

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

The Saskatchewan Association of Architects Celebrates Its Centennial

PART 2: THE EARLY YEARS – 1912 - 1945 | Second of a Four Part Series for WORTH Magazine

In 1905 the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were arbitrarily carved out of the former North-West Territories and a new era of construction was initiated in the West.

BOTH PROVINCES acquired former Territorial public buildings, such as court houses, land registry offices, hospitals and jails. Other public buildings, like immigration buildings, Dominion Experimental Farms, and post offices, remained under federal jurisdiction.

In addition, Saskatchewan acquired Government House and the Territorial Legislative and Administrative Buildings in Regina.

However, with only a few exceptions, many of those structures were of frame construction and/or of relatively small size, and the new provincial governments were determined to put their own visual stamp on their public buildings. A quarter century of unprecedented public building construction was initiated.

The flagship of the new provincial buildings in Saskatchewan was a replacement structure for the three Ter-



ritorial legislative and administrative buildings located on Dewdney Avenue – small brick and frame structures which were one or two storeys high.

Premier Scott commissioned a competition for a new edifice some 40 times larger than the Territorial Administration Building. The Montreal firm of Maxwell and Maxwell was selected to design the provincial Legislative Building, to be erected on the south side of Wascana Lake.

The new Department of Public Works oversaw not only the construction of bridges and roads, but also the new series of public buildings. Architects and draftsmen were hired to design various buildings, while other structures were commissioned through architects in private practice.

In 1906, Nova Scotia architect George Hutchinson was appointed the province's first Provincial Architect, but controversy over his proposed Land Titles Building for Regina led to his early dismissal and a greater reliance by government on private practice architects.

With so much new work underway, and so many new architects establishing themselves in the West, the creation of the Saskatchewan Association of Architects in 1911 was timely.

By that date, many men (and they were all men until 1950) were promoting themselves as "architects", and it was only through the establishment of the Association that this number was finally restricted to those who could prove that they had acquired the necessary education and credentials to practice in a fully professional manner. Those who did not meet that standard could sit for examinations through the University of Saskatchewan.

By August of 1912, during that first year of the SAA's operation, 82 men had registered with the Association.

While most were resident in Saskatchewan, several were from out-of-province, including the Maxwell brothers of Montreal, David Brown and





Top Row (left to right): H. J. Payton, T. B. Daniel, E. J. Hancock, W. Swan, D. Webster, F. H. Portnall, G. B. Colthurst. Intermediate Row (sawtooth order): F. J. O'Leary, F. J. Morgan?, G. J. Stephenson, John Turner, J. E. Harrison, Stan. E. Storey, F. L. Turnbull, James Crockert, H. E. Lloyd Owen, F. P. Martin, H. Lindley Bennett, N. L. Thompson, Alan S. Richardson, Robt. Blackwood, R. S. Byers, A. J. Wade, W. G. Goddard, R. M. Thompson. Bottom Row: E. Fillingham, A. L. Favell, A. G. Creighton, W. G. Van Egmond, F. C. Clemesha, W. W. LaChance, R. G. Bunyard, E. E. Delay, Dr. W. C. Murray (guest), G. H. Bugenhagen, H. Cooper, W. H. Evans, Prof. A. R. Greig.

Hugh Vallance (also of Montreal), Pender West of Winnipeg, and Meyer Sturm of Chicago. More architects would register the following year, bringing the total up to 104.

Conspicuously absent from that list were many previously familiar names, like S.A. Clark and A.M. Fraser, who apparently decided not to apply for official registration and consequently no longer promoted themselves as "architects".

The booming construction was not limited to provincial government public buildings, however. Due to the continuing influx of settlers, new houses, businesses, churches, schools and industrial structures were being erected throughout the province, many requiring the design talents of profes-

sional architects. Virtually every architect on the register had at least one attractive church and school in his portfolio, and many received numerous new commissions as word of their talents spread.

And then came the recession of 1913, followed by war in 1914. World War I not only slowed new construction, as resources were diverted to the needs of a country at war, but many men employed in the construction industry, including architects, volunteered for military service.

In Saskatchewan, 29 registered architects put their careers on hold and enlisted. Four of those did not return: Fenton Bisset, Walter Goddard, Ronald Ponton, and Alan Richardson.

Raymond Philbrick, who headed up the architectural design services at the Department of Public Works and served as its de facto provincial architect, also did not return. Ironically, his death opened the door for one of his staff to assume that mantle.

In 1916 Maurice W. Sharon, an Ontario architect, was appointed the Province's second Provincial Architect, a position he held until 1929.

At the end of the Great War in 1918, membership in the SAA stood at only 38 – a far cry

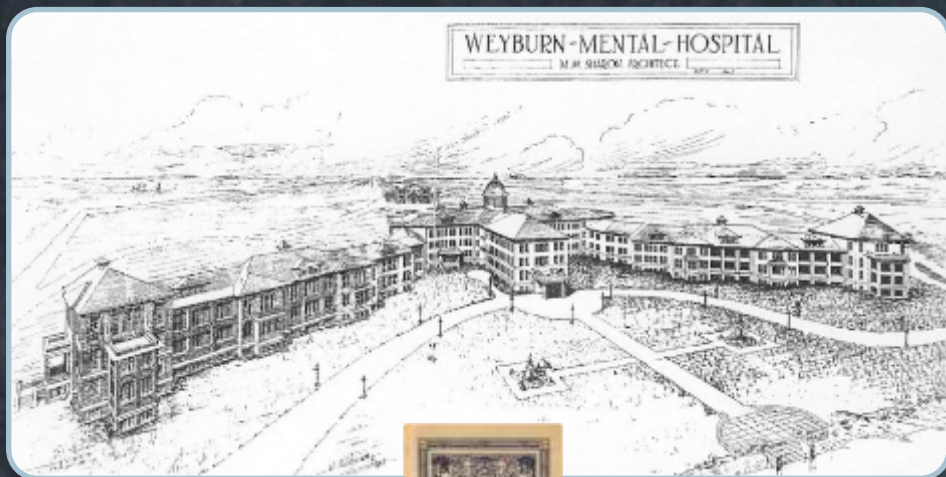
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Residence for Mr. R. H. Cook, Regina, Sask. - W.G. Van Egmond, Stan. e. Storey, Architects.

from the heady days of the Association's founding only six years earlier. While the 1920s did see a significant improvement in the provincial economy, and new construction surged

1939 provided an economic stimulus to many other businesses, that was not reflected in the field of architecture, and the SAA hit an all time low in its membership, with only 11 men



again, the number of architects practicing in Saskatchewan at the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 had only risen to about 50.

However, some of Saskatchewan's most impressive architecture was designed and erected during those two decades, including the core buildings at the University of Saskatchewan, major business blocks in the province's cities, elaborate religious and educational structures, and a number of imposing private residences.

The Dirty Thirties saw a decline in all aspects of the province's economic health, including a reduction in the number of practicing architects to the low 20s and the abolition of Harold Dawson's short-lived job as Provincial Architect in 1934.

While the onset of another War in

registering in 1945.

As during the previous war, SAA members joined the armed forces; all three returned to practice again. Among those

who remained to tend the home fires was a group of stalwarts now too old for military service, including 11 of the founding members of the SAA: George Jarrett, Frank Portnall, James Puntin, Frank Reilly, George Stevenson, Stan Storey, William Swan, Norm Thompson, William Van Egmond, Gentil Verbeke, and David Webster.

As well, during this time of design inactivity, this small group of men focused their attention on laying the groundwork for an eventual resurgence in the construction industry by publishing the Association's 6th Handbook, including images of 16 modern buildings.

World War II came to an end in 1945. It was a time to start rebuilding throughout the world and, as better times came to Saskatchewan, so were these improvements reflected in the fortunes of the SAA.W

• By Frank Korvemaker, S.A.A. (Hon.)

John Holliday-Scott

Saskatoon architect **John Holliday-Scott** was born in Hounslow, now part of London, in 1933. He lived as a boy in Hook, Surrey in southern England, and entered the Architectural School in the Kingston College of Art at 18.

He said when he was a boy, it was either the Royal Navy or architecture. While at the school, three of its professors (Chamberlin, Powell, and Bonn) won an architectural competition and set up in practice, including designing the huge Barbican Centre in London, on which Holliday-Scott and other students worked in 1955 and 1956.

When he graduated that year he worked briefly for a second London firm, designing iron gates, lobbies, and washrooms for a major building in London - not very satisfying work.

In 1957 he married Margaret Fletcher and they decided to immigrate to Canada, to Vancouver originally but a friend warned of a building recession. Canada House staff suggested Edmonton, but when they arrived, there was a recession there too. He did fill-in jobs for a summer and fall, answered an ad for a Saskatoon firm, (George) Kerr and (Pat) Cullingworth. He worked at the firm for two years, designed an apartment building, the downtown Co-op, a number of schools and a house for Marshall Parrot on Saskatchewan Crescent.

After two years, John went out on his own, his first commission, a house at the 1000 block of 14th Street for Ed and Pat Abramson, in 1959-60. Commissions came in the door.

Architect Jim Paddock joined him for two years then returned to Boston. On his own again, Holliday-Scott completed a handsome school at Clavet, designed he said like a village so it could accommodate a number of additions, five in all.

Work was not that plentiful and John was planning to return to England. He was at the time a member of the Saskatoon Symphony Board, as was Colb McEown of the University of Saskatchewan who asked if they awarded Holliday-Scott a major commission would he stay. He said of course.

The commission was for the Law and Commerce buildings joined to the Arts Building. John received the commission in 1963; the building began construction in 1964 for a 1967 opening. He liked working with Dean Otto Lang and Dean Tommy McLeod.



Designed U of S Law Building and Wascana Place

The Law Building in particular, with its open central space emphasizing the library, with offices and classrooms around the centre, became the Holliday-Scott trademark. The handsome north-facing facade of those buildings has been broken by a large unsympathetic add-on to Commerce.

Holliday-Scott had a rough ride with Shore and Moffat, the Toronto firm that had designed the Arts Building and wanted design control over the whole building. John said that Jim Wedgewood, Director of Buildings and Grounds, declared the contract had been awarded and that was that.



president of the Saskatchewan Association of Architects in 1974-75 is noteworthy.

Two of Holliday-Scott's favourite designs were completed in Regina, the Administration-Humanities Building at the University of Regina, completed in 1973, on a larger scale than Law but with the same heroic interior space, with the council chamber hung into that space.

He also designed Wascana Place outside and in, with the central interior space featuring a sculpture by Saskatoon's Eli Bornstein. John was asked to do everything at the Wascana Centre including the interior and furniture.

In 1974, Holliday-Scott and Paine re-designed the Saskatoon air terminal for the Department of Transport (the terminal recently re-designed again). As new experts they did a series of air terminal studies in the Caribbean over 18 months but no buildings were constructed.



Desmond Paine joined the firm in 1965, which became known as Holliday-Scott and Paine. Among their major commissions was the Lutheran Theological Seminary at the University of Saskatchewan. It was done in pre-cast concrete, the technology expressed openly. Holliday-Scott liked especially the interior courtyard.

The firm's largest commission, shared with the Forrester -Scott firm, was the University Hospital addition. The central mall was part of Holliday-Scott's design. He said a building of a certain size needed a heart. The mall also added a degree of clarity to a complex structure. Paine did the detailed work. They were hired in 1968, began design in 1970, the building finally opening in 1979.

Among the many Boards which John Holliday-Scott has served, his time as



They designed the Dental College on the Saskatoon campus in 1974-1979. One of Holliday-Scott's pleasures was the kind of research needed to arrive at such a design. He talked to architects of other dental buildings, as well as to deans, faculty, and students.

He designed the Cosmo Civic Centre - bermed to preserve energy, and Holliday-Scott liked the interior ramp as a form of sculpture. John also designed renovations to Saskatoon City Hall, outside and inside, and designed the Catholic School Board offices on 22nd Street.

The firm designed many schools in

Saskatoon, from small changes like the main floor library at Victoria, to new designs for over 20 schools, including Dundonald, Wildwood, River Heights, Silverwood, Forest Grove, Sister O'Brien, and St. Thomas.

He was able to do his central rotunda for the Catholic schools and mentioned in particular Bishop Mahoney High School because he included the village concept there too, with a two storey atrium building, a classroom pod, and St. Anne's Church, now much changed.

When he did parking structures, Holliday-Scott tried always to hide cars, with a berm at the airport, since removed, and with hospital parking built into the contour of the land originally, but additions have made it a blunt part of the river bank.

Ted Rusick joined the firm in 1980, which became known as Holliday-Scott, Paine and Rusick. Paine retired in 1988, Holliday-Scott leaving the partnership in 1993. John worked with his son Michael and they did work along the Yellowhead with commissions in Lloydminster - schools, a hospital - plus schools in Maidstone, Lashburn and a SaskTel Building in North Battleford - and a liquor store at Confederation Park which he calls The Cathedral of the Holy Spirits.

John Holliday-Scott would like best to be known in particular for Wascana Place as well as for the U of S Law Building, the U of R Administration-Humanities Building, that early residence for the Abramsons, and the house he redid for his own family on University Drive.

John retired from architectural practice in 2000 but continues to live in Saskatoon. W

• by Don Kerr

Upcoming 2011 SAA Features

Part 3: Post War Regeneration: 1945 to 1965

- New building materials
- Development of suburbs and malls

Part 4: The Evolution to Modern Scale and Design: 1965 to 2011

- Introduction of the high rise office tower