

Hiram Smith Hall: The UW's First Dairy Instruction Building

Hiram Smith Hall was the first permanent dairy instruction building in the western hemisphere. Prior to the building's completion in the early 1890s, dairy classes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison were held in a small, wooden building.

The classes that Dean William Henry and Stephen Babcock started in 1890 were the first systematic effort to teach the principles of dairying in the country. In June 1890, in his lab in what was then Agricultural Hall (now called South Hall), Stephen Babcock developed a simple, foolproof test for measuring the butterfat content of milk. As word about the test spread throughout Wisconsin, registration for enrollment in the UW's dairy short course rose from two (in January of 1890) to 72 (at the time the class started in 1891), to over one hundred (in 1892, when the new building opened), and finally, to an all-time high of 170 in 1915. Fourteen men were employed as instructors.

Students were given practical instruction in both butter and cheese-making. The building housed butter and cheese rooms, curing rooms, a lecture hall, laboratories, an engine room and a bathroom.

Hiram Smith Hall was the first structure in the cluster of agricultural buildings near Linden Drive and Elm Drive, followed by King Hall (which houses the soils department), the heating plant (built in 1903) and Agricultural Hall (also built in 1903). When the Agricultural Heating Plant was built, a lot of equipment was moved from Hiram Smith Hall into the plant.

Hiram Smith Hall served as the university's dairy instruction building until 1951, when Babcock Hall opened.

Hiram Smith Hall: Architectural Design, Construction, Disrepair and Renovation

The Dairy School, the Dairy Industry Building, the Dairy Building, Hiram Smith Dairy Hall, the Wisconsin Dairy School: all are references to Hiram Smith Hall found in the archives at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Hiram Smith Hall was built over the course of seven months, starting on October 1, 1891, and opened its doors to students in January 1892, before completion. Despite the winter elements, the speed of its construction stands as a record for the erection of a major university building.

The building is an example of Queen Anne-style architecture. Queen Anne design was the reigning style in the 1880s and 1890s, when the industrial revolution was building steam. Although the Queen Anne architectural style is difficult to define, some of the exterior features of Hiram Smith are distinctively Queen Anne, including:

- A roof that is steeply pitched and irregular,
- An overall asymmetrical shape,
- Decorative “half-timbers,”
- Decorative details, combined in unexpected ways, such as the use of masonry of cream brick, pebbles, and stone.

The total cost of the new building in 1892 was \$32,305. The cost of its renovation in 2007, a little over a century later, was around \$4.5 million.

The site of the building was originally chosen for its prestigious elevated position. It was designed by Ferry and Clas, a Milwaukee-based architectural firm. The company designed about 300 buildings in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin Historical Society building, Olin House (the official residence of the UW-Madison chancellor), and several additions to Bascom Hall, which has housed the campus’ senior administrative offices for many years.

Hiram Smith Hall is three and one-half stories high, 103 feet wide (north to south) by 56 feet deep.

Less than ten years after its completion, Hiram Smith Hall would get its first expansion. Designed by J.T.W. Jennings, a two-story, brick north wing added cheese and butter rooms in 1901. Again in 1909, a smaller, single-story, north wing was added to accommodate modern milk bottling equipment. Following the completion of these two additions, the dairy school hit its all-time high record registration of 170 students in 1915.

Within about three decades, however, the building fell into disrepair and it was slated to be bulldozed in 1941. In 1945, the student newspaper, The Daily Cardinal, ran a photo of the

building with a caption reading: “This is the antiquated, obsolete, inadequate dairy building of the state university of the greatest dairy state of the country.”

When the Department of Dairy Husbandry moved into the newly constructed Babcock Hall in 1951, new tenants, including the Publication Unit of the Department of Agricultural Journalism, moved into Hiram Smith Hall.

Prior to Ag Journalism’s move to the old agronomy building at 440 Henry Mall in 1972, the department also shared the building with units of Cooperative Extension, including WISPLAN Computer Service.

Hiram Smith Hall was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

In April 2005, students in landscape architecture classes in Hiram Smith were interrupted by construction workers in hardhats, who came running into the building yelling “Everyone get out, NOW!” A contractor was digging a gigantic hole to accommodate several floors of underground parking in the basement of the new Microbial Sciences building. The hole was so close to Hiram Smith Hall that when some of the ground shifted, the workers feared that the building was going to collapse into the hole.

The 2007 renovations were the building’s first major cosmetic and technical improvements in 116 years. The project included abating hazardous materials, upgrading, repairing or replacing all mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire detection, and telecommunications systems and controls, and installing the building’s first elevator, and ADA approved entrances, restrooms and signage.

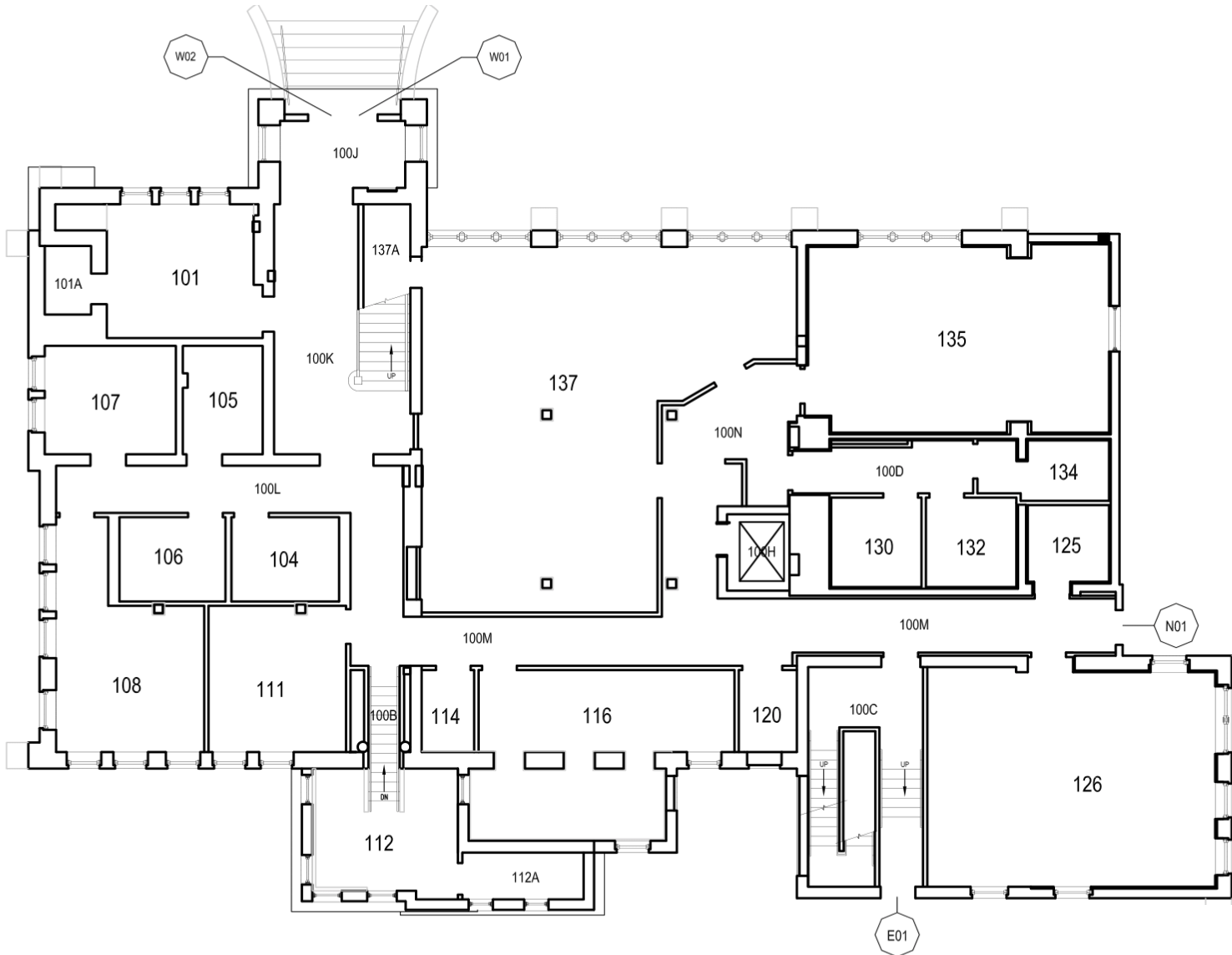
The architect for the project was Jim Brown of Engberg Anderson, Inc., Madison. Engberg Anderson’s work also includes the award-winning historic preservation of Ten Chimneys, Genesee Depot; First Unitarian Society, Milwaukee; Historic Pabst Theater, Milwaukee, and; Alterra at the Lake/MMSD’s historic Milwaukee River Flushing Station, Milwaukee.

The general contractor for the project was Kraemer Brothers, LLC, of Plain, Wisconsin.

First Floor

From the time of Hiram Smith Hall's Completion in 1892 and through the first half of the 20th century, the first floor was a working dairy operation, where students learned practical skills related to the production on milk, butter, and cheese.

Originally there were nor classrooms on the first floor; the only classroom in the Dairy School was on the third floor.



Room 101: This room originally was the Administrator/Manager's office for the dairy operation.

Note the *terrazzo* floor, which is a mosaic floor made by embedding small pieces of granite in mortar, and polishing.

Also note the patterned brick work above the windows and doors, the arch of brick on the ceiling along the north wall, and the tiers of brick where the west wall meets the ceiling. This is characteristic of Queen Anne architectural design.

The office has a vault, which would have been used, not to secure money, but to protect documents from the threat of fire.

Today, the office is occupied by LSC teaching assistants and project assistants.

Photos in Hallway: Adjacent to room 101, you'll find a photograph of Hiram Smith, former University of Wisconsin regent and the buildings namesake.

Further down the hall, a group photo of students taken in the third-floor lecture hall is displayed.

Room 116: This room was where Dairy School students washed and put a wax brine on the cheese. Now, the space has been renovated into a lounge for LSC students. The renovation was made possible by the generous contributions from the Sumner family.

Note the portrait of Professor Emeritus William "prof" Sumner, who played an active role in the department until his death in 1959.

Photos in Hallway: In the hallway leading to room 126 you can find two photographs on either side. On the right, Professor Stephen Babcock is shown demonstrating his invention of the Babcock Butterfat Test to William A. Henry and Thomas C. Chamberlain. On the left, a photograph depicting a room full of Dairy School students using machinery to process dairy products in Hiram Smith Hall is displayed.

Room 126: This room, and the space above it, is the two-story addition that was made to the building in 1909. It was a cheese and butter room.

At one time, this room had large concrete vats, where cheese curds were made. Sometime after the Dairy School moved to the newly constructed Babcock Hall in 1951, other tenants like Ag Publications

moved in. Alumnus Herman Felstehausen remembers working on the concrete tables, using a mimeograph machine to print 4H publications which were then stapled by a “Rube Goldberg of a stapler.” Today, it is a departmental meeting room.

Photos and Art in Hallway: Heading towards room 135, you’ll find a photo of a human scarecrow watching over a field of corn near Hiram Smith Hall. In the background, you can see Hiram Smith Hall (right) and King Hall (left).

Above the water fountains, a print of a drawing by artist Lynn Casper depicts the UW Band on the field at Camp Randall. Casper is an art history graduate from UW-Madison and has created several series of work highlighting UW-Madison’s campus and traditions.

Between Room 135 and the radio labs you’ll find a copy mural painted by John Stella depicting the lobby of “Old Radio Hall” on the UW-Madison campus. This mural, which you can find in the lobby of Radio Hall, depicts early developments in the history of WHA radio station, which currently hosts programs such as Wisconsin Public Radio, NPR and America Public Media. To the left are students and technicians who played a part in the 1917-1919 transition from telegraphic to telephonic transmission. In the center are faculty and students who guided WHA through its early years, including Department of Agricultural Journalism Professor Andrew Hopkins.

Room 135: In 1901, this room was added to the building in order to make room for modern milk bottling equipment. After the completion of this addition, the dairy school reached its maximum capacity of 170 dairy students.

Today, this classroom is used to teach LSC 100: Science & Storytelling. The Department of Life Sciences Communication currently has about 150 undergraduate majors and 25 graduate students, as well as over 200 students enrolled in the science communication certificate program. An additional 300 students, mostly non-majors, take LSC 100 each semester.

The back wall holds two more prints from Lynn Casper, depicting sail boats on Lake Mendota and autumn on Bascom Hill.

Radio Labs: The department currently has three radio recording studios. Each studio is equipped with cutting-edge hardware and software for digital editing used in production of radio broadcasts. Phone lines can be used to interview people outside the studio.

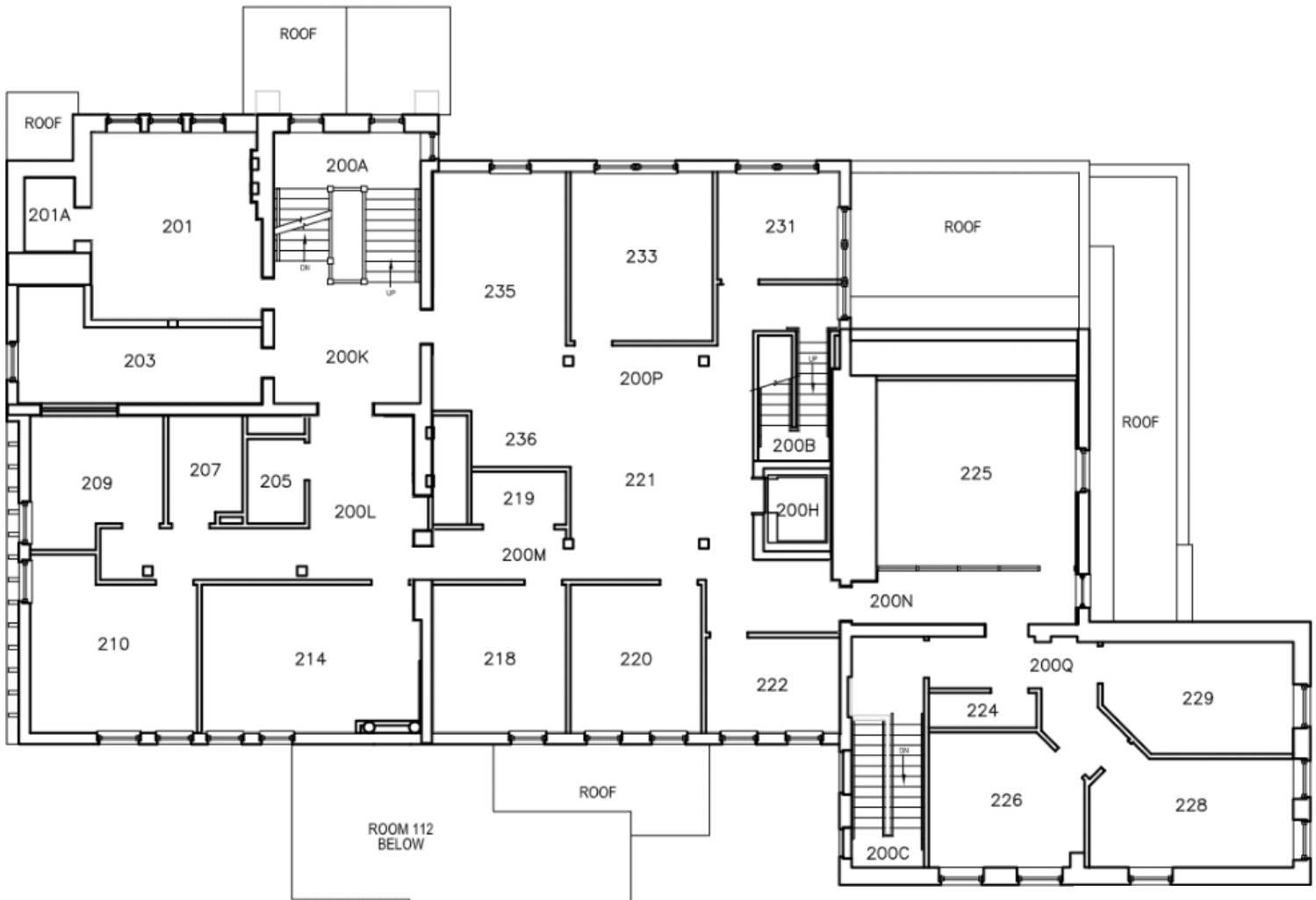
Room 137: Originally part of the dairy production area, this became the site of a large printing press. Today the room is a computer lab.

Return to the main stairwell and continue to the second floor.

Second Floor

The wooden staircase leading up to the second and third floors is original. Part of the banisters are made with quarter-sawn oak.

Most of the wood floors are original. You see different types of wood, depending upon what spaces was used for originally: oak and maple in more public spaces, pine in work or production rooms.



Room 201: From 1892 until the completion of Agricultural Hall in 1903, this is believed to have served as the office for the assistant to the dean of the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences. The office has some unique features, including a fireplace, a vault, and wood paneling.

Today, the office is occupied by the department chair.

Note the arch of brick on the ceiling above the fireplace.

Also note the vault occupying the rooms backwall. Similar to the vault in room 101, this vault was not used to secure documents, but instead protect them from the threat of fire.

Most of the individual offices for full-time staff are furnished with the Amish-made, *Mission*-style oak furniture that you see in this room. The seven drawer paneled executive desks with modesty panels and solid cast copper hardware, and the matching writing desks, are made of quartersawn oak by Witmer Furniture in Abbotsford, Wisconsin.

Room 203: This is the chairs research office and is occupied by graduate research and project assistants.

Reception Area: This is the main reception area for the Department of Life Sciences Communication.

The room is furnished with Amish-built, *Mission*, *Craftsmen* or *Arts and Craft*-style furniture. This style of furniture was selected for the décor of the renovated building for several reasons. Firstly, Hiram Smith Hall was built during the same period as this design was popularized – in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Secondly, the design lends itself well to an academic environment: it stresses function and unadorned beauty, relative to the ornamentation of Victorian design, which also would have been true to the period. And thirdly, this design style is associated with architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the famous U.S. architect who designed Madison's Monona Terrace Convention Center and has ties to southwestern Wisconsin.

The large acrylic paintings, "Horicon" and "Harrington" are the works of Marsha McDonald. These abstract landscapes were acquired through a Percent for Art Grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board. McDonald lives and works in Vilar de Andorinho, Portugal.

"Lotus in University Bay" was painted by Byron C. Jorns in 1937 and was given to the department from alumna Myrna G. Brindley. Jorns was a staff

artist in the Department of Agricultural Journalism from 1935 until his death in 1958. Jorns also directed the department's exhibit efforts during much of his tenure and was a wildlife watercolorist of national reputation. Jorns art can be found throughout the department, including on the staircase from the 2nd to 3rd floor.

This room includes the Wall of Donors, featuring black and white photographs of LSC's scholarship donors, together with plaques listing the student scholarship recipients.

Room 214: Professor Emeritus Larry Meiller's office. Larry taught in the department for 50 years. Every week, Larry hosts "The Larry Meiller Show" on Wisconsin Public Radio.

2nd Floor Hallway, Leading Towards Room 225 Conference Room:

The black metal boxes that you see mounted on the walls on each side of the hallway date back to when Hiram Smith Hall was on a dairy school. They are electrical switches for all the building's dairy equipment.

Room 225: This is the second floor of the 1901 addition. Today, it is one of LSC's conference rooms.

Return to the main stairwell and continue to the third floor.

Third Floor

The third floor of Hiram Smith Hall is predominantly occupied by our research faculty and the graduate students who work with them on research projects.



Art in stairwell: Going up the stairwell, you'll notice a collection of watercolor paintings from Byron C. Jorns, primarily depicting Wisconsin landscapes and the state's agricultural history.

Room 301: Between the years 1890 and 1903, prior to the completion of Agricultural Hall, this room was the first office of the dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Note the two portrait paintings hanging in room 301. Above the fireplace hangs a portrait of Professor Emeritus Andrew Hopkins, who served as the department chair for 37 years. Across the room, you can find a portrait of Professor Emeritus William "prof" Sumner, for whom the Sumner student lounge is named after.

Also note the size of the room, the fireplace, the wood paneling, the screened porch.

Lecture Hall: If you stand in-between Room 314 and Room 310 and face north, you can see the proscenium arch that framed the stage in the dairy school's lecture hall. The beam that runs north to south on the ceiling was one of two beams that ran the full depth of the lecture hall. Another beam runs parallel to it, through Room 307.

You can also see the blemishes on the floor where auditorium seats were once secured to the floor.

Room 309: In room 309 you can find part of the original blackboard and original wood paneling of the lecture hall. This blackboard continues behind the wall into the adjacent supply closet.