051
Memorial Union Building
Statement of Significance

The Memorial Union Building (MUB), designed by Shore and Moffat Architects of Toronto, opened on Remembrance Day in 1955. The building was intended both as a centre for student activities and as a tribute to the members of the university community who had given their lives in the Second World War. The centerpiece of the building is a large stone fireplace with a marble memorial tablet engraved with the names of the fallen soldiers. The student body raised $200,000 towards the $570,000 construction cost of the building. The Memorial Union Building is notable as one of the last Collegiate Gothic buildings erected at the university. St. Thomas More College (1954-1956) and the St. Andrew's College addition (1959-1961) are the other buildings roughly contemporary with the Memorial Union Building and designed in the Collegiate Gothic style. These buildings are somewhat anachronistic in that by the 1950's,
Historicist architectural styles had generally fallen out of favour in Canada, and Modernism had become the prevailing architectural idiom.

The Memorial Union Building was designed to accommodate expansion to the south and saw renovation throughout the 1980’s and again in recent years. However, expansion could not accommodate the rapid expansion of student numbers during the 1960’s, and plans for the Place Riel Student Centre were drawn up after it became apparent that the MUB did not have the capacity required.

Note: The Memorial Union Building is configured with floors numbered Basement, First Floor, Second Floor. This report follows the same convention.

2. Character - Defining Elements

2.1 Materials

The stone facade of the Memorial Union Building (MUB) is an important character-defining element. The exterior of the building is composed of ‘greystone’ walls, cut Indiana limestone trim and Tyndall stone steps and thresholds (Figures 1 & 2). Tyndall stone and greystone are both found on the interior surrounding the commemorative fireplace on the second floor. The roof is clad in slate, and flashing, downspouts and gutters are in copper (Figure 4). The original exterior materials of the
Memorial Union Building – greystone, Indiana Limestone, Tyndall stone, slate and copper – are character-defining elements. (For further information on building stones used at the U of S, refer to ‘Appendix: Stone’.)

The windows and doors of the building contribute to the character of both the interior and the exterior of the building. The building has two sets of large oak doors with brass kick plates and hardware (Figures 5 & 6). The main entrance doors see the most use and show signs of wear. The interior vestibule doors are also in poor condition. The northern door and its brass fixtures are in good commemorative condition. The oak doors and brass fittings are character-defining elements.

Painted steel-framed sash windows are used throughout the building, with limestone trim on the exterior and oak trim on the interior. The windows are single-paned, but are arranged in two layers, with an interior and exterior set for each opening. The window hardware is in brass (Figure 7). The second storey windows have window sills made of a buff coloured marble (Figure 8). The same marble makes up the cenotaph commemorating the war dead and it exists in a state of excellent commemorative integrity. On other floors, the window sills are made of terrazzo. The windows and their materials are in excellent commemorative condition with few exceptions and are character-defining elements. The marble of the cenotaph is also a character-defining material element.

Much of the original flooring materials have been replaced. The ground floor and main staircase have retained their terrazzo finish (Figure 9). The staircase (Figure 10) is formed of cast-
in-place concrete with terrazzo treads and risers, painted steel balusters and an oak handrail. The stairwell features oak wall paneling. The original materials of the staircase and stairwell are character-defining elements.

Most of the original interior layout has been altered over time.

### 2.2 Form & Style

The Memorial Union Building is a modestly-scaled building in the Collegiate Gothic style. It sits three storeys above grade, including its attic level, and features pitched gabled roofs. The landscaping surrounding the building serves to enhance its scale, as it was built with raised terraces on the north and west sides. Since its original construction, a raised patio has been added to the south. (See Section 2.4 Spatial Configuration).

The Memorial Union Building is essentially rectangular in plan, with its stairs contained in protruding volumes on the north and south sides, making the overall form irregular. In elevation, it is asymmetrical, with the principal entries being located off centre on the north and west facades. As shown in Figure 11, the north face of the Memorial Union Building terminates the outdoor area between Saskatchewan Hall and Qu'Appelle Hall known as Voyageur Place.

The exterior detailing is somewhat simplified compared to earlier examples of Collegiate Gothic architecture at the university. The Memorial Union Building has greystone quoins on its corners and limestone string courses (Figure 12). Cut and carved stone features include false slot windows (Figure 13) in the gable ends and a sign carved in relief on a low wall of Indiana limestone (Figure 14). A bay window (Figure 15) balances the north elevation (Figure 16). Stone spandrels, also visible in Figure 15, accompany many of the windows. Cut stone arches surround arched doorways on both the north (Figure 17) and west facades. The west entrance is enclosed in a shallow architrave. All of these are character-defining elements of the Collegiate Gothic style. The arch of the west facing entrance is currently obscured by a canopy. Historic pictures show that a stone blank is hidden...
by the canopy as well. The canopy reduces the commemorative integrity of the façade as it obscures the character-defining elements of the arch and the stone blank.

The Memorial Union Building is anachronistic in its architectural style. By 1955, historicist architectural styles had generally fallen out of favour, and Modernism had become the prevailing architectural idiom in Saskatchewan and across Canada. Compare, for example, the simplified form, massing and detailing of the Murray Library, which opened the same year, to the Collegiate Gothic Memorial Union Building.

The scale, form and style of the original building are all intact, despite several additions and renovations, and are character-defining. The aspects of form and detailing that identify this building as Collegiate Gothic in style are character-defining.

### 2.3 Location

The idea for a memorial emerged shortly after the end of the Second World War. On November 21, 1947, 186 students, each with a torch, gathered in the courtyard between Saskatchewan Hall and Qu’Appelle Hall to honor all of the students and alumni who gave their lives in the Second World War. Lieutenant Governor R.J.M. Parker unveiled a marker, and the future site of the Memorial Union Building was announced. Figure 18 captures the scene. The Memorial Union Building was erected at the south end of Voyageur Place. The Memorial Union Building was intended to be the centre of student life, featuring an auditorium, a ballroom, lounge rooms, a tuck shop and a student office. Its location near the residences, Qu’Appelle Hall and Saskatchewan Hall, was integral to these intended uses.
With the completion of the building, Voyageur Place (as it was later known) became enclosed on three sides, open only to ‘The Bowl’ (Figure 19). The 1909 Campus Plan by architects Brown and Vallance shows a building in this location (Figure 20). Although not realised exactly as planned, the Memorial Union Building is in keeping with the original intent.

### 2.4 Spatial Configuration

The spatial configuration of the Memorial Union Building has undergone many changes. Each of the floors of the building was originally laid out with a large central open space, and smaller enclosed rooms at either end. Only the second floor now retains this general configuration.

The first floor originally contained a large cafeteria space, supported by a kitchen, a dining room, a lounge and some offices (Figure 21). This floor is now divided up into smaller meeting rooms and offices for various student clubs (Figure 22).

The second floor originally contained a large lounge space, with smaller conference rooms at the east end (Figure 23). The large greystone fireplace and marble memorial tablet formed the central feature of this space (Figure 24). The configuration of the second storey has been essentially maintained. The conference rooms have been replaced by washrooms, but the lounge has been maintained in the form of a café, and the memorial fireplace remains intact.

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**Figure 18.** November 21, 1947. Students gather to honor colleagues who fell in the Second World War with a torchlight parade and the unveiling of a marker. The siting of the Memorial Union Building was also announced. The future location of the MUB is in the foreground. Photo A-8665, retrieved from http://sain.scaa.sk.ca/items/index.php/university-of-saskatchewan-archives/jsdiah

**Figure 19.** The MUB is indicated in green on this contemporary campus plan.

**Figure 20.** The building indicated in green on the 1909 Campus Plan is in the approximate location of the Memorial Union Building.
Figure 21. Original first floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File MU-46-T.

Figure 22. First floor plan as it currently exists. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 051-405-T.
The basement originally contained a large games room. The west end of the floor was divided into washrooms and mechanical rooms and the east end held offices and a studio (Figure 25). A row of windows allowed day light into the space from the south side. This basement now contains the student bar, Louis’. Although open in plan, the floor has been segmented into different levels accessed by ramps. A stage was added to the south side of the space and the windows there have been removed. The MUB was built with a basement tunnel connecting it to Saskatchewan Hall. The tunnel is intact.

2.5 Systems

The Memorial union building has a cast-in-place concrete structural frame, consisting of a concrete slab and joist system on concrete beams and columns. Pitched roofs have wood decking on wood purlins, supported by steel trusses. Flat roofs have concrete slabs. The foundation walls and footings are cast-in-place concrete. The walls appear to be non-structural, and consist of stone and clay tile, with cork insulation and a plaster finish. Interior partitions that are original to the building are built with 4” - 8” hollow clay tile.

Figure 23. Original second floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Managmt Division Asset Record System, File MU-45-T.

Figure 24. The second floor lounge as it was originally configured, 1956. Photo A-592, retrieved from University of Saskatchewan Archives.
2.6 Use(s)

The MUB has retained its essential purpose as a student union building, although the particular uses it supports have changed. Its primary original uses included a cafeteria, student lounges, a games room and student offices. Figures 27 & 28 show the original lounge and cafeteria spaces. It now contains a bar, a café, and offices for student clubs and organisations.

A student-run radio station also broadcast out of studios located in the basement of the MUB. CJUS FM was launched in 1965 with an antenna atop the Arts Building. In 1980 the studio was moved to the Education Building. In 1984 the Board of Governors decided to discontinue its funding. The radio station that began in the basement of the MUB held its last broadcast on September 30, 1985.

The memorial to the students, faculty and staff of the University of Saskatchewan who perished overseas in the Second World War still exists in excellent condition inside the upstairs café, and so the building still exists in name and function as a memorial.
### 2.7 Cultural & Chronological Associations

The Memorial Union Building can be chronologically and culturally associated with the Second World War, as a memorial to the members of the university community who perished in that conflict. Figure 29 shows the unveiling of the memorial plaque in 1955.

### 3. Associated Objects

The fireplace and the marble memorial plaques on the second floor are objects significant to the Memorial Union Building (Figure 29 & 30).

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**Figure 27.** Students in the lounge, 1956. Photo A-572, retrieved from University of Saskatchewan Archives.

**Figure 28.** The ground floor cafeteria, 1956. Photo A-577, retrieved from University of Saskatchewan Archives;

**Figure 29.** The unveiling of the memorial, November 11, 1955. Photo A-588, retrieved from University of Saskatchewan Archives;

**Figure 30.** The memorial hearth. Photo A-588, retrieved from http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/uofs_buildings/
4. Supporting Documents

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


University of Saskatchewan Archives. (Retrieved 2012). University of Saskatchewan Archives, RGM 300.32, Misc. 1959 Appraisal of the University.
5. Summary of Character - Defining Elements

Materials
- greystone walls
- limestone ornamentation
- slate roof
- Tyndall stone steps and plaza
- oak banister, doors and surrounds
- brass door & window hardware
- steel balustrade
- steel window frames
- terrazzo flooring
- marble window sills

Form
- pitched gabled roofs
- raised terraces
- facades and entrances
  - scale

Style
- quoins
- arched entries
- spandrels
- string courses
- archer slots
- carved stone relief reading
  - ‘Memorial Union Building’
  - bay window

Location
- Voyageur Place
- between student residences

Spatial Configuration
- open layout of second storey
- offices on first floor
- staircase
- tall windows

Systems
- hollow tile partitions
- steel trusses

Uses
- offices of The Sheaf
  - USSU offices
- lounge
- dining

Cultural & Chronological Associations
- Second World War