New Buildings Constructed for the University of Minnesota, Morris from 1965 to 2002

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University of Minnesota, Morris, Plant Services

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Introduction

The Board of Regents, in October of 1959, announced that the West Central School of Agriculture would be phased out and that college classes would be offered on the Morris campus. The next fall, when the University of Minnesota, Morris admitted the first freshman class, there were 14 buildings available for use by the new college. The first facility specifically built for the college, Clayton A. Gay Hall, was completed in 1966. By 2002 16 new buildings had been added to the campus. The purpose of this report is to bring together historical and architectural information about the new construction at the University of Minnesota, Morris from its founding in 1960 until 2002.

The writers are particularly indebted to Robert Thompson, Plant Services Junior Engineer, for his assistance in collecting factual information and building details from documents and plans maintained in his office. Harold Fahl, Superintendent of Plant Services from 1968 to 1993, when much of the building took place, added many details regarding the planning and construction of the new facilities. Lowell Rasmussen, Associate Vice Chancellor for Physical Plant and Master Planning, provided details on the planning, funding, and construction of science facilities and the Regional Fitness Center. Scott Kelly of Gemini Research worked on the photos and layout of the report.

A previous report covers the historic buildings of the West Central School of Agriculture, many of which are still in use by UMM in 2002.(1)

Campus History

The University of Minnesota, Morris in 2002 has a student body of nearly 2000 and 120 faculty. It serves students from throughout Minnesota and neighboring states who study the sciences and mathematics, the social sciences, the humanities, and education. With its excellent faculty, talented student body, and commitment to individual attention, UMM has been rated one of the top public liberal arts colleges in the country.

The University of Minnesota, Morris continues educational services which actually began on the campus in 1887. In that year the Sisters of Mercy opened a boarding school for Native American youths at Morris. In 1897 the federal government took over the facility, but then, with a change in policy reducing the number of non-reservation schools, closed the institution in 1909. The school was then offered to the state of Minnesota and turned over to the University of Minnesota for use as an agricultural high school and experiment station.(2) The West Central School of Agriculture opened in 1910 and operated for the next 53 years. However, responding to changing educational needs, the Board of Regents in 1959 announced that the West Central School of Agriculture would be phased out, making way for the conversion of the campus to collegiate classes the following fall. In the fall of 1960, when the University of Minnesota, Morris accepted its first 238 freshmen, there were a dozen major buildings available for collegiate use including a new administration building, three classroom buildings, a multipurpose engineering building, four dormitories, a combination dining hall and dormitory, a gymnasium, and an infirmary. In addition, there was a coal-fired heating plant and numerous barns, storage buildings and shops -- most utilized by the West Central Experiment Station. Most of these ancillary
buildings, with the exception of the Saddle Club Barn, Recycling Center, and Transportation Garage on the north edge of the campus, were eventually removed.

The first year collegiate experiment was successful; the legislature funded UMM the next year. The campus grew quickly; enrollment went to 437. Sophomore courses were added and the faculty to teach them was hired. That second year the four-year curriculum had to be planned. Degree requirements were set including the first majors that were to be offered. Teacher training was planned. From the outset it was recognized that new buildings would be necessary. A modern science facility and residence halls were the highest priority.

Rodney Briggs presents the proposed Science Building (University archives photo)

This first wave of new construction came during the 1960s, a period of commitment by the legislature to the development of post-secondary educational opportunity in rural Minnesota. UMM’s building requests were reasonable -- to be constructed in phases to match increasing enrollment. From 1965 to 1973 the science complex, the library, fine arts center, physical education building, swimming pool, heating plant, food service, and three new residence halls were added to the original campus. The excitement created by this flood of building on campus and in the community was remarkable. Funds had to be requested and appropriated, building committees formed, sites selected, architects picked, bids let, construction timed, furnishings chosen, and then the next building planned. Led by Rodney Briggs, the first provost, UMM staff met with architects, planners, and Twin Cities campus building specialists -- sometimes dealing with not just one, but two or three projects at a time.(3)

A new comprehensive campus plan for landscaping, traffic, parking, and new building locations was completed by 1968. As the need for space changed, many of the older West Central School of Agriculture buildings were remodeled.
In 1972 enrollment reached a high point of 1,763 and there were 97 faculty. When the statewide college age population then began to decline, the legislature became cautious about additional building for higher education and new construction on the Morris campus halted. UMM’s enrollments fell and then plateaued at about 1,500 students. The decline in enrollment was unsettling. It seemed evident that to sustain a first rate undergraduate college, the admissions program must become as active as that of a private college. Admissions was given the funds and staff for an aggressive recruiting effort. Campus administrative units and the faculty got behind the spirited enrollment campaign. These efforts began to pay off by 1980 and enrollment rose again, reaching 2,000 students by 1988.

While remodeling continued during the ‘70s and ‘80s, left unfulfilled for nearly two decades were plans for completing the college campus -- UMM still needed a student center, an additional classroom-office building, a public performance auditorium, a field house, and a further addition to the science complex. It was not until the student center was completed in 1992 that the building program resumed in earnest. In 1995 a new campus master plan established goals for future facilities development. A strong economy, state budget surpluses, astute lobbying, and a receptive legislature led to successive appropriations in 1998 and 2000 that brought a second wave of new construction that nearly matched that of the 1960s. A major addition that more than doubled the size of the science complex, a campus and community Regional Fitness Center adjoining the Physical Education Center, and an addition to the heating plant were built in 1999 and 2000. In 2001 the original 1966-68 science building was completely remodeled to complete the science facility. The four projects together brought $38,000,000 in new construction in four years.

Long range plans for the further development of the campus will focus on the renovation of the older buildings that surround the Mall. The most immediate plan calls for a $8,000,000 modernization of the Social Science Building, one of UMM’s most heavily utilized classroom and faculty office facilities. The need for a large public performance auditorium, which has been in the long range plan for decades as the third phase of the Humanities Fine Arts building, remains for the future. Finally it is recognized that if UMM is to grow beyond 2000 students more housing will have to be provided either by the University or a private developer.

Architecture

The architecture and landscaping of the UMM campus, with its impressive combination of historic structures and modern design, creates a physical environment that enriches the experience of those who visit, study, work, and live on the campus.

Woven throughout the campus is a landscape of knolls and swales, grassy lawns, windbreaks, towering pines, deciduous trees, shrubs, and flowers. While some landscape features remain from the years that the West Central Experiment Station used the campus as a testing ground for distinct varieties of trees and shrubs, much of the current landscaping was developed after UMM was established. The campus landscape architecture was recently featured in a new book, Valued Places, published in 2001 by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.(4)

At the heart of UMM is the Mall, a space conceived by Morell and Nichols in 1911. The Mall gives the campus a strong sense of identity and creates a continuously-used central meeting place. Preservation of the original Mall has remained an objective that has guided much of the building placement, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and landscaping in subsequent campus planning by Winston Close and Roger Martin in 1968 and Hammel, Green and Abrahamson in 1995.
The Morris campus is located along an ancient river bed through which now flows the rather small Pomme de Terre River. The site, in addition to providing pleasing vistas to the east, presents challenges to the builder because most of the subsoil is clay which swells and contracts with changes in moisture. This shifting substrate has caused structural problems for many of the older buildings on the campus. The new buildings therefore are often built on concrete caissons or pilings that reach down to firmer layers below the clay.

The buildings at UMM provide an appealing blend of early 20th century sensibilities with architectural modernism, both of which reflect the history of the campus. Arranged around the Mall are eight historic structures that date from the institution’s years as the West Central School of Agriculture. State Architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. designed most of these buildings in the Craftsman and Renaissance Revival styles prevalent in the 1920s. With the development of the liberal arts mission at Morris in the 1960s came a collection of newer buildings that reflect the iconoclastic, experimental nature of modern design, as well as advances in engineering, construction techniques, and materials.

These include Modernist buildings by such renowned architects as The Cerny Associates (the physical education center, heating plant, and food service) and Ralph Rapson (the fine arts center). The three new residence halls and the first phase of the science building, all designed by Carl Graffunder, saw the introduction of precast concrete panels for exterior walls. The science complex, the fitness center and the heating plant addition that were designed by the firm of Rafferty, Rafferty, and Tollefson between 1998 and 2001, demonstrate the architect’s ability to respect the past while creating exciting new facilities.

In 1995 the firm of Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, assisted by the Master Plan Advisory Committee, developed the most recent master plan to provide direction for the future.
development of the Morris campus. That report calls attention to the unique features of campus architecture. “It is one of the most compact and architecturally rich small college campuses in Minnesota and serves as a unique blend of publicly designed and financed architecture on an intimate scale in an educational setting. The preservation of the campus character and the enrichment of its identity are tied to the preservation of historic buildings and spaces, along with the layout of the campus as intended by Morell and Nichols . . . .”(5)

Clayton A. Gay Hall

Judge Clayton A. Gay, a Morris attorney and then judge, for whom this first of the new buildings was dedicated, was the first president of the West Central Development Association. In this role he was a leader among those who lobbied the legislature and the University administration for college classes on the Morris campus.

Clayton A. Gay Hall

Gay Hall, a 52,280 square foot residence hall, was constructed in two phases at a total cost of about $1,195,000. The first unit, basically half the building, was completed in 1965. The second unit followed in 1966. Designed by Carl Graffunder and Associates, the building accommodates 240 students and also contains a clinic for the college health service.

Graffunder, who was to design four of the first new campus buildings, used Gay Hall to introduce precast concrete panels for exterior walls. The white concrete exterior and flat roof of Gay Hall set the building apart from the rest of the newer buildings where extensive use of brick complements the earlier buildings on the Mall. Because of clay soil, the four-story structure is built on caissons but also has a structural slab for the first floor.
The design was a departure from the more conventional center-corridor residence hall by providing intimate living units of ten rooms clustered about their own lounge. These ten-room units were stacked, four floors high, in four interlocking "towers" that were connected only at the first floor. Residence hall staff had asked for privacy in the design, but it was a bit too much for the residents. To visit friends in the adjacent fourth floor unit only feet away, one had to descend three floors to the first floor, then climb up three floors to the unit in the adjacent tower. After the building was in use for a time, the difficulty was alleviated by opening a passage between adjacent living units on each floor of adjacent towers, thereby improving circulation among the residents.

Science Building

The Science Building in 2002 is a 158,538 square foot complex that is a functionally unified undergraduate instructional and research science facility. It is actually made up of four components. The two four-story units and the freestanding Science Auditorium were completed in 1966 and 1968. An addition larger than the original building was completed in 2000. For the purposes of this report the original 1966/68 building will be called "Science West"; the new 2000 addition "Science East".

Science West is a four-story building resting on caissons with a flat roof and rectangular massing. The building was constructed in two phases. A northern half comprised of 9 bays was completed in 1966 and a southern half comprised of 10 bays was completed in 1968. The northern half of the building, designed by Carl Graffunder and Associates, is "supported" by a dramatic series of sculptural, poured concrete columns at the ground-floor level. The columns support three-story tall piers of beveled, white, precast concrete. The precast concrete panels are imprinted with an organic, wavy pattern that is repeated in other Graffunder buildings on the campus.

Bettenberg, Townsend, Stolte and Comb were the architects for the southern half of the building and the adjacent Science Auditorium. The southern half of Science West, more simple in design and again resting on caissons, is faced with stretcher-bonded red-brown brick. Both halves of the building have narrow rectangular casement windows that are aligned in continuous vertical strips. The windows were originally divided by blue metal spandrels. The windows and spandrels were replaced with brown tinted glass during a major 2002 remodeling.

The building’s main entrance, which is located on the eastern facade, was altered in 2002. The entrance opens onto an elevated bridge-like concrete walkway that extends eastward past the front of the Science Auditorium and toward the campus mall. The walkway has a wrought iron balustrade.

A domed conservatory with a circular poured concrete base was added to the western facade of Science West in 1968. It is accessed via a brick and glass breezeway. An adjoining gable-roofed greenhouse with a brick base was added in 1986.

The Science Auditorium is a one-story, reinforced concrete structure with a sculptural, "folded" design in which the exterior walls and roof create a single form. The exterior is faced with white quartz-encrusted concrete panels. The auditorium has a massive sloped concrete base. The building houses a 275 seat auditorium. Storage and ancillary science facilities are located on the ground floor under the auditorium. The auditorium is noteworthy in that its interior design is an exact copy of a series of "acoustically flawless" lecture halls built on the West Bank of the Twin Cities campus at about the same time. The Science Auditorium is linked to Science West and to Science East via a glass breezeway.
Science West, with 67,637 square feet, was completed in 1968 at a cost of about $2,000,000. It served the needs of the biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics disciplines into the 1970s, but the addition of full programs in geology and computer science, as well as a substantial increase in the popularity of science as a major, greatly strained the facilities. The fourth phase of the science building was needed by the late 1970s but it was not to come until the year 2000.

A comprehensive renovation of Science West was completed in 2002 at a cost of $8,000,000. So much of the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems needed to be replaced, and so much of the function of the building was to change, that the interior was essentially gutted to the load-bearing walls and then rebuilt. The building’s roof-top mechanical equipment penthouses were enlarged and the entire interior of the building was renovated. The remodeling project was designed by Rafferty, Rafferty, Tollefson, the architects for the 2000 Science East. As one proceeds from the old to the new, the integration of interior design, furnishings, and equipment bonds the units together. Science West now accommodates special purpose facilities for the computer science, geology, and physics programs and also includes general purpose classrooms, research space, and the Science Division office.

Science East, completed in 2000 at a cost of $21,000,000, though sometimes referred to as an "addition", is the newest major classroom building on the UMM campus. It is a large, 89,206 square foot, multi-story reinforced concrete structure that is faced with brick. The architects for the building were Rafferty, Rafferty, Tollefson. Because it sits directly on the Mall on the site of the demolished 1930 gymnasium, Science East was designed to complement the Clarence Johnston Sr.-designed WCSA buildings through its hipped roof, wide eaves, brown brick exterior, and buff-colored cast stone trim. The building’s rectangular windows are arranged in horizontal bands that have cast stone sills and lintels.
Science East consists of two major sections, a three-story eastern wing that faces the campus Mall and a two-story western wing that is located immediately south of the Science Auditorium. A small outdoor courtyard is located at the junction of the Science Auditorium and the two wings.

The main entrance to the building is located in the eastern wing. This entrance is marked by a temple-like portico supported by columns of brick and poured concrete. The principal southern entrance to the building is located at the western end of the western wing. Rising above this entrance is a domed, astronomical observatory that is mounted on the roof.

In the interior the eastern wing has an atrium that is naturally illuminated by large skylights. Science East features glass-enclosed stair towers, colorful tile floors, and industrial-inspired green pipe-metal railings. The interior’s modern, functional look is softened by the use of lightly-stained and varnished hardwood paneling. Some lighting fixtures, etched glass, and other art for the building were designed by Cliff Garten.

The building provides offices for most of the science division faculty, classrooms, and special purpose teaching and research facilities for chemistry and biology. The ground floor accommodates the campus bookstore, duplicating services, central receiving, and the post office. Science East is linked to Briggs Library and the Student Center via a pedestrian tunnel.

**Rodney A. Briggs Library**

The Rodney A. Briggs Library was completed in two phases at a cost of about $1,800,000. It was designed by the Walter Butler Company, the firm that was, at the time, also involved on the
campus of Southwest State University. The first phase, built in 1968, was approximately one half the building. Insufficient funds left the fourth floor unfinished until the second phase was completed in 1973.

Briggs Library is a 54,654 square foot, flat-roofed building with a simple rectangular form erected on concrete caissons. Four stories are exposed on the western facade, three stories on the eastern side, which is the main facade. The building is faced with reddish-brown brick. The library has narrow rectangular window openings filled with single pane fixed sash. The lower level of the western facade, which looks toward the main Fourth Street entrance to the campus, is faced almost entirely with glass. The top story of the building is marked by a large band of aggregate concrete. On the western and eastern facades, the band becomes a series of projecting aggregate screens that cover the upper story windows.

The building’s main entrance, at the center of the eastern facade, is located within a projecting flat-roofed foyer. In front of the entrance is a plaza that extends between Briggs Library and the Student Center. It has aggregate stone pavers and lights with metal trough-like shades. The plaza was redesigned in 1990 to make it more compatible with the Student Center.

The library currently accommodates more than 180,000 volumes in open stacks and can seat about 500 readers. Briggs Library was designed and furnished to be both functional and inviting to the user. Many of the interior walls of the building are faced with warm brown brick. There are several attractive lounges in addition to conventional study tables, carrels, and study rooms throughout the building.
Physical Education Center

The Physical Education Center is the southernmost building on the campus. Football, baseball, and practice fields and a varsity track are located east and south of the building. Completed in 1970 at a cost of about $1,500,000, the PE Center is a large, 76,283 square foot, three-story, flat-roofed structure of rather utilitarian design. The architects were The Cerny Associates who also designed the adjacent swimming pool and heating plant so that the group of buildings complements one another.

The PE Center is built on engineered fill with spread footings and is faced with broad expanses of medium-brown brick. Its rectangular mass is made more interesting by triangular-topped, copper roofed shafts on the east side of the building that project above the roofline to house mechanical equipment. These triangular projections and the building’s east entrances, which appear to be cut out of the building’s corner massing, are design elements that are repeated in the nearby heating plant. The PE Center’s hillside site provides expansive views of the Pomme de Terre River valley that can be seen from two glass foyers. The hillside also presents the opportunity for a long set of concrete steps to descend along the south side of the building to the athletic fields. The main gym has 22 foot high concrete retaining walls on the south, west, and north. The main public entrance on the third level overlooks the basketball courts and accesses the retractable bleachers that extend downward from the entrance level. The PE Center houses the main gym floor with 3,600 seat retractable bleachers, a smaller multipurpose gym, weight room, two racquetball courts, the physical education staff offices, two classrooms, and locker rooms.

The PE Center has two major additions -- the swimming pool and the Regional Fitness Center. The 20,700 square foot swimming pool, better called a natatorium, is actually an integral part
of the Physical Education Center but was not built until 1973, three years after the PE Center opened. Designed by The Cerny Associates and built at a cost of $904,600, it contains an eight-lane competition pool, a diving pool, changing rooms, sauna, underwater viewing area, and a sizable spectator gallery. Built on engineered fill and spread footings, it is a two-story high, flat-roofed, red-brown brick building that abuts the PE Center on the north and is entered at two levels from the PE Center.

As an interesting aside, it is alleged that Representative Delbert Anderson, then chair of the powerful Legislative Building Committee, doubled UMM’s request for funding so that a fully complete competition pool would be built.

The PE Center, with the adjacent natatorium and fitness center, now provide UMM and the larger community with comprehensive athletic, health, and fitness facilities.

Heating Plant

The Heating Plant is located on the south side of Second Street near the southeast corner of the campus adjacent to the Physical Education Center. It was completed in 1970 at a cost of $520,000. The architectural firm that engineered the interior workings of the facility was the Helmick and Lutz Company. However, it was The Cerny Associates that conceived the striking exterior configuration. Built in the shape of a three-dimensional right triangle the building is a splendid example of modern architecture’s expression of pure geometric form. The triangular roof form is also practical because the height is required for the aerators for the boilers. For the design of the heating plant Cerny Associates won the Minnesota Society of American Institute of Architects Award of Merit in 1970. A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota, published in 1977, called the Heating Plant "the most dramatic building on the campus."(6)
Constructed on wood pilings, the 7,688 square foot building has smooth brick wall surfaces and a roof that extends from the peak of the triangle nearly to the ground. The roof is covered with copper coated, stainless steel, standing seam roofing. Entrances are cut into northwestern and southwestern corners. The extraordinary shape not only works dramatically against the profile of the PE Center but also was intended to signal the lines of a football stadium which Cerny thought might be built directly south of it in future years.

The new heating plant, which replaced the 1911 coal-fired heating plant of the West Central School of Agriculture, can burn either natural gas or oil, whichever is plentiful and least expensive. It is not only much smaller but also far less polluting than the coal-fired plant with its railroad track, coal piles, towering stack, and black smoke. It served the needs of the campus until the 1990s when new construction required additional boiler capacity.

In 1999 an addition was built that nearly doubled the size of the building. The 7,530 square foot addition, designed by Rafferty, Rafferty, Tollefson, was built at a cost of $4,000,000. Constructed on steel pilings, the addition respected the original design by adding a second, offset triangular form to the first and preserving the dramatic appearance of the structure. The heating plant addition not only added boiler capacity but also included a campus-wide cooling system which pipes cold water for air conditioning to some of the larger campus buildings.

Independence Hall

The University of Minnesota, Morris is located in one of the smallest "college towns" in the state. It was clear from the outset that if UMM was to become a viable institution, considerably more campus housing would have to be provided. For that reason, no sooner was Gay Hall completed than planning for additional residence halls began. Carl Graffunder and Associates was again chosen as architect for the residence hall which was completed in 1970 at a cost of $1,600,000.

Independence Hall is a four-story, 52,734 square foot, flat-roofed dormitory built on concrete footings, piers and grade beams with a reinforced concrete structural system. The residence hall has a capacity of 248 students. The building is faced with precast concrete panels that are similar to those on Science West, Gay Hall, and the Residence Hall Apartments. The concrete panels alternate with bays of vertically-aligned casement windows. Metal spandrels painted light brown divide the windows within the vertical strips. Brick is used extensively on the first story of the building, on the side walls, and in a band at the roof line so that Independence Hall is more harmonious with surrounding buildings than is Gay Hall. The building’s main entrance is marked by a concrete canopy whose ceiling is cast with a repeating pattern of cell-like forms. Flat brown panels that were originally installed on the stair towers have been recently replaced with panels of dark maroon plastic.

Independence Hall was intended to be a compromise between the small unit privacy of Gay Hall and the conventional center-corridor layout of the older dorms built for the School of Agriculture. It is configured into three four-story units or "pavilions" that are set at right angles to one another. The pavilions share joint stairwell towers that both separate the pavilions at each floor level and allow interconnection between them. Each floor of each pavilion is divided into two suites of 5 or 7 double rooms, with the suites separated by a central lounge. Each lounge has its own balcony. There are four handicapped accessible rooms on the first floor of the south unit. The building’s main floor commons area has a recreation room, lounge, public restrooms, office, and staff apartment.

Incidentally, the name "Independence Hall" was chosen in 1969 when the campus dormitories were renamed, replacing WCSA names like Boys' Dormitory, Girls' Dormitory, Junior Hall, and
Senior Hall with those more appropriate for a college. The names Blakely Hall, Camden Hall, Pine Hall, and Independence Hall were selected by the staff simply because they were politically neutral and pleasant sounding.

![Independence Hall](image)

**Food Service**

During UMM’s first decade, campus residents ate their meals in the 1918 dining hall built for the West Central School of Agriculture. The new Food Service building, designed by The Cerny Associates, was completed in 1971 at a cost of about $1,000,000. Built on engineered fill and spread footings, the building is a 24,318 square foot, two-story structure that is faced with stretcher-bonded, reddish-brown brick. It has a hipped roof covered with copper coated, stainless steel, standing seam roofing that matches the PE Center and the Heating Plant. The main entrance is located on the west facade beneath a shed roof.

Cerny designed the Food Service to be inviting, informal, and domestic, rather than institutional in character. Every effort was made to avoid the "battalion mess hall" appearance both in the interior and exterior design, even at the expense of some efficiency in food preparation and handling. The building is configured with four dining areas, one on each side of the building, that rise in elevation as they wrap around a central kitchen and service core. On the exterior of the building, each dining area projects in a cantilevered form out from the wall beneath it. Each dining area has a wide horizontal band of windows that flood the interior with natural light. Each area has a special character to provide students a choice of surroundings as they take their meals. Food Service also has two smaller private dining rooms where small meetings can be served.
The interior of the building has painted concrete block walls and large areas of tile flooring. These functional elements are softened by dramatic, soaring ceilings that are supported by laminated wood beams and faced with tongue and groove cedar. Thick pieces of laminated wood are also used as handrails. The warm wood, which is lightly stained and varnished, combines with the light from the expansive windows to give Food Service a warm, comfortable interior that reflects the natural environment.

Residence Hall Apartments

With Independence Hall under construction in 1970, planning for the next round of housing was well under way. Modular units, not unlike portable house trailers, were being promoted as a quick and economical solution to college housing shortages. They might only last ten years and then have to be replaced, but they could then be sold as cabins and would be financially self sustaining. PEMTOM, a developer of these units, made a presentation to the campus about their advantages. The units could be put in place quickly as a turn key development -- as many as UMM wanted. More units could be added when needed. They were already being used at the new campus at Southwest State University and the Duluth campus was interested. The modular units were appealing but Roy Lund, the University central administration’s head of Plant Services, was dead set against them as student housing. He believed they would be a nightmare of maintenance as they deteriorated under rough use. 

Carl Graffunder was given the task of developing an alternative with the advantages of apartment-like living for on-campus students. He proposed a cluster of small inexpensive apartments built to University construction standards. It was agreed and the Residence Hall Apartments were completed in 1971 at a cost of about $1,750,000. The cost per student for the complex was not much higher than would have been the case with the short-life modular units proposed by the PEMTOM developers.
The Residence Hall Apartments is a cluster of four three-story buildings, arranged in a quadrangle surrounding a smaller building, somewhat like a community center, which would house the Office of Residential Life -- a total of 61,334 square feet. Each of the four buildings contains three units of six apartments each -- 72 apartments in all, for a total capacity of about 288 students.

Like Gay Hall, the apartments are an example of a trend in modern design that sought to allow a building’s function to guide its form. Each apartment was designed to house four students in an off-campus-like apartment with the convenience of living on campus. The complex was built on wood pilings on the site of the old WCSA heating plant demolished in 1970. The apartments are stacked in units that are divided vertically by planes of warm red-brown brick. The brick planes interrupt and frame the apartments' precast, textured concrete facades. The brick is also used to create sheltered entrance bays and to help bring variety, rhythm, and a human scale to the buildings. The design is made more interesting by the fact that the units are staggered to vary in elevation in response to the changing topography. Each of the apartments has two dormitory size, two-person bedrooms, a combined kitchen and living area, and a small wrought iron balcony that doubles as a fire escape.

The Office of Residential Life unit is located within the common yard shared by the four units of the Residence Hall Apartments. It is a relatively small, one-story building with a raised basement and boxlike massing. It has a reinforced concrete structural system and is faced with stretcher-bonded reddish-brown brick. The main entrance is recessed within a simple rectangular opening on the building’s western facade. The building's widely-spaced, narrow casement windows are arranged vertically and are divided by light brown metal spandrels. The building
contains staff offices, a conference room, a lounge, a laundry, and mechanical equipment for the apartment complex.

Ultimately, the privacy of apartment living, personal cooking and the opportunity to avoid the cost of a food service contract make the Residence Hall Apartments the most sought after housing on the campus.

**Humanities Fine Arts Building**

Designed by Ralph Rapson and Associates, the Humanities Fine Arts Building (HFA) is one of UMM’s landmark structures. Completed in 1973 at a cost of about $5,000,000, the building houses 107,903 square feet of theaters, art studios, rehearsal and recital halls, practice rooms, classrooms, the art gallery, and support facilities for the art, music, speech, and theater programs.

HFA was planned and funded to be built in two phases. Construction of the second phase was begun before the first phase was finished so there is a single completion date for the building. As originally conceived, HFA was to include a large public performance auditorium at the north end of the present building, but the funding was not sufficient to build the auditorium. Because funding for the auditorium alone is more difficult to justify than as a component of the original building, it has not been funded to this date.
skylight windows that illuminate studios and classrooms with non-glare natural light. HFA was built on steel pilings, one to a depth of 132 feet, grade beams, and a structural slab for the bottom floor. The exterior walls are sheathed in wide expanses of reddish-brown brick. The base of the building reveals exposed, form-textured concrete that is also used for entrance plazas and exterior stairways. HFA’s windows are arranged in horizontal bands and include numerous skylights that illuminate hallways, art and dance studios, classrooms, and the art gallery. Principal entrances are located on the southern facade (facing the Mall), and on the eastern facade. Sadly, two workmen lost their lives to accidental falls during the construction of HFA.

The interior of the building is a varied, complex space with soaring ceilings, polished concrete floors, and walls of “raw” concrete block and smooth white plaster. Additional industrial-inspired elements include simple wrought iron railings, track lighting suspended on black metal beams, and exposed and brightly-painted ductwork and pipes. Through the core of the building on the first floor, running from north to south, is a wide open hallway, conceived by the architect as a walk-through street or thoroughfare with theaters, art studios, rehearsal rooms, and the gallery providing interesting sights to each side. As a place to explore, practice, perform, teach, and appreciate the arts, the HFA succeeds in its ability to be bold and expressive, while at the same time fostering, rather than overpowering, the activities that take place within.

Rapson plan of Humanities Fine Arts (from Hession et al 1999)

Ralph Rapson, designer of the Guthrie Theatre, the Rarig Center, and at the time the head of the University’s School of Architecture, won two awards for the Humanities Fine Arts Building -- the First Design Award from Progressive Architecture magazine in 1972 and in 1975 the Minnesota Society of American Institute of Architects Honor Award.(8)
Shops

UMM Plant Services did not in the early years ever have sufficient space, especially functional space in one campus location, to efficiently organize and carry out its many chores. In 1973 Harold Fahl, UMM’s Superintendent of Plant Services, received approval to design and construct a shops building just east of the new heating plant which already held the plumbing shop.

Erected on spread footings, the 4,468 square foot, flat-roofed, concrete block Shops building was constructed entirely by the UMM Plant Services crew. Many of the materials were salvaged from structures that had been recently demolished such as the roof beams which came from the old coal-fired heating plant. The building even has footings for a possible brick veneer to match the 1970 Heating Plant. The Shops building contains carpentry, paint, and grounds shops, an office, a lunchroom/lounge, and space for the storage of materials. The Shops building was planned as the first phase of a larger, brick-faced, structure that would have included Plant Service offices and storage space, and provided the efficiency of a centralized location.

Temporary Office Buildings

Office space was a perennial problem for the campus. After the early 1970s, following the construction of the Humanities Fine Arts Building, new construction ceased but the faculty and staff continued to grow. Camden Hall was taken out of service as a dormitory and converted to offices. The West Central Experiment Station moved to its new location in 1973 making way for additional offices in the Community Services Building. Nevertheless, by the mid-1980s, the shortage of offices was again acute.
In the summer of 1988 the campus received approval to construct two temporary faculty office buildings -- one to house the overflow of faculty from the Science Division, the other to house Humanities Division faculty. In less than two months UMM Plant Services staff built two 1,690 square foot units at a cost of $60,000 each. One was placed south of the Science Building, the other west of Humanities. The buildings each contained ten offices and were air conditioned and completely handicapped accessible. The buildings were designed so that they could be sold off, moved, and put to another use. The unit behind the Science Building was subsequently moved next to the humanities unit to make way for the science addition. Originally planned for the short term, they are still in use 14 years later.

Temporary Office Buildings

Maintenance Storage

Storage for every unit on campus and particularly Plant Services has been a perpetual problem. During the ’70s and ’80s, as academic and administrative programs grew and no new buildings were added, spaces were constantly being shuffled. Storage for material, equipment, and furniture always received short shrift. For a time, UMM even acquired two old Burlington Northern railroad buildings off campus for storage space.

In 1991 Harold Fahl, UMM’s Superintendent of Plant Services, received authorization to design and construct a 6,600 square foot storage building near the Shops building and Heating Plant. A Trice Building System steel building was erected on a floating slab by Plant Services employees at a cost of $45,000.
In 1992 the original Edson Hall was encircled by a $4,178,000 reconstruction that transformed it into the new UMM Student Center. The original Edson Hall, a one-story flat-roofed, brick structure, had been completed in 1959 as an administration and auditorium building for the West Central School of Agriculture. Almost immediately after it was completed it was taken over by the new college. During the 1960s it became UMM’s administrative offices, the UMM library, and its only auditorium. For a time it also housed the college art gallery. From 1968 through 1992 it fulfilled the functions of a campus union. It was used for student activities space, student government offices, the student radio station, a student store, recreation rooms, a cafeteria, and the largest campus auditorium. In 1990, with the commitment of a future activity fee to cover part of the cost, and after an intense lobbying campaign, the legislature was persuaded to appropriate funds for a proper campus student center.

With Hokanson, Lumming Associates as architects, a new 52,780 square foot Student Center was completed in 1992. Built on concrete caissons, it is a one-story building that, though technically an addition, so overpowers the original Edson Hall as to leave it nearly unrecognizable except for the auditorium, which is now named Edson Auditorium. Design of the Student Center presented a challenge for the architects who had to incorporate the existing auditorium in a new structure while at the same time preserving the integrity of the Mall.

The Student Center faces the Mall with a tall, hipped-roofed great hall that is lighted by large multipaned windows and glass doors. Flat-roofed entrance porches project from the north and south sides of the building. The building is faced with reddish-brown brick near the base and white stucco-covered panels. West of the great hall, the original brick south facade of Edson Hall can still be seen, but the north facade of the current building is part of the 1992 expansion.
The building is connected to the Briggs Library on the west by a short plaza and to the science complex to the south via a pedestrian tunnel.

Several of the facilities in the Student Center were given names which recall the campus heritage as an Indian boarding school; for example, the cafeteria is known as the “Turtle Mountain Cafe”. The interior of the great hall, named “Oyate Hall” (Lakota for “the people”), has a parquet floor, a soaring ceiling, art glass, and a large fireplace. The 530-seat Edson Auditorium is intact and retains simple, clean lines and walls faced with warm brick. The interior of the rest of the building has colorful, active spaces that encourage interaction among members of the campus community. The facility is now a complete student center with a great hall, meeting rooms, recreation, lounge and study space, a cafeteria, student activities and student government offices, a radio station, and the original Edson Auditorium. This hospitable, bustling facility, located in the center of the Mall, has become the hub of campus activity for students and staff alike.

Regional Fitness Center

Rafferty, Rafferty, and Tollefson were the architects for the Regional Fitness Center (RFC), a 47,385 square foot addition to the Physical Education Center. It was completed in 1999 at a cost of $5,000,000. Built on concrete footings, it is a “tall” one-story rectangular structure with a brick exterior and square windows. The building covers the northwest and the west sides of the PE Center and the original PE Center and the RFC now share a main entrance. The RFC provides a warm swimming and therapeutic pool with a small water slide, a multipurpose gym, a walking and jogging track, a cardio-fitness room, locker rooms, and offices.

The genesis of the Regional Fitness Center is an exceptional story in its own right. In 1996, during the planning for the location of the new addition to the science complex, it became evident
that the 1930-built Physical Education Annex would have to be demolished. Over the years the PE Annex had carried a heavy load of intramural sports and recreational activity. Since the space would have to be replaced, the best choice would be a multipurpose addition to the Physical Education Center.

The Regional Fitness Center

The City of Morris had long been interested in providing more recreation facilities for the community. UMM administrators and City officials began exploring the possibility of a unique venture to build a campus-community facility. As the discussions progressed it became increasingly evident that a common approach to funding a facility might be reached. For $5,000,000 a facility that met campus and community requirements could be built. The City of Morris could contribute $200,000, Stevens County another $200,000, the School Board would try a referendum for $1,000,000, and a private fund drive would be expected to raise $1,100,000. With commitments for one half the funds in hand, the Legislature would be asked to appropriate the remaining $2,500,000. In 1998 the School Board referendum for $1,000,000 passed, and the Legislature funded the University’s half of the project. What is more remarkable, that same ’98 session appropriated an additional $25,000,000 for the science and heating plant additions.

An interesting sidelight occurred when joint powers agreements between the city, the county, the school board, and the University were needed to administer the facility. It was discovered that the University of Minnesota had never been authorized to enter into joint powers agreements. The Legislature was approached and quickly provided authorization so that the project could go forward. The RFC is run by a board with representatives from all the major constituencies. Maintenance is funded by annual membership fees, short term user fees, and a user fee assessed the entire UMM student body.
Facilities Storage Building

The Facilities Storage Building is located on the north edge of the campus near the Recycling Center and the Transportation Garage. Built on concrete footings, it is a one-story, concrete block structure with simple rectangular massing and a shed roof. The main facade is faced with stretcher-bonded brown brick. Across the top of the main facade is a band of rectangular fixed-sash translucent windows. The 5,292 square foot building was designed by Toltz, King, Duvall, Anderson and Associates and completed in 2000 at a cost of $670,000. The building provides storage for several units on campus but a key feature is the provision for the handling and storage of hazardous material awaiting disposal in the proscribed manner.
Endnotes

1 Stephen Granger, *Historic Buildings of the West Central School of Agriculture Converted to Use by the University of Minnesota, Morris in 1960* (University of Minnesota, Morris, Plant Services, Feb. 1998).

2 Wilbert H. Ahern, "Indian Education and Bureaucracy, the School at Morris," *Minnesota History*, vol. 49 (Fall, 1984).


