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## 10 Babcock Drive. 1984

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## 10 BABCOCK DRIVE

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University of Wisconsin-Madison  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences







10 Babcock Drive today

Photo courtesy of Cris Merck

**T**he stately Victorian Gothic house nestled on the agricultural campus looks somewhat out-of-sync today with its concrete academic neighbors. However, wrapped into this house and the lives of its early residents is the story of the formative years of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The house, known as the "*Lake Dormer*," the "*Fred House*," the "*Agricultural Dean's Residence*," or simply, "*10 Babcock Drive*," was one of the first buildings on the agricultural campus and served as home for the College's first four Deans. It has been a cherished landmark for generations of students, alumni and friends of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

# THE DEANS

Each of the four deans, William A. Henry (1891–1907), Harry L. Russell (1907–1931), Christian L. Christensen (1931–1943), and Edwin B. Fred (1943–1945), played a major role in the development of the College of Agriculture at the UW-Madison. Through their efforts, the College grew into a superb teaching and research facility, helping the Wisconsin agricultural community adjust to changing scientific, technological and economic needs.

**William A. Henry**, for whom the Dean's Residence was built, came to the University of Wisconsin in 1880 to teach botany and serve as the University's first professor of agriculture. His arrival coincided with a growing realization among agricultural leaders that traditional farming methods needed to be supplemented, if not replaced, by more scientific practices. Under Dean Henry's leadership, strong efforts were made to develop communications between the state's farmers and researchers at the University. Dean Henry also made great progress toward convincing a sceptical farm population that sending their children to the University was a benefit, not a frivolous expense.

During Dean Henry's years at the University, the area of agricultural teaching and research was transformed. From one professor in the Botany Department, it grew to an autonomous College with faculty in horticulture, animal husbandry, agricultural chemistry and agricultural physics. The single farm that Dean



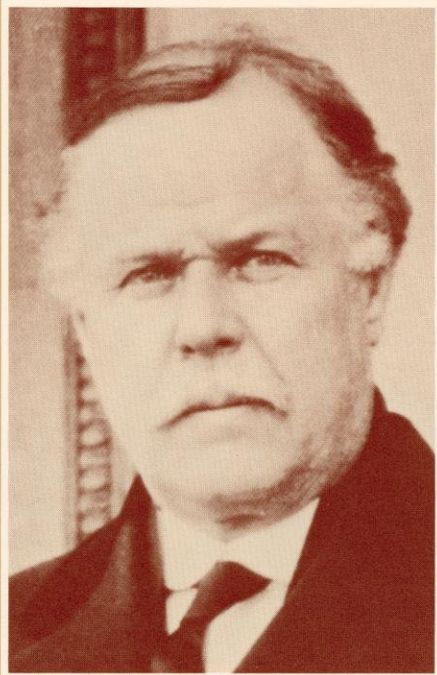
**Dean William A. Henry, 1891–1907**

Photo courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives

Henry felt operated primarily as a "pleasure plot" for Madisonians was converted to a viable model farm which served as the basis for the Experiment Station. Finally, the Farmer's Institute and Short Course programs were initiated to extend the University's advances to those who could not attend the University on a full-time basis.

Henry was named the first Dean of the newly-formed College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. His accomplishments were widely known and offers of better positions came from other agricultural states with increasing frequency. To retain Henry, the Board of Regents authorized a number of actions in 1895: a





**Dean Harry L. Russell, 1907–1931**

Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin

salary increase for Dean Henry, a horse to be used by Dean Henry and other members of the College, the right of the Dean's family to use surplus produce from the University Farm, and the construction of a formal residence for the Dean's family.

The residence was far from the smallest consideration, for the Dean and his wife had been sharing a modest white frame house with workmen from the University Farm. The appropriation for the house at 10 Babcock Drive was approved in 1895, and the design and construction were carried out the next year. The Henry family lived in the house until ill health forced Dean Henry to retire in 1907.

**Harry L. Russell** came to the Dean's position with a background in applied research that demonstrated the importance of the basic sciences for the agricultural sector. Working on problems as diverse as bovine tuberculosis, the cold-curing process for cheese-making, spoilage and contamination in canning, and public health issues, Russell had already made substantial scientific contributions prior to his appointment as Dean.

Building on Dean Henry's work, Russell pushed the College still further toward modern research areas. In 1909–1910 alone, teaching and research departments were added in poultry husbandry, entomology, plant pathology, genetics and veterinary science. Russell expanded the scope of College concerns to include the social sciences with the addition of pioneering programs in agricultural education, economics, journalism, and sociology. His dedication to the Wisconsin farm community led to the establishment of the state's agricultural agent system and its development as one of the nation's broadest agricultural extension programs. Russell served as Dean for 24 years, leaving in 1931 to become the Director of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

The appointment of **Christian L. Christensen** as Russell's successor was appropriate recognition of the changing Wisconsin agricultural community. The College's focus expanded to include analysis of the economic and social context of agricultural production. The pioneering efforts of the Departments of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology assumed greater importance as the Depression brought the survival of much of the farm sector into question. Dean Christensen's experience in economics and business administration, combined with his work with the USDA and Danish cooperatives, provided the ideal background for developing the strategy to combine scientific advances with sound economic practice. His experience also proved an invaluable resource in developing responses to the New Deal proposals intended to put the agricultural economy back on solid ground.

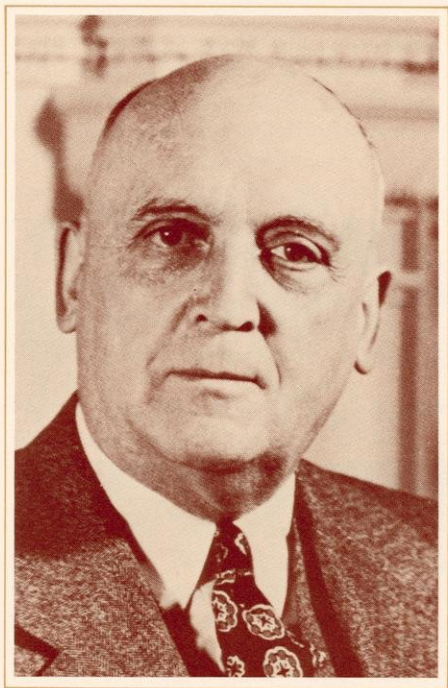
Dean Christensen also brought increased attention to rural life and economics. He strengthened the Short Course Program and instituted the Rural Life Conferences and the Rural Art Program. Christensen actively worked to educate people on issues such as soil erosion and soil conservation, leaving a strong heritage of stewardship for our natural and human resources.



**Dean Christian L. Christensen, 1931–1943**

Photo courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives





**Dean Edwin B. Fred, 1943–1945**

Photo courtesy of University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives

When Dean Christensen left Wisconsin in 1943 to assist in the war effort, he was replaced by bacteriologist **Edwin B. Fred**. Fred served as Dean for only two years before he was named President of the University in 1945.

Although it had been customary for the retiring Dean to turn the 10 Babcock Drive residence over to the incoming Dean, that practice ended with the Fred family. President Fred and his wife Rosa continued to live in the house and remained an integral part of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences until their recent deaths.



# THE HOUSE



View (looking southeast) of the UW Agriculture Campus, c. 1899  
The Dean's Residence is at left, King Hall at left center, and Hiram Smith Hall at right.  
Photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin

The house at 10 Babcock Drive is no longer used as the Dean's Residence, and dormitories, the Steenbock Library and other university buildings are located on the once open fields nearby. The Dean's Residence now houses the Experimental Farms offices, but the residence still carries the imprint of the Deans' families who once called it home.

Still standing are the trees which Dean Henry brought to the grounds in his plan to represent on the campus each native Wisconsin tree. There is the unique larch tree given by Horticulture Professor Emmett Goff in 1899. The large Norway maple, planted by Dean Russell at the time of his son Eldon's birth and transplanted to the grounds when he became Dean, remains near the end

of the driveway. The development of the new Horticulture Outdoor Classroom Garden has been designed to complement the existing plantings.

The 1984 nomination of the Dean's Residence to the National Register of Historic Places provides overdue recognition of the building and its grounds, and gives the residence its appropriate place among Wisconsin's historic resources.

The house's spacious porch, leaded glass windows and elegant stairway have not changed much since Dean and Mrs. Henry agreed to the designs prepared by local architects Conover and Porter. True, the spindles that once graced the porch railings have been replaced by more simple carpentry, and active children no longer slide down the banister,

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yet a homey atmosphere remains.

Just inside the building, the office staff for the Experimental Farms work in the former parlor and living room. Still visible are the remnants of the sliding doors that were removed during Dean Christensen's tenure in order to create the single large room, a popular gathering place for parties and receptions.

The door to the right of the living room fireplace leads to the conference room which once served as the library; this door was added during the remodeling carried out for the Christensen family.

Beyond the conference room are the restroom, servant's stairs and kitchen area, all of which have remained intact despite the conversion of the house for office use.

The dining room now serves as the office of the Experimental Farms Director. The ornate ceiling and the light fixtures above the fireplace and on the wall opposite the fireplace remain intact. The unusual radiator, which once doubled as a food warmer, still provides heat, while the charming coal fireplace adds grace to the room.

Beyond the stairway is the powder room that was converted from space originally designed as a gun room, complete with gun holes. The leaded glass window at the stairway landing still filters sparkling sunlight on cold winter days. The window's prism, originally ordered by Mrs. Henry, casts dazzling patterns of light over the staircase and surrounding area as the sun moves across the sky.

The former bedrooms and dressing room, in the front of the house on the second floor, are now admin-

istrative offices. The beautiful tile work around the fireplace in the southeast bedroom has never been disturbed, and from the elegant window seat in that room, the visitor enjoys an excellent view of the adjacent property. The dressing room still contains its full-length mirrors, and the door to the adjoining balcony allows fresh breezes to circulate through the house on warm summer days.

The smaller bedroom, adjacent to the southeast bedroom, now serves as a graduate student office. The former maid's quarters, at the rear of the house, are used by the Dean's staff. The master bedroom served as a computer room for a research department until recently. The fireplace in the room was covered during the energy conservation movement of the 1970's, but the ornate light fixtures and other remnants of more elegant days have been preserved without alteration.

Throughout the history of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the Dean's Residence has served as a gathering place for the people who made the College one of the state's most valuable assets. The Deans who lived in the house entertained undergraduate students, faculty members and important guests from all over the world. The voices of the Deans' children, the sounds of social gatherings and official meetings, and the conversations of the Freds in their senior years all became part of the house, giving it a life that will always be a warm memory for the many visitors to the Dean's Residence.

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# A NEW GARDEN

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Adam's Needle, Purple Mullein, Mexican Sunflower, Jewels of Ophar, Chinese Lantern, Winter Aconite, Marsh Marigold. . . more than 450 plants, ranging from native Wisconsin to rare exotic species, will grow in the University of Wisconsin's new Horticulture Garden.

Located next to the Dean's Residence, just one block from the Horticulture Building, the new garden classroom will replace garden space lost in the construction of the Plant Sciences Building addition.

The garden will add another dimension of natural beauty to the campus, but primarily it will serve as an outdoor classroom. It will provide essential "hands on" experience for students in the department, the only horticulture department in Wisconsin's higher education system. The garden will present opportuni-

ties for training in plant identification and nomenclature as well as ecological and site management techniques. The new garden classroom will offer particular support for Wisconsin's program specialty in floriculture, which boasts more recipients of student training awards than any other college or university in the country.

The varied topography and exposures of the 90,000 square foot site will allow for a diversity of plantings. The major emphasis in the garden will be on herbaceous ornamental perennials, but the site will feature many other plantings, including wildflowers as well as an alpine/rock garden and a water/bog garden. Plans for the garden include landscape plantings that will complement the setting of the historic residence.

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