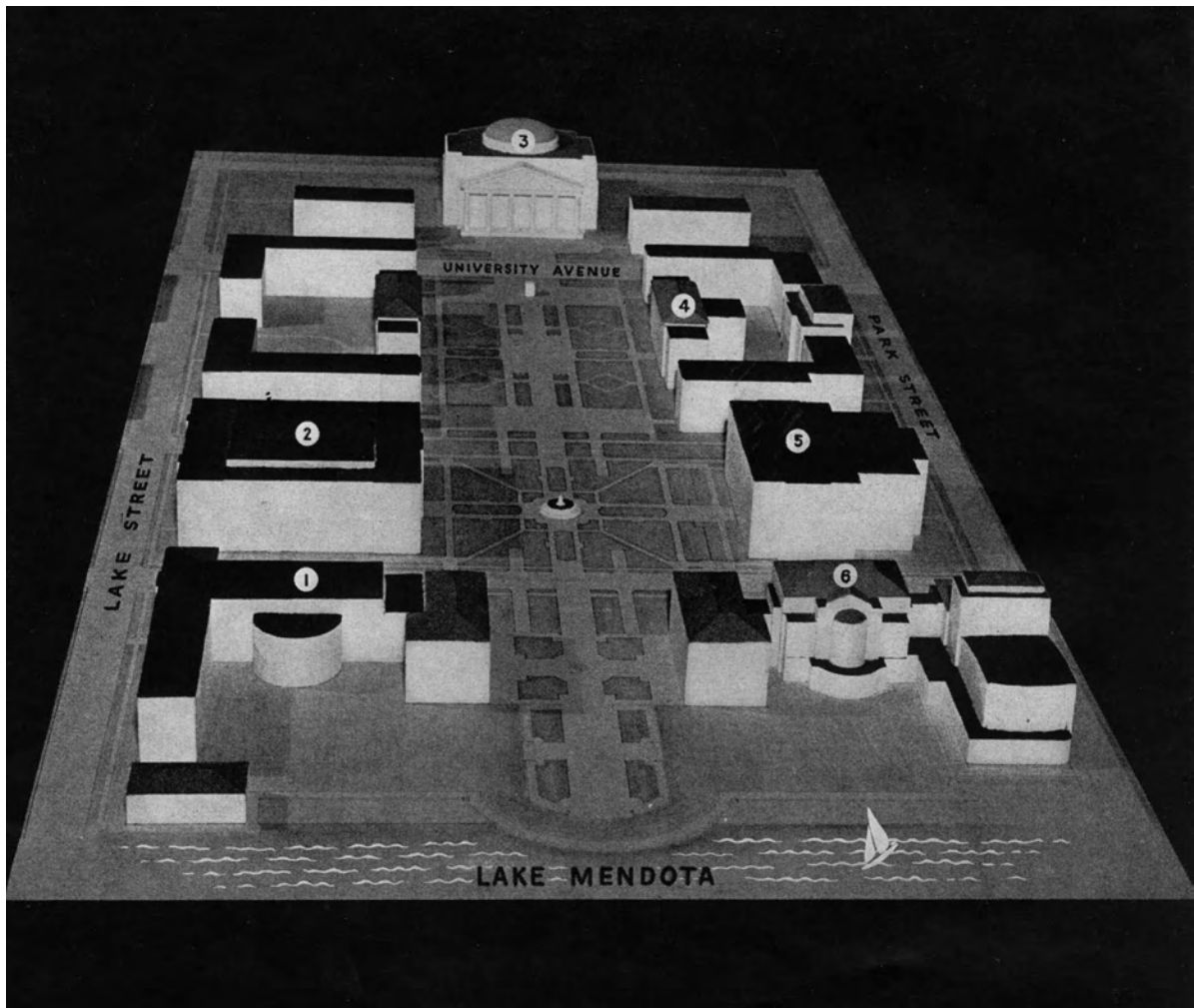


Figure 31

A scale model of William J. Hagenah's Lower Campus development plan shows a broad plaza stretching from Lake Mendota to University Avenue along the current route of Murray Street.  
Source: *Your Help is Needed Now...in 1945* (Madison: 1945).

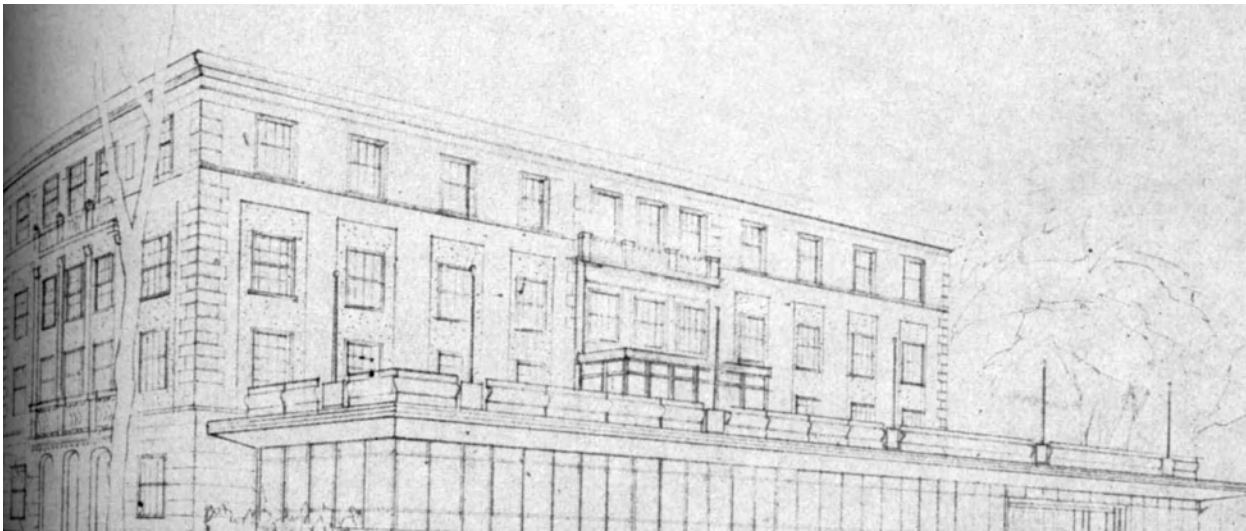
the Foundation offered to deed the YMCA lot to the university—on condition that “no structure substantially above the general level of the surrounding grounds shall be erected on the said property.” The regents voted to accept the offer on April 16, 1955.<sup>181</sup> In January 1956, the regents approved a proposal to double the cafeteria’s seating capacity with a \$300,000 addition.<sup>182</sup> The project also called for a new exit that would provide access to the Terrace from the cafeteria.<sup>183</sup> The Madison firm of Weiler, Strang and McMillin won the cafeteria project contract. Examination of

<sup>181</sup> University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, Record of the Meetings of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin, 1848-1971, series 1/1/1, University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives; minutes of April 16, 1955.

<sup>182</sup> “Compendium,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 57 (January 15, 1956): 11.

<sup>183</sup> “A Union Cafeteria Sampler,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 84 (January 1983): 22.





**Figure 32**

Architect's drawing of proposed cafeteria addition to east wing of Memorial Union, looking northwest. Madison architect William V. Kaeser, an ardent proponent of modern design, completed concept drawings for the project in 1946. The firm of Weiler, Strang and McMillin subsequently completed the project in 1957.  
Source: *Wisconsin Alumnus*, December 15, 1956.

the architect's drawings for the addition revealed that the canopy of the new addition would extend eastward over the lot line of the former YMCA property by three and one-half feet, however. Representatives from the Foundation and the Union met in February 1956 to consider the matter. Ultimately, the Foundation gave its blessing to the overhang, but recommended that the university pursue funding to build an underground delivery/loading dock for the Union, to preserve the appearance of the land given by the Foundation for an open mall.<sup>184</sup> Irwin Maier, a UW Foundation representative at the meeting, further suggested that the area underneath the overhang "be attractively developed for café tables and [a] walk-way...including an examination of photographs of decorative paved plazas of several Italian cities."<sup>185</sup> Completion of the cafeteria addition was scheduled for June 1957 (Figure 32).<sup>186</sup> In summer 1956, the YMCA Association Hall was demolished (Figure 33).

Meanwhile, as work began on the Memorial Union cafeteria expansion, stone from the walls of the Commons unit was salvaged to use along the lakefront as riprap.<sup>187</sup> Flagstones adjacent to the western wall of the Commons unit were relocated to the lawn north of the cafeteria, where they were used to create a new paved area.<sup>188</sup>

The days of flagstones on the Terrace were numbered, however. While aesthetically pleasing,

<sup>184</sup> Porter Butts, "Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Special Committees of the University of Wisconsin Foundation and the Memorial Union Trustees Appointed to Consider the Relation of the Proposed Addition to the Union Cafeteria and Kitchen to the Proposed Mall between the Union and the Gymnasium," February 8, 1956; administrative files of Wisconsin Union emeritus director Ted Crabb.

<sup>185</sup> Butts, "Minutes of the Joint Meeting," February 8, 1956.

<sup>186</sup> "The Changing Campus: II," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 58 (December 15, 1956): 19.

<sup>187</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication.

<sup>188</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication, September 26, 2007.

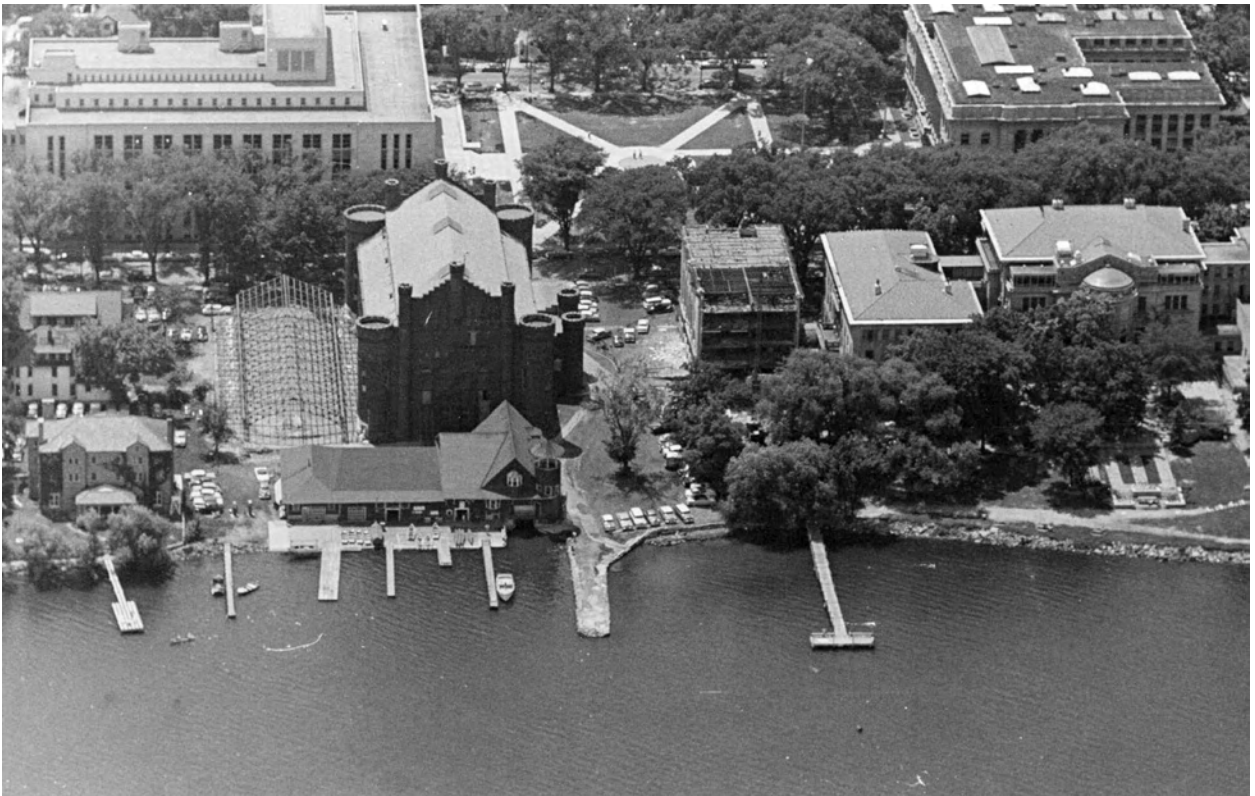


Figure 33

Two Langdon Street buildings were demolished in the summer of 1956. The Athletic Annex, built on the east side of the Armory and Gymnasium in 1911-12, was razed to make way for the Wisconsin Center (now Pyle Center). The YMCA Association Hall, which occupied the current site of UW Parking Lot 1, was removed to clear the way for open space, as envisioned in William J. Hagenah's Lower Campus development plan.

Source: Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID # WHi-24300

they had proven impractical in such a heavily-used setting. Terrace patrons tripped over them, chairs and tables refused to stay level, and maintenance crews found cleaning debris from between the stones a time-consuming chore. Removing the flagstones originally had been part of the cafeteria expansion project, and charcoal gray cement squares had been installed adjacent to the cafeteria at that time. Lack of funds curtailed the repaving project, however.<sup>189</sup> In May 1963, the regents reauthorized removal of the flagstones, which were to be replaced with concrete pavement.<sup>190</sup>

## “Save the Stones” campaign

Editorial writers at the *Daily Cardinal* responded to the decision with dismay. “Yet another attractive campus setting will be blighted with the spread of concrete,” observed one writer. “A concrete terrace

<sup>189</sup> “Union Terrace to Have New Look,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 64 (July 1963): 21.

<sup>190</sup> “Don’t Make ‘U’ Into A Cement Campus,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 15, 1963.

<sup>191</sup> “Don’t Make ‘U’ Into A Cement Campus.”

is no more to be welcomed than a concrete campus.”<sup>191</sup> Two days later, the *Cardinal* reported, “There are apparently some students on campus who don’t relish the thought of a cement terrace; they are organizing a drive to stop the paving of the terrace, and the destruction of one of the few places on campus where the atmosphere encourages, rather than hinders, informal relaxation.” The editorial urged readers, “If you enjoy the terrace as it is now, . . . then sign the protest petitions.”<sup>192</sup>

The Campus Planning Committee responded by announcing its decision to delay replacing the flagstones pending further study. Professor Kurt F. Wendt, a member of the committee, told the *Cardinal* that it was “not a matter of leaving the flagstones,” but of finding “another alternative.”<sup>193</sup> By the following month, planners had chosen that alternative: they proposed replacing the flagstones with a combination of stone and concrete. “Smooth limestone will be incorporated in the construction,” the *Cardinal* reported. “The plans approved show a strong pattern of paving stones tying together the present gray cement area outside the cafeteria and the dance area at the opposite end of the terrace. The altered plan is the result of studies by the University planning office. It was chosen from six alternatives submitted.”<sup>194</sup> Not until the summer of 1964 did the flagstones disappear, however. Taking their place were slabs of Kasota limestone from Minnesota, interspersed with sections of charcoal-colored concrete. “The present Kasota stone terrace is described as a compromise between the students’ desire for escape and the University’s insistence upon safety and cleanliness,” noted a *Cardinal* reporter.<sup>195</sup>

The “Save the Stones” campaign may have raised campus planners’ awareness of a growing distaste for the landscape changes that had accompanied post-war development, but it didn’t change their attitudes completely. Campus architect Donald Sites, interviewed in 1965, predicted that “there will be more and more plaza areas developed to provide a feeling of spaciousness in areas of high concentration. This intensity of building will produce a controlled type of landscape as opposed to the untouched, natural landscape that has been descriptive of the campus.” Nevertheless, he added, “we want to capitalize on our natural setting so that some areas of the campus will become even more important in their natural condition.” Plans were under way, Sites told the *Wisconsin Alumnus*, “for an overall development of the landscape including an imaginative treatment of the lakeshore from the Alumni House site at the foot of Lake Street to Picnic Point.”<sup>196</sup> At the same time, some alumni expressed dismay at the invasion of campus green space by automobiles. “The University is steadily replacing trees and lawns with parking lots,” observed one member of the Class of 1918. Fred O. Leiser, an alumnus who had led the campaign to raise funds to build the YMCA Association Hall in the early 1900s, decried the “sea of cars” on the lot where the Y building once had stood. “For several years we have been assured that the space now occupied by cars between the Union and the Armory would be replaced with a green mall,” Leiser wrote. “Would not a good slogan for us all to adopt be:—LET’S KEEP OUR CAMPUS GREEN?”<sup>197</sup>

In June 1966, university officials approached the State Building Commission for an allotment of \$130,000 to rehabilitate the lakeshore between the Memorial Union and the Alumni House. In his request to the Commission, UW Assistant Vice President and Business Manager R. H. Lorenz outlined the scope of the project, which would include a temporary service drive to the Memorial Union and an additional dining terrace for the Union. “The facilities of the area are totally

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<sup>192</sup> “Save the Stones,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 17, 1963.

<sup>193</sup> “Stones Stay on Terrace Temporarily,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 18, 1963.

<sup>194</sup> “Terrace—Stones, Concrete,” *Daily Cardinal*, June 21, 1963.

<sup>195</sup> Alan Rubin, “Flagstone Removal from Union Terrace,” *Daily Cardinal*, September 15, 1964.

<sup>196</sup> “The Evolving Pattern of Campus Design,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 67 (November 1965): 11. Sites may have been referring to a study that had been announced by institutional planner Leo Jakobson in 1960 of “lakefront recreational possibilities.” See Leo Jakobson, “The Lower Campus: Gateway to the University,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 61 (February 1960): 17; “A Dramatic Plan for the University’s Lower Campus,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 63 (January 1962): 12.

<sup>197</sup> Fred O. Leiser, “The Campus: Let’s Keep It Beautiful,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 67 (October 1965): 11, 12, 14.

unsuited for the large numbers of people and have become very ragged, ugly, and unkempt,” Lorenz wrote, noting that “areas for sitting or walking are too small and this has resulted in the planted areas being turned into bare ground.” The Memorial Union dining terrace was not nearly large enough for the demand, he pointed out, “and the existing shoreline is a collection of broken concrete and abandoned materials.”<sup>198</sup> On June 13, 1966, the Commission allotted the requested funds. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$160,000, with \$30,000 financed by Memorial Union revolving funds.

University officials sought the advice of San Francisco landscape architect Lawrence Halprin; representatives from Halprin’s office visited the campus in October 1966. Halprin associate David Heldt summarized his impressions of the lakeshore in a subsequent letter to State Architect James E. Galbraith. “The open green area north of the original Memorial Union and Wisconsin Center has been reduced in size and effect by expansion of the Memorial Union and the new Alumni House,” Heldt wrote.

Although removal of the Boat House and the Armory-Gym will re-open this area to some extent and allow the needed strong connection to the lake front from the main campus, lateral movement along the lake front is restricted by the new Alumni House and the structures from the Memorial Union Boat Storage to the Limnology Lab....there should be a strong lateral tie to the west so that one can stroll along the lakeshore to the wooded shore beyond the Limnology Lab. The same sort of strong lateral connecting walk should extend eastward so that one could stroll along the shore to the residential areas east of the campus. It is our idea that if the shoreline were to be filled to allow a broad continuous walkway of generous proportions...all the way from the Limnology Lab, eastward to Tenney Park...then you would have the proper kind of strong contact with and use of the lakefront which could be so unique to your campus....<sup>199</sup>

Meanwhile, construction of the new Alumni House (now known as the Below Alumni Center) went forward, and the building was dedicated on Alumni Weekend in May 1967.<sup>200</sup> By the following winter, the Wisconsin Alumni Association had moved out of its offices in the Memorial Union and into the new facility, but landscaping of the grounds remained unfinished.<sup>201</sup> A gift from the Class of 1917 funded a plaza adjacent to the new building; construction began in the summer of 1969.<sup>202</sup>

## Lakeshore rehabilitation

The Class of 1917 Plaza was part of the overall plan for lakeshore rehabilitation, which the nationally-acclaimed landscape architect Dan Kiley and his associate, Peter Ker Walker, had undertaken in 1967. Based in Vermont, the Office of Dan Kiley had been involved in campus planning at the UW since 1964, when the firm collaborated with architect Harry Weese on the university’s arts complex (now known as the Mosse Humanities Building, 455 North Park Street, and

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<sup>198</sup> Wisconsin State Building Commission, Minutes of Meeting and Agency Request for State Building Commission Action, June 13, 1966; Wisconsin State Building Commission Records, Series 712, Box 14, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

<sup>199</sup> Letter from David Heldt, Lawrence Halprin & Associates, San Francisco, to James E. Galbraith, State Architect, Madison, October 13, 1966; administrative files of UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning & Management.

<sup>200</sup> “A Mantle of Snow...,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 68 (February 1967): 18.

<sup>201</sup> J. H. Foegen, “A Leisurely Look Around Campus,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 69 (February 1968): 15.

<sup>202</sup> Myra E. Burke, “Reunion Reports: 1917,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 70 (June 1969): 12.

the Chazen Museum of Art and Elvehjem Building, 800 University Avenue).<sup>203</sup> Kiley's architectonic approach to landscape design complemented Weese's bold modernism, which at the time was held in high regard by his fellow designers. Previously, Weese and Kiley had collaborated on projects at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and at Chicago's Grant Park. In the mid-1960s, Weese and Kiley worked together on the IBM headquarters in Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Center for the Performing Arts, and on designs for Michigan Avenue in Chicago.<sup>204</sup> The Kiley firm also had extensive experience in campus planning, having completed landscape designs or master plans for the University of Pittsburgh, Yale University, Northwestern University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Vermont, and the University of Minnesota in the early 1960s.<sup>205</sup>

In 1965, as Weese and Kiley were completing their designs for the UW's new arts complex, the architectural firm of Weiler, Strang, McMillin & Associates was working on plans to expand the underground level of the Wisconsin Union Theater, with the objective of providing access to the lake and a boat rental/storage facility for the Wisconsin Hoofers.<sup>206</sup>

The origins of the lakeshore rehabilitation project that followed in 1969 can be traced back to a plan outlined in 1960 by UW institutional planner Leo Jakobson. In an article written for the *Wisconsin Alumnus*, "The Lower Campus: Gateway to the University," Jakobson outlined proposals similar in many respects to those that had been promoted by Arthur Peabody in the 1920s and by William J. Hagenah in the 1940s.<sup>207</sup> In 1962, the Lower Campus Development Committee announced further development of the Jakobson proposal. The committee had divided the lower campus into three segments: the Southeast Dormitory Area, the South Lower Campus Project, and the North Lower Campus Project. The North Lower Campus comprised the State Historical Society building, Memorial Library, the Memorial Union, the Wisconsin Center, "and, eventually, the Alumni House and a Guest House." Calling the North Lower Campus "the symbol of the University of Wisconsin," state architect Karel Yasko outlined an ambitious building program, including a games facility for the Memorial Union, a memorial plaza, a guest house, an auditorium for the Wisconsin Center, an alumni house, and an underground parking ramp. Plans also called for "a sun deck [to] be constructed at the lake edge on the site of the present boat house to take full advantage of the natural beauty of the shoreline."<sup>208</sup>

By 1967, when the Office of Dan Kiley began to develop working drawings for the lakeshore rehabilitation project, several of these proposals—including the "sun deck"—had been abandoned.<sup>209</sup> By 1969, however, the University Boathouse had been demolished, according to plan.<sup>210</sup> Several elm and willow trees also had to be removed to make way for the Kiley installation, which extended eastward from the Hoofers' boat rental facility to Lake Street (Figure 34). A stretch of shoreline immediately north of the cafeteria unit was filled, extending into the lake several feet. East of the existing breakwater, where the original shoreline had extended several yards north from the University Boathouse, excavation expanded and deepened to provide a mooring area for boats.

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<sup>203</sup> Dan Kiley and Jane Amidon, *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America's Master Landscape Architect* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1999), 210; Letter from David Heldt, Lawrence Halprin & Associates, San Francisco, to James E. Galbraith, State Architect, Madison, October 13, 1966; administrative files of UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning & Management.

<sup>204</sup> Kiley and Amidon, *Dan Kiley*, 58, 209-210.

<sup>205</sup> Kiley and Amidon, *Dan Kiley*, 58, 208-210.

<sup>206</sup> Wisconsin Department of Administration, Bureau of Engineering, "Memorial Union Boat Rental and Storage Facility and Site Renovation," Project No. 6403-02.

<sup>207</sup> Jakobson, "The Lower Campus," 14-17.

<sup>208</sup> Jakobson, "A Dramatic Plan," 9-14.

<sup>209</sup> Kiley associate Peter Ker Walker had begun working drawings by July 12, 1967; see letter from Fred Loewen, Coordinating Architect, Wisconsin Department of Administration, Bureau of Engineering, Madison, to Dan Kiley, Charlotte, VT, July 20, 1967; administrative files of UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning and Management.

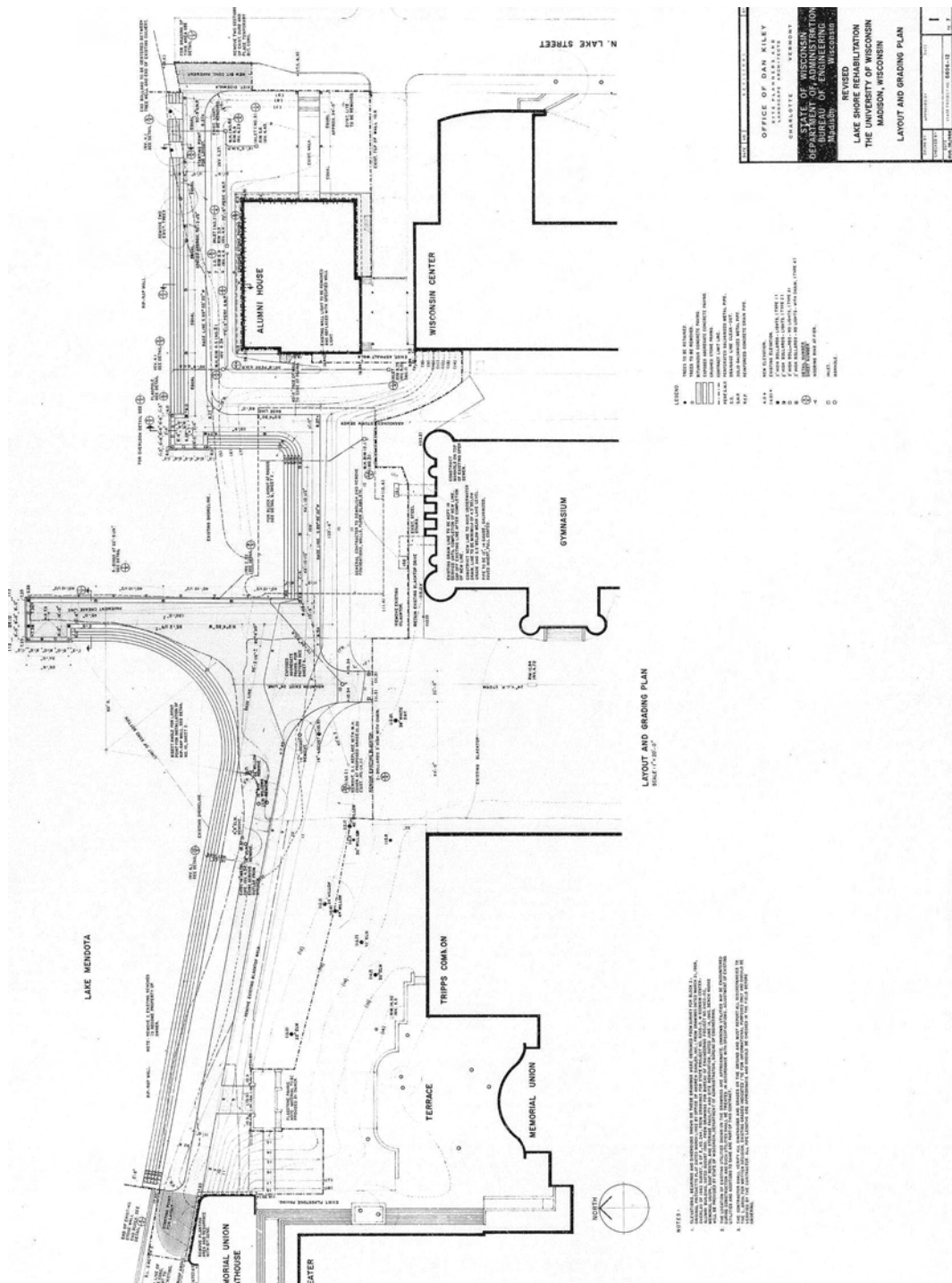


Figure 34

Lakeshore rehabilitation plan devised by Peter Ker Walker, an associate of nationally acclaimed landscape architect Dan Kiley, August 1968. Kiley's affinity for geometrical form is expressed in the shoreline treatment, which consists of five courses of limestone blocks stepping down to the water's edge.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of State Facilities Management.



## Figure 35

The lakeshore rehabilitation project nears completion, ca. autumn 1969, looking southwest from the Class of 1917 Plaza overlook. Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.

The lakefront parallel to the Alumni House also was reshaped to extend further into the lake, supporting an “overlook” near the northwest corner of the building.

Kiley’s affinity for geometrical form is clearly expressed in the shoreline treatment, which consists of five courses of limestone blocks stepping down to the water’s edge. At a point just east of the Memorial Union building, the courses turn north and continue along the western edge of the breakwater, which terminates in a square platform accented with bollards.<sup>211</sup> The eastern face of the breakwater, designed as a boat dock, is vertical and has no steps. In the excavated mooring area east of the breakwater, the stepped treatment of the shoreline continues east-west along the shoreline once occupied by the University Boathouse, just north of the Armory and Gymnasium. The step courses curve sharply north at the southeastern corner of the inlet and extend to the edge of the overlook, which supports a flagpole. East of the overlook, the step courses continue uninterrupted past the Alumni House to Lake Street. Adjacent to the steps for the length of the shoreline, the Kiley plan

<sup>210</sup> The exact demolition date of the University Boathouse has not been determined, but contemporary sources suggest that it probably remained standing until 1969, when construction began on the lakeshore rehabilitation project.

<sup>211</sup> Office of Dan Kiley, Revised Lakeshore Rehabilitation, Details, Sheet 2 of 7; Detail 10: Plan of Block Layout at 80' Radius, August 26, 1968; administrative files of UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning and Management.



called for exposed aggregate pavement, which replaced a blacktop path that formerly paralleled the lakefront north of the Terrace. To provide a sandy bottom for patrons of the university swimming pier, the plan also provided for loads of beach sand to be deposited on the western side of the breakwater, northeast of the Commons unit (Figure 35).<sup>212</sup>

## Nature strikes back

Storm clouds gathered over members of the Class of 1917 on May 16, 1970, as they stood at the water's edge to dedicate their memorial plaza and flagpole near the Alumni House (Figure 36).<sup>213</sup> There was, indeed, rough weather ahead. Unusually severe storms in 1973, 1975 and 1976 significantly damaged the Hooper Sailing Club's piers and sailboats.<sup>214</sup> Winter and spring ice movement also took a heavy toll on the shoreline in the 1970s. The Kiley installation proved disappointingly vulnerable to the forces of nature. The carefully sculpted embayments on either side of the university breakwater trapped floating vegetation and other debris driven towards shore by prevailing winds. In 1978, university administrators asked the regents for \$90,000 to fund emergency repairs to the breakwater east of the Terrace. Waves, ice, and settling had caused portions of the breakwater to collapse into the lake, posing hazards for swimmers and pedestrians. In addition to reconstructing the breakwater, the emergency funds would cover the cost to repair steps, lights, and sidewalks.<sup>215</sup> Crews employed a mud jack to raise slumping steps along the western edge of the breakwater. Cracks and uneven portions of the exposed aggregate paving parallel to the lakeshore also were repaired.<sup>216</sup>

Meanwhile, the Hooper Sailing Club had been working closely with the university since 1973 to develop plans for reducing shoreline erosion and for upgrading the club's boat storage facilities. The strip of shoreline between Park Street and the Hydraulic Laboratory (now called the Water Science and Engineering Laboratory) had been created artificially by a series of fill operations over several decades. Boulders had been placed along the water's edge to stem erosion. In 1977, the university's Department of Planning and Construction called for a further extension of the shoreline into the lake to provide more space for circulation and boat storage. Originally, the new shoreline was to be stabilized by a permanent concrete bulkhead, but this initial proposal changed significantly over the subsequent two years.<sup>217</sup> By 1979, planners had abandoned the concept of creating new land along the shoreline, deciding instead to limit new construction to the zone above the lake's existing high water level. The project area also was extended west to the Limnology Laboratory. At the foot of Park Street, the former Lake Laboratory would lose its upper story in 1980 to become an observation deck.<sup>218</sup> Gifts from the Classes of 1927 and 1928 funded shoreline enhancements between Park Street and the Limnology Building.

On the Terrace proper, few physical changes had occurred since the replacement of the flagstones, some 15 years earlier. Excursion boats operated by the Hoover Boat Line and by Capital

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<sup>212</sup> Office of Dan Kiley, Revised Lakeshore Rehabilitation, Layout and Grading Plan, Sheet 1 of 7, August 26, 1968; administrative files of UW-Madison Division of Facilities Planning and Management.

<sup>213</sup> "Class Reports: 1917," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 71 (July 1970): 8-9.

<sup>214</sup> University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Planning and Construction, *Preliminary Environmental Report: Lakeshore Improvements, University of Wisconsin-Madison* (March 10, 1977), 2; UW Archives subject file, "Lakeshore Improvements."

<sup>215</sup> "UW-Madison Seeks 'Emergency' Breakwater Repairs," UW-Madison News Service release, October 5, 1978.

<sup>216</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication, October 26, 2007.

<sup>217</sup> *Preliminary Environmental Report: Lakeshore Improvements*, 3-4.

<sup>218</sup> Wisconsin, Department of Administration, Bureau of Facilities Management, *Concept & Budget Report: Lakeshore Improvement Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison*, Project No. 7808-27, March 1979, 7-8.



Figure 36

Dedication of the Class of 1917 Plaza, May 16, 1970. Source: *Wisconsin Alumnus*, July 1970.

Lakes Cruises had discontinued service to the city dock at the foot of Park Street in the late 1960s.<sup>219</sup> Although plans had been announced in 1968 to expand the Terrace in conjunction with the lakeshore rehabilitation project, almost 20 years were to pass before the Terrace expansion project garnered the requisite financial support to move forward.<sup>220</sup> A campus-wide survey of historic buildings in the early 1970s led to the designation of the Bascom Hill Historic District, which encompasses the Memorial Union and Terrace.<sup>221</sup> Around the same time, the Memorial Union Building Association launched a fund-raising campaign to raise a million dollars for various improvements, including “beautification of the lakeshore.”<sup>222</sup> In 1979, the Class of 1934 donated funds for landscaping and furnishing the Union Theater plaza.<sup>223</sup>

## Expansion and renewal, 1986-87

On May 5, 1982, an unforeseen benefactor died in Prairie du Sac. Although Russell Rieser was not an alumnus of the university, he had chosen to give the Wisconsin Union an unrestricted bequest, which in 1984 was valued at \$165,000.<sup>224</sup> Rieser, who was 66 years old at the time of his death, had enjoyed fishing from the Union pier and attending the Travel Adventure Series at the Union Theater, according to one of his Madison relatives. He had been a member of the Union since 1969. Little more is known about him, beyond the fact that his generosity gave the Terrace expansion project new life.<sup>225</sup> The Union’s trustees authorized release of the Rieser funds for the Terrace project in October 1984.<sup>226</sup> Rieser’s bequest would be combined with a gift of \$64,000 from the Class of 1936. Additional funding came from the Memorial Union Building Association and Union operating funds. Ultimately, the project would cost some \$300,000.<sup>227</sup>

A renovation plan was developed by campus landscape architect Richard Tipple (1925-2005) and the university’s planning and construction office. Union director Ted Crabb and his staff worked closely with Tipple to expand the seating capacity of the Terrace while maintaining its unique ambience. During the time that Crabb was contemplating changes to the Terrace, he happened to see a public television documentary on the work of William H. Whyte. In 1971, Whyte had established the Street Life Project in New York City, where he and his team studied the behavior of ordinary people on city streets, parks, and plazas, to find “spaces that work, don’t work, and the reasons why.”<sup>228</sup> In 1980, Whyte presented his findings in a book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, in which he enumerated “all the basic elements of a successful urban place.”<sup>229</sup> Among these elements were ample seating capacity, preferably with moveable chairs; exposure to both sunshine and shade;

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<sup>219</sup> Frank Custer, “Music or Boats Capt. Fuller’s Business—It Depends on Season,” *The Capital Times*, August 28, 1964; Rosemary Kendrick, “Plan Unveiled for 125-Year-Old Boathouse to Become Boat Livery,” *The Capital Times*, n.d. Both articles may be found in the Hoover Boat Line scrapbook, Wisconsin Historical Society Microform 1175 (P89-2627). Harry Hoover sold his boathouse in James Madison Park to the city of Madison in 1969.

<sup>220</sup> “Cycle Driver Testing Area Approved for Hill Farms Site,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 24, 1968 (story on Wisconsin State Building Commission meeting of May 23, 1968).

<sup>221</sup> Jeffrey M. Dean, “Bascom Hill Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, ca. June 1974. The district was certified on September 12, 1974.

<sup>222</sup> JoAnne Jaeger Schmitz, “Union Diary: A Few of the Happenings in the First Fifty years,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 79 (July 1978): 9.

<sup>223</sup> Tom Murphy, “Short Course,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 80 (September 1979): 30.

<sup>224</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication, November 15, 2007.

<sup>225</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication, June 21, 2007.

<sup>226</sup> Ted Crabb, personal communication, October 26, 2007.

<sup>227</sup> “Changes of Place,” *Wisconsin Alumnus* 89 (July-August 1988): 13.

<sup>228</sup> William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation, 1980), 8.

<sup>229</sup> Whyte, *Small Urban Spaces*, 12.

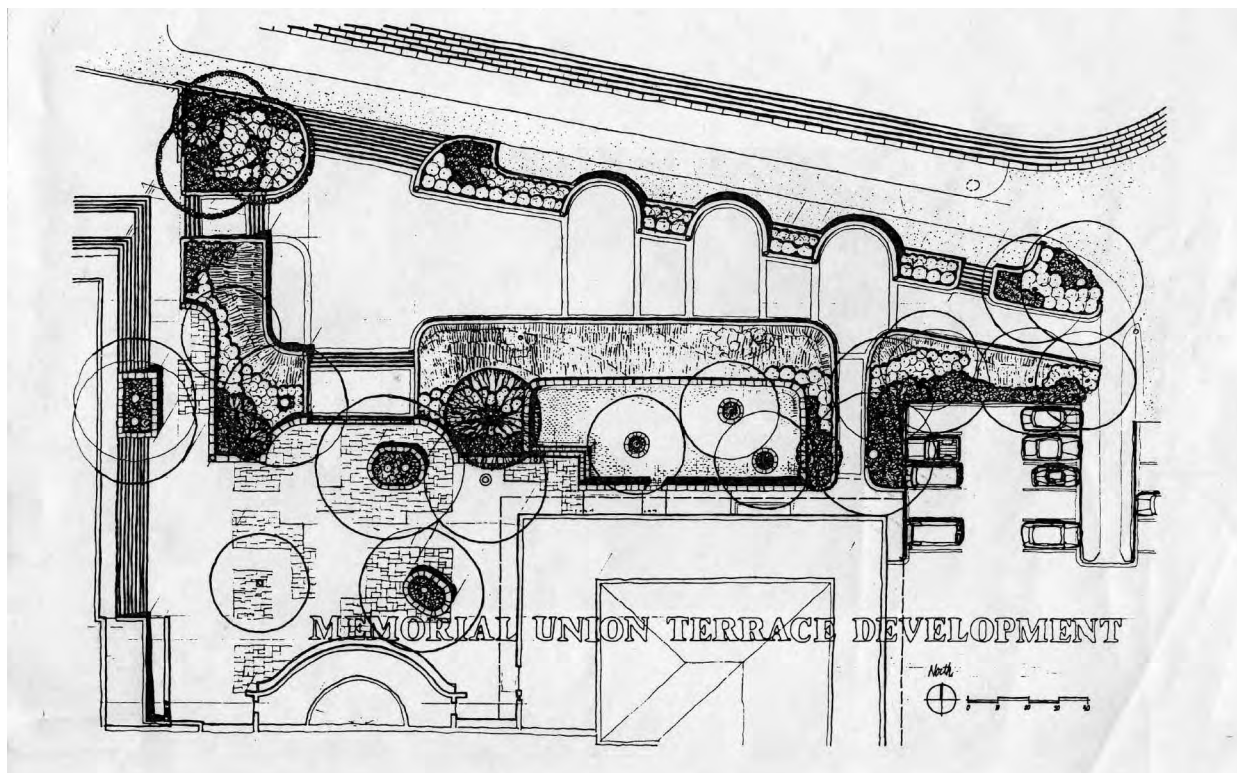


Figure 37

Plan for Terrace expansion, ca. 1985. Source: UW Planning and Contruction.

access to water features, such as fountains; and the availability of food. Whyte also advised that retaining walls be built at a height conducive to sitting. The height and configuration of steps also are key elements, he found. If step risers are built at a relatively low height, people passing through an area will be less conscious of changing elevations. Steps provide another place for people to sit, to see and to be seen, he pointed out. A people-friendly environment also provides wide aisles, which permit unobstructed movement from table to table.

Viewing the documentary on Whyte's research, Crabb immediately recognized its relevance to the Terrace renovation. Most of the "basic elements" described by Whyte already existed on the Terrace; the objective of the renovation project, Crabb realized, would be to maintain and enhance those attributes.

Site plans for the project were approved by the Wisconsin State Building Commission on March 27, 1985, and Bachmann Construction Company of Madison proceeded with renovations (Figure 37).<sup>230</sup> Much of the work had been completed by April 1987, when *The Capital Times* reported that the refurbished Terrace would accommodate from two to three times more patrons, who would be able to enjoy the lake view from three different levels. The area between the original

<sup>230</sup> Wisconsin State Building Commission, Requests/Items, Item no. 2144, March 27, 1985; Wisconsin State Building Commission Records, Series 712, Box 17, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives; Ted Crabb, personal communication, October 17, 2007.



Figure 38

A few “Sunburst”-style chairs can be seen (center, background) in this photograph, taken before the 1938 construction of the Wisconsin Union Theater. In addition to the Sunburst, several other types of chairs once adorned the Terrace.  
Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.

Terrace and the lake, as well as the space north of the cafeteria, had been reshaped with newly-poured concrete walls and steps. A ramp providing handicapped access from Park Street to the north entrance of the Union Theater was installed as part of the project, which also included a brat stand and landscaping.<sup>231</sup> The grand opening weekend, June 18-21, featured fireworks, sailboat rides, musicians, dancers, and a whimsical 16-foot-long papier-mâché fish, emerging from the waves near the Terrace shoreline.<sup>232</sup>

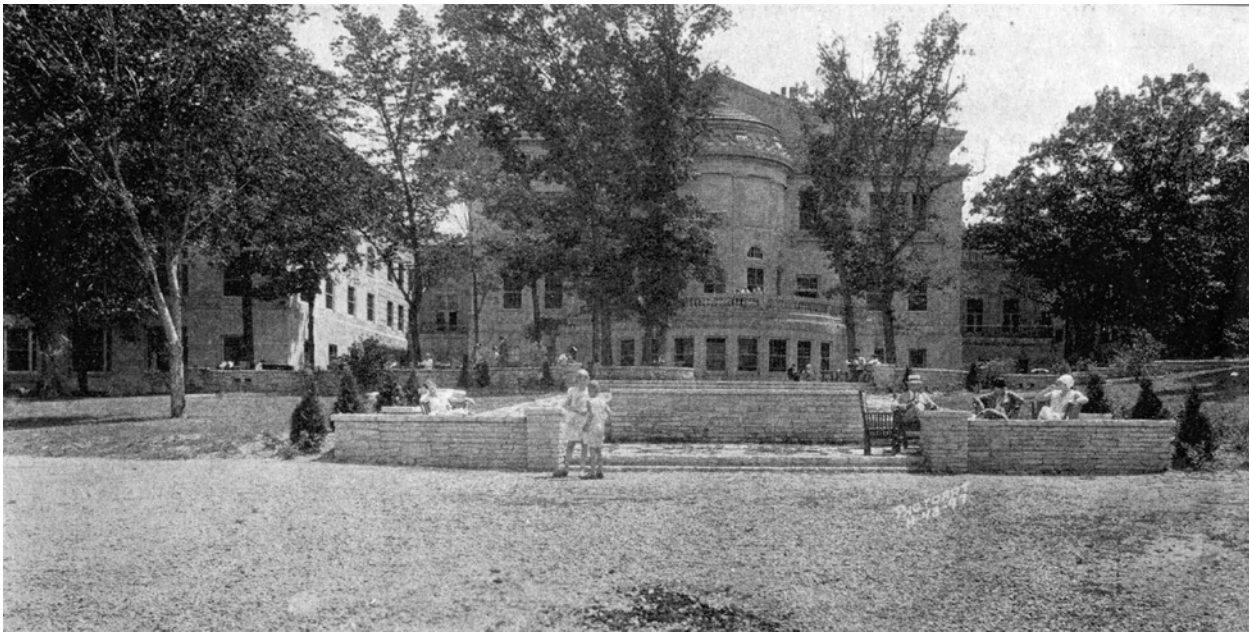
## Terrace chairs

With the expansion of the Terrace in the late 1980s came the opportunity to provide additional tables and chairs. Although the layout of the Terrace was changing to meet the demands of a larger campus community, the familiar outdoor furnishings—including the beloved “Sunburst” chair—would remain the same.

The date at which the first Sunburst chairs arrived on the Terrace remains obscure, although the Sunburst appears in photographs taken before the 1938 construction of the Wisconsin Union Theater (Figure 38). Originally, the Terrace had been furnished with rustic hickory chairs featuring

<sup>231</sup> Mike Lunney, “Union Terrace Upgraded,” *The Capital Times*, April 14, 1987.

<sup>232</sup> Kris Kodrich, “Union Terrace Basks in New Look,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 14, 1987.



## Figure 39

Looking south from the lakeshore, this 1930 photograph documents the use of rustic hickory chairs on the Terrace. Rustic furniture enjoyed widespread popularity during the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, wooden chairs proved unequal to the demands of Madison's climate, and they soon were replaced by more durable metal chairs. Source: *Architectural Progress*, July 1930.

seats and backs woven from bark strips (Figure 39).<sup>233</sup> Rustic furniture enjoyed widespread popularity during the early decades of the twentieth century, when the proprietors of genteel resorts such as The Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina, began decorating their verandas and drawing rooms with it.<sup>234</sup> Unfortunately, hickory furniture proved unequal to the demands of Madison's climate, and within a few years, it was replaced by more durable metal chairs.

Of the many different designs of metal chairs once used on the Terrace, only two styles are known by name: the "Deauville" and the Sunburst. The Union stopped ordering Deauville chairs in the 1960s, due to a design flaw: their rims trapped water, causing the seats to rust. Ultimately, the Sunburst proved to be the most durable design. A hoop encircling the chair's legs provides extra strength and ensures stability on uneven surfaces such as flagstone.<sup>235</sup> By the beginning of the 1970s, only a few non-Sunburst-style chairs remained on the Terrace (Figure 40).

The designer of the Sunburst chair is unknown. According to one account, the Union ordered several dozen metal chairs from Lloyd's Manufacturing Company of Menominee, Michigan, around 1931.<sup>236</sup> Later, chairs were purchased from the Troy Sun Shade Company of Troy, Ohio, until

<sup>233</sup> Porter Butts quoted in Ellen Lebow, "Old Sunburst Chairs Take Seat on Terrace," *Daily Cardinal*, [summer 1981].

<sup>234</sup> For information on the history and manufacture of hickory chairs, see Ralph Kylloe, *A History of the Old Hickory Chair Company and the Indiana Hickory Furniture Movement* (Lake George, NY: Ralph Kylloe Antiques and Rustic Publications, 2002), 15-18.

<sup>235</sup> Jeff Iseminger, "A Summer Symbol: Union's Sunburst Chairs," *Wisconsin Week*, July 31, 1991.

<sup>236</sup> Lebow, "Old Sunburst Chairs."





**Figure 40**

A sample of the various types of metal chairs once used on the Terrace appears in the foreground of this 1969 photograph, which looks east from the Wisconsin Union Theater's first floor deck.  
Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.

the firm went out of business. Production of the Sunburst chair abruptly ended, because the Troy Sun Shade Company destroyed the custom tool and die equipment used to cut and shape the metal.<sup>237</sup>

The search for a new manufacturer proved fruitless until 1981, when the Memorial Union Building Association commissioned Wisco Industries of Oregon, Wisconsin, to recreate the Sunburst tools and dies.<sup>238</sup> To ensure continued production of the Sunburst chair, MUBA retains ownership of the manufacturing equipment. As part of the Terrace expansion project, Wisco manufactured 300 chairs and 70 new tables.<sup>239</sup> Their colors—John Deere green and Allis Chalmers orange and yellow—pay tribute to Wisconsin's farming traditions.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>237</sup> "Museum Object of the Week: Deauville-Style Chair Used at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Memorial Union Terrace on Lake Mendota, 1930s," May 24, 2007. [www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/archives/002823.asp](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/archives/002823.asp)

<sup>238</sup> Iseminger, "A Summer Symbol."

<sup>239</sup> "Changes of Place," *Wisconsin Alumnus* 89 (July/August 1988): 14-15.

<sup>240</sup> Iseminger, "A Summer Symbol."



Almost three decades have passed since the renaissance of the sunburst chair; its image has emerged as a campus icon, a trademark of the Wisconsin Union, and a welcome reminder of Terrace camaraderie. Its broader significance—as a symbol of the Union’s history and traditions—awaits the passage of years.

## Conclusion

The Memorial Union Terrace, while undergoing a series of renovations and refurbishments over its nearly 80 years of existence, embodies the best of the university’s traditions. As part of the Bascom Hill Historic District, the Terrace is a recognized historic site, but it enjoys a unique status as a place where the past mingles actively with the present and the future.

Inevitably, not all the changes that have taken place since its creation in 1928 have met with unqualified approval. The vision of William J. Hagenah, the UW Foundation executive who proposed a grassy, car-free zone between the Memorial Union and the Wisconsin Center, has yet to be realized. (The 2005 UW-Madison Campus Master Plan calls for expanded green space in the area now covered by parking Lot 1, however—so Hagenah’s dream finally may come true).<sup>241</sup> Removal of the Terrace flagstones in the tempestuous 1960s created a campus-wide protest. The Walker-Kiley design for lakeshore rehabilitation (1969-70) proved disappointingly susceptible to the forces of nature, requiring numerous repairs over the years. Following the renovations of 1986-87, the Terrace oak trees slid into decline, but “made an outstanding comeback” after diagnosis and treatment by arborist Bruce Allison.<sup>242</sup>

Additional improvements made during the 1970s and 1980s included constructing an emergency fire safety staircase from the Tripp Commons deck to the Terrace in 1978-79; the Class of 1941 walkway, a shaded pedestrian path across UW Parking Lot 1 from Langdon Street to the lakeshore, built in 1982; the Lake Safety Tower, dedicated in May 1987 as a gift from the Class of 1932; and a lakeshore restoration project at the base of Park Street, completed during 2001-2002, a Class of 1951 gift that served as capstone for the many shoreline and Terrace enhancements undertaken up to that time.

As the campus community continues to change and grow, so inevitably will the Terrace continue to adapt and evolve to meet its needs—steadfastly keeping its place in “the heart and soul of a great university.”

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<sup>241</sup> See Final Plan Documents: Executive Summary (pdf), posted on University Communications website, *Campus Master Plan*. <http://www.uc.wisc.edu/masterplan/>

<sup>242</sup> R. Bruce Allison, “Of Oaks, Elms, and Autumn Ash,” *Wisconsin Alumni* 90 (September 1989): 28.



Figure 41

The Terrace today. Source: Wisconsin Union Marketing Department.

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