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St. Thomas More College

University of Saskatchewan Heritage Register
November 2014
St. Thomas More College

Alternate Names
STM

Architect(s)
1954 - Webster & Gilbert Architects, Saskatoon
1963 - Peter Thornton, Gardiner, Thornton, Gathe & Associates, Vancouver
1969 - Peter Thornton, Gardiner, Thornton, Gathe & Associates, Vancouver with Gordon Arnott of Regina as associate architect

Builders
1954 - Shannon Brothers
1963 - Piggott Construction Co.
1969 - W.C. Wells Construction Co.

Construction Dates

Recognition
Federated College - ‘B’ Listing Recommended

1. Statement of Significance

St. Thomas More College (STM) is the only federated college at the University of Saskatchewan. Its first home was a wood-framed building called Newman Hall, also known as the ‘white house’, built at the corner of College Drive and Bottomley Avenue in 1927. In 1954 construction began on a ‘greystone’ building on the same site, and the original building was eventually demolished. The sod was turned for the construction of the St. Thomas More College building on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1954. The building cost $600,000 to build, and opened on February 7, 1957. Additions to the building were carried out in 1963 and 1969. In 2013, another addition began construction, but this
most recent addition is beyond the scope of this report. The first portion of the stone building was designed by Webster and Gilbert of Saskatoon. Peter Thornton of Vancouver designed the larger interior spaces. Thornton also designed the second addition with Gordon Arnott of the Regina firm Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama Architects acting as associate architects. The 1969 addition was designed and built under the same arrangement. St. Thomas More College is of architectural historical interest as one of the last Collegiate Gothic buildings constructed at the university, in the case of the 1954-57 portion, and as an example of contextual Modernism in the two later additions. By the 1950’s, historicist architectural styles had generally been eclipsed by Modernism, so the Collegiate Gothic portions of the building are somewhat anachronistic.

Note: The St. Thomas More College Building is configured with floors numbered Basement, First Floor, Second Floor and Third Floor. This report follows the same convention.

2. Character - Defining Elements

2.1 Materials

The exterior of STM is constructed of ‘greystone’ walls, with cut Tyndall stone trim, on a granite base course (Figure 1). The greystone, a stone native to the South Saskatchewan River valley, defines much of the campus, and was a choice of materials intended to associate St. Thomas More College with the larger university. (For further information on the stone materials used in this building, refer to ‘Appendix: Stone.’) Other exterior materials include slate tile roofing, copper downspouts, and steel exterior light fixtures (Figures 2 & 3). The oldest parts

Figure 2. Slate tile roofing.

Figure 3. Copper downspout and painted steel window sash.

Figure 4. Aluminum framed windows set into a field of greystone.

Figure 5. St. Thomas More College, 1954. Photo A-774, retrieved from University of Saskatchewan Archives.
of the building have painted steel sash windows with multiple divisions (Figure 3). The newer portions of the building have aluminum framed glazing (Figure 4). In these cases the glazing is not divided into smaller lites, but rather larger panes of glass are used. The original exterior materials are character-defining elements.

The interior of the 1954 section of the building has retained most of its original character-defining materials. Four sets of copper doors were a gift of the Emmett Hall family and were designed and constructed by the Vancouver artist, Lionel Thomas. The doors are fabricated from kiln-dried fir and covered with sheets of copper. The copper doors feature various designs including the crests of St. Thomas More and John Henry Newman (Figure 6).

In the 1954 wing, the main stair has an oak banister and painted steel balustrade (Figure 7). The steel newel posts feature the flower motif found commonly in other early University of Saskatchewan buildings. Terrazzo treads have been retained on the upper floors and landings. Glazed ceramic tile wainscoting is used on the upper portion of the staircase (Figure 8). Oak wainscoting has been applied to many of the walls in the 1954 wing, but is not original to the building. Recent renovation work has shown that in at least some places, the original glazed tile wainscoting exists beneath the oak paneling. Original red terra cotta tile flooring has also been exposed in the original 1954 building (Figure 9). The corridors of the upper floors still have their original maple doors with stainless steel fixtures (Figure 11). Some of the brass door numbers remain.
The chapel has walls of white plaster contrasted with exposed glue-laminated wood arches, and cedar paneling (Figures 15 & 30). The ceiling is also finished in cedar paneling (Figure 15). Stained glass windows, designed by Robert Rambusch of New York, are the focal point of the south wall. Vancouver artist Lionel Thomas was commissioned to design a mural, painted on oak panels, in the cantilevered recess at the north end of the chapel. The same artist designed the black granite altar. The black granite of the altar is sandblasted to give it texture and several wall mounted fixtures are made of the same material. The pews in the chapel are made of a light stained oak (Figure 14). The floors of the chapel are finished in black slate flagstones (Figure 14).

The interiors of the 1963 addition are modernist in character, with an emphasis on the use of cedar and oak. Doors are either cedar or quarter sawn oak. Cedar paneling makes up the ceiling of the library and lecture room. Oak millwork is found throughout; quarter sawn oak surrounds the entrance to the library. A grille made of walnut is featured above the doors. The oak paneling of the hallway art gallery is still in place, but has been painted. In the cafeteria, windows are set into deep quarter sawn oak surrounds. Each window is accompanied by a painted steel radiator. Exposed concrete columns with an exposed aggregate finish characterize the cafeteria. The 1963 addition also saw the installation of one more set of doors by artist Lionel Thomas. The northern entrance still features a set of multicolored ceramic and copper clad doors by the artist. Red tile makes up the underside of the accompanying arch.

The treatment of the materials in 1969 addition is characteristic of the Modern architectural style. This portion of the building features corridors with floor to ceiling panels of alternating oak and glass. The oak and glass are made to look uninterrupted and continuous; no transition materials or frames were specified. Oak baseboards are installed flush with the adjacent wall. Door jambs are rabbeted so as make the
surface of the wall continuous (Figure 17). Throughout, materials are characterized by a lack of embellishment. The lecture room in the 1969 addition features the cedar panel roof, oak doors and window surrounds found in earlier portions of the building. The student lounge features a terrazzo floor. A greystone wall, formerly on the exterior of the building, has been enclosed as an interior element in the lounge space.

The original interior finish materials and the built-in artwork of the building are character-defining elements. The treatment of materials in support of the Collegiate Gothic and Modern architectural styles is also character-defining.

2.2 Form & Style

The exterior of the 1954 portion of the building is Collegiate Gothic in its style, although the expression of the style, particularly in the design of the chapel, is restrained and simplified in comparison to earlier examples. The front elevation of the chapel places an emphasis on its vertical elements, with its slender buttresses and tall, narrow lancet windows with stained glass. The doors to the chapel are clad in copper and set into an arched opening. The west elevation has an almost Modern expression of a series of cantilevered stone bays. The rest of the 1954 wing is more conventional, featuring typical Collegiate Gothic elements. A ‘Norman’ tower rises to the east of the chapel, and marks the main entrance. The roof is gabled, with a flattened top, and peaked dormer windows. The walls are in rough-faced greystone, with Tyndall stone string courses, windows surrounds, quoins and archer slots (Figures 21 & 22).
The 1963 and 1969 additions are Modern in style. The form of these portions is low, at mostly two stories in height, and relatively widely spread. In some instances its roofs are flat, and where pitched slate roofs are employed, they are set back from the exterior walls, behind the parapets, emphasizing the horizontal roof-line. The expression of the stonework differs significantly on the original building and its later additions. On the original portions of the building, stone is employed traditionally, with rough-faced greystone the predominant material and Tyndall stone used for window surrounds and cut stone details. However, on the 1960’s additions, the greystone is expressed as a panel, interrupted by horizontal bands of smooth-faced Tyndall stone (Figure 24). Vertical windows separate the greystone panels. The northern stair tower is detailed in a modernist way, as a series of slender Tyndal stone columns separated by narrow windows stretched over the full height of the tower (Figure 27). The 1969 addition follows the same principles and is largely indiscernible from the 1963 portion.
Although the rest of the 1954 building was designed by the Saskatoon based firm of Webster and Gilbert, the interiors of the chapel, library and auditorium were designed by Vancouver based architect, Peter Thornton. This is perhaps apparent in the relatively simple modern forms and finishes of these interiors, in comparison to the Gothic detailing of the exteriors. For example, the chapel uses a modern structural system, the Glulam arch, exposed to view on the interior, and detailed with minimal decorative flourish (Figures 36 & 47). Even the stained glass windows are rendered on the interior as simple openings in an otherwise featureless white plaster wall (Figure 46).

Figure 24. Typical arrangement of windows on the modern portions of the building.

Figure 25. Narrow windows make reference to historical archer slots.

Figure 26. Elevations of STM College after the completion of the 1960’s addition. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record system, File ST-81-T.
2.3 Location

St. Thomas More College is located prominently along College Drive on the University of Saskatchewan campus. Prior to the construction of its greystone buildings, the first Catholic chaplain facility, Newman Hall, was located on the same site. Also known as the ‘white house,’ Newman Hall was constructed in 1927 and contained a chapel and club rooms for Catholic students. In 1936 it became known as St. Thomas More College. In 1943 the White House was enlarged to meet the needs of the growing student population. (The White House is visible in Figure 37, a photograph taken during the construction of the new building.)

The location of St. Thomas More on the university campus, and its architectural design as a Collegiate Gothic greystone building, gave physical expression to its status as a federated college of the University of Saskatchewan. In 1954, the current building was constructed immediately adjacent to the White House on the southern boundary of the main campus property. For a short time, the White House and the new stone facility both existed on the site. With the completion of the new building, the White House was offered to the university at no cost, save for the expense of moving it. When the university declined, the building was sold to a local contractor and was removed (Sanche, p. 104). The 2013 addition to the building occupies the former site of the White House, and when excavations for this addition were undertaken, some of the materials of the white house were unearthed.
The spatial configuration of the original 1954 building can be best described by distinguishing the chapel wing from the wing of administrative offices and dormitory rooms. The chapel is oriented north-south, with its narrow dimension facing College Drive to the south. The chapel itself is located on the 1st floor. It is a large open space, with a clear-span structure, and a high peaked ceiling. Over time, the chapel’s configuration has been changed. Originally the altar was situated on a raised platform at the north end of the chapel in front of a large painted mural by the artist William Kurelek. The pews were arranged facing north in parallel rows. In response to liturgical reforms stemming from the Second Vatican Council of the 1960’s, the orientation of the chapel was changed so that the pews face the western wall of the chapel where the altar is now located. The raised choir loft above the sacristy at the south end of the chapel is a character-defining element. The high vaulted ceiling also defines the character of the chapel. The basement level below the chapel contains an auditorium.
The administrative and residential wing runs east-west, parallel to College Drive, and comprises three floors. It is joined to the chapel at the main entrance and vestibule, which are marked on the exterior by a stair tower. Each floor of the administrative and residential wing is organized around a double-loaded corridor, with rooms arrayed on either side. This configuration has been maintained and is a character-defining element. On the first floor, a library was located on the north side of the wing, at its eastern end. Now a social lounge, the character of this room is defined by its high ceiling and windows. The book shelves and mezzanine that were once in the room have been removed.

Figure 32. The first floor plan of the 1963 addition. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record system, File ST-51-T.

Figure 33. The library: large, open plan configuration with numerous windows and character-defining cedar panelled ceiling.

Figure 34. A 1963 photo of the gallery hallway. Light shed from the cantilevered lightwells is visible in the right half of the photograph. Photo A.31, retrieved from St. Thomas More College Archives.
The 1963 addition is located to the north of the original wing, and connects at the north side of the main entrance vestibule, just east of the chapel. On the basement level, it contains a large cafeteria, associated service spaces and a seminar room. On the 1st floor, the 1963 addition houses a library above the cafeteria, a seminar room, offices, and a ‘walk-through’ art gallery. Funding for the addition came partly from grants provided by the Canada Council for the Arts. In order to be eligible for more funding, the architect was challenged to designate as much of the building as possible to education in the social sciences and humanities. The walk through art gallery was conceived as a way of increasing the floor area in the building devoted to the arts, thereby increasing the value of the grant. By designating what would otherwise be considered a hallway as an art gallery, STM was able to secure more funding.

The 1969 addition, also known as the East Office Wing, is a linear wing running north-south, located parallel to Bottomley Avenue, and connecting the eastern end of the original building back to the 1963 addition. It included offices on the Ground and 1st floors, and a faculty lounge called the Chelsea Room on the third floor, connected to a roof-top patio. The Chelsea Room was named for St. Thomas More’s home town in England. In 2003, this lounge was enclosed and converted into classroom space. The Chelsea Room was re-located to the former library space in the original wing. The spatial configuration of the rest of the 1969 addition has been maintained. The double loaded corridors, student lounge space and the lecture room have all been maintained, although the 2013 addition may see some changes to these spaces.

Figure 35. First floor plan of the 1969 office wing addition. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File St-88-T.
2.5 Systems

Although the original structural drawings no longer exist, the administrative and residential wing of the 1954 building appears to be a steel framed building. The roof structure is a system of steel beams and purlins, supporting wooden rafters. Steel beams and columns support floors consisting of a concrete topping and slab on open web steel joists. Exterior walls incorporate structural steel columns, and consist of greystone and cast-in-place concrete. Foundation walls and footings are of cast-in-place concrete. The chapel wing has a similar structure, except that the roof and walls of the chapel above the 1st floor level have a structure consisting of glue-laminated wood arches and purlins, supporting wooden rafters.

The 1963 and 1969 wings have a concrete structure, except for their roofs, which have a steel structure. The roof structure on the 1963 wing consists of steel beams supporting an unusual system of insulating structural calcium silicate panels. These panels, manufactured by a company called ‘Y-Tong’ are more common in Europe, but are rarely used in North America. They are of a material similar to concrete, but are air-entrained to reduce weight and increase their insulating value. The rest of the building has a more conventional structure of stone-faced concrete walls and concrete columns supporting cast-in-place concrete beams and slabs. The foundation walls and footings are also of cast-in-place concrete. Some interior concrete columns in the 1960’s portions of the building are finished in an exposed aggregate concrete, and are still visible. A few of these columns exist in the cafeteria, although most were removed in renovations in the early 2000’s. Large beams were dropped beneath the ceiling of the space to pick up the load that had been carried by the concrete columns. Exposed structural systems were a defining characteristic of the Modern architectural style. Where structural elements are exposed to view, such as the concrete columns in the cafeteria or the glu-lam arches in the chapel, they should be considered character-defining elements.

Figure 36. Exposed glue-laminated ribs in the chapel.

Figure 37. STM under construction, 1953-1956. Photo B.05, retrieved from St. Thomas More College Archives.

Figure 38. Exposed aggregate finish on concrete columns.
The building features several intricate wooden grilles where ventilation and cooling are delivered. The chapel has a wooden screen in a geometric pattern (Figure 39). This operable screen can be opened or closed to control ventilation. Above the library door is a grille made from walnut. The cafeteria features a large oak grille. Many windows feature wooden radiator covers. The cafeteria has retained its original radiators, which are still in use. One can be found beneath each window. The radiators are character-defining as a visible system indicative of the time of construction.

2.6 Uses

Although St. Thomas More College has always been a Catholic college at the University of Saskatchewan, the nature of the education provided through STM has evolved. The institution began as a traditional religious college with a mandate to provide Catholic teaching and care to Catholic students. In response to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, and increased interest from the non-Catholic student body, St. Thomas More became more flexible and open in its policies around the religious affiliations of students and faculty. As the college grew, it became a more integral part of the University of Saskatchewan rather than a separate, but related institution. Today, any student enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan may take classes at STM and the college offers many of the same classes that the College of Arts and Science offers.

The first STM stone building consisted of a chapel, sacristy, Newman club room, library, kitchen, dining area, offices and a residence area for the Basilian Fathers. The second stage of the building brought a cafeteria, a larger library, an art gallery and a lecture room. The third stage of construction became known as the east office wing and provided offices, seminar rooms, an enlargement of the library stacks area, a student lounge and the Chelsea Room. With minor changes over time, the building is generally still used for its original intended purposes.

The only major change in use has been to the two upper floors of the original 1954 building, which were originally residential accommodation for Basilian Fathers, but are now used as offices. “St. Thomas More College never did operate its own residence, and is perhaps the only Catholic college in Canada which has not done so.” (Sanche, p. 90).
In 1936, St. Thomas More College made a temporary agreement with the university to use the larger institution’s classroom space. The college and the university came to regard this arrangement as mutually beneficial, and as the construction of the more permanent greystone structure was planned, President J.S. Thomson insisted that the arrangement continue. The 1953 building was therefore built with little provision for classroom or lecture space.

2.7 Cultural & Chronological Associations

St. Thomas More College is unique as the only federated college at the University of Saskatchewan. Its relationship to the university was modeled on the relationship between St. Michael’s College and the University of Toronto. As such, STM is part of the university, but dependent on its own funding. It uses university facilities and confers degrees from the University of Saskatchewan, but hires and pays its own faculty. STM became an affiliated college of the University of Saskatchewan in 1936, and was formally recognized as a federated college in 1953 after this category was added to the university statutes.

The Shannon Library is named for the construction company that built the first stage of the college (Figure 42). Shannon Brothers, General Contractors was run by brothers Dennis, Joe and Frank Shannon, who had all been members of the Newman Society. Their construction company had built many of the Catholic churches and schools in Saskatoon.

The building can be associated with the saint for whom the college is named. Sir Thomas More was canonized in 1935 as a martyr of the schism that separated the Church of England from the Catholic Church. Sir Thomas More lived from 1478 to 1535, and was an English lawyer, social philosopher, author, statesman, and noted Renaissance humanist. He was an important advisor to Henry VIII of England and Lord Chancellor from 1529 to 1532. More also wrote Utopia, published in 1516, about the political system of an ideal and imaginary island nation. More opposed the Protestant Reformation generally, and opposed the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church, refusing to accept King Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England. Tried for treason, More was convicted and beheaded in 1535.
3. Associated Objects

The black granite altar located in the chapel was a gift from the Hoeschen family in 1954 (Figure 43). The altar, designed by Vancouver artist Lionel Thomas, features a motif of jugs, loaves and fish. The whole top of the altar was consecrated as the altar stone. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, mass could only by celebrated on a stone altar containing the relics of saints. The bones of three female martyrs: St. Digna, St. Justa and St. Maria Goretti were placed in the sepulchre cavity of the altar and covered with a stone slab.

Several works of art were commissioned or gifted with the first stage of construction of St. Thomas More College. In addition to the altar, a mural by the same artist adorns the bay at the north end of the chapel. The Mural of Mary, Queen of the Universe, as it is known, features a stylized portrayal of Mary with angels and other symbolic figures (Figure 44). The mural was the gift of the Catholic Women’s League of Saskatchewan. On the large wall surrounding this mural is a work by Alberta born artist William Kurelek (Figure 46). Painted in 1976, the Kurelek mural was a gift from the Basilian Fathers to STM on the 40th anniversary of the college. The mural has a major theme of the union of humankind with God and a minor theme of Christ’s multiplication of loaves and fish. The themes are depicted in the setting of a Saskatchewan wheat field. Kurelek passed away the year after completing what he termed his, “first proper mural.”

The copper doors found in the original portion of the building are also works of art. The doors were designed by Lionel Thomas and feature the crests of St. Thomas More and John Henry Newman. All four sets of copper doors are still in existence.

The 1963 portion of the building saw the addition of the multi-colored ceramic doors of the north entrance as well as a bronze sculpture of St. Thomas More (Figures 47 & 48). Both pieces were made in 1963 by Lionel Thomas. The bronze sculpture originally adorned the library wing, but was moved in 1969 to the southeast corner of the building facing College Drive.

The cornerstone of the building is located on the stone wall of the exterior chapel stair. The stone is weathered and much of the text is no longer discernible (Figure 50).
4. Supporting Documents

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


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**Figure 48.** Bronze sculpture, *The Moment of Truth*, by Lionel Thomas.

**Figure 49.** A stone crest reads, ’1955’ at the top of the tower.

**Figure 50.** The cornerstone, showing signs of weathering.
5. Summary of Character - Defining Elements

Materials
- greystone walls
- granite base
- Tyndall stone trim and detailing
- cedar paneling
- black slate floor
- copper doors
- black granite chapel fixtures
- maple doors
- aluminum and steel framed glazing
- steel staircase, and balustrade
- oak banisters
- glazed tile wainscoting
- stained glass windows

Form & Style
- corbels
- stone piers
- peaked roof and parapets
- archer slots
- statuary niche references
- gothic arched doors and stone
- lancet windows
- dormer windows
- quoins
- exposed glue-laminated arches in chapel
- cantilevered bays on chapel
- stone blanks
- stained glass

Location
- College Drive
- University of Saskatchewan

Spatial Configuration
- double height chapel with vaulted ceiling
- double-height Chelsea Lounge
- double-height library
- auditorium
- stair towers

Systems
- exposed glue-laminated arches in chapel
Uses

- worship
- dining
- study
- library
- lectures
- auditorium
- art gallery
- residence (Basilian fathers)
- offices

Cultural & Chronological Associations

- Catholic Church
- federated college
- St. Thomas More
- Kurelek mural
- stained glass windows
- copper doors
- ceramic doors
- 1955 crest