The invention of the “Babcock Test'' in 1890 marked a shift in the entire focus of Wisconsin’s economy. As you can see illustrated on the painting that crowns the dome of the Wisconsin capitol building, wheat was for a long time the state’s main export. However, this is grueling for the land and eventually production began to dip. Yet, it is around this time that the UW-Madison Professor made a breakthrough in what he called “dairy science”. The product? A simple test that allows the farmer to gauge how much butterfat is in their batches of milk. For those who are not dairy experts, this slashed an unquantifiable amount of milk waste and energy. In the years following Wisconsin would become the United States largest dairy exporter. It still brings in $45.6 billion to the state's economy. This economic boom was further supported by Babcock refusing to patent his invention. In fact he toured the state, showing farmers all over Wisconsin how to utilize the test. The materials needed are limited so this great boon for dairy farmers came at little cost. To forgo exorbitant wealth for the good of the state is a sacrifice that perfectly embodies the ideals of the Wisconsin Idea.

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