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### **Stephen Moulton Babcock**

Stephen Moulton Babcock graduated B.A. from Tufts College in 1866 and received a Ph.D. from the University of Göttingen, Germany, in 1879. After working as a teacher and chemist in New York, he joined the staff of the University of Wisconsin, where was professor of agricultural chemistry from 1887 to 1913 and remained for the next 43 years. He was also chief chemist of the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station.

The test, which bears his name, was an outgrowth of necessity, as is so often the case with inventions. Dairying was becoming an important industry in Wisconsin and its future depended on an accurate and easy method to determine the intrinsic value of milk. When presented in 1890, the test brought international recognition to the University of Wisconsin. Here he established a laboratory that carried out pioneering research in nutrition and in the chemistry of vitamins. Babcock's experimental studies in the food requirements of animals paved the way for the work of the American chemist Elmer Verner McCollum (1879-1967) on vitamin A, and it was in Babcock's laboratory at the university the biochemist Harry Steenbock discovered vitamin D, the sunlight vitamin. Babcock invented an apparatus to determine the viscosity of liquids. The last two decades of his life were spent in basic research on the nature of matter and its relation to energy.

Interestingly, Babcock felt that he should derive no personal gain from his testing device, his most famous invention, and no patent was taken out. He also refused to take a cent for anything else he did that might benefit humanity. Fame came to Babcock because he could not avoid it. Not a fluent speaker, he always tried to get out of making speeches.

Away from his laboratory in the biochemistry department of the UW's College of Agriculture, Babcock - affectionately known as "the laughing saint of science" - could be found in the grandstands with his bag of peanuts or popcorn watching football or baseball. In his Lake Street home, he refused to install a telephone, claiming it was too much bother to answer the contraption. He did, however, adopt the automobile and enjoyed touring southern Wisconsin before his death in 1931 at age 87.



# Forward

The story of Babcock House began well before the concept of an affordable cooperative house for UW students. This story begins with the life of Stephen Moulton Babcock. His inventions and discoveries revolutionized agricultural science and the dairy industry. The footprint that he left on campus went beyond his work in classroom and laboratory, as he made an impact on everyone he had contact with along the way. Students, faculty, industry leaders and the community as a whole respected the man for what he did, but loved him for who he was.

Most in the community today know the Babcock name only as home of the dairy store with the tasty ice cream treats. Those of us that have had the privilege to live at Babcock House have a different set of thoughts and recollections when we hear the name, yet few know the true House history.

His death set into motion a series of events that led to the creation of Babcock House, creating a new opportunity for hundreds of college students. The details of that transformation are spelled out in this directory as an official account of how Dr. Babcock's home became Babcock House.

Dr. Babcock's original home is long gone, reclaimed by the University and torn down to be used as a parking lot. Concerned faculty and alumni still believed in the dream and worked to keep the House alive on Clymer Place without University control or financing. Alumni came through once again in 1963 to help make the current House on University Avenue a reality.

Much has changed since that first semester in 1931. Women on the ag campus back then were a novelty. Now, they are the majority. Dr. Babcock would hardly recognize the campus today - or the science taught in its classrooms. Babcock House has withstood the challenges of the Great Depression, two World Wars and times of significant financial hardship and thrived, becoming the oldest continually operating housing unit on campus - and possibly the country.

Through it all, Babcock's greatest asset has been its alumni. As you read through the directory, you will see that the men of Babcock are now scattered around the world from Alaska to South Africa to Vietnam with careers as diverse as can be. Whether you lived in the House for five years or one, or were a Chomper or social member, you are part of the Babcock family and always will be. This book is dedicated to all who consider themselves Babcockers.

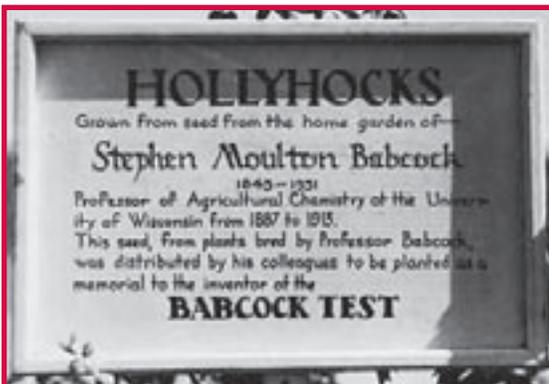
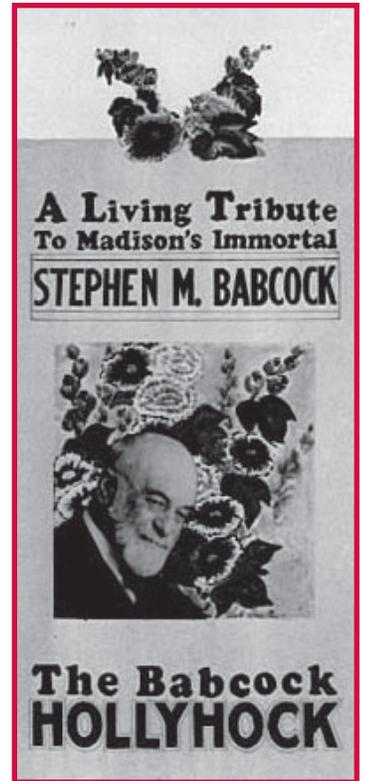
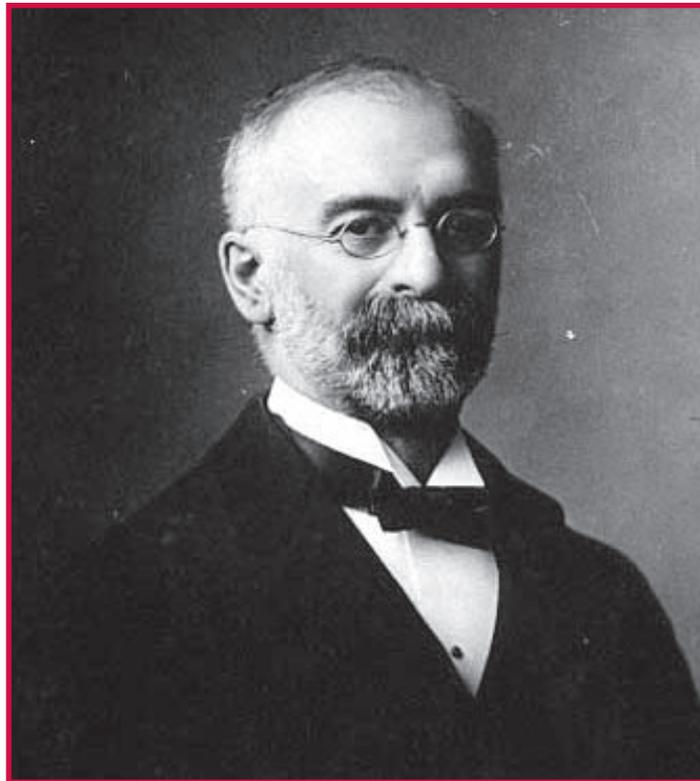
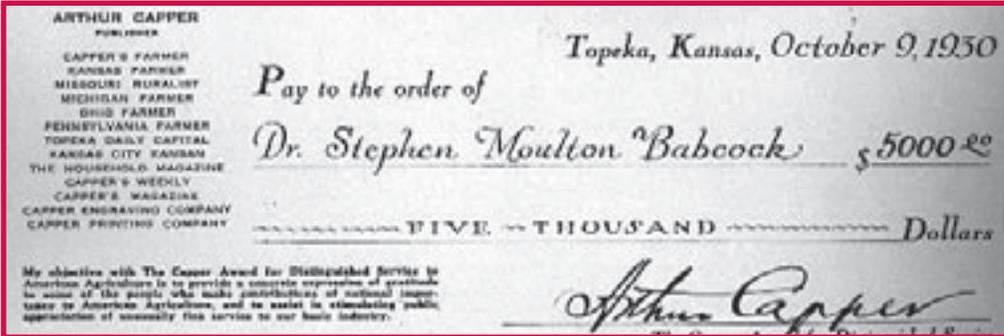
The desire to produce this directory came from more than the need to preserve the true history of the House. It came from the dream of helping reconnect our alumni in a way that has never been done before. As the project developed and grew, the stories became more fascinating and the book got bigger.

Special thanks go out to Craig Kohn, 2006-07 Steward, for his extensive research on the history of the life of Dr. Babcock and the House; to Liz Matzke (former AWA member and friend of the House), for assistance in the layout and design of this book; and to all of you who contributed your memories, stories and updates which made this directory possible. This book is a snapshot of the first 75 years of Babcock House. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

John Rozum, Directory Editor  
House Member 90-95  
Alumni Board Member 02-07



# Babcock History





# Babcock History

## This is the House that Babcock Built

Craig A. Kohn, 2007 Steward

### Chapter 1 Destined for Success

The innovations and breakthroughs discovered at UW-Madison have changed the world numerous times, and Wisconsin has consistently led the advances into the uncharted world of modern science. Yet few realize that none of this would be likely, perhaps even possible, if not for the discoveries of Stephen Babcock. For it was Dr. Babcock who first gave UW global recognition with his butterfat tester and according to famed UW President E. A. Birge, Dr. Babcock deserves credit as the founder of vitamin discoveries at Wisconsin, and perhaps the science of nutrition as a whole. In short, Dr. Babcock's numerous discoveries no doubt helped usher in many of the modern advances that marked the 20th century.

Yet, Dr. Babcock's origins were anything but ideal for his destiny in life. Dr. Babcock was born on October 22nd, 1843 in Oneida Co., NY, which at the time was "the greatest cheese center of the world," according to Dr. Babcock. Prof. Edward Farrington remarked that Dr. Babcock was "a poor boy; he had to work for a living," and spent "his entire [childhood] life in poverty" in part due to the Civil War and its resulting depression. Yet, in spite of these difficult times, Babcock's optimism remained.

For example, Dr. Babcock was fond of mentioning times when dairy prices were literally nonexistent. The checks the Babcock family received for their cheese could not be cashed at the war-closed banks, but could be at Remington Arms Company, which was not as affected by the depression. They could not give him money but could give him its equivalent in guns and ammunition. "Better than nothing," remarked Babcock. Dr. Babcock said that he and his brother had more fun shooting all summer than he could have had he held onto the checks and received his money in full a year later.

After his home school days, Stephen Babcock attended Tufts College in Boston and then Cornell University. Dr. Babcock received his PhD from Goettingen, Germany, returned to Cornell as a chemistry instructor, and later relocated to Geneva, NY as a chemist at their ag research station. There he received a call from the University of Wisconsin in 1885, beginning what would become a career that would elevate him to global recognition.

It should be remarked that of all people who have lifted themselves by their bootstraps, Dr. Babcock could justifiably have been one of the most deserving of fame and fortune, yet he rejected both for the good of the State of Wisconsin and indeed the world of science as a whole. We as a people could greatly benefit if we too, in these times of unparalleled prosperity, exemplified that generosity and service that defined Dr. Babcock even more so than his discoveries.

### Chapter 2 Exemplifying the Wisconsin Idea

Dr. Babcock arrived at the University of Wisconsin in 1887 at the strong request of President Chamberlin, where he began experimenting with what would become his most famous work, measuring the butterfat content of milk. According to *A Fortune Left Behind*, prior to the invention of Babcock's Butterfat Test, there was no way to test the true quality of milk. Therefore it could be adulterated or altered by the farmer, by the plant, or by the store, and often was. This lack of standardization prevented the uniformity needed for the modernization of the dairy industry.

William Henry, Dean of the College of Agriculture, approached Dr. Babcock and asked him to develop an effective and inexpensive way to measure milk quality. Dr. Babcock worked dutifully on this, eventually developing a perfect test. It was so perfect that it rarely, if ever,



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failed to accomplish its goal of standard measurement. It was so simple to use that any farmer or cheese plant manager could use it, and no significant detail about it has been changed to this day, while the modern dairy industry it created certainly has leaped forward.

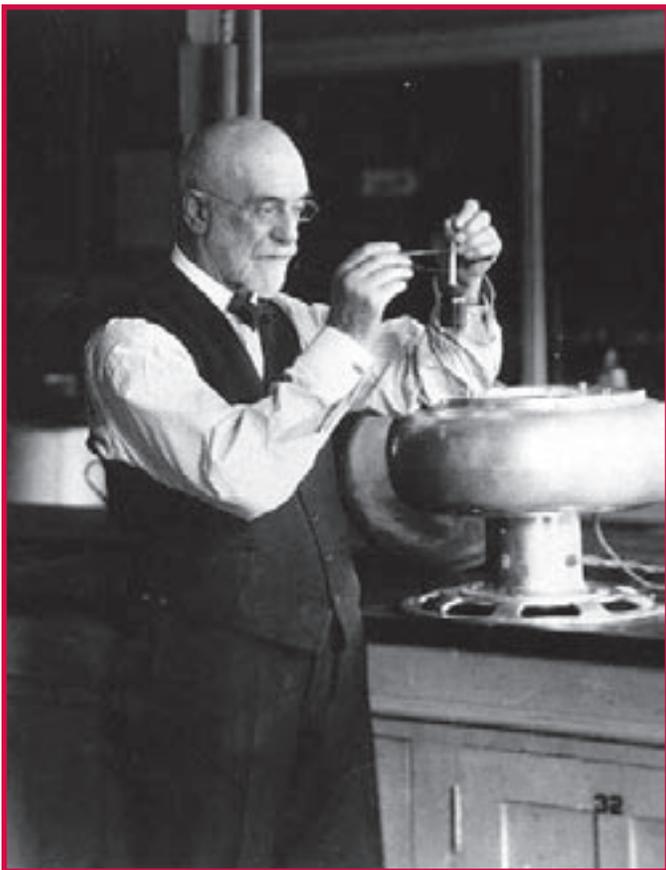
60 years later, UW President E. A. Birge would remark in the Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer that the attention and revenue generated by Babcock's test sparked a trend of breakthrough scientific research at UW-Madison, a trend that has continued to this day. Said Birge, "Few inventions of a single man have had so great an effect, economic, moral, and social."

On October 11th, 1894, controversy briefly arose when Geo. W. Burchard, editor of *Hoard's Dairyman*, mistakenly gave credit for the Babcock Test to Hoard himself. As can be imagined, this briefly caused an uproar within Wisconsin, for the test that was supposed to "make farmers honest" was possibly plagiarized by the very supposed inventor! Dean Henry later wrote Dr. Babcock, saying that he had talked, "about the foolish Burchard claim" and requested permission to pressure both Hoard and Burchard to revoke this statement, lest it confuse a "dairy student" in the future. While Babcock, true to his form, found the whole matter trivial, he consented, and the matter was laid to rest. Babcock finally and fully received credit where credit was due.

However, the most remarkable aspect of this story is not the perfect test, the impact it created, nor any detail about the Babcock Test itself, but rather Dr. Babcock's unfathomable generosity in what could have undeniably been his most profitable venture. John Brisben Walker, who covered the 1904 World's Fair, wrote, "Attention was called by the Chief of the Department to the Babcock Milk Tester," continuing, "then I learned that this valuable test, ingenious, scientific, and perfect, was the work of an American scientist... Dr. S. M. Babcock, and that he had given the world the results of his study and ingenuity without patent and without reward. His name certainly deserves to rank among the most notable in the annals of invention." And today it still does.

## Chapter 3 Wisconsin's Pride

"I still see him almost daily passing my window as he winds his way to his laboratory. On those trips he often drops in to discuss with me his problems and my own as well," wrote Louis Kahlenberg in 1924, adding, "Dr. Babcock worked on fundamental and novel problems, rather than on matters of a routine character... he has constantly kept up his interest in problems of an experimental nature."



*Dr. Babcock working in his laboratory*



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This quote probably best summarizes Dr. Babcock's later years. He easily could have been content with the results of his butterfat test; in fact, milk production in the U.S. increased 900% in 30 years in large part because of the Babcock Test and the stock breeding data it gave for establishing the development of the five major dairy breeds. However, in no way did his work end after his invention of the butterfat test; indeed, with this invention, his work truly began. In 1903, Dr. Babcock developed and perfected the "cold storage" method of curing cheese. Later, his "hidden hunger" experiments on the nutritional needs of cattle, or simply, feeding cattle solely one type of grain, paved the way for the science of nutrition and the discoveries of Vitamins A and D by McCollum and Steenbock, respectively. Finally, Dr. Babcock perfected an apparatus using Pasteur's procedures for a complete pasteurization of milk.

Shortly before receiving his coveted status of Professor Emeritus in 1913, effectively allowing Dr. Babcock to devote his time entirely to his research, Dr. Babcock's curiosity was piqued when he found a moth larva, which is 75% water, in a jar of malted milk 100% free of water. This conundrum motivated Dr. Babcock to solve the biochemical mystery of metabolic water, or the creation of water from solids via oxidative metabolism. The jar is still on display in the old Biochemistry Building above Babcock's main lab.

Dr. Babcock's final work was on a mystery that eluded him throughout his life, the theory of the constitution of matter, or the transference of energy through matter. For the last two decades of his life, Babcock pondered how a moving pendulum could cause a rise in temperature in a closed system, and created experiments to measure and record this phenomena. Babcock's attention to detail and perfection created the need for condition-controlled laboratories; three of these were created, including one underneath the basement of Ag Hall (yet to be re-discovered for the UW by the 75th class of Babcockers). Dr. Babcock died in the midst of this experiment.

However, Dr. Babcock's life was not solely dedicated to his research. Dr. Babcock was affectionately known across the UW campus for his kindness and sense of humor, leading to his nickname, "The Laughing Saint of Science." Dr. Babcock was an avid fan of UW sports and attended every home football, basketball, and baseball game during his tenure at Madison. He was so popular that he was granted two seats at Camp Randall in his honor, solely for his use until his death in 1931. Never once absent from these seats, Babcock could always be found with a bag of peanuts or popcorn in his hand, cheering on the Badgers to a hopeful victory.

Dr. Babcock was not an avid fan of phones, however, and he refused to install one either in his home or lab. When UW administration forced him to install one, he gained the upper hand by claiming that he "just didn't



*Dean Henry, President Chamberlin,  
Dr. Babcock and the milk tester*



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hear the ring.” However, Dr. Babcock did embrace other forms of technology, especially Ford’s automobile. At the age 78, Dr. Babcock bought his first car, and he and Mrs. Babcock toured most of the state on country back roads. Dr. Babcock continued to drive without incident until his death.

On July 2nd, 1931, Dr. Stephen Moulton Babcock died of heat exhaustion in his own home at the age of 87. Newspapers around the world, including the New York Times, heralded the death of the “Laughing Saint.” The Wisconsin State Journal published articles about Dr. Babcock for a week after his death, honoring his life by concluding, “The distribution of his gifts and good works has been, and will continue to be, world-wide.”

Dr. Babcock ranks among the greatest in service to mankind, and yet has been almost forgotten by the history of mankind solely because of his humility and selflessness. Said UW Pres. Glenn Frank, “In an age smitten with passion for publicity, Prof. Babcock forgot himself into immortality,” but, unfortunately, not into infamy.

Indeed, had it not been for Dr. Babcock, the Wisconsin dairy industry would have “gone to pot,” according to College of Ag Dean William Henry. In Dean Henry’s opinion, only Dr. Babcock had the capacity to save Wisconsin’s dairy industry and lobbied to get Dr. Babcock to UW from New York, an offer Dr. Babcock initially refused. Later, Babcock would come to call the Badger State his home, and in return, help make it what it is today.

Few people have, or are even able to draw the connection between modern Wisconsin they know and the presence of Stephen Babcock in the state. Dr. Babcock’s work allowed for the modernization of the state’s dairy industry, allowing America’s Dairyland to come into existence and dominate the US dairy industry. Today the Wisconsin dairy industry contributes \$20.6 billion dollars to the state economy, and directly employs 160,000 people, in large part allowing a recent 7th place ranking nationwide for Wisconsin’s state economy. Furthermore, Dr. Babcock’s foundational research in nutrition led to Steenbock’s discovery of the synthesis of Vitamin D, the proceeds of which led to the creation of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, which has given \$800 million towards UW research since its founding in 1925. Without Dr. Babcock, the State of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin, as we know them now, would not likely be in existence. The ideology that one man can make a difference has rarely been more greatly exemplified.



*Dr. Babcock speaking to a crowd in front of his home on 423 Lake Street.*



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To conclude this biography of Dr. Babcock, many things could be said, but I think the sentiments expressed in the July 6, 1931 Milwaukee Wisconsin News are the most appropriate. They are as follows:

“HAD DR. STEPHEN MOULTON BABCOCK so willed it, he might have died a multi-millionaire. WHEN De Laval of Denmark gave the cream separator to the dairying world, he (De Laval) patented his invention and before long was able to count his fortune in millions. BUT DR. BABCOCK was an idealist who believed that inventions of universal beneficence belonged not to the inventor but to humanity at large.”

“HIS DEATH has called forth many tributes to him as a scientist, as a trail blazer, as an inventor of the highest accomplishment in man’s most important industry. But greater still than all of his achievements, all of his service, is the example he has set as a selfless benefactor of the human race – a man who turned his back on a princely fortune that his fellow men might enjoy his priceless gift at the cheapest possible cost.”

“AMERICA has produced many great inventors whose genius has advanced the human progress, enriched thousands and added greatly to the comfort and enjoyment of life, but all of them have profited or sought to profit from their inventions. They are not to be blamed for that. It is the human, often necessary, way. DR. BABCOCK, however, chose the nobler course. He had the larger view of social obligation. To his God-given intellect and to the education of his country had made possible, he gave due credit to his invention, and he turned it over to the public as something for which he could not justly ask a monetary return.”

“WISCONSIN, mourning at his grave, is proud to number this exceptional citizen among her adopted sons.”

## Chapter 4 The Cooperative Revolution

“A college can help you get an education but it cannot give you one.” – Dean Ira Baldwin

Dr. Babcock had been laid to rest for only a handful of days when word reached the press that the majority of his will would be left to the University. The July 8, 1931 edition of the *Wisconsin State Journal* was headlined by “U.W. Legatee in Babcock’s \$133,000 Will” stating that the funds would go towards books and scholarships. However, \$8000 of this amount was tied up in his property, and the house remained empty throughout the month of July awaiting action from UW. In short, the University had no plan of action for the house at the time.

Shortly prior to Babcock’s death, the key members of the College of Agriculture met to discuss a very serious crisis within the college. By this point, the nation had been



*Dr. and Mrs. Babcock*



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in the grip of its worst economic catastrophe for almost two years. The public had little money for even food and clothing, let alone college tuition. Especially hard hit were rural students, the very same who made up the majority of college's population. The agricultural student population had dropped 'dramatically' by this time and was showing no signs of getting better; in fact, it looked as though it would get much worse.

On the committee were, V. E. Kivlin, associate dean of the college, A. J. Haas, executive secretary, J. A. James, chair of Ag Education, and E. R. Jones, chair of Ag Engineering (suitably enough, both are still well represented majors in the house). Dean Ira Baldwin would play a later role on the committee. They realized in their work that the biggest expense in attending college at UW was that of room and board. Reducing this cost soon became their focus, and they decided to do so by providing a self-governed, student operated house. In other words, they intended to form a student cooperative, the first of its kind in Madison.

They originally planned on buying a mid-sized house, but soon found that the 'For Rent' pages contained either unsuitable or too expensive houses. By the time Babcock's will had been released to the public, the committee consisted of some rather discouraged individuals to say the least. It was Prof. Sumner of Ag Journalism who would change this.

While giving a ride to Prof. Jones after work one day in mid-July, it was Sumner who suggested Babcock's house to the committee. J. M. Hanks, administrator of the Babcock estate, agreed the next day that it was an excellent idea and transferred control of the estate to the committee.

However, the house remained empty and unequipped, and in one month it would not only have to be furnished, but two dozen students would also have to be recruited to fill it and pay rent to sustain it. It also lacked any idea of

structure or governance. The committee resolved all these issues with remarkable swiftness. Regarding furniture, the committee learned that university housing was discarding several bunks from Barnard and Chadbourne halls. They were offered the bunks free of charge but were also told they'd be responsible for moving them. So it was that the city of Madison was treated to the sight of several of its most distinguished professors in overalls, personally moving the bunks, mattresses, and furniture onto trucks to Ag Hall, where they were kept until the house was ready. Regarding governance, it was Dean Kivlin and Al Haas who suggested making the Babcock House a cooperative. Haas assumed control over the rest of the details and was made responsible for hiring a steward, cook, etc. until the students could assume the responsibility.

Little is known to this author of how the ideas for Babcock House originated. There was nothing on campus at that time or before to model it after. There were few, if any permanent student cooperatives across the nation. In short, the idea was one of a kind, and highly modeled after its creation. By 1939, an article entitled "Can Cooperative Living Work" by Otto Mueller, Director of University Housing, stated that there were over 50 cooperatives; three followed the Babcock model exactly. The idea was praised by several publications. The Wisconsin Alumni magazine praised the College's ingenuity for reducing prices, and in the post-war boom of the late 1940's, the trend set by Babcock House became a notable and necessary facet given the excess number of students in attendance.

Yet, while the idea quickly took off, it's something of a mystery of how the structure of the house came to be. However, a small notation in the commemorative articles after Dean Baldwin's death may give some insight to the mystery. In many ways, Dean Baldwin was a driving force behind this new student house, and his past experiences may give insight as to why this would be.



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Dean Baldwin is one of the more ambitious characters in UW history. He held positions as chair of the Department of Bacteriology, dean of the Graduate School, dean and director of the College of Agriculture, university vice president for academic affairs, and special assistant to the president. Dean Baldwin came to UW in the summer of 1917 to work for the Heinz Company on a project involving a better cultivation of pickles to allow for more commercialization of the project. Anyone who enjoys relish on their burgers can appreciate this novel approach because prior to the Heinz Company's work, the pickle cultivation that existed could only be found behind your mother's garden fence. The company worked with the Agricultural Experiment Station to perfect their work, and soon housing became an issue for their employees. To alleviate this problem, the students collaborated to rent a house together, each assigning tasks such as cleaning, cooking, finances, etc.

"This was a great experience for me because I worked with graduate students who were working towards their doctor's degrees in entomology and plant pathology," said Baldwin, continuing, "Some of those people I remained friends with as long as they lived. . . . We lived in the same house; they sort of took me in. It was a home where they were living, right next to the campus, and they found a room for me in the same place. So I got to know many of them very well, and I suspect that had as much influence in my deciding to go ahead and do graduate work as anything that ever happened."

Sounds oddly familiar, now doesn't it? And with these humble yet somewhat revolutionary beginnings, Babcock House emerged onto the collegiate stage as the foremost leader and founder of what would in a few decades be known as the cooperative revolution in the city of Madison, a city who today leads the nation and the world for the number of cooperatives per capita.

## Chapter 5

### An Established House, An Exciting Home

"Students Cut Costs to New Low Levels" reported the 1934 UW Alumni Magazine, following with, "Room and board and all living expenses at the Babcock House, a cooperative agricultural student home, have averaged slightly less than \$100 per semester for the last two years." Thus, Babcock House's first mention in print verified what the deans of the College of Agriculture suspected all along – that expenses could be reduced through a cooperative house and that the students could make this experiment succeed.

In the fall of 1931, 24 boys, selected on the basis of "high school records, their work in FFA and 4-H, and their financial need" moved into the newly furnished residence on Lake Street. It seems that this idea was a success



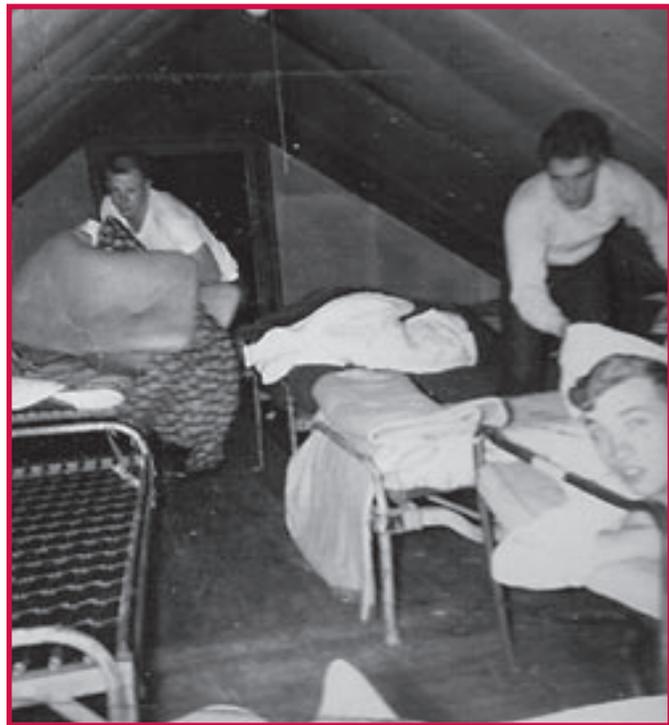
*Babcock House's First Class, Fall 1931*



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from the very beginning, with most of the credit owing to the students themselves. “You may wonder just what Dr. Babcock would be thinking now if he could see the enthusiastic spirit of these young men,” stated a campus newspaper, continuing, “It is this cooperative understanding that has made Babcock House somewhat outstanding, and that has made it possible for them to successfully operate as a cooperative.”

The description of the operation of the house then would be pretty applicable today. “The cooperative work system that is still in effect in the house was initiated then (in 1931),” stated an October, 1949 *Wisconsin Country Magazine*, continuing, “The boys do all the work except the cooking. Each member is assigned to a specific job which he has to perform for the whole semester. And he is expected not to shirk his duty.”



The “Ram Pasture” attic bedroom at 423 Lake Street.

In a personal letter in 2005, Stewart Johnson, one of the members of the original class of Babcockers, gave an interesting description of the day-to-day activities and lives of the 1931 class. Mr. Johnson came to UW-Madison from Oconto Falls at the “so green” age of 16 and was recognized as the top freshmen scholar by the end of his first year. Mr. Johnson worked at the College of Ag Library six nights per week, and had the opportunity to work with such UW legends as Harry Steenbock and E.B. Fred. Jobs were definitely a necessity, and sixteen of the members worked part-time jobs at Sears on State Street, working 10 p.m. on Saturday to 10 a.m. Sunday stocking shelves.

They made ice cream in their own hand-made equipment and ate lots of sauerkraut. Because the House had only one bathtub and no shower at the time, they routinely showered in the Red Gym. Despite the hard times, House member trips to Chicago and California were made possible. When asked what they did while at Madison, he replied, “We ran the city and [the] UW.”

Furthermore, academics were clearly thriving at the residence. The executive committee that helped form Babcock House, led by Ira Baldwin, sent an August 30th, 1932 open letter to the faculty stating, “The year scholastic record of the 21 boys who lived in the Babcock House the second semester averaged 1.6 grade points per credit. The 1.6 grade point average is above the University or College average. During the first semester the fraternity with this grade point average was fourth high in scholarship of 45 fraternities. Evidently, the Babcock House conditions were favorable for study.”

In fact, the House was such a success that space became too short within 10 years of opening for business. “With this same understanding, the executive committee has recognized that Babcock House was really too small, and that this opportunity ought to be extended to more students. This year, they rented a separate house to accommodate an increase in membership to 39,” reported a campus newspaper.



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However, the House was and has always been much more about student activities. The same *Wisconsin Country Magazine* article about Babcock House gave some insight into what the House became over the course of two decades – “From reports heard around campus, Babcock parties are dandies. Burt Olson, social chairman from Westby, usually sees to it that there are plenty of the fair sex around to liven things up.” The article continues, “One extracurricular activity at the house... got the boys considerable publicity. Chazz Ruelke... glanced out the window and saw, of all things, a monkey perched on the fire escape. Chazz rubbed his eyes, checked his liquid consumption... and yelled for the rest of the boys. For a couple of days, the monkey stuck around the neighborhood... when night came he jumped through an open window and spent the night with the boys.” The fact that the monkey chose to stay at Babcock House every night clearly indicates the level of intelligence that exists in some primates at UW. The psychology department, however, was less than thrilled once they received news of the newest Babcocker and decided that the monkey hadn’t applied properly to the house. “It was a dirty trick,” glumly said one of the boys.



*Babcock House at 1021 Clymer Place*

## Chapter 6 Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

“Historic Babcock House, for 23 years a low-cost housing cooperative for College of Agriculture students, has been torn down,” read the opening paragraph in the 1954 *Wisconsin Alumnus*. The House had been quite successful in its first decade or so of operation, so much so that a second house was required to accommodate the increasing popularity. However, in 1954 the University had deemed the original house unsuitable and dilapidated, and reclaimed the structure in order to have it torn down to make way for the Peterson Building, which until recently housed the Bursar’s Office.

Duane “Dewey” Kraemer was probably in one of the most difficult positions a Babcock Steward has ever encountered. “While at ROTC summer camp, I received notice that the original Babcock House on Lake Street had been condemned, and was being closed,” Mr. Kraemer recently wrote, adding, “With the help of several of the Babcock members, we located the house on Clymer and leased it even though half of the rooms were already leased to other students.”

Unsure if they could even fill half a house, they stuck to their guns and took the chance of keeping the organization alive. After the fall semester, they had the entire house on Clymer to themselves, and Babcock House stayed alive due in large part, once again, to the tenacity of the students. It took more than just the students to keep it going. Credit needs to be given to A.J. Haas, Secretary of the College of Agriculture, who was also one of the original committee members who created the House. Mr Haas put his own money on the line for the Clymer Place house, helping the organization become incorporated, and then writing a personal land contract loan to enable the corporation to buy the property without any University support or funding. However, Babcock House wasn’t fated to stay at this location long.



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Within a decade, financial arrangements had been made to purchase a nicer house at a new location - 1936 University Avenue, near the Old Dairy Barn where Dr. Babcock first performed his nutrition experiments over a half century earlier. Babcock alum Sherman Geib brokered the sale with a sale price of \$48,000 for the building, which was built in 1938. Sherm noted that it was quite difficult to find financing at the time for a student housing mortgage.

With a large, statewide fund raising drive in 1963, the house was furnished and the membership swelled. It was here that the organization would remain, sometimes flourishing, sometimes struggling, but always with the same motivation in mind.

Over the next forty years, many changes would occur. One of the most controversial was the decision to go co-ed (the first in CALS but not the last) beginning in 2002. Despite some concerns, the house has benefited from this decision, and few if any serious problems ever emerged. On the plus side, the house now has a much larger population to draw higher quality members from, especially given there is near a 2:1 ratio of females to males in the College of Ag & Life Sciences alone.

Today, we find that the 2007 Babcock House is in many ways very different from that first house in 1931. As of press time, five women and 18 men live in a house with at least one (and more likely two or three) computers in each room. Each of these computers is hooked up to the fastest possible internet connection available from our server; this is becoming increasingly necessary as many classes require an internet connection for serious items such as homework, lectures, and quizzes. Quite frankly, the technology that exists in each room is a far cry from that of even five years ago. In fact, this author can remember a time when he was one of a handful of members to even have a cell phone. In short, many things have changed in 75 years, and are continuing to change at an even faster rate.

In many ways the 2007 House is very much the same as that first House. The governing structure inside the house has changed little; the President and Steward still fulfill many of the same duties, as do the freshmen members who still assist the cook. Of course some traditions have been lost, but many more retained, and some have even been brought back, such as the 1930's tradition of giving a pie to every student who gets a GPA above pi (3.14 and above); 16 members received a pie this semester.

In short we have seen a house that has changed in some ways and remains unchanged in others. Though sometimes controversial, the changes that have occurred were in many ways inevitable and necessary, and the House that we have today not only reflects an adaptation to changing times, but dedication to the overarching desire towards preserving Babcock House itself. In the end, however, I believe that we as an organization are better for it.



*Photo from newspaper showing 1936 during construction of the Birge Tower.*



# Babcock History

The university has changed much over the past 75 years. Courses continue to become increasingly more demanding as the UW continues to lead the nation in research and academics. Out-of-state students make up a larger fraction of the student population each year, and the demographics of the average student continue to reflect greater wealth, more opportunities, and higher demands of the university in every respect. Simply put, the House faces a much different atmosphere than it did 50, 25, and even 10 years ago. What matters the most in the end though, is the underlying service of the Babcock House organization: to ensure that any student can achieve a world-class education so long as they are willing to work hard and study harder.

That said, so long as there are economic needs in this country, and so long as a good education is necessary for self-advancement, there will always be a need for an organization like Babcock House. Even more important than economics, however, is the personal wealth that a Babcock member gains in their own college experience through the chance to grow, mature, and learn from the experience of living in this House. The immense response to this upcoming anniversary alone is evidence of the impact that this organization has had on hundreds of individuals. There may come a time that this organization is no longer needed, but so long as there are dedicated students who need an affordable house and a home supportive of their academics and social lives, there will always be a Babcock House.

## Prologue

It's hard to begin a story about Dr. Babcock and about Babcock House and not be biased, especially if you were a part of the organization. Though it is not uncommon to feel pride for organizations that you were a part of, it is clear that among the conventional elements there are aspects about this organization and about Dr. Babcock that were and are truly unique. This is a story about that uniqueness.

Indeed, there have been plenty of professors at UW-Madison who have accomplished many great works, and there are many, many student houses at Wisconsin, each with a great story to tell. However, in the grand scheme of things, Dr. Babcock and Babcock House each are distinguished from commonality in the fact that they have always existed to give the most to those who have had the least.

Though Dr. Babcock studied under some of the greatest minds in biology, physics, and chemistry in both Europe and America, he came to a fledgling university in the sparse Midwest with no prior world-renown accomplishments to help a group of people he knew only by association. When Babcock House was created, it primarily served a group of students lacking self-importance; it would never compare to the cumulative wealth that discerned many other student houses, fraternities, and sororities. Dr. Babcock and his namesake's organization were each hallmarked by a deep sense of service towards the greater common good and a desire for self-advancement in the face of distinct challenges.

And so, we see that this is a story not about greatness as we generally see it, but rather about prominence achieved through sacrifice and determination. Dr. Babcock was never an elitist, and never took himself so seriously that he couldn't enjoy a bag of peanuts at every home ball game. In this sense, I think he would be quite proud of his namesake's organization and its continued history.

- Craig Kohn, 2006-07 Steward

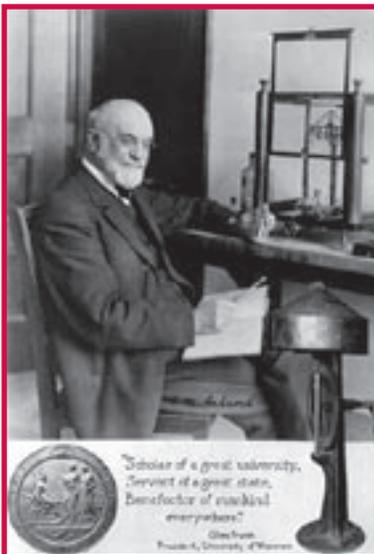
*Editor's Note: This article originally ran in the Babcock Bulletin as a multi-part series from the Fall of 2005 through Spring 2007. References courtesy of the UW Archives and the Wisconsin State Historical Society.*



# In the News

## BIRTHDAY HONORS FOR DR. BABCOCK

Inventor of Famous Milk Testing Device Was 77 Years Old Friday.



## HONOR BABCOCK AT DAIRY SHOW PIONEERS' DAY

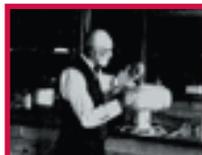
## An Interview with Dr, Babcock

By Charles F. Cellison



## THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL Sunday, November 20, 1927 Babcock Painting Takes Place With Wisconsin 'Ag' Immortals

## U. of W. Gift Plaque to Honor Dr. Babcock



## Inventor of 'Butterfat Test' Continues Research Work

### Babcock Test for Butterfat Now Used in All Parts of World

S. M. Babcock Still at Work in Laboratory

## THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN March, 1928 Babcock Finds the Hidden Hunger He and His Cows Open Up a New World

## Dean Russell Says: I Knew Babcock

### Close Associate Tells Story Of State Benefactor

By H. L. Russell,  
Former Dean  
University College of Agriculture,  
As Told to E. K. Marks

(In our August 7 issue, we told the story of the Babcock test. Now we propose to give you a glimpse of the inventor of the test—Stephen Meadon Babcock—through the eyes of H. L. Russell, former dean of the University College of Agriculture. Russell knew Babcock well. They worked together on



H. L. RUSSELL, former dean of the Wisconsin college of agricul.



# In the News

## **Prof. Babcock Dies; Inventor of Butter Test. Noted Savant of U.W. Succumbs at His Madison Home; Was 88 Years Old**

**Milwaukee Journal, July 2, 1931**

**Madison, Wis** – Dr. Stephen Moulton Babcock, 88, discoverer of the Babcock test which revolutionized the dairy industry, was found dead in his home in the heart of the university district Thursday morning. He was lying on the floor before the big wicker chair in which he spent most of his leisure hours.

Dr. W.T. Lindsay estimated that Dr. Babcock had been dead for several hours. A heart weakness, aggravated by the intense heat, caused death, Dr. Lindsay indicated.

Mrs. John Hausmann, a neighbor, found the front door wide open and saw Dr. Babcock lying on the floor.

Friends of Dr. Babcock have long feared that death would come to the great scientist in the night. He has persisted since the death of his wife in April, 1927, in living alone in the old house. Friends have urged him to move to the University club, where he took his noon meal, but he refused, claiming that he preferred to live the rest of his life “at home.” He ate no evening meal.

The body was taken to the Lawrence undertaking home. Burial will be in Forest Hill cemetery, where Dr. Babcock will be placed at the side of his wife. Dr. Babcock has a brother in San Diego, Calif., but no one in Madison could remember his address. Two brothers of his deceased wife in West Winfield, N.Y. were notified.

### **A Great Man Who Was “Very Human”**

“There goes a great man!” This was the exclamation of a teacher in the University High school at Madison as she pointed out to her class Dr. Stephen Moulton Babcock, who saved millions of dollars for dairymen by preventing the loss of butter fat in the process of separating cream

through the discovery of the famous milk test which bears his name and which he gave free to the world.

This incident was recorded for posterity last February when Dr. Babcock acted his discovery in the making of the first talking motion picture filmed by the United States department of agriculture. Despite his years, the scientist vigorously re-enacted before the camera his monumental work and gave every evidence of thoroughly enjoying the novelty. Through this picture millions who never saw Dr. Babcock will be able to look upon his kindly, thoughtful face and learn how he conferred a lasting benefit upon mankind.

### **His Laugh Was Hearty**

“On his daily trips to the laboratory he often drops in to discuss with me his problems and my own as well,” wrote Louis Kahlenburg seven years ago. “His keen insight, kindly interest, and above all his novel and helpful suggestions are an inspiration. He never seems to grow old, and his happy way of viewing things and his merry, resounding laugh are constant sources of pure and unadulterated delight. When Dr. Babcock laughs, he laughs all over.

When he first came to Wisconsin his laboratory was on the fourth floor of old South hall, and Dean Henry of the college of agriculture had his office on the first floor. Babcock’s laugh so disturbed Henry on the first floor that the latter sought to have Babcock hold his mirth within bounds. But Henry found that could not be done and, like a sensible man, he soon learned to enjoy himself by entering into the true spirit of Babcock’s jovial nature.

### **Enjoyed His Automobile**

When 78, Dr. Babcock bought an automobile, learned to drive it in a short time, and with Mrs. Babcock toured Wisconsin, going over country roads of all kinds and passing through many tight places that would have taxed the dexterity of many a driver. A good baseball game was also enjoyed by Dr. Babcock.



# In the News

Modesty and simplicity were characteristics of Dr. Babcock. Tobacco and alcoholic drinks he never used.

## Resume Of Achievements

In a sketch prepared by Prof Andrew W. Hopkins and Agatha Raisbeck of the department of journalism, the achievements of Dr. Babcock are thus summarized: "He perfected the test for butterfat, which is known for its merit throughout the dairy world. He and another man worked out the cold curing process which is a foundation of the cheese industry. He gave dairy breeders a basis for breeding for production which has made possible much of the development of the five great dairy breeds. He worked out scientific ways of doing things that enabled other scientists to go on in all branches of dairy chemistry."

The first monetary reward that Dr. Babcock received for his discovery was in 1930. At the convention of the American Country Life association in Madison, Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas gave him the Capper award of \$5,000 and a medal in recognition of his "outstanding contribution to American agriculture." His was the first time that the award had been made.

## Nationals Gave Testimonials

In 1899 the legislature of Wisconsin gave him a medal designed in London. The following year the dairymen of New Zealand presented him with an illustrated testimonial bearing a number of water colors of New Zealand scenes. In 1901 a similar testimonial in the form of an oil painting representing an Australian dairy scene was received from the dairymen of the provinces of Victoria and New South Wales.

Dr. Babcock's original test machine was exhibited at the World's Columbian exposition at Chicago in 1893, at the Paris exhibition in 1900, at the Pan-American exhibition in 1901 and at the Louisiana Purchase exposition at St. Louis in 1904. The highest honor, the grand prize, was awarded the Babcock test at both the Paris and the St. Louis expositions.

## Paused For Sports

On the university campus, Dr. Babcock was a familiar figure. The day before his death, he was seen puttering around in the sizeable garden back of his house, bareheaded and with a collar off and shirt sleeves rolled up. The garden, ill kempt but beautiful, is a mass of tall hollyhocks.

Each day the old man, feeling his way carefully along, could be seen on State St. walking out to his laboratory or to a grocery store. During the spring his noon jaunts to the laboratory were always suspended briefly while he halted at the lower campus and watched the fraternity kittenball teams in action. In winter, there was no more familiar sight than Dr. Babcock in his sweated coat and stockingcap.

## Had No Telephone

Dr. Babcock was one of those few old fashioned souls who will not have a telephone in the home. There was one in his office, forced on him by President Chamberlain, but Dr. Babcock avoided the nuisance, as he called it, by leaving the receiver off the hook. But he took to the bicycle, owning the second one seen in Madison.

Before Prof. Babcock announced his discovery the only known means of determining the butter content of milk was a complicated and slow chemical process requiring work in a well-equipped laboratory by experts in analysis. Creamerymen could not conduct this test.

Dr. Babcock also paved the way for discovery of the vitamin. He found that animals might be starving to death, although they had plenty to eat. He termed this "hidden hunger" and with it as starting point Dr. E.V. McCollum, nutrition experts at the university, eventually brought vitamin A to the attention of the world.



# In the News

## Born in New York

Dr. Babcock was born at Bridgewater, N.Y., October 23, 1843. He graduated from Tufts College, Medford, Mass., in 1866 and took graduate work in chemistry at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., from 1872 to 1875 and thereafter at the University of Goettingen in Germany. He came back to this country in 1879 with a doctor's degree in his chosen science.

After a brief experience as instructor at Cornell, he became chief chemist of the New York state experiment station at Geneva, where he worked out a simple way of analyzing milk and became known as an agricultural chemist. In 1887 he became chief chemist at the Wisconsin experiment station and professor of agricultural chemistry in the state university. After a quarter century of active work he was named professor emeritus, given the honorary degree of doctor of science and left free to devote whatever time he chose to further laboratory research.

## Madison By Day

**Wisconsin State Journal, July 7, 1931**

**By Betty Cass**

Stories of Dr. S.M. Babcock are being recalled in such numbers that only a biography could hold them all, but one which is being told and retold more frequently than others is that of his "peanut letters."

When he was presented with the Capper award of \$5,000 last year, publicity on the matter was broadcast over the country so thoroughly that he was immediately besieged with hundreds of letters from people asking him for part or all of the money.

Another result of the award was that he was interviewed by reporters from both local and metropolitan newspapers.

One of the reporters from a Madison paper asked him what has going to do with the money.

Being of such a gentile, kindly, nature that he did not wish to tell her that it was none of her business, and of such a naïve, unsophisticated character that he never dreamed she would print it, he answered in a joking vein:

"Why, I think I'll buy peanuts with it," he chuckled, "I've never had enough peanuts in my life."

The result of this story, printed first in the Madison paper and then carried over the entire country by telegraph, was another avalanche of letters.

And it is this two groups of letters which have, collectively, become known to his friends as "the peanut letters."

The letters which came after the Capper Award were of the usual beginning type which come to anyone publicly receiving a large amount of money – although some of them seemed unusually interesting.

One woman in Georgia, for instance, had a farm for sale and, knowing of his interest in agriculture, thought he would be the one to buy it. And, although she did not mention the \$5,000 award he had just received she thought that exactly \$5,000 would be a fair price for it.

There was a letter from a farmer in Minnesota. He had just suffered a fire which destroyed all his farm buildings. Insurance had covered a great deal of it and it was all rebuilt except the chicken house – and wouldn't Mr. Babcock rebuild it for him?

## In Lodging Houses (unknown time and source)

As usual, thousands of Wisconsin students, both men and women, will live in lodging houses next fall. These range from chic Ann Emery Hall for wealthy coeds to cooperative Babcock House for boys.



# In the News

## From an Unknown Newspaper

1963

A number of people from the Madison and vicinity went to Tomah last Saturday to attend the wedding of Miss Bernita Ann Schappe, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Schappe, Thomas, and Kenneth Runlee, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thorval Runlee of Edgerton.

Their guests included Mr. and Mrs. Norbert Schappe and family, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Schappe and family, Mr. and Mrs. William Schappe, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Payne, Perry Schappe, Joan Johnson, Jean Fasking, Mr. and Mrs. Eldon Noth, Mr. and Mrs. John Lombard, Mr. and Mrs. Thor Norland, Bernie, Myra, and Patricia Norland, all of Madison; Mr. and Mrs. John Benish and Mr. and Mrs. Albert Benish and son, Sun Prairie; James Tonkin, John Birdsall, Warren Sharratt, Robert Osborn, Carl Huber, Fred Lindsay, R.A. Ambrose, Ted Tibbitts, Al Shadbolt, Dewey Kramer, Darrell Drew, Bill Hendrickson, John Suttie, Joseph Wachuta, Phil Tichenor, and Allan Bringe, University of Wisconsin friends of the bridegroom.

## Babcock House Razed

Wisconsin Alumnus, 1954

Historic Babcock House, for 23 years a low-cost cooperative for College of Agriculture students, has been torn down.

But for some of the faculty members who first arranged the housing ventures for students short of funds have found a new home on Clymer Place – somewhat closer to the agricultural campus than the Babcock house on Lake Street – to carry on the cooperative house.

The Lake street house was home to the late Stephen Moulton Babcock, nationally known professor of

agricultural chemistry who invented the first practical butterfat testing methods.

He willed the house to the University along with the rest of his estate, and it was converted into a 20-man living unit. Last year the Regents decided it was too costly to keep up. The site will become a parking lot for the time being; earlier there had been some discussion of developing the Babcock and adjacent property as a low-cost dormitory site.

## Stolen Van Goof-up Brings Drawn Guns

Wisconsin State Journal, Thursday, April 6, 1989  
By Kim Schneider \Police reporter

Seven UW-Madison students are asking for a formal apology from University and Madison Police after being held face down at gunpoint Tuesday night for driving a delivery van mistakenly listed as stolen.

The seven students, all residents of the Babcock House men's cooperative, were followed home from a short trip to Lake Mendota, where one of the students had taken an icy dip as part of a house tradition. Ron Wiederholt, a senior agronomy major, said a University Police officer followed them into their University Avenue parking lot about 6:30 p.m., jumped from his squad car and ordered them to lie face down on the pavement.

"The first thing I saw was a cop car with lights on and a police officer standing behind his door with a gun pointed at us," he said. "We were wondering if the problem was we had gone down to the lake. Then the officer yelled the van was stolen."

A second officer arrived and also pointed his gun at the students.

"When I first saw the gun, I was frightened," Wiederholt said. "When he said the van was stolen, I just got mad."



# In the News

The co-op members had reported the van stolen in January. The white van, labeled “Daily Cardinal,” has been used by co-op members for years to deliver the college paper around town each day. The report was canceled the following day when it was learned one student had taken the van for repairs, junior Dave Helke said.

In February, police questioned co-op members who had the van at the newspaper office at Vilas Hall, telling them it was listed as stolen, Helke said. Students thought the problem was cleared up.

Tuesday night, it took about 1 1/2 hours and verification in person from a *Daily Cardinal* editor before officers left the house and removed the stolen vehicle listing, said Helke, who added students then visited both police stations to complain.

Madison Police Capt. Jeffrey Frye said his department is investigating what happened with the van listing.

University Police Lt. Phil Dixon said his department will investigate the officers’ actions. But initial reports indicate the officers did what they were trained to do in stopping a stolen vehicle, he said.

Dixon said the officer saw the students pass on the way to the lake and found them suspicious because they were looking around a lot. When the officer ran a check, he found the van listed as stolen and followed it after calling for a back-up.

“The officer elected to have the people lay on the ground, which is basically the way it is taught so you have the best control of the situation and nobody gets hurt,” he said.

It did not violate policy for the officers to draw their guns, he said. The students, who attend the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, said the actions seemed excessive. “None of us looked the least bit threatening,” Helke said.

Wiederholt, who was wet from a swim in the lake, said the officer wouldn’t allow a co-op member to bring him a blanket from the house.

Wiederholt prompted the lake trip by swearing at dinner, in violation of house rules. Since he didn’t wear a suit to the next meal, he had to swim in the lake, he said.

When a student came out of the house with a blanket, the officer pointed a gun at him. “He dropped the blanket and went back into the house,” Wiederholt said. “I asked the cop if I could still have the blanket, and he made me crawl by him first and frisked me.”

Dixon said 18 years ago a van stolen from campus was used to bring explosives into Sterling Hall.

Said Dixon: “It could be nice kids from the Cardinal, but you don’t know that at the time.” He added: “Unfortunately, there was a problem with the thing not actually being stolen.”





# In the News

## Babcock House Provides Haven For Ag Students

Capital Times Friday, May 3, 1996

By John Oncken

It reminded me of my own humble lodgings - those decades ago - while attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison. An old house, three stories tall with narrow hallways, small rooms, no lawn and fronting a main street that was laid out in the early 1900s when cars were small, slow and few.

The red-lettered sign backed up against the bright red patio/porch proclaims "Babcock House," a name that I knew was some sort of ag-student residence but had never given it much thought. Until recently that is, when Sherman Geib, a Madison Realtor and longtime friend, asked if I knew the history of this same Babcock House. Other than one experience of having a student from the residence - when it was located in an alley called Clymer Place, just off Johnson Street and just behind a rooming house where I lived - back into my car one long ago day, I said "no."

"It all started with Stephen M. Babcock the longtime professor at the university - you know, he invented the Babcock test for milk butterfat - who willed his house to the university for agricultural student housing in 1931," Geib explained. "It's an interesting story."

A few days later, Geib, Don Peterson, now general manager of Wisconsin Farm Progress Days, former associate dean of ag extension and a Babcock House alumnus, and I talked more about the past and present of the cooperative residence. The result was an invitation to have supper with the students now living there.

The first thing I learned was that this group of "aggies" eats rather well - a quarter of a chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, salad, milk and enough ice cream and cake "to choke a horse" (that's old farm boy lingo). Yes, they have a cook, but the setup, serving and cleanup are done - as are all the household tasks - by the residents.

Residents hail from all around Wisconsin - except for Kris Lucius of Toledo, Ohio - and include Sid Drissel from Kenosha, who is the recruiter (his job is to keep the house full), Chris Nelson, a biochemistry major from Baldwin in the northwest, Jason Rider from Seneca in Crawford County near the Mississippi River, who is majoring in horticulture (transgenic plant propagation), and from nearby Sun Prairie and Stoughton come past president Jon Schoonmaker and current president Brian Olson.

The University Avenue site is actually the third location for the house. The original Babcock House was on Lake Street but was replaced by the Extension building in the early '50s. For nine years, the house was on Clymer Place only to again face campus expansion for the new Education Building in the '60s, when it moved to its current location.

It's owned by the Babcock House Corporation (purchased with a loan from well-known ag professor A.J. Haas back in the '50s) with Madison's Steve Sievert serving as president.

Greg Clark's days as steward, student and resident of Babcock House are few in number - he starts works as a groundskeeper at a LaGrange, IL, country club (hired by another Babcock House grad, Ron McCarthy) on May 20.

Yes, Babcock House is all male - but, just up the street, the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA) recently built a new building. "They are really good," one Babcock resident confided to me, "I just don't know how they got the money to build the house and do all the things they do." (Note - I don't know either, but, maybe they'll invite me to supper some time and I'll find out.)

My visit to Babcock House helped me realize that you can still attend a big university, at a good price, survive less than luxurious conditions and go onto success. Just ask Geib, Peterson, Clark, current residents and 500 alumni.