

NURSERY SCHOOL



Fig. 1. The Nursery Laboratory February 1997. [Del Brown

The present nursery school was built in 1955 to replace a temporary building (T-17) that had housed the campus nursery school for many years.

A cooperative nursery school was started in 1926 by professor Abby Marlatt, chairman of the home economics department and several college women. It was named the Dorothy Roberts Nursery School, after a faculty member who died as a result of a lab accident in 1921. By definition a cooperative nursery school was one in which the permanent staff was aided by one or more parents of the children attending. The school provided to the department of home economics the opportunity to observe and experiment in child development and nutrition. Children were drawn from faculty, students and Madison citizens. From the beginning, the nursery school was housed in the first floor of the old house used for home management located on Linden Drive. In 1930 this building was moved a few blocks (to make way for the children's hospital) to 1501 Linden Drive, where it remained in dual use until 1940 when the home management house was built. At that time the old practice cottage was remodelled and used entirely as the nursery school. This old and cramped cottage provided space for only 16 children at a time, and provided no effective facilities for observation and study. In the middle 1940s the nursery school was moved to T-17, a temporary building near the corner of Linden and Babcock Drive. The professor in charge at this time was Helen C. Dawe under chairman of home economics Frances Zuill.¹

After WW II the enrollment in home economics grew so large that the state was persuaded to add the long-planned west wing to the home economics building and remodel the existing sections. The budget set for this project proved insufficient for all the improvements desired by the home economics faculty, and one of the high dollar items trimmed to meet the budget was the nursery school addition. This reduction in scope was enough to bring the project within budget, but left the nursery school in its old quarters in T-17. The resolution of these difficulties began in 1955 when the



Fig 2. The Nursery School from the air, February, 1997. Just visible at the left is the east edge of Agriculture Hall. [Del Brown Photo, AP-69]

state building Commission appropriated \$125,000 for a nursery school. All the effort that professors Zuill and Dawe had put into the first plan was now of use again.

On November 17, 1955, the regents approved the location and preliminary plans for the nursery school. The architects were Weiler and Strang of Madison. The preparations of final plans took until July 14, 1956, when they were approved by the regents. On October 6, the regents selected J. H. Findorff & Son as general contractor for \$70,031, total contracts awarded amounted to \$125,000.²

Groundbreaking took place in November 1956. Construction was generally unremarkable, although the filling in of part of the hillside to provide an outside play area turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. On September 25, 1957 the University officially took over responsibility for the preschool laboratory. Because of the hillside setting, problems with drainage and ice buildup were much in evidence throughout the winter of 1957 and into the spring of 1958. The finished building was a 61 by 74 foot two level building of concrete faced with brick, set into the south side of observatory hill.³

The building still serves as the main preschool lab for the University, under the auspices of the school of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences. Cost for each child has risen from the 50 cents per day of the early days of the co-op preschool to the current \$80-140 per week. Thirty to fifty children per week attend the preschool on Linden Drive, and they still come from the University faculty, students and Madison residents on a first come-first serve basis.

1) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, December 1941 p. 13, January 1944 p. 7, April 1937, p. 6; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, February 1934, p. 129; *Daily Cardinal*, December 13, 1921;

2) *Regent's Minutes*, October 1, 1955, November 12, 1955, May 12, 1956, July 14, 1956, September 8, 1956; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, November 1955 p. 9;

3) *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, October 1957, p. 6; *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, December 1956, October 1966 p. 12.