049

Health Sciences Building
1. Statement of Significance

The Health Sciences Building, now known as ‘Health Sciences A Wing’, was the first medical building to be built at the University of Saskatchewan, completed in 1950. The Health Sciences A Wing has heritage value as the cornerstone of the medical precinct at the university. Designed by architects Webster and Gilbert, this 4-storey Collegiate Gothic structure maintains a high degree of commemorative integrity. Its front façade, in particular, remains essentially unchanged from the original design.

The School of Medical Sciences began as a two year pre-clinical program at the University of Saskatchewan where it was first located in the Header Houses near the MacKinnon Building. In 1937 the school moved into the top two floors of the Archaeology Building before finding its home in the newly constructed School of Medical Sciences Building, starting in 1949. The school was connected to the University Hospital when that building opened in 1955 and a B Wing was added in 1969. Additions to the building continue to be made, most recently with the Academic Health Sciences D and E wings. The additions to the building are beyond the scope of this report.
The School of Medical Sciences transitioned into a degree-granting College in the years 1952-1957. In 1957 the first class of M.D.’s at the University of Saskatchewan graduated from the program. The cornerstone of the Health Sciences Building was laid by the ‘Father of Medicare,’ Tommy Douglas.

Note: The Health Sciences Building is configured with floors numbered First Floor, Second Floor, etc... This report follows the same convention.

2. Character - Defining Elements

2.1 Materials

The exterior of the Health Sciences A Wing is faced in materials common to the University of Saskatchewan. The most prominent of these character-defining materials is ‘greystone,’ the local stone used on many earlier buildings. Greystone is complemented by cut Tyndall stone ornamentation (Figure 1). A granite base and steps (Figure 2) complete the stone materials of the exterior. The greystone, Tyndall stone and granite are all character-defining elements. The greystone that surrounds the entrance stairwell exists in a threatened state of commemorative integrity due to the poor condition of its mortar joints (Figure 2). All other stone is in good commemorative condition. (For further information on building stones used at the U of S, refer to ‘Appendix: Stone’). Other materials visible on the exterior include oak doors and stained glass (Figures 4 & 5). The oak and stained
glass are also character-defining elements. On either side of the oak
doors are steel light fixtures. Steel is also used for the window frames
which are visible from the building’s exterior. The stained glass and
steel elements are shown in Figure 4. Copper flashing completes the
character-defining materials of the building’s exterior.

The vestibule inside the principal entrance has heritage value due to
its granite and marble finishes. The vestibule has walls and flooring
of grey marble paneling shown in Figure 5. The marble panels are
complemented by polished black and grey granite surrounds shown
in Figure 6. The granite and marble are character-defining elements
of the building’s interior. The wall mounted materials are in excellent
commemorative condition, but the granite flooring shows wear.

The interior of the building is characterized by the use of oak, for
doors, door frames, window frames and stair handrails. The doors
in the building are in varying states of commemorative integrity.
Many of the doors, including the exterior main entry door have been
replaced in kind.

Window frames are of painted cold rolled steel. Most of the window
frames appear to be original and many still have operable casements.
Window hardware is generally original and of brass, as in many other
buildings at the University (Figure 7). The original steel window
frames and hardware are character-defining elements.

Staircases feature
steel stringers, cast
iron newel posts, steel
balustrades and oak
handrails (Figure
8). The corridors
have painted plaster
walls with brick
wainscoting. The
brick is in excellent
commemorative
condition. The
plaster shows signs of
deterioration in many places. The brick and plaster wall treatment
is character-defining. The terrazzo flooring has brass strips,
thresholds, drains and clean out covers. Terrazzo is used extensively
in the building and also makes up wall bases, stair treads and window
sills. The terrazzo and its brass components are character-defining
materials that have retained their heritage value to a good degree of
commemorative integrity (Figure 9). Original brass frames are also
found on a few bulletin boards (Figure 10).
2.2 Form & Style

The Health Sciences Building was one of the later buildings to be constructed at the University of Saskatchewan in the Collegiate Gothic style. In plan, the building is arranged in the classic Elizabethan E-shape. Figure 11 illustrates the original front elevation of the building. Subsequent additions have obscured the E-shaped plan of the building from the rear, but the original front elevation has been well preserved.

The front elevation is symmetrical in composition, with the main entrance located centrally, and marked by a tower and a set of stone steps. Figure 12 shows the main entrance to the building, with its arched opening. Lanterns are hung on the walls on either side of the main entrance. The central tower is decorated with a crenellated parapet, statuary niches, scuppers and a row of octagonal windows (Figure 13). Stairwells are rendered on the front elevation as turrets (Figure 14). The stonework features decoration in the form of statuary niches, cut stone blanks and shields. A carved stone shield above the main entrance features the motif of the staff and snake, in reference to the medical professions (Figure 15). A prominent Tyndall stone stringcourse marks the base of the building (Figure 16). The parapet of the Health Sciences Building is constructed in cut Tyndall stone, and is one of the few modifications to the original front elevation, having been raised during the construction of the B-Wing, in 1968. It is decorated with crenellation in the form of archer style slots, and stone scuppers. Features of the Collegiate Gothic style such as arched openings, tower and turret forms, and carved stone decoration, are all character-defining elements.
The interior of the building still holds some heritage value, although many original features have been lost to renovations. The brick wainscoting and original terrazzo floors in the corridors generally remain and are in good condition. Several arched openings remain (Figure 17). Most of the original features and finishes in the stairwells remain in place (Figure 8). Cast iron newel posts are decorated with a flower motif that is also found elsewhere on campus. Many of the stained glass windows visible from the exterior are also visible from the interior (Figure 18).

Dropped ceilings have concealed a vaulted ceiling in the vestibule and arched ceilings in the first, second and third floor corridors.

2.3 Location

The Health Sciences Building is located off Wiggins court, near the Wiggins Avenue entrance to the University of Saskatchewan (Figure 19). From 1926 to 1937, the School of Medicine was housed in the Horticulture Building (Header Houses) (Figure 20), and later in the Archaeology Building (Figure 21). The Health Sciences Building was the first purpose-built medical building at the university. The subsequent construction of the Royal University Hospital and other medical buildings nearby has created a medical precinct. It was at this location that the School became the degree granting College of Medicine. The location of the building is of heritage value because it signaled the permanent establishment of the College of Medicine, and established a medical precinct.
2.4 Spatial Configuration

The original form of the Health Sciences Building is legible in plan, and the basic arrangement of its central wing, with rooms arrayed on either side of a double-loaded corridor, is intact. However, renovations, expansions and additions since its construction have transformed it from a discreet building into part of a complex of interconnected facilities. These changes have been invasive and in many cases have completely changed the spatial character of its spaces.

A comparison of Figures 22 and 23 shows the type of reconfiguration that generally took place on all floors. The addition of the B Wing to the west side of the building saw the deletion of all of the windows and doors on that façade. The staircase shown in the original plans on the west side of the building no longer exists. Rooms were removed from the west side of the building to make way for wider connective thoroughfares. On both the first and second floors, the large open plan rooms of the north wing have been extensively subdivided. The basement and the fourth floor (Figure 24) are the only levels which have escaped this reconfiguration.

A character-defining space was lost in the conversion of the double height lecture room of the second floor into a single height classroom. Figure 25 shows the original space in section. Figure 26 illustrates the original appearance of the space. A new floor was added to create a series of small rooms on the third floor where the upper portion of the lecture hall formerly existed. Figure 27 shows the current configuration of the space. The double height stained glass windows that originally allowed daylight into the space from the east have been concealed inside a small service stair. Figure 28 shows the rooms that were added on the third floor.

Figure 19. The location of the Health Sciences Building is indicated in green on this contemporary campus map.

Figure 20. 1931 Medicine class. Photo taken in front of the Header Houses where classes were held. Photo A-5742, retrieved from the University of Saskatchewan Archives.

Figure 21. Anatomy lab in the attic of the then Field Husbandry Building (now known as Archaeology). Retrieved from Buchan, D.J., Greenhouse to Medical Centre Saskatchewan’s Medical School 1926-78.
Figure 22. Original first floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File HS-49-T.

Figure 23. First floor plan after reconfiguration. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 049-2139-T.
Figure 24. Original fourth floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File HS-46-T.

Figure 25. Section through the building showing double height lecture theatre. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File HS-45-T.
2.5 Systems

The Health Science Building was one of the first at the university to be constructed with an elevator. The original elevator is still intact and functioning in the building. It has steel doors with circular windows. Inside the steel doors are bronze scissor gates that are operated by the user (Figure 29). The style and materials of the elevator are character-defining elements.

The Health Sciences Building is one of the last buildings at the university constructed with load-bearing masonry walls rather than a structural steel or concrete frame. Floors are constructed of reinforced concrete slabs, supported by steel beams. The steel beams are supported on steel columns in the interior and by the exterior masonry walls.

2.6 Use(s)

The Health Sciences Building has heritage value in having been used continuously for medical education, and many of its spaces are still used for the activity for which they were originally intended. The use of the building for research, administration and education in health sciences is a character-defining element.
2.7 Cultural & Chronological Associations

The Health Sciences A Wing is associated with the College of Medicine and with the history of medical education and research at the University of Saskatchewan. It can also be associated with Tommy Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1961. Douglas led the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the first democratic socialist party to form government in North America. Douglas is best known for his contributions in healthcare including a government provided province wide hospitalization program, establishing the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan and establishing the first publicly funded health care system in North America. Douglas laid the cornerstone for the building on August 26, 1946 (Figures 30 & 31). The cornerstone is a character-defining element.

3. Associated Objects

The third floor of the Health Sciences Building’s A Wing holds the Geoffrey Jamieson painting collection. The collection consists of five separate panels painted on the walls of the south end of the corridor. The murals, painted in 1962, are reproductions of historic anatomy images. Jamieson, a former student of the College of Medicine, returned in the 1990’s to touch up his art work. Figure 32 shows one of the paintings.

Further down the same corridor, display cases hold a collection of microscopes and microscope accessories (Figure 33). Also on the third floor in room A302 is the Van Leeuwenhook photo and microscope display.

On the first floor, the College of Medicine Medical Undergraduate Student Photograph Collection is displayed on the walls. The collection dates back to 1926 when the school first opened as a two year clinical program known as the School of Medical Sciences. The photos were examined by a restoration expert in 2004 who reported that the condition of some of the photos was very fragile. The most damaged of the photos have undergone restoration as a result.
4. Supporting Documents


Facilities Management Division (2011). Asset Resource Database [Data File]. Retrieved from \usask\fmddfs\files\iis\IIS_Public\ARS


Figure 33. Microscope collection.
5. **Summary of Character - Defining Elements**

**Materials**
- rough-faced greystone walls
- cut Tyndall stone trim & decoration
- grey marble floors
- oak doors & millwork
- copper flashing
- slate chalkboards
- steel-framed windows
- painted steel & cast iron balustrades & stairs
- terrazzo flooring, wall bases, window sills and stair treads
- grey granite base and steps
- black granite
- yellow brick wainscoting

**Form & Style**
- symmetrical form and elevations
- classic Elizabethan E-shape
- rectangular massing
- central tower element
- front steps
- arched windows and entrance
- octagonal windows
- corbels
- stone scuppers
- barrel vault and stepped ceilings
- crenellation
- parapet (battlement)
- quoins
- statuary niches
- stone and stained glass crests

**Location**
- University of Saskatchewan
- medical precinct

**Spatial Configuration**
- double loaded corridors
- stair towers

**Systems**
- composite structure of load-bearing masonry walls and steel structural frame, concrete slabs.

**Uses**
- medical education and research

**Cultural & Chronological Associations**
- cornerstone laid by T.C. Douglas