Historic Buildings of the West Central School of Agriculture
Converted to use by the
University of Minnesota, Morris in 1960

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February 1998

University of Minnesota, Morris, Plant Services

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Introduction:

In 1998, the University of Minnesota, Morris has a well planned campus of some 30 buildings centered around a pedestrian mall. Fourteen of those buildings, especially the ten directly on the Mall, those which give the campus its strong sense of place, were built during the period from 1899 to 1958 and served the West Central School of Agriculture. The purpose of this project is to bring together the historical information on those facilities, still in use in 1998, that were available when, in 1960, the secondary program of the West Central School of Agriculture began phasing out and collegiate instruction of the University of Minnesota, Morris began. In addition to University documents, maps, and architectural drawings, the task was greatly facilitated by the discovery of a 1992 survey of University buildings including those of the Morris Campus by Norene A. Roberts done for the State Historic Preservation Office, the 1963 article “West Central: Fifty-three Years” written by Dean
Theodore H. Fenske for the Golden Final Edition of the WCSA’s yearbook the Moccasin, and six Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of the campus dating from 1892 through 1927. Professor Wilbert Ahern’s 1984 article in Minnesota History, “Indian Education and Bureaucracy: The School at Morris” carefully details the history of the Indian School. The writer is indebted to Susan Granger and Scott Kelly of Gemini Research of Morris who located the Roberts survey and the Sanborn maps, photographed the campus buildings, contributed the section on campus architecture below, and consulted on the accuracy of the information included in this report. Les Lindor, student of the WCSA and later a WCSA faculty member and Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds from 1949 through 1965, provided many facts and insights into the development of a campus in transition. Harold Fahl, UMM’s Superintendent of Plant Services from 1968 until 1993, also a student of the WCSA, contributed many details of the lives of these historic buildings.

Campus History:
Beginning in 1887 and until 1896 the Sisters of Mercy operated a boarding school for American Indians under contract with the federal Office of Indian Affairs at the location of the present Morris Campus. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of 1892 and 1896 show the development of 14 frame buildings of the Morris Indian Industrial School on the site. Most were assorted farm buildings; a pig pen, horse, cow and sheep barns, a chicken house, a wood house, an ice house, etc., were placed to the east of a rather large main building with a two and one half story wing, located at about the center of the present Mall. The main building included a chapel, kitchen and dining room, the girls dormitory, and school rooms. To the southeast where Spooner Hall now stands was a second large building identified as the Boys’ School. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps tell us the fuel was wood, the heat from stoves, the lighting from kerosene lamps, and that “no fire apps”. (apparatus) was on the site. In 1896, because of a change in policy by the federal Office of Indian Affairs opposing sectarian schools, the Sisters lost their contract and were forced to close the school.

A few months later, in 1897, the federal government purchased the facility and operated the Morris Indian School until 1909. The Sanborn map of 1902 shows that the federal government had undertaken a substantial building program with the campus first four masonry buildings added—a School House, a Hospital, and twin Girls’ and Boys’ Dormitories. That Boys’ Dormitory, built in 1899, was to become Music Hall under the West Central School of Agriculture and is now the Minority Resource Center, the oldest remaining building on the campus. By 1909, again because of a change in policy reducing non-reservation boarding schools, the federal Morris Indian School was finally closed. The facility was then turned over to the State by an act of Congress, “Provided, that said lands and buildings shall be held and maintained by the State of Minnesota as an agricultural school, and that Indian pupils shall at all time be admitted to such school free of charge for tuition and on terms of equity with white
pupils.” The Sanborn map of that year, 1909, shows a campus with five masonry buildings including the School House, the twin Boys’ and Girls’ Dormitories, the Hospital, and a Laundry. The original main building had been partially removed and the remainder had become the dining hall and office. The earlier frame “Boys’ School” had by 1909 become the gymnasium, band room, and carpenter and paint shops. In addition there were eight other lesser structures including farm buildings, storage sheds, a cottage, an ice house, and a morgue. The school had nearly 300 acres of adjacent farm land as well. By 1909 there was electric lighting, coal-fueled steam heat, a sewer system, city water, four fire hydrants, a hose cart, and fire hoses in the dormitories.

This seems to be the condition in which the University of Minnesota found the campus in 1909. Professor Ahern describes the lobbying by the town residents and visits by legislators and University officials to assess the possibilities of opening an agricultural school for area students. Dean Fenske’s article on the history of the WCSA tells us that the Minnesota legislature accepted the facility from the federal government in 1909 but made no provision for funding the school at that time. Nevertheless, the University of Minnesota made plans to open an agricultural school and experiment station in 1910, hired its first Superintendent and staff, and began registering its first students for classes to begin in the fall of 1910.
The West Central School of Agriculture opened with 103 students in October, 1910. In 1911 the legislature appropriated $221,500 for improvements in the physical plant. As a result Girls’ Dormitory (now Camden Hall) and Spooner Hall—the first of several buildings designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr.—a central heating plant, and some additional farm buildings were added to the campus during the period 1911 through 1913. By 1915 the “School House” from the Federal Indian School had been converted to the WCSA Administration Building, and the twin Boys’ and Girls’ Dormitories had become teaching facilities—the Agronomy (now the Minority Resource Center) and Home Economics Buildings, respectively. By 1915 the large Cattle Barn and Silo (now the Saddle Club Barn) had been constructed and across from it the Engineering Building (now Community Services) was under construction. In 1917 the legislature appropriated funds to construct the combined Dining Hall, Gymnasium, and Auditorium building (now Behmler Hall). In 1920 Agricultural Hall (now Social Science) was constructed as was a new dormitory, Senior Hall (now Blakely Hall). Development of the physical plant continued during the 1920s. In 1921 the Agronomy Building (now the Minority Resource Center/Old Music Hall) and the Home Economics Building, the 1898 Morris Indian School structures, were remodeled and the exteriors rebuilt to match the style of the Clarence Johnston buildings already on the Mall and the 1900 Administration Building (the former Indian School “School House”) was reconstructed into a much larger version that included a 500 seat auditorium. In 1923 the Hospital (now Education) was built. Three years later, in 1926, another dormitory, Junior Hall (now Pine Hall), was constructed. The new Gymnasium with a swimming pool was added in 1930 completing the circle of Mall buildings all designed by Clarence Johnston. Enrollment reached a pre-war high of 391 in 1936. With the advent of Veterans’ programs the all-time WCSA enrollment high of 455 was reached in 1947. It was not for over two decades, in 1954, that the next building construction took place. In that year the Home Economics Building on the north side of the Mall was replaced by a new modern facility (now the Humanities Building). In 1959 the Administration Building, the centerpiece of the Mall, was replaced by Edson Hall. No sooner was Edson Hall ready for use than it was announced in 1959 that the School of Agriculture would be phased out, making way for the conversion of the campus to collegiate classes beginning in the fall of 1960.

When the WCSA graduated its last students in 1963 and the University of Minnesota, Morris began to fully utilize the campus, there were 12 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, four residences, 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 seed house and machinery building on the north edge of the campus, were eventually removed. It is the 12 buildings clustered around the Mall, the large dairy barn still used by the Saddle
Club, and the former seed house that are the subject of this report. Many have changed in function; each has been remodeled (some many times) but all are still in use in 1998.

Architecture:
The 1995 UMM Campus Master Plan (HGA, 1995) calls UMM “one of the most complete and architecturally rich small campuses in Minnesota” in large part because the pre-1960 buildings built for the WCSA have been so little altered, and because the integrity of the buildings arrangement around the campus’ Mall is basically intact. The Plan recognizes that the design and siting of the historic buildings around the Mall provide two of the elements—a feeling of enclosure and the sense that UMM is a self-contained village—that are essential to the Morris campus unique identity as an intimate, friendly, small town, residential campus where close interaction between members of the campus community is both facilitated and valued.

The ten buildings that were designed by Clarence H. Johnston between 1912 and 1930 share a number of design characteristics that combine to give the UMM campus its architectural distinction and cohesion. All of the buildings built between 1912 and 1970 are faced with brick or tile from the Twin City Brick
Company that has a warm, medium brown tone. Johnston added texture to the brick facades through decorative brick patterning that emphasizes the buildings’ window openings, entrances, and rooflines. Most of the buildings are trimmed with buff-colored dolostone that was quarried along the Minnesota River near Kasota and Mankato. Johnston used the dolostone for window sills, belt courses, and entrance surrounds on all but the Engineering Building (Community Services) and the Cattle Barn.

The Hospital, circa 1925

All but the Dining Hall and Gymnasium (Behmler Hall), the Gymnasium (PE Annex), and the Cattle Barn have hipped roofs with wide overhanging eaves that were left open to reveal exposed rafter tails that were, in all but Junior Hall (Pine Hall), decoratively shaped. All of the hipped roofed buildings except the Hospital (Education) have gabled or hipped dormers. Many have regularly spaced, rectangular window openings that were originally fitted with multi-paned double hung sash, another of the campus’ distinctive architectural characteristics.

The buildings are intentionally modest, rather than ornate, in design. Rather than creating “ivy league” type collegiate buildings that would have been associated with European, East Coast, and perhaps elitist, historical precedents, Johnston chose—through the use of hipped roofed massing, wide overhanging
eaves, dormers, and relatively smooth wall surfaces—to create what some have called a “Populist” campus. The designs were inspired by the 20th century Craftsman and Prairie School styles that emphasized principles such as progressivism, unpretention, and simplicity. Many of the campus buildings were also inspired by residential design, a choice that emphasizes the domestic, sheltering function of this residential campus built in the midst of what Johnston probably perceived as a somewhat desolate expanse of western Minnesota prairie.

A few of the Johnston buildings also show the influence of other architectural styles. For example, the Hospital (now Education) was influenced by the Renaissance Revival, the Gymnasium by Art Deco, and Behmler Hall by various Medieval Revivals. Some of the buildings have twins on other University campuses, particularly the Crookston campus. The Johnston-designed buildings at UMM are also similar in scale and design to buildings on other institutional campuses that he designed for the State of Minnesota such as the Willmar State Hospital.

Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. (1859-1936) designed all of the WCSA buildings described in this report except the Minority Resources Center, the Seed House, the Humanities Building, and Edson Hall. He studied architecture briefly at MIT but was trained primarily as an apprentice and draftsman for prominent architects in St. Paul and in New York City. In May of 1901 he became architect for the Minnesota State Board of Control, a body newly created by the legislature to oversee the construction and operation of all state-funded institutions. Johnston served as State Architect for 30 years until the State Division of Construction was dissolved in 1931. In this capacity he designed hundreds of buildings for the State’s extensive correctional facilities, normal schools, hospitals, veterans’ home, tuberculosis sanatoria, asylums, schools for the handicapped, orphanages, and state fairgrounds. Included among these are dozens of buildings designed for the University of Minnesota on all of its campuses. After leaving the post of State Architect in 1931 Johnston continued to work on a contract basis for the University. In addition, for nearly 50 years he maintained a prolific private practice in which he designed hundreds of churches, schools, hospitals, and residences including more than 30 houses along St. Paul’s Summit Avenue. Johnston also designed the Assumption Catholic Church (1905) in Morris. His son, Clarence H. “Harry” Johnston, Jr., maintained his father’s practice until 1960 and is responsible for work performed for the University of Minnesota after the senior Johnston’s death in 1936. Dozens of buildings designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Mall around which the WCSA buildings were built was the result of a campus plan prepared by the firm of Morrell and Nichols in 1911 shortly before the first Johnston building on the Mall, Girls’ Dormitory (now Camden Hall), was built. The firm of Anthony Morrell and Arthur R. Nichols was perhaps Minnesota’s most prolific landscape architecture firm. They provided early site plans for many
colleges including Macalester, Gustavus Adolphus, the University of North Dakota, Carleton, Wartburg, and the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth campuses of the University. Dean Fenske tells us that the beautiful landscaping of the campus with its magnificent trees can be credited to John A. Anderson who was on the staff of the School of Agriculture from 1916 until he retired in 1959. During the 1960s as new buildings were being sited, Winston Close, the University’s Advisory Architect made important contributions to long range campus planning. In 1968 Roger Martin designed the detailed landscape architecture of the Mall as it exists today.
Minority Resource Center/Old Music Hall (Morris Indian School Boys’ Dormitory):
The Minority Resource Center, the oldest structure on the campus, was constructed in 1899 as part of a
building program instituted shortly after the federal government took over the jurisdiction of the Morris
Industrial School for Indians in 1897 from the Sisters of Mercy who had operated the Indian school from
1887 until 1896. Originally constructed as a boys’ dormitory, it is the only structure that remains from
the 22 years that the campus was utilized as an industrial school for American Indians. Directly across
the Mall to the north there was a twin Girls’ Dormitory constructed in 1898. The Minority Resource
Center was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 because of its significance to the
history of Indian education in the state.

The building is a two story, red brick structure on a tall, random ashlar limestone foundation. It was
constructed on spread concrete footings with load bearing brick walls and wood floor framing. The
original 1899 roof had no overhang, tin shingles and four chimneys. In 1921 this building and its twin
Home Economics were redesigned by Clarence Johnston. It now has a hipped roof with wide
overhanging eaves, curvilinear rafter tails, and hipped dormers. It is one of only two buildings on the
campus that have segmental arched window openings (the other is Community Service’s northern
blacksmith shop wing). The window openings are filled with 6/6 sash and have Kasota stone sills. The
south (rear) facade of the building was the original main facade. The original entrance porch on the
south side has been removed and the entrance filled with brick. The current flat roofed entrance porch
was added to the north facade in 1921 to match the porches on Girls’ Dormitory (Camden Hall) and
Spooner Hall and has quatrefoil motifs and brackets at the cornice, and a floor of red ceramic tile.
The iron railing has been removed from the porch roof. Two original exterior endwall chimneys from the south facade and two interior chimneys have also been removed above the roof line.

In 1909 the Morris Indian School was discontinued and the federal government gave the lands and buildings to the State of Minnesota as an agricultural school which would be operated, beginning in 1910, by the University of Minnesota as the West Central School of Agriculture. The building and its twin across the Mall were used as dormitories until 1913 when, after the construction of the new Girls’ Dormitory (now Camden Hall) and Spooner Hall, they were converted to teaching facilities–Agronomy and Home Economics. Used as the Agronomy Building until 1920 when the new Agricultural Hall (now Social Science) was built, it was identified as Music Hall during most of its years of service with the West Central School of Agriculture when it was used for music and business classes.

When, beginning in 1960, the School of Agriculture was converted to the four year liberal arts college—the University of Minnesota, Morris—the name Music Hall was retained. During the period from 1960 through 1973, before completion of the Humanities Fine Arts Building, it served as the primary fine arts facility with music practice rooms, an art studio, and even a “little” theatre. Security, custodial services and duplicating were housed in the basement for a time in the 1960s. In 1989, because of its principal use as the headquarters for the campus Minority Student Program, the building was designated as the Minority Resource Center but it still retains its historical name “Old Music Hall” as well.

In 1998 the building houses the facilities of the Minority Student Program, the offices of related student organizations, the campus newspaper, a computer lab, and a special purpose classroom used by the Elementary Education program.

**Camden Hall (Girls’ Dormitory):**

Girls’ Dormitory and Spooner Hall were twin residence halls that were designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. and constructed in 1912 and 1913 to house the students of the newly opened West Central School of Agriculture. The Girls’ Dormitory, now named Camden Hall, is a brick building with Kasota stone trim, 1/1 sash, and a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves and hipped dormers. Constructed on concrete footings, it has brick load bearing walls and wood floor and wall framing. It was built with three stories and a raised basement at a cost of $50,000. The building has original flat roofed entrance porches on the south, east, and west facades. The porches have quatrefoil motifs and brackets at the cornices, and floors of red ceramic tile. The east and west porches retain iron railings on the porch roof while the railing has been removed from the south porch. The north (rear) facade has a series of wide Tudor-arched windows that light a projecting sunroom (originally a dorm lounge, now the Social...
Camden Hall, formerly Girls’ Dormitory

Science Division office) that matches a similar projecting room on the rear of Spooner Hall. The building faces south on the Mall directly across from its twin, Spooner Hall. In 1949 a fire gutted the attic and the third floor so the building was reconstructed as a two story structure. The rafter tails at the eaves of the new roof were not decoratively shaped like those of the original. Both the Girls’ Dormitory and Spooner Hall served the School of Agriculture as residence halls throughout the life of that institution.

When college students arrived on campus beginning in 1960, Girls’ Dormitory continued as a women’s residence hall for both WCSA (’60-’63) and UMM women (’60-’69). The building was called Women’s Residence Hall when used by the college. As new dorm space became available in Clayton A. Gay Hall it was taken out of service as student housing. Because the structure has an open, center staircase between the first and second floors it was not suitable as a residence hall for fire safety reasons. Further, because the soil beneath the structure had not been completely stabilized (as is the case with many of the older buildings) there has been substantial movement leading to structural integrity problems. For these reasons, when Spooner Hall was remodeled to continue as a residence hall, Camden Hall was left untouched. By 1969 it had been renamed Camden Hall (a name picked solely for its pleasing sound) and had become a faculty office building and the headquarters of the Social Science Division. Camden
Hall, regarded until recently as a candidate for early removal, has received special attention in the 1995 comprehensive Campus Master Plan prepared by Hammel Green and Abrahamson, Inc. as one of the key resources important to preserving the character of the historic campus Mall.

Spooner Hall:
Spooner Hall was one of two matching dormitories—the other was Girls’ Dormitory (now Camden Hall)—that were constructed almost immediately after the opening of the WCSA. Designed by Clarence Johnston it was built in 1913 at a cost of $50,000. It was named for Lewis C. Spooner, the local state representative who lobbied for the transfer of the federal Indian School facility to the State of Minnesota in 1909. It is a three story brick building with a raised basement, Kasota stone trim, and 1/1 sash. Its hipped roof has wide overhanging eaves with curvilinear rafter tails and gabled dormers. The south (rear) façade has a series of wide Tudor-arched windows that light a projecting sunroom-like dormitory lounge that matches a similar room on the rear of Camden Hall. The main façade has two stone shields in the central bay that originally marked the main entrance. It faces north on the Mall directly across from its twin, Girls’ Dormitory. During a major remodeling in 1960, entrance porches that matched those on Camden Hall were removed from the front, east, and west façade. The main entrance in the central bay was filled with brick and the inner staircase removed. New, fire-safe, three story stair towers
were then added at each end of the structure. The exterior appearance of Spooner Hall has thus been substantially altered. In addition, new bathrooms and a set of dorm rooms at the basement level were added in 1960. During the period 1990 to 1993 Spooner Hall was totally refurbished.

Spooner Hall served as a dormitory for the School of Agriculture through 1961 and continues to serve as a residence hall for UMM to this day. Spooner Hall suffered the indignity of being the site of the first “panty raid” at the new college in 1965. It remains a popular residence hall among college students who appreciate the gracious lounges and large dorm rooms characteristic of its original design.

Community Services Building (Engineering Building):
The Community Services Building was constructed in 1915 at a cost of $26,200 as the Engineering School Building for the West Central School of Agriculture. It is located north of Camden Hall, just off the Mall, and faces a large grassy open area to the east. Another Clarence Johnston design, it is a two story, brick structure with a second story surfaced in stucco. Constructed on concrete spread footings, it has steel main framing and wood secondary framing on the second floor. It has a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves with curvilinear rafter tails, and hipped dormers, and 3/3 sash. Unlike the other Johnston-design buildings, it does not have stone trim, possibly reflecting a cost-saving measure instituted because the building did not need to match the other Mall-facing buildings. The main facade has brick pilasters separating the inner bays, main entrances located in the outer bays (the north entrance is traced by a rounded brick arch), and window openings that have been reduced in size with stucco infill. The north wing of the building is a one story brick structure with segmental arched windows that
was originally built as a blacksmith shop and forge and predates the construction of the main building by a few years. The older blacksmith shop had a section added to the east end when it was incorporated into the 1915 structure. The main building has a rear hipped wing that projects to the west, and a one story brick south wing that matches the original north wing blacksmith shop.

Community Service Building, formerly the Engineering Building

Originally a flower garden with a small reflecting pool was located between the center and south wings on the west side of the Engineering Building. In 1958 the south wing was extensively renovated and faced with brick. In addition the south open stairs were replaced and a north stair was added for fire safety.

The building originally contained mechanical, electrical, and carpentry shops and labs, the forge and blacksmith shop, and classrooms and offices. Engineering served as the agricultural engineering teaching facility for the WCSA until that institution closed in 1963. As UMM classes and administrative units began taking over more and more of the campus, all of the Experiment Station staff moved to the second floor of Engineering which then served as the headquarters of the West Central Experiment Station until the new Station headquarters building was opened in 1973 on the University farm east of the campus. A portion of the center shop and the north wing were also retained by the Experiment Station until 1973.
When college classes began in 1960 the south wing of Engineering was converted into a chemistry lab. By the early 1970's the bookstore, post office, and printing and duplicating shop had moved to the first floor. In 1973, when the Experiment Station moved to its new facilities, the building was taken over completely by UMM and renamed the Community Services Building. The second story now houses the offices of Continuing Education, Regional Programs, and related outreach activities. From its original mission in 1915 as the agricultural engineering facility for the WCSA through its present uses, the structure has been remodeled and rearranged to serve multiple purposes. In spite of considerable maintenance the building is only in fair condition and sits masking the east side of the imposing Humanities Fine Arts Center. For these reasons, campus planning currently regards it as a candidate for demolition when, in the future, replacement facilities can be built.

Saddle Club Barn (Cattle Barn and Silo):
This large barn is located to the northeast of the Mall across a large open space facing the Community Service Building. It was constructed in 1914 as the cattle barn for the West Central Experiment Station. Originally it had a gambrel roof that was replaced after a 1950 haymow fire by the present rounded roof with small dormers. The new roof shape (known as a "round-roof barn") was widely promoted by state agricultural experiment stations and county agents for use in dairy barns because the rounded shape increased the capacity of the hayloft over gambrel roofs, although it was somewhat more difficult and expensive to construct. The walls of the barn are constructed of structural clay tile. The barn originally had a silo at the northeast corner. Later two hollow-tile silos and a Harvestore were added to the ends of the west facade. All silos were eventually removed. There is a one story addition on the east, originally used for feed storage, and now used for the storage of sand and salt for winter road sanding.
The building served the Experiment Station until new research facilities were constructed on the University’s east farm in 1973. Since that time about half of the barn has been used to stable the horses of the UMM Saddle Club and the remainder has been used for storage. The Saddle Club Barn and two structures near the north edge of the campus—the Seed House and the machinery shed (now the Transportation Garage)—are the only farm structures left on the campus.

Behmler Hall (Dining Hall and Gymnasium):
Behmler Hall, designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., was constructed in 1918 at a cost of $69,000 to serve as the dining hall, gymnasium and auditorium facility for the West Central School of Agriculture. It was built on concrete spread footings with concrete floor framing including the balconies on the north and south ends. It is constructed of brick with extensive Kasota stone trim, and is sited in a position of prominence at the center of the east side of the Mall. It is one of the most ornate buildings on the campus and has three stories, a raised basement, 6/1 sash, and a flat roof. The main facade has five recessed window bays that rise three stories to a course of brick and stone corbelling. Originally these bays contained two story high gymnasium windows. The rounded arched main entrances, located in the outer bays, have decorative brick, stonework, and inset terra cotta tiles. In 1926 a two story rear addition was constructed to provide food storage and living quarters for dining hall staff. In 1931, after the new Gymnasium building was completed, the gym floor and stage were replaced by two floors of dormitory rooms, and the structure became known as Junior Girls’ Dormitory. During this remodeling
a set of twelve windows was added to bring natural light to the east facing dorm rooms. The dining hall remained. The building then served the WCSA as a dining hall and dormitory until the school closed in 1963.

With the advent of college classes, Behmler Hall began a period of several additional uses, but was never used as a dormitory for college students. The building was renamed for Fred W. Behmler, a local physician and legislator who chaired the Interim Legislative Commission to study the Schools of Agriculture and then recommended their conversion to college classes. He was also active in persuading the University and the legislature to establish the University of Minnesota, Morris. Under UMM the building served as a dining hall until the construction of the new Food Service in 1971. Its basement was the location of the cafeteria and student-faculty gathering spot that was named “Louie’s Lower Level” by founding Provost Rodney Briggs. The second and third floor dorm rooms became offices. In fact the Social Science Division faculty was housed there in the early 1960s. In 1967 the second and third floors were remodeled for administrative offices including the Provost’s office. In 1971, when a new Food Service Building was completed, the first and second floors were extensively remodeled to house most of the student affairs and business office staff. In 1982 and again in 1984 additional remodeling added an elevator tower for handicapped access and a new campus computer center in the basement. By the mid 1980s the interior of the 1918 Clarence Johnston designed Dining Hall, Gymnasium, and Auditorium would be unrecognizable. It had become Behmler Hall, the administrative center for the campus.

Blakely Hall (Senior Hall):
Blakely Hall was constructed in 1920 at a cost of $75,000 as a boys’ dormitory for the West Central School of Agriculture. Originally named Senior Hall, it is built of brick with Kasota stone trim.
The building has two stories, a raised basement, 8/8 sash, a hipped roof, and wide overhanging eaves and curvilinear rafter tails. It was constructed on spread concrete footings and has reinforced concrete floor framing including the attic floor. Like the three other residence halls designed by Clarence Johnston, the building has dormers facing the Mall. Always used as a boys’ dormitory by the WCSA, it is noteworthy that in the ‘30s and ‘40s the rifle team had its range in the basement and attic was the “smoker” for the residents where ping pong was played daily and there were occasional boxing matches held. In 1960, the original front entrance in the third bay was bricked up and an exterior enclosed brick stairway added for fire safety reasons. A similar enclosed stairway was added to the south end of the building in 1988 and the interior stairs were removed. From its original construction in 1920 until the present it has served both WCSA and UMM as a residence hall. Incidentally, the current name, Blakely Hall, does not honor a person. When the campus became UMM it was decided that the names used for three of the dorms—Senior Hall, Girls’ Dormitory, Junior Hall—were not appropriate for a college. Blakely Hall’s name was chosen simply for its phonetic appeal by a group of staff and students. The same method was used to choose the names of Camden, Pine, and, later, Independence residence halls.
Social Science Building (Agricultural Hall):
The Social Science Building was constructed in 1920 as a major teaching facility, named Agricultural Hall, for the West Central School of Agriculture. Designed by Clarence Johnston, it was built at a cost of $89,000. Located on the northeast corner of the Mall, it is a two story brick structure with a raised basement, 8/8 sash, and Kasota stone trim. The 1920 structure was built on concrete spread footings with reinforced concrete framing throughout but by 1949 the north addition, taking into account the unstable subsoil of the campus, was built on a floating concrete slab. It has a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves, curvilinear rafter tails, and hipped dormers. The building’s unique rounded arched entrance has brick pilasters with ornate stone capitals, a stone shield in the tympanum, and other decorative brick and stonework. In 1949 there was a substantial one story, flat roofed addition built on the north side of the building that contained a steeply sloped auditorium designed for the display of animals to classes. To this day this auditorium is known by all as the “cow palace”. When utilized by the WCSA, the Social Science Building held classrooms, offices, laboratories, and meat cutting and cold storage facilities. After it was occupied by the University of Minnesota, Morris the interior was extensively remodeled in 1975. At that time an elevator and stair towers were added to the rear of the building for fire safety and handicapped access.

Social Science Building, formerly Agricultural Hall

In the 1960s the building was successively named Humanities, then Humanities/Social Science, and finally Social Science/Education–functional names because different division offices were located there at various times. The book store and post office were located in the basement of the building until 1969.
While classes from many disciplines were scheduled here, over the years Social Science classes tended to predominate. It is also the site of the psychology laboratory (most recently remodeled in 1993) which now occupies the entire basement. During the 1975 renovation a multi-room political science simulation lab was constructed on the third floor. At present Social Science remains one of three heavily utilized general purpose classroom buildings on the campus.

Education Building (Hospital):
The Education Building was constructed in 1923 as the infirmary for the West Central School of Agriculture. Designed by Clarence Johnston, it was built at a cost of $10,000 and contained room for 25 beds, nurses’ quarters, and an infirmary kitchen. It is a brick structure with Kasota stone trim and is built on concrete spread footings with wood interior load bearing walls and floor framing. It has two stories, a raised basement with a walkout entrance to the south, 8/8 sash, and a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves and curvilinear rafter tails. Features such as decorative brickwork above and below the first story windows and a front portico with wooden Tuscan columns, classical detailing, and a flat roof topped by an iron railing, plus the lack of dormers, all reflect a Renaissance Revival influence in the design. During a major remodeling in 1974, an exterior stair enclosure of concrete block was added to the west facade of the building and the south entrance and interior stairs were removed.

The Education Building, formerly the Hospital

Apparently it was the policy, and during the early period of the School of Agriculture a necessity, to care for ill students on the campus rather than in the local hospital. In fact, this building replaced an earlier
hospital located on the present Mall which was built during the Federal Indian School period and appears on the Sanborn map of the campus dated 1902. The building served as the health service for WCSA from 1923 until 1961. When UMM took over the campus, the health service for college students was operated as an outpatient clinic rather than an inpatient infirmary so much less space was needed. The health service was moved to Pine Hall from 1961 to 1967, and the building was put to other uses. In 1967 the UMM Health Service moved to new quarters in Clayton A. Gay Hall. From 1961 until 1967 this building housed the UMM administrative offices which, by then, had expanded beyond the capacity of Edson Hall. For a short time in the early 1960s it was labeled “The Office of Student Services”. In 1964 it was the site of an infamous prank in which Dean Briggs’ office was sodded, wall to wall, by a group of students. The scene included not only a full carpet of grass “borrowed” from the local greenhouse, but the flag from one of the greens at the golf course. The perpetrators were never caught, which is a good thing since Briggs was not amused. By 1967 the building had become the headquarters of the Division of Education with administrative and faculty offices and several seminar rooms. Recently, the University Relations offices have been housed in the basement as well.

Pine Hall (Junior Hall):
Built in 1926 for the expanding West Central School of Agriculture, Junior Hall, as it was originally named, served as a boys’ dormitory through 1962 when it was taken over by UMM for use as a residence hall.
Similar in appearance to the other Johnston-designed residence halls, it is a two story brick structure with a raised basement, Kasota trim, 8/8 sash, and a hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves and dormers. (Interestingly, the rafter tails are straight, rather than being decoratively-shaped like those seen on the campus’ other hipped roofed buildings except Camden Hall whose roof was replaced after a fire.) It was constructed on concrete spread footings with reinforced concrete floor framing including the attic. The attic was used as a recreation room and “smoker” for the WCSA boys. On the east end of the first floor there were four separate rooms for female faculty members. This suite of four rooms was used as the health service from 1961 until 1967. The building was renovated in 1960 and an enclosed hipped roofed stair tower replaced the original front entrance porch. It is located off the Mall to the northwest of the Student Center, remote from the complex of other college residence halls located to the southeast of the Mall. Nevertheless, renamed Pine Hall, it has been a popular residence hall used primarily for upper division college students since the early 1960s.

Recycling Center (Seed House):
The Seed House was constructed in 1929 as a seed grain processing and storage facility for the West Central Experiment Station. It was designed by Roy Lund who later became the University-wide Director of Plant Services. It is a two story structure with a hollow tile first floor, and lap siding on the second story. The interior supporting walls and partitions are of reinforced concrete and the building had an elevator to move grain to interior bins. It has a gabled, tiled, roof with a monitor. A
low quonset was added to the north side in 1953. The building was used by the West Central
Experiment Station for seed processing and storage well into the 1990s. It is currently used by UMM
Plant Services as a recycling center.

Physical Education Annex (Gymnasium):
The building identified as the Physical Education Annex was originally constructed in 1930 as the
gymnasium and pool for the West Central School of Agriculture. Designed by the State architect,
Clarence H. Johnston Sr., who did most of the older buildings on the Mall, it was a twin to the
gymnasium on the Crookston campus. The brick building sits on a spread footing foundation and has
reinforced concrete floor framing and steel roof framing, a gabled roof, and stone trim. There are Kasota
stone window sills, entrance surrounds, roof line coping, and unique circular disks set into the
brickwork at the top of each bay. Art Deco-style features include stylized fluting above the window
openings on the main facade and cast metal lamps that flank the main entrances. (The words “Girls”
and “Boys” originally appeared above the two entrances in stone panels that are now covered with
stucco.) Although many of the large rectangular window openings were filled with brick in 1962, the
appearance is very similar to the original 1930 structure. The building not only served the School of
Agriculture, but also UMM as the developing college’s gymnasium and pool. It will be remembered as
the site of UMM’s early basketball games where the small size, packed with screaming fans, gave UMM
a legendary home court advantage.
Upon completion of the new Physical Education center with its modern natatorium in 1973 the old pool was leased to the Morris School District’s Community Education Program until 1981. It was then taken out of service and the locker rooms and offices converted to storage and student organization spaces. From 1973 through 1997 the gym floor was used primarily for intramural sports, dances, and occasional public events. Because of problems with the structural integrity of the building it is planned for demolition with the site to be used for the future addition to the Science Building.

The Humanities Building (Home Economics):
Designed by Bernard J. Hein, Home Economics, now the Humanities Building, was constructed in 1954, at a cost of approximately $200,000, to provide modern home economics facilities for the West Central School of Agriculture. It was built on the site of an 1898 Morris Indian School Girls’ Dormitory that was the twin of the Minority Resource Center, became the Home Economics building and was later remodeled (probably in 1921) with Clarence Johnston- designed features to match the Mall buildings. The present Humanities Building faces south on the Mall across from the Student Center. It is a two story, flat roofed brick structure with a raised basement and Kasota stone trim. It is constructed on a concrete floating slab with reinforced concrete framing throughout. Windows arranged in long, stone edged bands give a modern, horizontal emphasis to the design. Originally the building had four classrooms, two craft rooms, four laboratories, a home economics parlor, a dining room, and offices. It served the WCSA as a classroom and home economics facility until 1963, but beginning in 1960 the space was shared with UMM when some of the home economics facilities were converted to college biology labs.
In 1997, an enclosed elevator tower was added to the west end of the building to provide handicapped access.

As UMM took over, the Home Economics building first was used primarily as a science building for biology and mathematics, but art classes were taught there in the early ‘60s as well. In fact it was named the Science Building through 1967. When the biology labs were removed and the new Science Building opened in 1967 it became the headquarters of the Humanities Division. The language lab and art studios were housed in the building and additional offices were added for the Humanities Division faculty. Equally important, the Humanities Building remained the second major general purpose classroom facility for the campus.

Edson Hall/Student Center:
The original Edson Hall, a one story flat roofed, brick structure, was completed in 1959 as an administration and auditorium building for the West Central School of Agriculture. Because of settling problems across the campus on buildings with spread footings, Edson Hall was built on wood pilings. The building was designed by Bernard J. Hein to replace the WCSA Administration Building that had been reconstructed on that site in 1924. In fact Edson Hall had a floor plan identical to that of the Administration Building that it replaced but was rotated 90 degrees so that the entrance faced the east. The new building was named to honor Allen W. Edson who had joined the faculty of the WCSA in 1922 and had served as the Superintendent from 1947 until 1958.
Almost immediately after it was opened 1959, it was utilized by the newly opened college for its administration. During the 1960s it housed UMM administrative offices, the UMM library, and its 530 seat auditorium. It also housed the college art gallery for a time during the ‘60s. Throughout the period 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 auditorium.

In 1992 Edson Hall was incorporated into the newly constructed Student Center which, though technically a $4,178,000 addition, so overpowered the original building as to leave it nearly unrecognizable except for the auditorium, which is now named Edson Auditorium. The Student Center faces the Mall with a tall, hipped roofed great hall that is lighted by large multipaned windows. The principal entries to the center are to the north and south. West of the great hall, the original south facade of Edson Hall can still be seen, but the north facade of the current building is part of the 1992 expansion. The facility is now a complete student center with meeting rooms, recreation, lounge and study space, a cafeteria, student activities and student government offices, a radio station, and the original Edson Auditorium.
Bibliography


Fenske, Theodore H. “West Central: Fifty-three Years,” from the 1963 Moccasin, the Golden Final Edition of the Yearbook of the West Central School of Agriculture.


The Gymnasium and P. E. Miller Field, circa 1960