

Canadian Architectural Archives at the University of Calgary Libraries

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Résumé de l'article

Les « Archives d'architecture du Canada » (The Canadian Architectural Archives) aux bibliothèques de l'Université de Calgary furent établies en 1974; les premières grandes collections entrèrent par moyen de don en 1975 et, par la suite, les Archives se sont enrichies considérablement. Les collections comprennent surtout des desseins, des dossiers et des photographies, avec quelques modèles. Les Archives ont pour objectif de favoriser l'étude et la recherche et de conserver les collections. Sont comprises dans les grandes collections celles de John B. Parkin et Associés, Arthur Erickson et Ron Thorn ainsi que plusieurs collections d'importance de Toronto, Calgary et Vancouver. Les collections sont organisées d'après les principes archivistiques de l'ordre d'entrée et de la provenance. Divers répertoires et inventaires facilitent l'accès aux projets de construction individuels et un plus large contexte biographique est fourni à l'aide d'un programme d'histoire orale. À quelques exceptions près, tous ces instruments de recherche se trouvent dans la salle de lecture des Archives; les personnes venant de l'extérieur de la ville ou de la province pourront se prévaloir d'une aide à la recherche, quoi que limitée. Les Archives fourniront, conformément aux règlements des droits d'auteur, des copies de pièces ou d'extraits pour fins de recherche, d'exposition ou de publication.

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Résumé/Abstract

Les «Archives d'architecture du Canada» (The Canadian Architectural Archives) aux bibliothèques de l'Université de Calgary furent établies en 1974; les premières grandes collections entrèrent par moyen de don en 1975 et, par la suite, les Archives se sont enrichies considérablement. Les collections comprennent surtout des desseins, des dossiers et des photographies, avec quelques modèles. Les Archives ont pour objectif de favoriser l'étude et la recherche et de conserver les collections. Sont comprises dans les grandes collections celles de John B. Parkin et Associés, Arthur Erickson et Ron Thom ainsi que plusieurs collections d'importance de Toronto, Calgary et Vancouver. Les collections sont organisées d'après les principes archivistiques de l'ordre d'entrée et de la provenance. Divers répertoires et inventaires facilitent l'accès aux projets de construction individuels et un plus large contexte biographique est fourni à l'aide d'un programme d'histoire orale. À quelques exceptions près, tous ces instruments de recherche se trouvent dans la salle de lecture des Archives; les personnes venant de l'extérieur de la ville ou de la province pourront se prévaloir d'une aide à la recherche, quoi que limitée. Les Archives fourniront, conformément aux règlements des droits d'auteur, des copies de pièces ou d'extraits pour fins de recherche, d'exposition ou de publication.

The Canadian Architectural Archives at the University of Calgary Libraries were established in 1974; first major collections were donated in 1975 and, by 1983, the Archives has grown significantly. Collections consist mostly of drawings, file material and photographs, with some models. The purpose of the Archives is support of study and research and preservation of documents. Major collections include those of John B. Parkin Associates, Arthur Erickson, and Ron Thom, as well as other large collections from the Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver area. Organization of collections is based on archival principles of original order and provenance, and access to individual building projects is facilitated through various indices and inventories. An Oral History programme provides some additional biographical background. With a few exceptions, all materials are accessible for research in the Archives reader area; limited research assistance can be given to persons from out of town or out of province. Copies of individual items can be provided for research, exhibition or publication under strict copyright regulations.

In 1974, the University of Calgary Libraries, with the cooperation of the Faculty of Environmental Design, created an architectural archives to complement the graduate programmes of the Departments of Architecture and Urbanism, as well as to support the Canadian Studies Program at the University.

Major Canadian architectural firms who had contributed significantly to our built environment were contacted and offered preservation, organization and management of

their redundant documents. As a result, the first collections arrived in 1975. Since that time, the Archives holdings have grown to some 400,000 drawings, over 2,000 metres of supporting project and office files, and nearly 11,000 photographic negatives and prints, and other materials. In each case, the ownership of the materials is vested in the University of Calgary while copyright, if still in force, remains in the name of the donor or creator as applicable.

The purpose of the Archives is threefold: first and foremost, they were instituted to support study and research at the University; second, to assist researchers of other institutions in their work, and private individuals and government departments in their efforts to restore historical buildings.

Our third *raison d'être* is the preservation of the documents themselves in order to present to future generations an accurate picture of architectural development in Canada during the twentieth century, including not only masterpieces of public and private buildings created by artists in the profession, but also the plain and simple utilitarian structures providing shelter for everyday purposes and designed by unassuming firms.

Many of the collections consist not only of working or contract drawings, but extend to sketches, preliminaries, shop drawings and artistically produced renderings. Some collections include microfilm copies of individual projects, others include slides and even models.

An equally important part of the collections are the supporting office and project files. Drawings follow the development of a building from the early design stages to its completion, while files encompass every aspect of the communications necessary in its creation — from the first client-architect contact and subsequent correspondence, to tender submission and contract data, from inter-office memos to interview reports, the construction stages, inspection reports, change orders, agreements, and so on. They are an indication of the organization and management as well as of the personalities involved in the firm's work and its development.

The first collection received in the Archives was donated by the Toronto firm of *Neish Owen Rowland & Roy* and consisted of the documents of JOHN B. PARKIN ASSOCIATES, from 1938 when John B. Parkin opened his first practice in Toronto, until the early 1970s when, after several partnership changes, the firm emerged under its present name of NEISH OWEN ROWLAND & ROY, NORR for short.

The collection presents a fascinating picture of development, from a one-man office — it is said that John B. Parkin even typed his own letters in the early days of his firm's existence — to a major company with an office not only in Toronto, but also in Sault Ste. Marie and Montreal. The first drawings are letter-size, a few years later they are standard five square foot tracings, and by the early fifties, the first mylars appear. The documents trace the firm's history from Parkin's early specialization in school buildings to his firm's success in winning the competition for the Ontario Association of Architects' Headquarters building in Toronto which brought recognition and commissions for large office and university buildings, factories and hospitals; from alterations to a tiny bungalow to Toronto City Hall and the International Airport.

Among the major projects represented are the O.A.A. building, the Salvation Army Headquarters and Temple, the Greater Niagara and the Humber Memorial Hospitals, Barber-Greene and H.J. Heinz Company plants, Warner-

Lambert Research Institute, Toronto City Hall (in association with Viljo Revell), the Sun Life Assurance Company Office building on University Avenue in Toronto, Imperial Oil Regional Office building in North York, Toronto Dominion Tower on King and Bay Street, York and Brock Universities (as part of the UPACE project), the addition to the Thorwaldsen building on the University of Saskatchewan Campus in Saskatoon and, of course, Toronto International Airport. A very comprehensive file collection accompanies and complements the drawings.

The *Arthur Erickson* collection, received in 1976, begins with some of Erickson's student work of 1948 and some designs executed while he worked in the offices of Sharp & Thompson in Vancouver. The collection includes many of his well-known residences as, for example, the two Gordon Smith houses, the Frazer residence in West Vancouver, the Filberg house in Comox, and the Danto and Adaskin houses on Point Grey. Major projects are Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Lethbridge and Victoria Universities, the Point Grey Townhouses, Shannon Mews and the False Creek Townhouse development, the Canadian Government Pavilions at Expo '67 and '70, the MacMillan Bloedel Office building in Vancouver, as well as the Robson Square development.

The *Erickson* collection is particularly rich in rough sketches and renderings, display and exhibition items. Although project and office files for this collection are not as extensive as are those of the *John B. Parkin/NORR* collection, they nevertheless provide valuable additional background information.

Ron Thom's donations of archival materials begun in 1975, now consist of three consignments extending from 1964 to 1977 and include Thom's major contribution to university and college architecture such as Trent University, Massey College, Sir Sandford Fleming and Lester B. Pearson Colleges, as well as his Shaw Festival Theatre (Niagara-on-the-Lake) and the Firehall Theatre (Toronto) renovations. St. Jude's Cathedral of the Arctic, the Peterborough-Norwich Plan, Simcoe Downtown Planning and the Guelph Civic Centre are other major projects represented. Numerous rough sketches and preliminaries are included, on which philosophical annotations and musings can be found in the architect's handwriting. Again, project files support the drawings collection.

Collections of great historical importance are those of *Thompson Berwick Pratt* and *McCarter Nairne* of Vancouver, and that of *Stevenson Raines* of Calgary. All three are excellently preserved.

The *Thompson Berwick Pratt* collection begins with 1908 when George L. Thornton Sharp and Charles J. Thompson — new Canadians from Great Britain — formed a partnership in Canada's rapidly growing Pacific City. Their designs were in great demand, particularly in the residential devel-

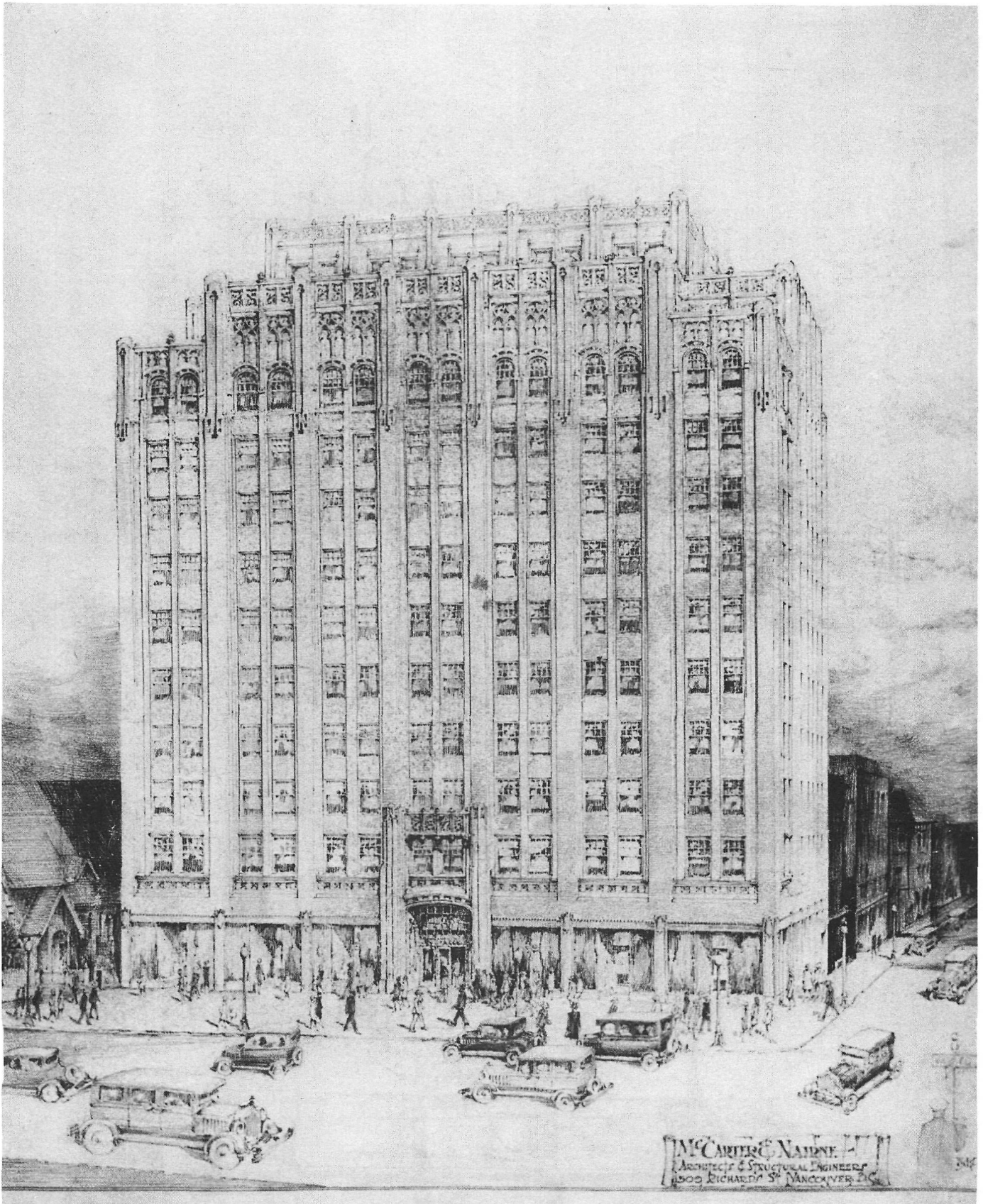


FIGURE 2. GEORGIA MEDICAL-DENTAL BUILDING, Vancouver, by McCARTER NAIRNE & PARTNERS, 1928–1929, 67.5 x 57.5 cm., pencil on paper.

SOURCE: The McCarter Nairne Collection, C.A.A.

opment of the C.P. Railway property of Shaughnessy Heights and later, in that of Point Grey and the University Endowment Lands. The real estate boom following the opening of a ferry service across Burrard Inlet attracted even more residential commissions to the firm.

This collection was received in four major consignments arranged by the architect in broad building category: residences, schools, banks and miscellaneous projects. This subject organization was retained in the Archives.

The *McCarter Nairne* collection provides yet another large segment of early Vancouver architecture beginning with 1921, but including several sets of Thomas Hooper drawings of 1908/09. Major buildings here are the Marine Building and the Georgia Medical-Dental building, the David Spencer Department Store (which is now, as SEARS, part of the Vancouver Harbour Centre), the more mundane Manitoba Works Yard, the British Ropes Warehouse and the Coca-Cola Bottling plant, which was built in association with Mathers & Haldenby of Toronto. The collection includes numerous full-scale decorative details such as millwork and ceiling designs, as well as many excellent presentation drawings.

The *Stevenson Raines* collection is the Calgary equivalent of Thompson Berwick Pratt and McCarter Nairne of

Vancouver. It begins in 1905 under the name of LAWSON & O'GARA and extends through various partnership and name changes to 1978 when the firm was known as STEVENSON RAINES BARRETT CHRISTIE HUTTON SETON & PARTNERS. This collection is particularly interesting from the point of view of completeness, since we were fortunate to secure the archival materials of partners who had either branched off on their own or joined the firm after several years of independent practice. These include the drawings on microfilm of John Alexander Cawston, who was a partner from 1947 to 1951 and then operated his own practice until his death in 1967; those of Kelvin and Ross Stanley, who were partners in the firm's Edmonton office under the name of DEWAR STEVENSON & STANLEY from 1951 to 1955 and then returned to independent practice until 1979; and the collection of Gilbert Beatson and his partnership from 1957 to 1982 when BEATSON FINLAYSON HOWATT merged with STEVENSON RAINES to form the new firm of RAINES FINLAYSON BARRETT & PARTNERS. This collection, then, forms a complete and unbroken record of their contribution to nearly eighty years of development in the City of Calgary.

A very important collection which does not consist of either drawings or files but which must not be forgotten, is that of *Panda Associates* of Toronto, perhaps the largest architectural photographic firm in Canada. It begins with



FIGURE 3. RESIDENCE FOR MR. & MRS. A FRENCH, Toronto, by JOHN B. PARKIN, 1938, 21.5 x 28 cm., pencil on tracing paper, crayon tinting.

SOURCE: The John B. Parkin/NORR Collection, C.A.A.

the year 1946 and has now, after numerous deposits, reached the year 1959 and consists of over 11,000 photographic prints and negatives. Many of these are progress photographs showing buildings at various stages of construction; others are of completed buildings, others again are of old buildings about to be demolished. Many of the photographic projects represent buildings for which drawings are available in the various archival collections, others are of buildings by architects whose drawings we do not have. The collection is, therefore, a valuable addition and complement to the Archives' holdings.

Space does not permit description of each and every collection preserved in the Canadian Architectural Archives but an alphabetical listing of collections is appended to this article (Appendix 1). One important fact must be emphasized: almost every collection includes documents, in either original or print, by other architects. In most cases they are drawings for an original building used in the design of additions or alterations, or in cases where our donor firm acted as associated architects to out-of-province firms; for example the already mentioned Thomas Hooper originals in the *McCarter Nairne* collection; blueprints by Somervell & Putnam, Bernard C. Palmer and William Fred Gardiner for Shannon Estates, used by Arthur Erickson in the development of Shannon Mews; prints by Eden Smith, and Vaux and Brian Chadwick for a Rosedale, Toronto, residence in the *Ron Thom* collection, or sketches by Cecil Burgess and watercolour renderings by Percy Nobbs in the *Rule Wynn & Rule (Edmonton)* collection. The *Stevenson Raines* historical collection is particularly rich in such incidental documents, including as it does individual projects of many local architects whose firms — and with them their drawings and file material — have long ago gone out of existence. Of particular interest here is the 1929 correspondence between FORDYCE & STEVENSON and John Lyle, concerning construction of the Bank of Nova Scotia building on Calgary's Eighth Avenue South West. Although many of the incidental drawings are prints rather than originals, they may well be the only documentation remaining of the original buildings.

Organization of materials is simplicity itself: each collection is preserved as a unit, and is identified by a collection code consisting of the first three letters of the originating firm's name, e.g. *PAR* for *Parkin*, *ERI* for *Erickson*, *MOR* for *Moriyama*, etc. Within the collection, documents are arranged in the order in which they were created, i.e. a chronological order, and project numbers assigned by the originating firm or architect are retained. Where no project numbers exist, artificial ones are created, giving the last two digits of the year shown on the documents plus a "Cutter" number based on the project name. For example: '*ERI 65K57*' is the artificially created call number for Erickson's Kitsilano Museum complex in Vancouver. Although dated 1965, the drawings bear no project number; '65' indicates the year in which design was begun, and 'K57' is the Cutter

conversion for the first three letters of the project title, namely 'Kitsilano'. By this method, the project can easily be fitted into the chronological sequence.

Finding aids consist of an Accession Register giving a brief description of each collection or consignment, the name of the originating and the donor firms, date of donation, inclusive dates, scope and major projects included. Descriptive inventories are then compiled, and cards typed for various catalogues: a project index which is arranged in alphabetical order by building or client name; a building type index based on Walter Bowker's system created for the National Architectural Archives; an architects index listing every architect or architectural firm on whom even the smallest bit of information is available in the Archives; and, a place index, which lists buildings by Province, city and street address. Locating the documents for an individual building therefore presents no difficulty.

The Archives' activities are by no means limited to organization and administration of the collections. In order to supply much needed biographical and philosophical background information to our collections, an *ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM* of tape-recorded interviews with local architects is in progress. Moreover, architectural historian Dr. Harold Kalman has generously contributed several tapes of his own conversations with well known architects in Vancouver — among them G.L.T. Sharp and J.Y. McCarter. Transcripts of these tapes are gradually being made and provide invaluable personal background to the collections. This is all the more important since so very little biographical information is available in print at this time.

How accessible are our collections? The answer is, with a few exceptions, all documents can be made available to any bona fide researcher. Exceptions are individual projects which have been placed under restriction either at the request of the donor firm, or voluntarily by the Archives themselves. These include any building incorporating electronic security systems or vaults. To consult these, special permission must first be obtained by the researcher from the donor firm.

All other documents are considered available from the time a new collection or consignment has been accessioned and checked against a project list or, in its absence, a quick-list produced by Archives staff. Consultation of documents is confined to the Archives Reader Area, that is, documents are not signed out on loan. Copies can be made, either by regular printing process or by photography but, because of copyright regulations, the Archives require written permission for copying from the donor firm. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain such permission for the Archives. Cost of copying is billed to the researcher by the University with an additional labour and service charge to cover cost of time spent by Archives staff on retrieving, checking and preparing the documents for copying as well as mailing to the requestor and administrative costs incurred by the Univer-

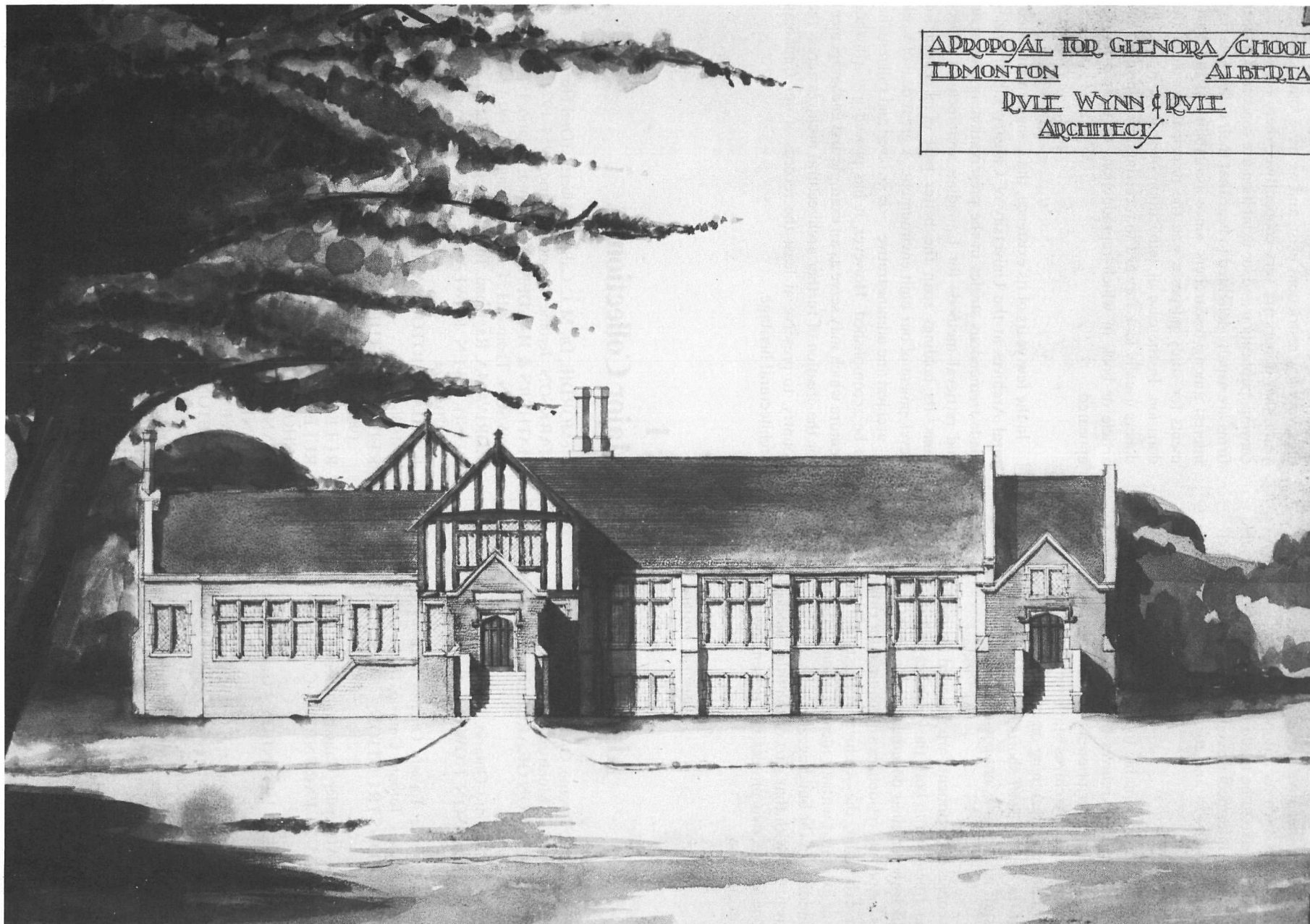


FIGURE 4. GLENORA SCHOOL, Edmonton, by RULE WYNN & RULE, 1940, 43 x 60 cm., watercolour on heavy art paper.

SOURCE: The Rule Wynn & Rule Collection, C.A.A.

sity Controller's office in preparing invoices, as well as cost of postage. Where negative or other easily reproducible intermediate copies such as autositives, sepias or high-speed film copies have to be made before printing, it is our policy to retain the intermediate copies — in order to protect the donor's copyright — and to share the cost with the requestor.

Researchers who are unable to come to the Archives in person can contact the Archives by telephone or by letter, giving as detailed a description as possible of the item or information required. Archives staff will then conduct a reasonable amount of searching on behalf of the requestor. Because of the present staff shortage, in-depth research by Archives staff is, of course, not possible.

Where copies of documents are intended for publication, credit should be given to both the Archives and the collection of which the original document is a part. If copies of floor plans for private residences are required for either publication or exhibition, the Archives request that these be published or exhibited without identification of the original client and address of the building; alternatively, the copy will be made available with that part of the title "blocked out." This is done in order to protect the present owner of the residence in question.

Considering the extent of materials in the Archives' holdings, very few restrictions exist, and we have found over the years, that donors are very cooperative where requests for copying, publication and/or exhibition are concerned. Donor firms are usually delighted to hear that their collections find interest among researchers, since availability of the documents for study purposes was the principal reason of the donation. In the case of publication of specific items, the donors usually look forward to receiving an off-print of the article or book in which reproductions of their drawings appeared.

In the few years of its existence, the Canadian Architectural Archives at the University of Calgary Libraries has made tremendous strides in the preservation, organization and retrieval methods for Canadian architectural collections. Its holdings span the better part of a century of development of our built environment. A great deal of work — archival and administrative — is involved and still remains to be accomplished. However, it has proved a worthwhile venture which may serve as an example and encouragement for the creation of further architectural archives across the country, to preserve at least the records of our Canadian architectural heritage.

Appendix 1

Alphabetical Index to Major Collections

- ADAMSON, Gordon; Toronto, Ontario, 1933–1972
AFFLECK, Raymond T.; Montreal, Quebec, 1956–1974
ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS; Edmonton, Alberta, 1906–1973
ANDREWS, John; Toronto, Ontario, 1967–1973
BEATSON FINLAYSON HOWATT; Calgary, Alberta, 1957–1975
BROWN, Francis Bruce; Toronto, Ontario, 1920–1921
BROWN, John Francis; Toronto, Ontario, 1881
CALGARY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION; 1967–1972
CAWSTON, John Alexander; Calgary, Alberta, 1951–1967
COHOS EVAMY & PARTNERS; Calgary, Alberta, 1960–1978
DALE CHANDLER KENNEDY; Calgary, Alberta, 1955–1975
ERICKSON, Arthur; Vancouver, B.C. and Toronto, Ontario, 1948–1970
HEMINGWAY, Peter; Edmonton, Alberta, 1956–1979
JOHN B. PARKIN/NORR; Toronto, Ontario, 1938–1970
KALMAN, Dr. Harold; Toronto, Ontario, (Oral History), 1971–1973
LOMBARD NORTH GROUP; Calgary, Alberta, 1965–1970
LONG, J.W.; Calgary, Alberta, 1960–1972
McCARTER NAIRNE & PARTNERS; Vancouver, B.C., 1908–1970
McMILLAN, H.W.R.; Calgary, Alberta, 1960–1972
McMORDIE, Dr. M.J.; Calgary, Alberta, (Oral History)
MARKSON, Jerome; Toronto, Ontario, 1954–1974
MATHERS & HALDENBY; Toronto, Ontario, 1962–1966
MAWSON, Thomas H.; Lancaster, England, 1914
MORIYAMA, Raymond; Toronto, Ontario, 1959–1973
NEISH OWEN ROWLAND & ROY; Toronto, Ontario, 1970–1974
PANDA PHOTOGRAPHIC LTD.; Toronto, Ontario, 1946–1959
REID CROWTHER & PARTNERS; Calgary, Alberta, 1906–1914
RULE WYNN & RULE; Calgary, Alberta, 1949–1969
RULE WYNN & RULE; Edmonton, Alberta, 1918–1972
SCHOENAUER, Norbert; Montreal, Quebec, 1960–1968
STANLEY, K.C. & R.; Edmonton, Alberta, 1948–1979
STANLEY, T.E.A.; Calgary, Alberta, 1910, 1911, 1926
STEVENSON RAINES BARRETT CHRISTIE HUTTON SETON & PARTNERS; Calgary, Alberta, 1905–1978
STRONG, Richard; Toronto, Ontario and Calgary, Alberta, 1962–1977
THOM, R.J.; Vancouver, B.C. and Toronto, Ontario, 1964–1977
THOMPSON BERWICK PRATT & PARTNERS; Vancouver, B.C., 1908–1968
UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS & JOINERS; Calgary, Alberta, 1907–1972
WHIDDINGTON, H.M.; Lethbridge, Alberta, 1912–1919