CHAPTER THREE
The Threadbare Thirties 1930 - 1939

Until the University of Manitoba finally moved to Fort Garry (formerly part of St. Vital), the campus was occupied by the Manitoba Agricultural College, the School of Home Economics, and the Rust Laboratory (Agriculture Canada). The Residence housed degree and diploma students in Agriculture, Home Economics, the Dairy Short Course, and a short course in Mechanics. Some teaching, administrative, and support staff lived in the Residence as well.

Residence Life in the 1930s

At that time, most of the rooms were double, with two single beds, two bookshelves, two study tables with two chairs, and two table lamps. There was no rug or telephone. This furniture was appreciated and lasted many years (so many years, in fact, that much of it was still in use when the University finally renovated the building in the late 1970s).

The West wing was supervised by a matron. A nurse attended those students who were ill and called the physician, Dr. Hogg, when necessary. In addition to the matron, the Residence was run by student self-government. The Senior Stick and other members of the Council (including a student court) administered Residence rules. Six days a week, from 7:00 to 9:15 pm was study period, with complete quiet, and at 10:30 pm students were required to retire to their rooms for the night. Living under a system of self-government was the most valuable experience of these college years, inspiring as it did, a self-discipline and respect for one’s peers.

The boys and girls constituted one happy family at social events and extra-curricular activities. These included a choir, literary performances, sports, the Student Christian Movement, and many other activities that kept the students busy and interested.

In 1933, the first Variety Nite was held, and the co-eds introduced the “Co-ed Ball” in 1934, with such successful results that the dance became a tradition each November.

By the mid-thirties, the U of M was already famous for her gala frosh reception each fall. In 1935, 1,800 students attended the “Freshman Frolic” dance.

Residence beds were made daily and rooms swept before students went to classes. Every day
except Saturday, immediately after breakfast, most students went to the short chapel service that was conducted by the students themselves; the service consisted of readings from the scriptures and the singing of hymns. On Saturdays, they had some leisure time to go skating or some other activity, although the women’s movements off of campus were closely controlled and monitored.

These were the days when students came to the Dining Room properly attired, and at specified times. The seating arrangements were still posted weekly. Meals started with a blessing, and everyone left the table at the same time. In the evening, students enjoyed cocoa and cookies.

On Sunday evening, chapel service was conducted by a special guest and was followed by discussion and snacks in the living room (lounge). On one occasion, Archbishop Matheson of Rupertsland (for whom the campus street is named) conducted the Sunday service, after which everyone retired to the living room to listen to his experiences as a missionary before 1900, when he had travelled from Winnipeg to Edmonton by Red River cart.

In the 1933-34 academic year, official specializations in Home Economics were offered, and in 1935 the Canadian Dietetic Association was formed. At this point, there was considerable interest in the dietetic profession amongst the students in Home Economics. Courses were changed and a seminar course was added. This allowed students to specialize in the option of Institutional Management and to work towards being a dietitian. In 1937, a student-operated Institutional Management Tea Room was established in the Residence building where students gained practical experience necessary in this role.

A study of the Calendars of 20 years ago gives an inkling of the progressive changes which were taking place. In 1916-17, the Domestic Science student was required to wear a uniform, “the skirt of which must clear the ground by exactly six inches.” Progress was not only rapid, but upward.
The ABC Booster Club

In the fall of 1938, a group of enthusiastic students banded together for the purpose of stimulating Varsity Athletics. The Booster Club, since it was not an official organization in any sense, had very little or no financial backing, which necessitated volunteer effort of all kinds.

Heading the list of Booster Club activities were the Snack Room or Cafeteria sing-songs, probably given the most enthusiastic and wholehearted support of any Varsity gatherings. Students turned out “en masse” and sang their favourite songs, while more boisterous “ring-leaders” urged them to support The Team.

The success of the club was not due to any few single efforts, but to the combined “boosting” of all those who in any way, however small, had helped to foster a new brand of spirit on campus.

In 1939, the University of Manitoba Band recorded their theme song Brown and Gold at radio station CJRC. The song of the UMSU urges, “Forward to success, wisdom, happiness.”

At this time, the complete room and board cost was $1 per day—a fortune to many.

■ ABC Booster Club rally in the Auditorium.

■ The Students’ Union Building as it was called in 1935.
The Arts Building (Tier - 1931) and the Science Building (Buller - 1932) have been added to the campus.

“One of the most encouraging developments in the Union this year has been the gradual decline of ‘faculty spirit.’ Men of all faculties have mingled freely together, and there appears to be emerging a very desirable esprit de corps, which embraces all groups in the Residence. The transition from a dormitory of one faculty to a Student Union for the whole University is progressing satisfactorily.” Report of the Dean of Men’s Residence, 1934-1935.

“Most of the problems and difficulties that confront the Administration in regard to the Union arise from the relatively small number of students living in Residence. This situation has resulted in heavy overhead, much of which is a fixed charge, being carried by a small group of students, or else in a deficit.” Report of the Dean of Men’s Residence, 1933-34.

1935 - Trees are starting to flourish and the campus is looking quite beautiful.