CHAPTER ONE
The Early Years 1911 - 1919

It all began at a rugged prairie site in 1911. The Boys’ and Girls’ Dormitories (later to be known as Taché Hall) was one of the principal buildings of the new campus of the Manitoba Agricultural College (MAC). If we go back in time, we can see how the MAC fits into those early years of the University of Manitoba.

In the Beginning—Some History

The University of Manitoba is Western Canada’s first university, founded on February 28, 1877—just seven years after the Province of Manitoba and only four years after the City of Winnipeg. At the time, Manitoba was a small postage stamp-shaped province; Winnipeg was hardly more than a town; and the University of Manitoba was a university in name only, created to confer degrees on students graduating from its three founding colleges—St. Boniface College, St. John’s College, and Manitoba College. In 1882, the Manitoba Medical College became affiliated, and Wesley College joined in 1888, as did the Manitoba College of Pharmacy in 1902. Another notable addition was the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1906, which would play a part in the future location of the University of Manitoba campus.

In 1885, the federal government approved legislation granting the University up to 150,000 acres of Crown land in Manitoba as an endowment. The University established the Land Board and began framing how these lands and their proceeds would be used. This process took until 1887 when land selection began. By 1889, over 42,000 acres were recommended and the selection of lands continued until 1891. By 1893, a committee was appointed to consider available sites in Winnipeg for the construction of “a university building with lecture theatres and laboratories.” A number of sites were considered and the matter was turned over to the provincial government for its consideration. The decision was put on hold until the issues of land patents and an increase in the University’s provincial grant were resolved.

Finally in 1898, the patents for the University’s land grant were issued and the lands were transferred to the University. The patents contained no restrictions on how the land could be used by the University.

And by the turn of the 20th Century, it was recognized that the University of Manitoba needed to be both a degree granting and teaching
university, and for that it would need to have its own faculty members and facilities. To that end, in 1901, a Science Building was built on Broadway, where Memorial Park is now located.

The Manitoba Agricultural College (MAC)

Manitoba’s rapid growth at the turn of the Century prompted the government to support agricultural research and education. Back in 1894, the Department of Agriculture had started a dairy school, followed by the establishment of the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1903-04.

It was designed to give men a solid educational background in agricultural sciences. The College also included a Division of Home Economics, which was intended to give young women from rural communities a scientific background in homemaking. Young women were to receive the finest education in health, nutrition, and home management. Everything from food safety before refrigeration, the chemistry of food and laundry, human physiology, and home-based accounting was covered in those early years. These women would then go back to their communities to become leaders and strengthen the rural experience. The courses were to be state-of-the-art, on par with any other existing program in North America.

Two river lots south of the Assiniboine River and west of Winnipeg were selected for the MAC campus. Located on the old Osborne Barracks site on Tuxedo Avenue, the MAC was the first college of its kind in Western Canada, and only the third in the country. Samuel Hooper, the first Provincial Architect, designed the original College buildings, setting them in a formal Edwardian plan, in which the buildings were arrayed around a long oval drive. The MAC officially opened in 1906.

Back to the University of Manitoba

The University of Manitoba was still undecided on a location for its campus. On June 6, 1907, on behalf of the Tuxedo Park Co., Frederick William Heubach offered the University 150 acres of land for a University site adjacent to the southern boundary of the new city park (Assiniboine Park).

By 1909, still with no finalized plan on a future location for the new U of M campus, a $12,000 temporary building was constructed north of the first University building (Science) on Broadway to accommodate the increase in the number of new departments.

In 1910, the Report of the Royal Commission on the University of Manitoba was tabled, but did not provide any unanimous agreement on the future of the University. However, it did call for the following: the establishment of a Board of
Governors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to manage the University; the search for a large permanent site; a president to be chosen; and the extension of teaching departments as rapidly as required, by demand.

An expanded location on Broadway and a site south of Assiniboine Park—now the home of the Canadian Mennonite University—were both held up as possible homes for a full-grown University of Manitoba.

At about this time, the Manitoba Agricultural College had outgrown its Tuxedo campus. Unable to secure additional land close to the Tuxedo Avenue school property, the Province elected to purchase 243 hectares in a new St. Vital (later to be called Fort Garry) site.

With the University Council unwilling to agree to the Broadway site as the permanent location for the University and the provincial government unwilling to provide money for new University buildings on the Tuxedo site, the provincial government let it be known that it would be willing to convey to the University some 137 acres lying between the recently transplanted Manitoba Agricultural College grounds and the Red River in St. Vital [Fort Garry], and would proceed to erect and equip an Engineering Building or other buildings required by the University.

In the end, the St. Vital [Fort Garry] site of the Manitoba Agricultural College was selected to house the University of Manitoba. Construction on the campus began in 1911 and the first buildings, the Boys' and Girls' Dormitories (much later to be named Taché Hall), the Administration Building, and the Horticulture and Biology Building (now the Human Ecology Building) opened in 1912-13.

The history of this campus is evident on the Administration Building, which is adorned with the University of Manitoba's name on its western side and the Manitoba Agricultural College's name on the eastern side.

The transition to the St. Vital [Fort Garry] campus and debate over where the University of Manitoba should be located would continue for some time and, even until 1950, the University was split with junior students studying at the Broadway campus and senior students studying at the, by then called, Fort Garry site.

The New College Campus (1911 - 13)

The new campus site was described, in the February 1912 edition of the MAC Gazette, in this way:

The new property lies about seven miles south of the Winnipeg City Hall, alongside the Pembina Highway, and comprises about 600 acres, all of which are thickly treed with small poplars, a few willows, and some scrub oak. The clearing was undertaken with the industry and technology of the era:

T.J. Harrison, assistant in Field Husbandry, was in charge of this work, having a tent and staying on the spot, and having at one time...
The Residence constructed to the third floor in 1912. The Boys’ side (West) was ready before the Girls’ side (East).
100 men working under his directions ... owing to the wet weather, little headway was made. On August 7, 1911, a Hart-Parr gasoline outfit was hired to break ground and, after this, better time was made ... the engine proving far superior to the horses for this kind of work; gangs of men were employed, picking up the roots and burning them. Eight teams were also employed drawing poles off the land, and it is estimated that 2,000 cords of wood were taken off. The latter has recently been sold and the receipts will go a long way toward defraying the cost of clearing and breaking.

Excavators were paid 25¢ an hour to dig the foundation, mostly by hand, and tradesmen were paid 40¢ to 60¢ an hour. So rough, or rustic, a setting was the birthplace of Taché Hall that the editors of the MAC Gazette referred to it only as “the farm.” In fact, the editors spoke of the proposed highway from Winnipeg to the St. Vital site, as one that would “undoubtedly become very popular with motorists desiring a short spin in the country.”

Naturally, since most of the College’s students were from rural Manitoba, the isolation of the new campus was familiar. Nonetheless, the architects of the Residence extended themselves, ensuring that the Residents would enjoy a comfortable, even luxurious (for its time) home. The structure of the residential community on campus was patterned after the British residential college format.

To mitigate against the isolation, University Crescent was constructed early in the Century, reducing the distance to Winnipeg by nearly one mile, and the street railway system (street-car system) was further developed to include the St. Vital [Fort Garry] campus.

The Architects

The architects who designed the Dormitory and other buildings on the new St. Vital campus, Samuel Hooper and Victor Horwood, were Englishmen who immigrated to Canada. Hooper was trained as a stonemason and was well known in Winnipeg for stone monument designs. In 1904, Hooper was appointed as the first Provincial Architect. He, along with his assistant Victor Horwood, designed many of the new buildings for the growing province. However, Samuel Hooper died in 1911, and Victor Horwood was appointed the new Provincial Architect and completed many of the buildings already designed by Hooper, including the new Dormitory at the St. Vital campus.

The Dormitory, whose façade was almost the length of two football fields, required an architect with special design skills. What was created was a wall with a clear hierarchy of entrances and internal functions—a main entrance block and two flanking dormitories, one for women (East) and one for men (West).

The exterior design of such an extensive building presented a formidable challenge. Although it was designed in a style similar to its Georgian campus contemporaries, almost the full vocabulary of traditional architectural detailing was sought out to treat the expanse of the facade. Thus the building is more appropriately described as being eclectic in style.
The projecting pavilion housing the entry to the Auditorium and Dining Room has a balustraded pediment in which is carved the emblem of the Manitoba Agricultural College. The block behind is crowned with a pagoda-like cupola, buttressed with Italian Baroque volutes. Twin block towers mark the entrance to the Residence wings on either side. The extreme corners are given sweeping curves, and their entries are treated with Tuscan columns and lintels capped with broken scrolled pediments, repeating the motif of the second-storey windows of the Administration Building. The dormered and gabled roof line is treated with English Jacobean flair in combination with classical details. The use of the salmon-red brick, limestone beltcourses, cornices, quoining, and red Spanish-tile roof is consistent with all the original buildings on campus.

This first campus building appears to have stretched Hooper and his architectural team to reach a high level of excellence. It is sophisticated, stately, and elegant. It is also one of the longest “walls” in all of Manitoba.

Further, the MAC Gazette reported in November 1912 ... “The Progress of the New College at St. Vital”:

Those of you who saw the building under construction in the fall of 1911 will remember that work on the dormitory, which is by far the largest building on the grounds, had then only reached the second storey, but owing to the very rapid progress made on the building this summer, hopes are now entertained that it may all be roofed in by Christmas of this year. The part of the dormitory to be occupied...
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by the young men is already roofed, and that portion to be reserved for the young ladies is rapidly nearing completion.

This building is situated about 450 feet from the south end of the main building (Administration Building). It will be four storeys high and will be built of brick and stone. The dormitories, auditorium, gymnasiums, kitchen, dining room, and store-houses are all located in this building, the auditorium and dining room being in the centre, while the dormitories are situated on either side; the one on the east for the girls, that on the west for the boys. The Auditorium will be provided with a gallery and will have seating accommodation for 1,200 people.

The dining room is 100 by 90 feet and will have three stained glass windows, each 24 feet wide. The girls’ residence will hold 200, while the boys’ residence will have provisions for nearly 400. Connected with each residence will be a gymnasium, shower baths, swimming pools, and running tracks, and it is probable that a small reading room will be provided where at least the daily papers will be on hand.

In designing the kitchen and connected storerooms, great care has been exercised to secure an arrangement whereby the least possible handling will be necessary, and with very gratifying results. All the goods are taken in the north side and stored. Each time they are moved they are taken nearer the dining room, first to the cook’s storeroom, next to the range, then to the supply table, and on to the dining room at the south side.

This building is also up to the third floor so that it ought to be ready next fall. The estimated cost? A hefty $824,825.

Another article in the MAC Gazette described the inside of the Residence:

The floors of all halls and lavatories are terrazzo and the rooms are fir. The rest of the woodwork is oak, with a golden finish. Each room is designed for two students and is furnished with two beds with mattresses, blankets, and comforters; a student’s study table; and a dresser. In each room are two clothes closets with doors that can be kept locked while the students are out at work, if so desired. The dining room occupies a central part of the building and can be entered on the main floor from both boys’ and girls’ residences. Opening into the dining room is the large kitchen where the cooking for the whole institution will be done. In this is installed the ranges and the refrigerator plant, and underground is the vegetable cellar where all the vegetables for the season can be stored.

In two wings to the rear of this building are the gymnasiums. These will be equipped with high class apparatus, including vaulting horses, parallel bars, special duplex pulley weights,
horizontal and vaulting bars, spring boards, horizontal ladders, climbing ropes, travelling rings, flying rings, stall bars, tumbling mats, medicine balls, basketball outfit, and indoor baseball. Near the gymnasiums are shower baths, two swimming tanks [the plunge baths], and lockers for gymnasium suits, bathing suits, and work suits.

In this building, as well, there are sitting rooms, reading rooms, matrons’ quarters, dietitians’ quarters, and accommodation for members of the staff who desire to live in the college and for all the help.

Meanwhile, construction of the Home Economics Building was delayed because of the First World War, so those programs were delivered in the basement, second, and third floors of the Administration Building. It was to be a temporary arrangement until a new Home Economics Building was ready. However, it took until September of 1950, after having “exhausted the space available in the Administration Building,” that the temporary arrangements dating from 1913 ended when the School of Home Economics moved into the Horticulture Building, its current home [Human Ecology].
A Glimpse of the Past

But what about Residence Life at that time? For the students of the MAC, there were many strict rules and regulations to be followed while attending the College. Rules in the General Calendar included required uniforms for the girls, as well as details about when to eat, sleep, and leave campus.

1914 – Rules & Regulations of the MAC
- Residents must not invite friends to stay overnight, and must consult the dean, matron, or dietitian before inviting anyone to meals, for which a charge of 25¢ per meal will be made.
- Students will not be permitted to burn candles or lamps in their bedrooms.
- Students may have one evening a week to themselves, if they so desire, but must sign the students’ register before leaving.
- Students are required to make their beds, sweep the rooms, and leave the window open before going to prayers at 8:30 am.
- No student will be allowed to smoke in or about the institution except in the room provided for that purpose.
- Only students who have registered as smokers are allowed to use the smoking room.
- Students occupying front rooms are requested to use white or cream curtains.
- Scuffling or loud talking in the halls or on the stairs should be discouraged by all students interested in the maintenance of good student self-government.
- Students are cautioned against carelessly leaving money in their rooms.
- Overalls should be left in lockers provided in the Mechanical Building.
- Spitting in rooms and corridors is strictly forbidden.
- Students will be obliged to have their personal effects laundered regularly.
- A student must not leave the campus after 9:00 pm without permission.
- All students will assemble in the Auditorium in the morning at 8:25 am for prayers.
- All lights in the dormitory should be out by 11:00 pm. Those using lights after that time will be charged 25¢ extra per night. This will not apply in the case of sickness properly reported to the nurse.
- A student who takes sick when on a visit to the city must have the president notified at once.
- Students violating any of the regulations will be liable for suspension or dismissal from the college.
- Residents of the Boys’ Dormitory must not enter the Kitchen without permission; or the Girls’ Dormitory except on Friday evenings.
- Each student will be given a fair chance, but if he shows no inclination to make satisfactory progress in his work, he will not be allowed to stay in the institution.

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Also in 1914, the new Home Economics Professional Housekeeper’s two-year diploma course began in October. This course included subjects that were not included in the regular program: marketing, bacteriology, large-scale cooking, and ethics were some of the new subjects taught in this program. There was a practical element to this course as well. Students worked in the Residence Dining Room to gain experience in running a large-scale establishment. One could scarcely imagine a more ideal arrangement for hands-on training of University-based Home Economics students.

In 1914 with the onset of World War I, University Council established a Committee on Military Instruction and authorized the teaching of military science and tactics. A Canadian Officers’ Training Corps (COTC) was organized and during the term, men drilled, and 64 of them took extra classes to qualify as military officers. In 1916, an Overseas Correspondence Club was established to write letters to University of Manitoba students serving in England and France during World War I in order to keep them in touch with activities at the University during their absence.
During the 1918 fall term, an influenza epidemic and the subsequent ban on public meetings closed the University for seven weeks from October 11 to December 2.

World War I ended on November 11, 1918. A total of 1,160 students and 14 faculty and staff from the University had enlisted. One hundred and twenty-three were killed or died during the war and 142 received military honours.

While students had always been active in sports and social activities, the post-First World War period marked a boom in student organization with the creation in April 1919 of the University of Manitoba Students’ Union (UMSU).