



St. Paul Seminary and Surrounding Area, c. 1921 (Minnesota Historical Society)

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS,
THE ST. PAUL SEMINARY, AND
HISTORIC SUMMIT AVENUE:
AN ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**PREPARED FOR
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Historical Designations and Implications	4
National Register of Historic Places	4
Local Designation	4
Potential for Designation of Other Properties.....	5
Other Design Oversight	6
St. Thomas Campus, St. Paul.....	7
North	7
East of Cleveland	9
2045 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3781)	9
2055 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7852)	9
Summit Block East	10
2078 Summit Avenue	10
2100 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7854)	10
2110 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7855)	13
2112 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7856)	13
Finn Street.....	14
Summit Block West	14
2120 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7860)	14
2130 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7861)	16
2134 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7862)	16
2140 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7863)	17
2144 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3788)	17
2150 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7864)	18
2154 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3789)	18
2156 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7865)	19
2166 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7866)	19
2170 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7867)	20
2174 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7868)	20
The St. Paul Seminary.....	21
Assessment of St. Paul Seminary Historic District.....	30

Conclusions.....	35
MacPhail Building, Minneapolis	37
Historical Designations and Implications	37
National Register of Historic Places	37
Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Designation	37
Historical Overview	37
Conclusions.....	38
Sources Consulted.....	39

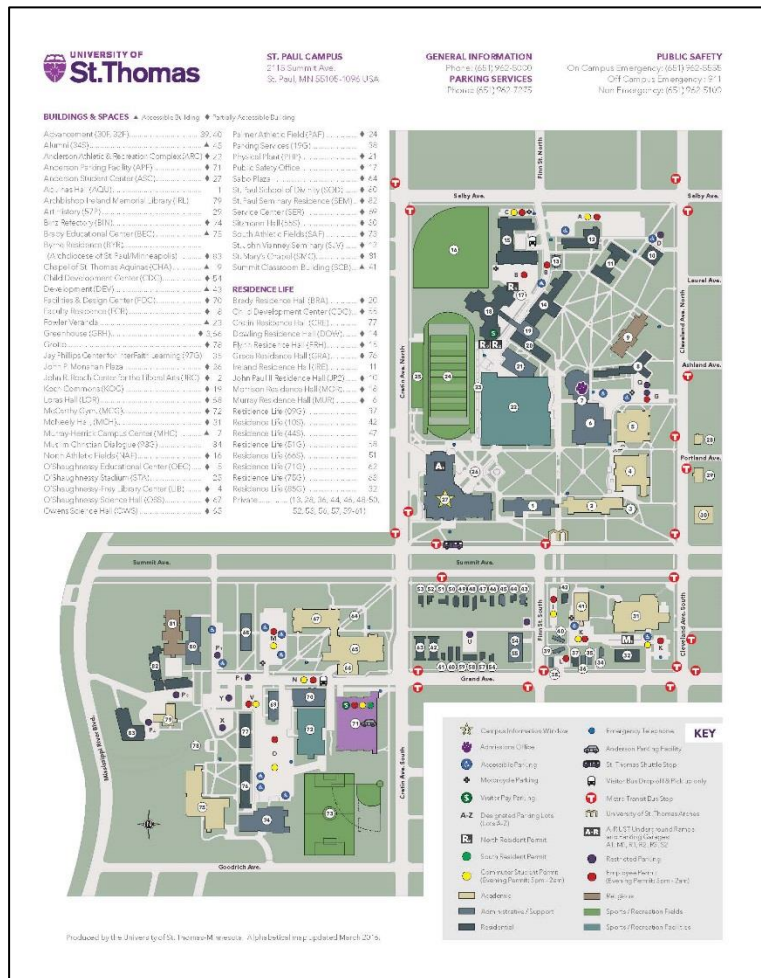
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of St. Thomas has prepared a ten-year master plan for its St. Paul campus to remain competitive in an ever-changing educational environment. Looking ahead to 2020 and beyond, the master plan identifies the possibility to construct 215,000 square feet of new academic space, renovate 137,000 square feet of existing space, expand housing by 437 beds, and increase parking to handle an additional 631 vehicles. Space is at a premium at the landlocked campus, so planners must find creative ways to address these needs while enhancing the physical character of the campus.

Some of that character is derived from historic properties. The campus straddles Summit Avenue, which is a National Register historic district and is also locally designated by the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. One focus of the following report is evaluating the historical significance of properties in these districts between Cretin and Cleveland, as well as properties in the historic district west of Cretin and east of Cleveland that are owned by St. Thomas.

The district’s period of significance extends from 1885 to 1938. The National Register nomination states that the district “obtains its character from the 200 properties built between 1900–1929. . . . The poorest years for building on west Summit were during and just after WWI and from 1930, the Great Depression, through WWII. During the 20-year period from 1930–1949, only 16 buildings were constructed on west Summit.”¹

Properties in the historic district are classified as either contributing or noncontributing. If they date from the period of significance and retain good physical integrity from that period, they contribute to the district. In addition to houses and other primary buildings, contributing features include secondary structures, such as garages, as well as landscapes and other elements.



¹ Norene Roberts and Jeanne Zimmewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1988, updated 1992, 7:5.

Properties that are greatly altered or were built after the period of significance are usually considered noncontributing. The local heritage preservation commission, which reviews applications for building and demolition permits in the historic district, resists proposals to demolish or substantially modify contributing properties. Changes should conform to the district's design guidelines, which are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. A noncontributing building, on the other hand, can usually be demolished, but the commission also reviews plans for the use and design of whatever goes in its place.

To the north of Summit Avenue, Aquinas Hall (1932) dates from the last phase of construction in the district, while Albertus Magnus Hall (1946) and two more recent stone markers are noncontributing. The Anderson Student Center, constructed after the historic district was designated, is also noncontributing. For the campus west of Cretin, Loras Hall, St. Mary's Chapel, and some landscape features are contributing, but the rest of the historic district is occupied by noncontributing new construction and parking lots.

The two blocks between Cleveland and Cretin Avenues south of Summit have a varied collection of properties. Only one of the buildings on the East Block, 2110 Summit, was built during the period of significance and contributes to the historic district. What was once its side yard, now a surface parking lot, is considered noncontributing. The William Mitchell College of Law building at 2100 Summit is also noncontributing to the district. It appears, though, to be of historical significance in its own right in the areas of education and law and potentially qualifies individually for the National Register and local designation. The West Block contains ten contributing properties and one noncontributing property, 2166 Summit, which was built in 1950, after the period of significance.

While there has been much change on the blocks west of Cleveland, the design of the new construction is generally compatible with the Summit Avenue National Register and local historic districts and does not detract from their overall character. This perspective can serve as a guide when assessing the potential impacts of alternatives that St. Thomas is considering in its master planning process.

Another focus of the following report is to reevaluate the St. Paul Seminary Historic District, which overlaps the Summit Avenue historic district. Both include Loras Hall and St. Mary's Chapel. A nomination for this district was prepared in 1984. The district has not been officially listed in the National Register, but the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office considers it eligible for designation. The reassessment included in this report concludes that demolition, new construction, and alterations since the nomination was drafted in 1984 have severely compromised the integrity of the St. Paul Seminary Historic District. The district no longer appears to qualify for the National Register under Criterion A (education and religion) or Criterion C (architecture). Individually, the surviving buildings are of historical interest for their association with the seminary, but given their primary relationship to the campus, which lacks physical integrity, and changes to their setting, the case for individual eligibility also seems weak under Criterion A.

Under Criterion C (architecture), there might be a case for National Register eligibility for the three buildings—Loras and Cretin Halls and the Gymnasium—that survive from the 1890s. The seminary was an early and important commission for architect Cass Gilbert, so the buildings could represent a significant milestone in his career. The spare design of the buildings in an era better known for ornamentation is also noteworthy, making the buildings potentially of interest for their aesthetic characteristics. Grace Hall, which was designed by architect Emmanuel Masqueray and completed in 1913, cannot make the same claim and does not appear to be eligible under Criterion C.

Finally, this report reviews the historical status of the building that formerly housed the MacPhail Center of Music in Minneapolis, which is owned by St. Thomas. The MacPhail Building is locally designated, so alterations are subject to review by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission. The commission is primarily concerned with exterior work. The building also appears to qualify for the National Register, so a substantial rehabilitation might be able to obtain historic tax credits that could help finance the project. The challenge would be to find a financial/ownership structure that could make use of the credits, which only have value to tax-paying entities. Tax credit reviews cover the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

National Register of Historic Places

Campus property fronting on Summit Avenue is in the West Summit Avenue Historic District, which was listed in the National Register in 1993 for its significance in architecture (Criterion C) and community planning and development (Criterion A). The district includes approximately 219 acres, with a period of significance extending from 1885 to 1938. At the time that the nomination was prepared, the district contained 487 properties, 393 of which were considered “contributing” to the district.²

The boundary of the district “generally . . . contains properties facing Summit Avenue north and south to the alleys on both sides of the Avenue,” and includes “the first 234 feet north of the Summit Avenue north curb line on the University of St. Thomas campus” and “the buildings fronting on Summit Avenue and five buildings on the St. Paul Seminary campus . . . to preserve an unbroken streetscape within the district.” The nomination observed that the “overall . . . feeling on the avenue is one of stateliness. This feeling is a result of the combination of large lots, large houses, compatible architectural styles, generous set-backs, the boulevard, and mature plantings.”³

National Register designation is primarily honorary. Property owners can usually remodel or even demolish National Register properties without obtaining approval from the National Park Service or the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office, which oversee the program. (If changes substantially alter the property’s historic character, its National Register status will be revoked.)

There are, though, some exceptions. If a project involves federal funding or requires a federal license, plans must be reviewed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which can cause delays, require design modifications, or stop the project altogether. A similar review is required under Chapter 138.665 of Minnesota statutes if state funds are directly allocated to the project. In addition, National Register properties are covered by the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act, so any interested party can initiate a lawsuit to protect a threatened historic property under that act. Finally, the rules of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board require the city to complete an Environmental Assessment Worksheet before a National Register-listed property is demolished if the demolition is not subject to Section 106 or Heritage Preservation Commission review.

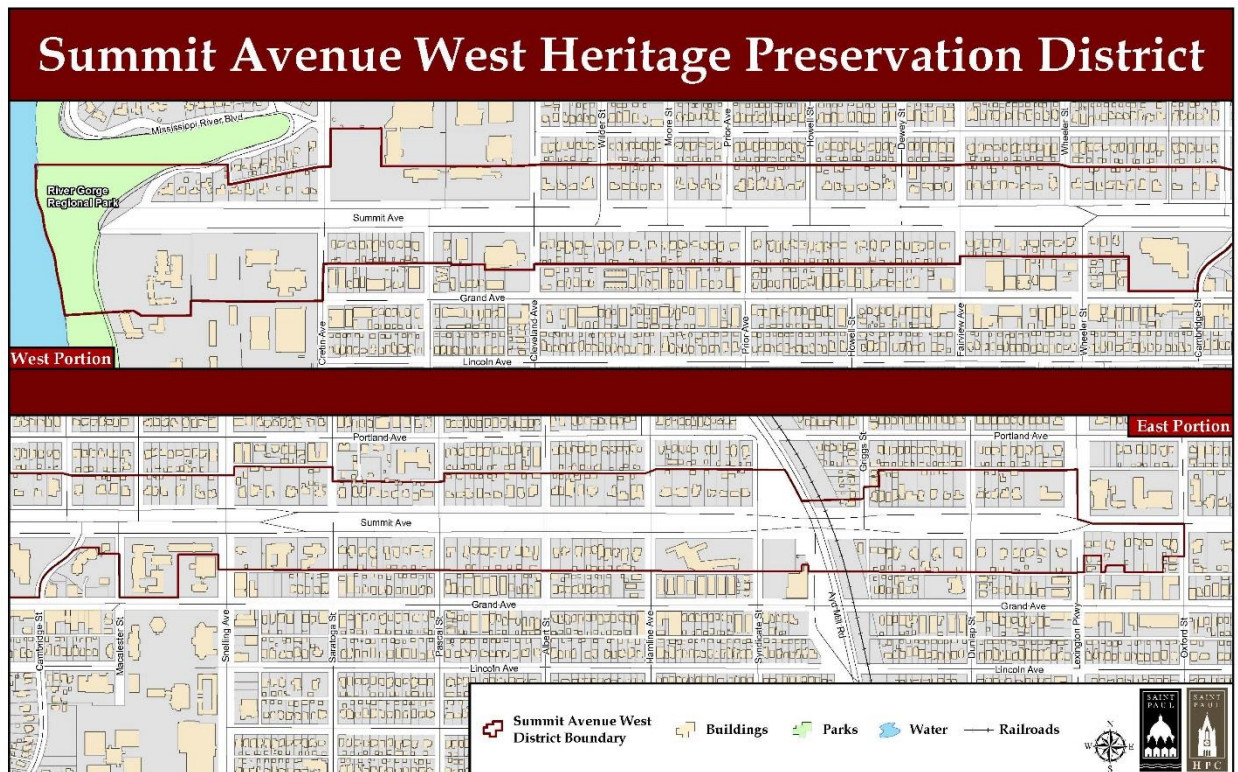
Local Designation

The City of St. Paul created the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District in 1990. The local designation adopted the National Register evaluations of the contributing or noncontributing status of properties in the district (i.e., if a property contributes to the National Register district, it also contributes to the local district).

² Roberts and Zimmiewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District.”

³ Ibid., 7:1 – 7:2.

Local landmark designation imposes design review by the city’s Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) for projects that propose to alter or demolish designated properties. Local landmark designations, including the Summit Avenue district, typically focus on exterior features. Owners are usually free to alter building interiors without any review. The St. Paul HPC has established design guidelines for the Summit Avenue historic district, and St. Thomas is familiar with this review process. Properties that are considered contributing to the National Register district also contribute to the local district.



Potential for Designation of Other Properties

The potential for properties on the St. Thomas campus to qualify for National Register or local designation, either individually or as a historic district, has not been assessed. The following buildings have been inventoried by the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO) but their National Register eligibility has not been determined except in relation to the Summit National Register and local districts (properties in these districts are marked with an asterisk [*]). Inventory numbers are provided in parentheses. Properties were identified by a search of the MnHPO’s database, which relies on dated and sometimes inconsistent inventory data, so this list and information in the next paragraph might not be definitive or completely accurate.

- O’Shaughnessy Stadium and Field (RA-SPC-0628)
- Chapel (RA-SPC-0629)
- Albertus Magnus Hall (now the John R. Roach Center for the Liberal Arts) (RA-SPC-3783)*
- St. Thomas Infirmary (RA-SPC-3784)

- O’Shaughnessy Library (RA-SPC-3785)
- Aquinas Hall (RA-SPC-3786)*
- Ireland Dormitory (RA-SPC-3787)
- Constellation Earth Sculpture (RA-SPC-5655)
- John Ireland Statue (RA-SPC-5656)
- Flagpole with Plaque (RA-SPC-5657)
- Physical Plant Headquarters and Heating Plant (RA-SPC-5658)
- St. John Vianney Seminary Residence (RA-SPC-5659)
- Murray Hall (RA-SPC-5660)
- Catholic Digest Building (RA-SPC-5661)
- John Paul II Hall (RA-SPC-5662)
- Brady Hall (RA-SPC-5663)
- Dowling Hall (RA-SPC-5665)
- Graduate Programs in Management (44 N. Cleveland) (RA-SPC-5666)
- Faculty Residence (RA-SPC-5667)
- O’Shaughnessy Hall (RA-SPC-5938)
- Stone Place Name Markers (RA-SPC-7858)*
- Parking Lot (site now occupied by Anderson Student Center) (RA-SPC-7859)*

Also inventoried, but not evaluated, are properties owned by St. Thomas at 2109 Grand Avenue (Buscher House, RA-SPC-5705), 30 Finn Street (apartment building, RA-SPC-5727), and 32 Finn Street (apartment building, RA-SPC-5728).

St. Thomas buildings that are in the MnHPO database but are no longer standing include Garages (RA-SPC-5654), the Irish American Cultural Institute (RA-SPC-5653), Foley Theater (Club Building) (RA-SPC-5664), O’Shaughnessy Hall Athletic Center (RA-SPC-5668), and the following buildings on Grand Avenue: 2091 (house, RA-SPC-5701), 2093 (McAnulty House, RA-SPC-5702), 2097 (M. B. Jamieson House, RA-SPC-5703), 2103 (Mary Anderson House, RA-SPC-5704), and 2117-2119 (McCarthy Building, RA-SPC-5706).

Other Design Oversight

The community surrounding St. Thomas is generally well-educated and very concerned about changes proposed for the neighborhood. This has resulted in a series of agreements between the school and the City of St. Paul:

- Special Conditional Use Permit, 1990
- Special Conditional Use Permit, 1995
- Conditional Use Permit, 2004

Some components of these agreements overlap with the HPC regulations and also influence the development of the master plan.

ST. THOMAS CAMPUS, ST. PAUL

Lexington Avenue became the west boundary of St. Paul in 1872. The city limits were extended to the Mississippi River in 1885. That same year, St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary was established on the north side of Summit. The College (now University) of St. Thomas remained at that site in 1894, when the St. Paul Seminary was established on the block south of Summit and west of Cretin. The blocks south of Summit between Cretin and Cleveland Avenues were primarily developed as single-family housing in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁴

North

The boundary of the West Summit Avenue National Register Historic District runs in a straight east-west line through this block, encompassing Aquinas Hall, the John R. Roach Center for the Liberal Arts, and the Anderson Student Center. The locally designated Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District adopts the same boundary north of Aquinas Hall and the Roach Center, but at the west end of the block, along Cretin Avenue, it extends north nearly to the intersection of Mississippi River Boulevard.

The National Register nomination identifies the following properties on this block:

- Albertus Magnus Hall (now the John R. Roach Center for the Liberal Arts): Considered noncontributing to the historic district because it was built in 1946, after the end of the district's period of significance.
- Aquinas Hall: Opened in 1932 and a contributing feature in the district.
- Stone name place markers: Located along Summit at the corners of Cretin and Cleveland, these two markers are of more recent construction and do not contribute to the district. They now read "University of St. Thomas," the name adopted by the school in 1990.
- Parking lot, northeast corner of Cretin and Summit: The Anderson Center now stands on a site occupied by a surface parking lot in 1984. The nomination considered the site noncontributing to the historic district.

As noted previously, the present study did not assess the potential for National Register designation of individual buildings or a St. Thomas campus historic district north of Summit.

⁴ Ibid., 7:2; Merrill Jarchow, *Private Liberal Arts Colleges in Minnesota: Their History and Contributions* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1973), 38–40.



North Double-block

Top: Looking northeast on Summit Avenue from near Cretin Avenue, with Anderson Student Center in the foreground and Aquinas Hall center-right.

Bottom: Looking northeast on Summit Avenue from Finn Street towards the John R. Roach Center for the Liberal Arts (historically, Albertus Magnus Hall).

East of Cleveland

Two properties east of Cleveland, 2045 and 2055 Summit, are within the St. Thomas campus boundary as defined by the 2004 Conditional Use Permit.

2045 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3781)

Morrison House serves as the home of the president of St. Thomas. It was constructed in 1936 by contractor Car-Dell Company as a single-family house for Jay and Helen Levine. It is a French Chateau style house with a screened sunroom on the east side and an attached garage in the rear.⁵ The house remained as a single-family home until a St. Thomas trustee (John Morrison) purchased the property in the early 2000s, renovated it, and gave it to St. Thomas for use as a president's house. Father Dennis Dease lived in the house until his retirement in 2013, and it now is occupied by Dr. Julie Sullivan.



2055 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7852)

Now known as Sitzmann Hall, this building is home to St. Thomas's Catholic Studies program. The Georgian Revival style structure was constructed in 1927 as a single-family house for J. Lisle and Anna Jesmer, and was given to St. Thomas in 1943. St. Thomas used the building for music education classes and music lessons for nearly sixty years. At some point during that period, it was named Chiuminatto Hall after Anthony Chiuminatto, a longtime music professor. In the early 2000s, the property was renovated for use by Catholic Studies and named Sitzmann Hall after donors Eugene and Faye Sitzmann. St. Thomas constructed an addition to the building in 2009. The addition was designed by Anderson-Dale Architects of St. Paul and approved by the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission.



The National Register nomination incorrectly states that St. Thomas acquired the property from the Butler family in 1983.⁶

⁵ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:47.

⁶ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:48.

Summit Block East

2078 Summit Avenue

At the time that the National Register nomination was prepared, the Christ Child School for Exceptional Children stood on this site. Because it was completed in 1957, it was considered noncontributing to the historic district. The school was demolished in 2005 and replaced by McNeely Hall. Given its even more recent construction date, McNeely Hall is also noncontributing.

2100 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7854)

The National Register nomination describes this building, which opened in 1957, as “a 3 story tan brick International style building with box-like massing and large anodized metal and plate glass windows. There is a stone retaining wall at the front of the property.” It is considered noncontributing to the historic district because it dates from after the district’s period of significance.⁷

The building was erected to be the first home of William Mitchell College of Law, which took its name from a Winona lawyer who served as an associate justice of the Supreme Court from 1881 to 1898. He also became an important partner at the oldest law firm in the Twin Cities, Doherty, Rumble and Butler, a career path also followed by his son and grandson. One of the named partners, Pierce Butler, was the state’s first member of the U.S. Supreme Court and part of the family that founded the Butler Brothers Construction Company.

William Mitchell College of Law was established in 1956 by the merger of two existing law schools: the St. Paul College of Law, which had been offering night classes in downtown St. Paul since 1900, and the Minneapolis-Minnesota College of Law. The latter was itself a consolidation of several Minneapolis law schools that



*Top: 2100 Summit Avenue today.
Below: William Mitchell College of Law, December 30, 1959 (St. Paul Dispatch and Pioneer Press photograph, Minnesota Historical Society)*

⁷ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:48.

had started between 1912 and 1920. As one journalist wrote: “These schools . . . had one thing in common: their students worked for a living. Many of them were what today would be called non-traditional students, older and more varied in experience than the fresh baccalaureate degree-holders who filled the more prestigious daytime law school program at the University of Minnesota. William Mitchell offered night classes and a curriculum tailored to adults who by day were bank tellers, insurance agents, [and] law-office clerks.”⁸

According to a history of the school written by Douglas Heidenreich, who graduated from William Mitchell in 1961 and was a long-time professor and administrator there, one of the largest challenges after the merger was finding a suitable location for the newly joined schools. Both schools wanted the location to remain in their respective cities. Individuals involved in the planning realized that the College of St. Thomas “was located about equidistant from the downtown centers of both cities. Interstate 94, then in the planning process, would soon provide a quick way to get from Minneapolis to the area near St. Thomas.” Knowing that St. Thomas had a growing space issue, William Mitchell approached the college’s president, Father James P. Shannon, about the possibility of constructing a new building that could be used by the law school at night and St. Thomas during the day. William Mitchell would own the building and the land, but St. Thomas would have right of first refusal if the law school decided to sell.⁹

The building was designed by the prominent local architectural firm Ellerbe and Company. Construction started in November 1957 and the building was ready to welcome students by fall 1958: “The 27,000 square-foot, flat-roofed building [was] thought to be more than ample for the law school’s future needs.” It “contained eight classrooms, a library, a tiny book store area, a small student lounge, a coat room, rest rooms . . . , four minuscule faculty offices, and an administrative office. . . . Some of the space remained unfinished, available for future expansion.”¹⁰



William Mitchell College of Law, December 30, 1959 (St. Paul Dispatch and Pioneer Press photograph, Minnesota Historical Society)

⁸ Virginia Brainard Kunz, *St. Paul: A Modern Renaissance* (St. Paul: Windsor Publications, 1986), 213; Lori Sturdevant, *Her Honor: Rosalie Wahl and the Minnesota Women’s Movement* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014), 42.

⁹ Douglas Heidenreich, *With Satisfaction and Honor: William Mitchell College of Law, 1900–2000* (St. Paul: published by the college, 1999), 183–187. After two years with a private law firm following his graduation, Heidenreich became an assistant professor of law at William Mitchell in 1963. He rose to acting dean in 1964 and was appointed dean in 1965, a position he held for a decade. He continued to teach at the school until 2014. (Mitchell-Hamline School of Law website, <http://mitchellhamline.edu/biographies/person/douglas-r-heidenreich/>)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195–197.

Heidenreich described the period from 1958 to 1976 as the school’s “Golden Years.” The students from the merged institutions “came together in a new, modern, sleek, functional structure in a quiet St. Paul neighborhood. They encountered a new dean, some new teachers, and some new fellow students. They attended law school at the beginning of an era of stability and calm that would last for about fifteen years.” The school’s rapid growth during those years surprised those who had established William Mitchell, quickly disproving the assumption that the building at 2100 Summit would long serve the school’s needs. By 1976, the school had outgrown the building and moved to a new seven-acre campus at 875 Summit Avenue.¹¹

St. Thomas acquired the building in 1977, renamed it McNeely Hall (later the Summit Classroom Building), and continued to offer classes there. St. Thomas still owns the property today. William Mitchell, following a pattern of consolidation in higher education in recent decades, merged with the Hamline University School of Law in 2015.¹²

In its first building at 2100 Summit, William Mitchell laid the groundwork for the major institution that it quickly became. By the mid-1980s, William Mitchell was the state’s largest law school with an enrollment of over 1,000 students, and its graduates were influencing the profession in Minnesota and beyond. In 1986, historian Virginia Kunz wrote: “Its emphasis on practical lawyering skills has helped earn it a reputation as a ‘lawyer’s law school,’ a reputation enhanced by graduates who hold about half of the judicial positions in the state’s district, probate, and county court systems. Warren Burger, the . . . United States chief justice, is a graduate, as are several of the state’s supreme court justices and members of the newly formed Minnesota Court of Appeals, based in St. Paul.”¹³

She added: “The college has pioneered in opening doors to a legal education for women and minorities, who, for much of the twentieth century, could not attend law school in Minnesota.” The school continued the practice of its predecessors by offering a range of options, including both day and evening programs, to make training available to full- and part-time students. Rosalie Wahl, the first woman to sit on the Minnesota Supreme Court, exemplified this legacy. In 1962, at the age of thirty-eight and a mother to four children, she enrolled at William Mitchell. By the following year, another child was on the way. She forged ahead, losing only one week of class for the birth. When she graduated in 1967, she was given a job by an adjunct professor at the school, attorney C. Paul Jones, who had become the head of the state’s first public defender’s office in 1965. A later history noted that in hiring Wahl and other promising graduates of William Mitchell, “Jones was making his office a training ground for future judges.”¹⁴

The building at 2100 Summit was William Mitchell’s first facility, the site where several earlier law schools were consolidated. This merger created an important institution that trained a cadre of attorneys who became prominent members of the legal profession in Minnesota and beyond.

¹¹ Ibid., 199–253.

¹² Kunz, *St. Paul*, 214; Roberts and Zimmewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:48.

¹³ Kunz, *St. Paul*, 213–214. Warren Burger graduated from the St. Paul College of Law in 1931 (Michael Graetz and Linda Greenhouse, *The Burger Court and the Rise of the Judicial Right* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 347).

¹⁴ Kunz, *St. Paul*, 213–214; Sturdevant, *Her Honor: Rosalie Wahl*, 42–48.

The “golden years” at 2100 Summit were a key period in the school’s evolution. In less than two decades, the school’s explosive growth led to its relocation to a much larger facility. Based on this significance, the property is potentially individually eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of education and law. Likewise, it potentially meets the HPC’s designation criteria.

2110 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7855)

Built in 1923, “this 2 story Colonial Revival style house has an asphalt hipped roof, stucco walls, and 6 over 6 windows,” the National Register nomination explains. “The central first story windows are grouped with arched window heads with 3 light fanlights. A barrel vault roof is located over the front door supported by wood Tuscan columns.” Both the house and a two-car garage behind it contribute to the historic district.¹⁵



The building was called the Harry Sinykin Duplex by a historic properties survey in 1987. According to the inventory form prepared at that time, “The current owner is Genevieve Sinykin, age 93. She is the daughter-in-law of the original owner, Harry Sinykin. She has lived here since 1923—first upstairs with her husband. Harry Sinykin and his wife lived downstairs. When her husband died, Genevieve’s son moved upstairs and she moved downstairs. It is still a duplex with one common entrance.” The lot once extended to Finn Street, but Genevieve sold the western 60 feet of the property to the University of St. Thomas (see 2112 Summit Avenue). St. Thomas now owns the house at 2110 Summit as well, and uses it as a residence hall for women.¹⁶

2112 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7856)

Located at the southeast corner of Summit Avenue and Finn Street, this 60-foot-wide surface parking lot was once part of the yard of 2110 Summit. As of 1987, it was edged by a fence and paved with gravel. Today, it has an asphalt surface and no fencing. A low, concrete-masonry-unit retaining wall runs along the west side, stepping down to the south in response to the descending grade. The wall supports a planting strip holding bushes that screen the lot. Trees and bushes are on a grass lawn between the north end of lot and the



¹⁵ Roberts and Zimmewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:48.

¹⁶ Joe Roberts, Norene Roberts, and Jeanne Dugey, “Harry Sinykin Duplex, 2110 W. Summit Avenue,” Minnesota Historic Properties Inventory Form, 1987, prepared by Historical Research.

sidewalk along Summit. Cars enter the lot from the alley to the south. The property is a noncontributing feature in the historic district.¹⁷

Finn Street

In *The Street Where You Live*, Donald Empson explains the derivation of this street's name: "William Finn (1819–89), the first permanent white settler in the area, was born in Ireland, immigrated to the United States, and enlisted in the Mexican War. In 1848, as payment for his military service, he received a grant of land extending from today's Marshall Avenue to St. Clair Avenue, and Fairview to the river. He built his house where the University of St. Thomas now stands and farmed the adjacent property. Later he sold his farm to the Catholic Church for an industrial school, and it was Archbishop John Ireland who bestowed this street name in 1889 within the Groveland plat." Later in the book, Empson gives the date of the Groveland Addition as 1890. In any event, the archbishop's land development was a creative—but ultimately unsuccessful—attempt to use profits from real estate speculation to fund church operations. As part of Ireland's plat and the historic district's street pattern, Finn is presumably contributing.¹⁸

Summit Block West

2120 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7860)

The National Register nomination describes this "2 and ½ story Tudor Revival style house" as having "a cross gabled asphalt roof, red brick first story and stucco wide mock half-timbering above. The foundation is poured concrete. Bargeboards on the gable ends are wide. The front roof has a large gabled dormer. Windows are 8 over 8. The front of the house faces east on Finn Street." Like the house, a garage to the south was considered contributing to the historic



district, but the garage has been demolished and replaced by an asphalt-surfaced parking lot. The property is now owned by the University of St. Thomas. When the National Register nomination was prepared, the building served as the school's Alumni House. It now holds development offices.¹⁹

Walter Butler built this house in 1924 with the assistance of his family's contracting business, the Butler Brothers Construction Company. Walter and two brothers, William and Cooley, formed the Butler Brothers Construction Company in St. Paul in 1877. Two other brothers, John and Emmett, joined the firm in 1894. A sixth brother, Pierce, became an attorney and served as

¹⁷ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:49.

¹⁸ Donald Empson, *The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 94–95, 114–115. The significance of the street was not noted in the district nomination.

¹⁹ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:49; Joe Roberts, Norene Roberts, and Jeanne Dungey, "Walter Butler House, 2120 W. Summit Avenue," Minnesota Historic Properties Inventory Form, 1987, prepared by Historical Research.

the company's general counsel before his appointment as a U.S. Supreme Court justice in 1923. Butler Brothers was involved in a number of major construction projects across the country, including buildings at the College of St. Thomas, and expanded into mining and roadwork in the early twentieth century.²⁰

Walter and his wife, Helen, had their first child, John Edward, in 1888. Another son, Walter P. Butler Jr., was born around 1893. The federal census in 1910 and 1920 indicated that both sons were living with their parents at 1345 Summit Avenue, and both were divorced by 1920. This was half of a double-house that Walter and his brother, Pierce, built in 1900. Designed by Clarence Johnston Sr., the property was individually listed in the National Register in 1982 and is also a local landmark. In 1920, Walter erected a substantial house next door, at 1335 Summit. Both properties are contributing features in the West Summit Avenue Historic District.²¹

The oldest son, John, was apparently the first occupant of the house at 2120 Summit, while Walter Jr. continued to live at 1345 Summit. John died in March 1927, and within two years Walter Jr., by this time remarried, had moved to 2120 Summit. Walter Jr. became the secretary-treasurer of the Walter Butler Company, an engineering and architecture firm established by Walter Sr. after he left Butler Brothers in 1927. Another son of Walter Sr. and Helen, Robert, became involved in the business around that time as well. The company worked on substantial institutional, industrial, and commercial projects, and also became involved with the development of large housing complexes. During World War II, it erected factories for the war effort. When President Truman appointed Robert as U.S. ambassador to Australia in 1946, Robert's son Walter joined the company, becoming its vice president in 1949 and rising to president in 1954.²²

The Butler Brothers Construction Company and the Walter Butler Company are clearly significant. In his 1963 history of Minnesota, Theodore Blegen discussed the founding brothers and concluded: "Contractors, builders, and engineers, they created a Minnesota firm that has left its marks not only on the iron-ore industry but also on vast building operations, including Minnesota's state capitol."²³ They also had an influence on Summit Avenue. The house at 2120 Summit, however, does not appear to have significant association with this legacy. It was built a few years before Walter founded the Walter Butler Company and served as a residence for two of his sons. One died in the year the new company was formed; the other, although an executive

²⁰ "Story of Building of Minnesota's New Capital," *St. Paul Globe*, September 18, 1904; Butler Brothers Construction Company file, at Hess, Roise and Company; "Walter Butler" and "The Walter Butler Company" in *The History of Minnesota* (West Palm Beach, Fla.: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1967), 4:837–838; Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 244.

²¹ Charles Nelson and Susan Roth, "Pierce and Walter Butler House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1981; Roberts and Zimniewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:18, 7:48.

²² Butler Brothers Construction Company file, at Hess, Roise and Company; "Walter Butler" and "The Walter Butler Company" in *The History of Minnesota*, 4:837–838; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1923* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1923), 291; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1925* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1925), 275; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1928* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1928), 253; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1929* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1929), 267.

²³ Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963, 1975), 376.

of that business, does not appear to be a key figure. The house at 2120 Summit does not seem to be the best representation of the Butler family’s accomplishments in the construction industry and is unlikely to qualify individually for the National Register or local designation.

2130 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7861)

Built in 1918, “this 2 story Colonial Revival style house has a steeply-pitched asphalt roof and shed dormer,” according to the National Register nomination. “The west side of the side gable sweeps down to the first story entrance. A fat Tuscan column supports the front entry roof over the front door. The front facade is asymmetrical. Walls are stucco. Windows are 4 over 4 and dormer windows are casements.” Both the house and the garage behind it contribute to the historic district. The nomination does not describe the garage, however, and the current three-car, gable-roofed structure appears to be of more recent construction. If it does not date to the period of significance, it is does not contribute to the district.²⁴



While the property was originally owned by Lewis M. and Edna Glass, the National Register nomination uses only the wife’s name to identify the house and states that “the owner acted as her own contractor/architect.” The 1920 federal census lists Lewis’s occupation as a “broker” in “Grains and Docks” and provided no occupation for Edna. According to the National Register nomination, the building has served as St. Thomas’s President’s House.²⁵

2134 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7862)

The National Register nomination identifies this house, built in 1921, as the Michael M. Tierney House: “This 1 and ½ story Craftsman/Bungalow style house has a bellcast asphalt hipped roof and large front hipped dormer. The front facade is symmetrical. Walls are stucco with fieldstone piers on the first story and chimney. Windows are 3 over 1 with vertical muntins.” Both the house and detached garage contribute to the historic district.²⁶



²⁴ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:49.

²⁵ The 1920 U.S. Census lists Lewis M. and Edna Glass at this property (Ancestry website, <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed May 11, 2016); Roberts and Zimmiewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:49.

²⁶ Roberts and Zimmiewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:49 – 7:50.

The house was originally owned by Michael M. and Mary C. Tierney. According to the 1930 census, Michael worked as a conductor for a steam railroad. Mary's occupation was not indicated. S. Tierney, perhaps a relation, built the house at the end of the block, 2174 Summit, also in 1921.²⁷

2140 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7863)

The house was built in 1938 by contractor Emil Nelson. Two years later, the federal census indicated that the house was being rented by Francis and Mary O'Gorman, noting that Francis worked as a clerk for a railroad office. In the National Register nomination, it is known as the Mrs. O'Gorman House and described as a "1 and ½ story Tudor style Bungalow" that "has stucco walls with mock half-timbering and an intersecting asphalt gabled roof. There is a gabled front entry porch. Windows are 6 over 6." The detached garage behind the house, like the house, contributes to the historic district.²⁸



2144 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3788)

Built in 1931 at an estimated cost of \$7,500, this house was originally owned by William F. and Helena C. Smith. In the National Register nomination, it is known as the Helena C. Smith House. It is unclear why her husband, William, is not included in the name as well. The 1931 St. Paul directory listed Helena as the president and William as secretary/treasurer of the W. F. Smith Tire and Battery Company. The 1933 directory indicated that William was president and Helena was vice president of the company.²⁹



The National Register nomination describes the "two-story Spanish Colonial Revival style house" as having "a red tile intersecting gabled roof, stucco walls, and [a] round arched entrance with round arched door with diamond patterned leaded glass. There is a simple architrave and a

²⁷ The 1930 U.S. Census lists Michael M. and Mary C. Tierney at this property (Ancestry website, <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed May 11, 2016).

²⁸ Roberts and Zimmewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:50. The 1940 U.S. Census lists Francis and Mary O'Gorman at this property (Ancestry website, <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed May 20, 2016).

²⁹ R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1931* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1931), 1158, 1162; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1933* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1933), 1092, 1095; "2144 W. Summit Avenue," Historic Sites Survey form, 1982.

round window in the gable end. Windows are 6 over 1.” The nomination states that the rear garage also contributes to the district.³⁰

2150 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7864)

Built in 1918, “this 1 story Bungalow has an asphalt gabled roof and stucco walls with fieldstone porch foundation and base. Windows are 6 over 1. Eaves are deeply overhung with large wood brackets on the gable ends and over the front porch. The rear garage is contributing.”³¹



The McAnulty Company was the contractor for the house, which is known by that name in the National Register nomination. According to the 1918 St.

Paul city directory, the company had an office in the Merchant Bank Building (presumably the Merchants National Bank Building at 366–368 Jackson Street in downtown St. Paul). The company also had an office in the Lumber Exchange Building in Minneapolis. The 1919 Minneapolis city directory called the company the “largest builders of modern homes in the north.” James P. McAnulty was the manager of the business.³²

2154 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-3789)

The house was built in 1912 for Herbert A. Folsom by contractor Joseph Fisby at an estimated cost of \$3,500. According to the 1913 St. Paul directory, Folsom was an employee in the tax department for the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. The National Register provides a description of the property: “This 2 story Tudor Revival style Bungalow has front facing asphalt gables at the second story and over the full front screened porch with battered piers. Gable ends have wide bargeboards with pendants. Walls are stuccoed with mock half-timbering with brick painted grey. Windows are 1 over 1. The west side has a bay window.” The nomination indicates that the rear garage is contributing as well.³³



³⁰ Roberts and Zimmewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50.

³¹ Ibid.

³² R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1918* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1918), 1427; James P. McAnulty, *Minneapolis City Directory 1919* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1919), 1149.

³³ Roberts and Zimmewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50; R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1913* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1913), 680.

2156 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7865)

The house was built in 1913 for A. A. Klemmer. According to the National Register nomination, “this 2 story American Foursquare style house has a cube form under an asphalt bellcast hipped roof. The front dormer is hipped. Walls are wire-faced red brick up the first story sill line and stucco on the upper stories. A full one story hip roofed porch stretches across the front and is glassed. Windows are 1 over 1.” While the house contributes to the district, the garage in the rear does not.³⁴



The house was erected by St. Paul contractor A. G. Erickson. Other projects by Erickson include the Albert P. Wallich House at 1164 Summit Avenue, also in the West Summit Avenue Historic District, and the Charles Beard House (1037 W. Portland Avenue) and Edward Stringer House (696 W. Linwood Avenue), both in the Historic Hill District.³⁵

2166 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7866)

Known as the Ernest J. Murphy House, this house was erected in 1950 by contractor William Golla. Because the house was built after the historic district’s period of significance, it does not contribute to the district. The same is true for a garage on the property. According to the National Register nomination, “this one story cottage style house has an intersecting asphalt gabled roof with one gabled front dormer and an asymmetrical facade. Walls are sheathed in wood shakes. There is a large plate glass picture window and a recessed front door with side lights. Windows are 1 over 1.”³⁶



³⁴ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50.

³⁵ Alfred G. Erickson file, at Hess, Roise and Company.

³⁶ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50.

2170 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7867)

The house was built in 1922 for H. S. Mills, and both the house and the freestanding garage are considered contributing to the historic district. Architect Olin H. Round designed the house. Born in Michigan in 1867, Round arrived in St. Paul around the turn of the century. He was employed as a draftsman by Mark Fitzpatrick until 1909, and then became a partner with Franklin Ellerbe until 1913. After that, other than brief partnerships with Service Wagner and Silas Jacobson, he maintained a private practice until his death in 1927.³⁷



The National Register notes: “This 2 story Colonial Revival style house has an asphalt gabled roof. First story walls are rough red brick and the second story is weatherboard. The front facade is symmetrical with 6 over 1 windows on both floors flanking a flat roofed balustrade portico supported by fluted Doric columns and pilasters with multipaned sidelights flanking the front door. Above the entrance on the second floor is a Palladian window.”³⁸

2174 Summit Avenue (RA-SPC-7868)

Built in 1921, this house is called the S. Tierney House (see 2134 Summit). The house and the garage behind it contribute to the historic district. The National Register nomination describes “this 2 story American Foursquare style house” as having “a cube form and asphalt hipped roof with hipped dormers. Walls are stucco and the foundation is poured concrete. The full hip roofed front porch contains a grouping of 5 windows and the front door. Each has an angled arch molding.”³⁹



The nomination indicates that “the contractor apparently was F. K. Tewes.” According to St. Paul city directories, Frank K. Tewes was also known as Frank X. Tewes. A graduate of University of Illinois, he became known for designing school buildings and was credited with the plans for twenty-nine schools between 1922 and his death in 1929. He served as the city architect

³⁷ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50; Alan Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 187.

³⁸ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50.

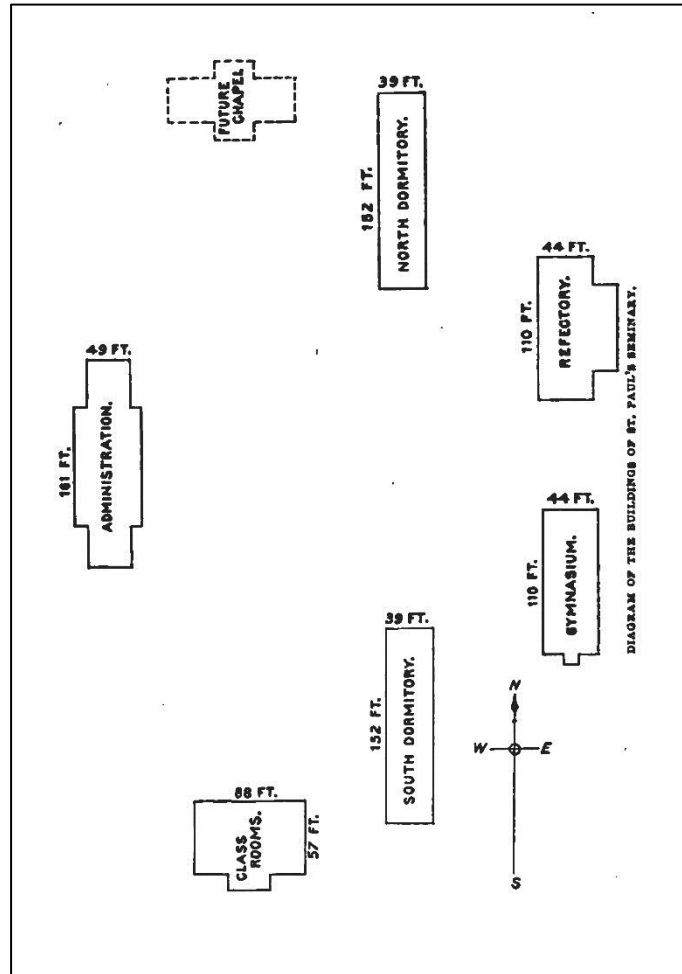
³⁹ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:50 – 7:51.

for St. Paul during the same period. Some of his well-known projects include the Highland Park Pavilion, Roosevelt Junior High, and the Public Safety Building.⁴⁰

The St. Paul Seminary

In 1894, the St. Paul Seminary was established on the property bounded by Summit, Cretin, and Goodrich Avenues, and with funding from railroad magnate James J. Hill, the seminary constructed six buildings on its new campus: Administration, which included apartments for professors as well as administrative offices; Classrooms; identical South and North Dormitories; the Gymnasium, which also held the campus heating plant; and the Refectory, with a large dining hall, kitchen facilities, and staff lodging. A location was also identified along Summit Avenue, northwest of the North Dormitory, for a chapel with a traditional east-west long axis. St. Mary's Chapel was erected in the following decade, a project also underwritten by Hill, but on a north-south alignment and slightly west of the site initially proposed.⁴¹

The seminary's first buildings were designed by Cass Gilbert, an up-and-coming architect who had established his own firm in 1891 after ending a six-year partnership with James Knox Taylor. Gilbert had crossed paths with Hill after the Boston architectural firm Peabody, Sterns and Furber was hired to design Hill's Summit Avenue mansion in 1887 and "Gilbert was given the task of assisting with the adjacent powerhouse, fence, and gates." In 1895, shortly after completing the seminary project, Gilbert was awarded the contract to design the Minnesota State Capitol, which brought him to national prominence. Gilbert opened a New York office a few years later and went on to win



Seminary plan from Patrick Danehy, "The New Seminary of St. Paul," Catholic University Bulletin 1 (1895)

⁴⁰ Entry for Frank K. Tewes, R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1929* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1929), 1291; entry for Frank X. Tewes, R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory 1926* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1926), 1243; Frank X. Tewes file at Hess, Roise and Company.

⁴¹ Patrick Danehy, "The New Seminary of St. Paul," *Catholic University Bulletin 1* (1895): 215–220; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1903–1904), 1:108. Jarchow, *Private Liberal Arts Colleges in Minnesota*, 39–40; Roberts and Zimmewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:2.

major commissions, including the Woolworth Building in New York City and the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. With the seminary project, Gilbert gained experience working with strong-willed clients. While the new institution was the brainchild of Archbishop John Ireland, Hill was an active participant in the design of the new seminary buildings that he was bankrolling, often flaunting his power over the architect. Hill’s attention to detail continued throughout the construction period. An extensive article on the new campus in the *Catholic University Bulletin* in 1895 noted that “the benefactor, . . . not content with making this princely donation and examining the plans, has seen to it that they were faithfully carried out.”⁴²

The *Bulletin* article, written by Reverend Patrick Danehy, the seminary’s first professor of scripture, observed that “the buildings are in the North Italian style, simple, solid, and impressive.” It added: “They are all built of red pressed brick, have either plain gable or hip roofs, and by the solidity of their walls remind one strongly of the monastic edifices of a bygone age.” At the same time, they boasted state-of-the-art features: “The

partitions are fire-proof throughout, while the stairs and the landings on each floor are of iron. The buildings are heated by steam, lighted by gas, supplied with hot and cold water, and in the resident building, with bath-rooms on each floor. The corridors are laid with thick matting and thus the footfall of the passerby does not break in upon the quiet of the student.” The two residences “have apartments for one hundred and thirty students.” The “apartments” comprised



One of the dormitories (top) and the Refectory (bottom) around 1900 (Minnesota Historical Society)

⁴² Patricia Murphy, “Architectural Education and Minnesota Career,” in *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*, ed. Barbara Christen and Steven Flanders (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2001), 38; Danehy, “The New Seminary,” 217–218. Primary resources on the design and construction of the seminary were not examined for this study, but these documents could provide further details on the development of the campus. Repositories include the Hill Family Papers and the Cass Gilbert Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul Seminary Papers in the James J. Hill Papers at the James J. Hill Library, and the Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, all in St. Paul.

two rooms, a study and a bedroom, unusually expansive accommodations compared to the minimal dimensions of traditional monastic cells.⁴³

Danehy also discussed the campus's forty-acre site "at the terminus of Grand Avenue." Although sparsely settled at that time, Grand was destined to become an important commercial and residential corridor, with development catalyzed by the streetcar line that served it. The extension of that streetcar line to the campus in February 1890 made the eastern entrance the primary approach to the campus. The importance of the streetcar was highlighted by Archbishop Ireland's participation in the celebratory first run of the line. Historian Mary Christine Athans noted that "having the streetcar terminus at one of the entrances of the seminary and accessible to seminarians, particularly during the years they were not allowed to have cars, was a convenience for generations of students."⁴⁴

A fence perhaps ringed the seminary site. Danehy mentioned that "electric cars . . . run to its gate," and early twentieth-century photographs show a wood fence in front of the chapel. Directly north of the campus was "Summit Avenue, the broadest and most beautiful thoroughfare in the city." The boulevard concept had been established in 1887 when the Summit Avenue Improvement Association convinced property owners between the river and Lexington Avenue to donate land to widen the right of way from 100 to 200 feet. This made possible the landscaped center median that distinguished the street. The city's park board took responsibility for the section between Cretin and the river in 1903, adding trees and other landscaping. The road was not paved until a decade or two later, an expediency forced by growing automobile traffic.⁴⁵

The campus grounds were another important feature of the seminary. The site was "threaded with graveled walks and dotted with flower beds," Danehy reported. "The landscape gardener who has done well his work of beautifying this fine tract of land had in reality an easy task. Instead of planting, he has had to cut down trees, where the shade would otherwise have been too deep, and has thus given us a series of beautiful vistas on every side." One of these vistas featured the Mississippi River gorge along the campus's west edge.⁴⁶

The distribution of campus functions in multiple buildings was unusual at the time: "It has been customary time out of mind, in the construction of our Catholic seminaries, to bring all the departments beneath one roof. In the present instance this plan has not been followed. . . . The six existing buildings are arranged . . . at a considerable distance one from the other, leaving a spacious open court between." This arrangement has been credited to Hill, a strong believer in the virtues of outdoor activity. Another advantage of this approach was "that when the number of students shall have grown so as to need more living apartments, another building can be erected at a small additional cost, without marring the harmony of the original plan." That is precisely what happened in 1912–1913, when Grace Residence Hall was added. The building's name was chosen to honor one of the first three bishops "who exercised direct and actual jurisdiction in the

⁴³ Danehy, "The New Seminary," 217–218; Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 82; James Michael Reardon, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Paul: From Earliest Origin to Centennial Achievement* (St. Paul: North Central Publishing Company, 1952), 310.

⁴⁴ Danehy, "The New Seminary," 218; Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 54.

⁴⁵ Ernest R. Sandeen, *St. Paul's Historic Summit Avenue* (St. Paul: Living Historical Museum, Macalester College, 1978), 12–13; Roberts and Zimmewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:3.

⁴⁶ Danehy, "The New Seminary," 219–220.

territory that became and is the Diocese of St. Paul.” At the same time, to honor the other two bishops, North Dormitory was renamed Loras and South Dormitory became Cretin. Grace was on the same alignment as these earlier residences, but was much closer to Cretin than Cretin was to Loras. Although designed by Emmanuel Masqueray, who was responsible for the elaborate designs of the Cathedral in St. Paul and the Basilica in Minneapolis, Grace’s minimalistic ornamentation reflected the more somber tone set by Gilbert’s earlier dormitories.⁴⁷



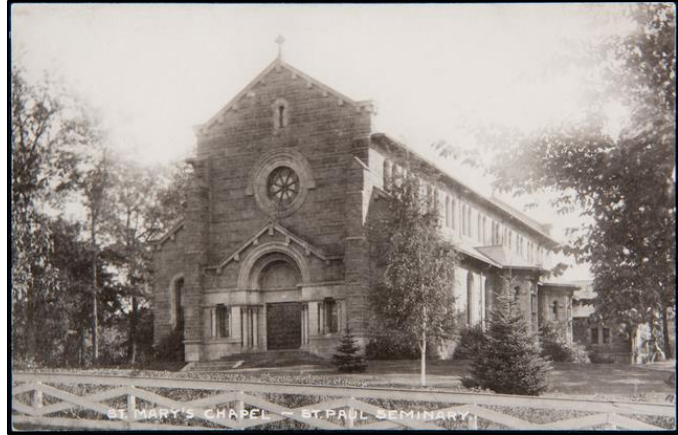
Top: Aerial of the seminary, looking northeast, around 1921. The chapel and Grace Hall had been added to the original campus by this time. The grounds have extensive vegetation. (Minnesota Historical Society)



Bottom: This detail from a 1953 aerial shows the campus shortly before changes started to transform its historic configuration. (Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota)

⁴⁷ Danehy, “The New Seminary,” 217–218; Reardon, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Paul*, 315, 552–553. Information about renaming the halls is in Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 118–119.

St. Mary's Chapel was erected between 1901 and 1905. It was designed by Clarence H. Johnston Sr., who opened an office in St. Paul in 1882 and worked on high-profile projects for the State of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota, and many private clients over the course of a long career. A 1984 National Register nomination observed that the chapel was "remarkably ornate and lavish compared to the earlier Seminary buildings." Much of this ornamentation, however, dated from the mid-1920s to mid-1930s. The work was overseen by Maginnis and Walsh, a Boston firm that specialized in ecclesiastical decoration. The designer for the project was the artist Bancel La Farge, with assistance from his son Tom. The campaign to upgrade the chapel included carving column and pier capitals; painting extensive figurative and other designs on the walls and ceiling; installing altars, Stations of the Cross, and an organ; and filling the windows with stained glass.⁴⁸



The chapel in about 1920 (top) and the interior around 1935 (bottom) (Minnesota Historical Society)

After the improvements to the chapel were finished, the campus remained relatively undisturbed until mid-century. When construction started up again, it was concentrated at first on the west and south edges of the campus. In 1950, the seminary opened a new purpose-built library, designed by Lang and Raugland and named in honor of Archbishop Ireland, southwest of the Administration Building. Sisters associated with the seminary, who had never had a place of their own, got a new convent with a chapel in 1951. Also by mid-century, a small addition extended from the southeast corner of the Gymnasium.⁴⁹

Modifications that would be more consequential to the historic campus, however, were foreshadowed in a letter from the seminary's rector to the archbishop in June 1964, which observed that "we are short of class-room space, office space, and a combination garage and storage building." At a meeting soon thereafter, the seminary's board authorized the construction of a twelve-car garage and an office space for the dean of studies, both affecting the historic

⁴⁸ Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 154–165; St. Paul Seminary page on University of St. Thomas website, <https://www.stthomas.edu/spssod/about/chapel/smc-history/readmore/> (accessed November 2, 2016); Murphy, "St. Paul Seminary," 7:3 – 7:4.

⁴⁹ Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 186–192; Reardon, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Paul*, 552–553; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of St. Paul, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1927, updated 1939 and 1951), 7:727.

integrity of the Administration Building. More substantial alterations were anticipated by March 1965, when the seminary hired the architectural firm Bettenburg, Townsend, Stolte and Comb to begin design work for three new buildings for classrooms, an auditorium, and a gymnasium with a swimming pool. Planning and fundraising took several years, but in spring 1967, according to historian Athans, “contracts were signed and the announcement was made that a one-and-one-half-million-dollar addition was planned.” Completion was scheduled for March 1968. Brady Educational Center, a two-level classroom building and auditorium, was erected at the southwestern corner of the campus, while the gymnasium was on the campus’s east side. The changes resulted in an official reorientation of the campus away from Cretin Avenue and Grand Avenue, where buses had replaced the streetcar line some years earlier: “A more welcome entrance was constructed that necessitated a new address: 2260 Summit Avenue—a sign of openness to a new era.”⁵⁰

Despite these changes, the original seminary buildings remained. By the 1970s, Athans writes, “the old refectory building was no longer functional and was even unsanitary. Rebuilding it was clearly cost-prohibitive.” A new refectory was in place by the end of 1977 and the old structure was demolished a few months later. In the same decade, a retirement home for priests, the Byrne Residence, was constructed on the east edge of the campus along Cretin Avenue.⁵¹

Even as improvements were made to the campus, the seminary struggled to cover operating costs and witnessed a decline in enrollment. The last half of the twentieth century was a time of transition for the Catholic Church, particularly in the United States, which experienced a period of social upheaval. Fewer men were being drawn to the priesthood. Catholics were questioning the role of women and lay members in the church. Attitudes about birth control were changing. Social justice concerns were overriding religious dictates. These tumultuous times affected the St. Paul Seminary and its close neighbor, the College of St. Thomas. St. Thomas changed with the times, becoming coeducational in 1977 and adding graduate programs, all prompting its rechristening as the University of St. Thomas. The seminary, on the other hand, foundered. By the mid-1980s, St. Thomas and the seminary were engaging in intense discussions about an affiliation.⁵²

It was during this period, in 1984, that Patricia Murphy prepared a National Register nomination for the St. Paul Seminary Historic District based on its significance in the areas of education and religion (Criterion A) and architecture (Criterion C). (The nomination was not processed, so the district is not listed in the National Register.) By this time, two of the six buildings designed by Gilbert—the Refectory and Classrooms building—had been demolished. The district comprised the four surviving Gilbert buildings—the Administration Building, Loras and Cretin Halls, and the Gymnasium—as well as St. Mary’s Chapel and Grace Hall. Specifically excluded were six buildings constructed later, “all located south and/or east of the proposed district: the Library, Brady Center, Binz Rectory, McCarthy Recreation Building, a Convent and the Byrne Residence.” Architecture, education, and religion were given as the areas of significance. While nominations at that time did not delineate a period of significance, the form identified “specific

⁵⁰ Athans, *To Work for the Whole People*, 247–256. The quote from Msgr. McCarthy, who had become the rector in 1958, is on page 247.

⁵¹ Athans, *To Work for the Whole People*, 273. This Byrne Residence was razed in 1995 and rebuilt to the west.

⁵² There is an extensive discussion of this period in Athans, *To Work for the Whole People*.

dates” as 1892 to 1912. The latter year was presumed to be when Grace Residence was completed, although Athans maintained that the construction extended into 1913. The nomination noted that “the Seminary has continued to serve its intended function since it was dedicated in 1895.”⁵³

That changed after 1987 when the seminary became officially affiliated with St. Thomas with the creation of the School of Divinity, which became a graduate program of St. Thomas. This program, according to the school’s website, “educates lay men and women for service in the Church and for the work of evangelization.” The seminary, under the aegis of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, retained its role of training priests.⁵⁴

This merger was responsible for some of the modifications that occurred after Murphy’s nomination was prepared. In 1984, the campus retained relatively good integrity: “New construction and the demolition of two of the original buildings at the complex have changed the orientation of the Seminary Buildings to one another over the years, but the original core area of the campus remains intact. The buildings at the site were laid out in a circular fashion around a central open court, with the Loras/North Dormitory and the chapel . . . at the northern part of the circle, the refectory (razed) and the gymnasium on a north south axis at the east part, the south dormitory on a north-south axis with the north dormitory and forming the southern part of the circle together with the classroom building (razed), and the Administration building on the west side of the circle. . . . The campus is geared for pedestrian travel though there are two driveways leading through it, one from Summit Avenue running between the Chapel and the Loras Residence to the Administration Building where it connects to the other which extends west and south through a parking area to Cretin Avenue.”⁵⁵

Planning for changes to the campus had begun around the time that the nomination was completed. The seminary had assembled committees to consider three specific needs: the renovation of St. Mary’s Chapel, renovation of the Administration Building, and construction of new residential facilities for students and priests on the faculty. By May 1986, architect John Rauma, a principal of Griswold Rauma Egge and Olson, had been selected to work on plan development. One of Rauma’s first recommendations was to demolish, rather than renovate, the Administration Building and erect a new office building. This would allow the creation of a central common area anchored by the chapel to the north and ringed to the east, west, and south by the new administration and residential buildings. The orientation of the chapel would be flipped, moving the altar from the southern apse to the north end, where the choir/balcony would be removed and the new sanctuary would block the doors that were historically the main entry. A proposal to completely remove the apse to create the new entry ran into opposition, so the apse was repurposed with a baptismal font and the entry was accommodated in a new addition to the south. The design of the office building was modified several times, once dropping it from three to two stories “but expand[ing] the] width to allow for the same square footage.” The scale

⁵³ Patricia Murphy, “St. Paul Seminary,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, June 1984, 7:0, 8:0, prepared by the Ramsey County Historical Society; Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 117–118. Athans noted that the convent was completed in 1951 and used for that function until 1987 (pages 190–192).

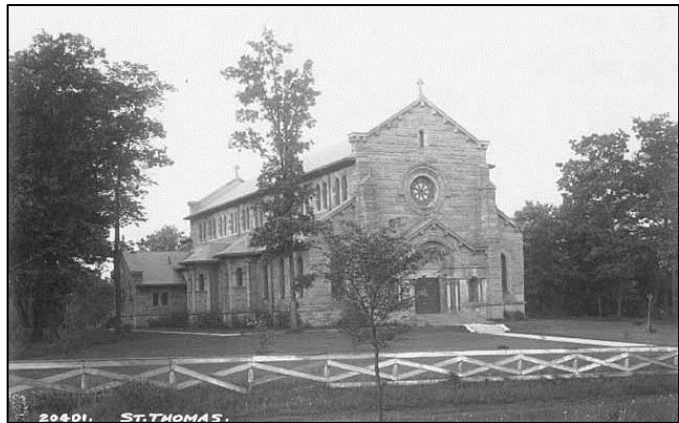
⁵⁴ University of St. Thomas website, <https://www.stthomas.edu/spssod/about/history/readmore/#d.en.119399> (accessed November 2, 2016).

⁵⁵ Murphy, “St. Paul Seminary,” 7:1.

shrank again when the archdiocese reduced its space requirements and the building's height was lowered to a single story. Even so, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that "the project is the biggest construction effort in the history of the educational institution."⁵⁶

The article continued: "When the complex is complete in the summer of 1989, the entire seminary campus will be concentrated in the new buildings. The remaining seminary buildings will be transferred to the college." The new facility comprised more than 78,000 square feet and included residential accommodations for one hundred seminary students and twelve ordained faculty in addition to offices for the faculty and administrators.⁵⁷

At a prayer service in December 1987 marking the start of the demolition of the Administration Building, the seminary's rector, Father Charles Froehle, remarked: "We are grateful for the vision and dreams of James Hill and John Ireland who built this structure, and to those who subsequently lived and worked within it. But our generation also has its vision and its dream built upon that earlier one. May future generations look back and thank God for our vision, and may they, too, have a new vision and new dreams—so that what happens here may always be the best service of God's people." Father Stephen Adrian, who worked for the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis for nineteen years, felt that the demolition "opened the door for diocesan seminary education in the twenty-first century to happen. And it did that because the St. Paul Seminary ceased to exist. At least the



The Administration Building and St. Mary's Chapel around 1900 (top and middle, Minnesota Historical Society) and the chapel today (bottom) with the now-closed entry, and the Divinity School to the left.

⁵⁶ Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 329–332; Jean Hopfensperger, "New Complex Will Reflect Changing Role of Seminary," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 14, 1988.

⁵⁷ Hopfensperger, "New Complex Will Reflect Changing Role of Seminary."

St. Paul Seminary that priests knew. Once the administration building and the gold cross on top of that administration building came crashing down, it was as if the St. Paul Seminary had been dissolved. Something died, and something new was born. The brilliance of re-orienting the chapel was . . . a snapshot of that.”⁵⁸

The official groundbreaking for the new construction was in March 1988, and work progressed ahead of schedule. A year later, the seminarians moved into the new residential building from their existing rooms in Loras and Grace Halls. The last service in the chapel in Grace, “which had been a center for the prayer of seminarians for over seventy-five years,” was held on St. Patrick’s Day 1989. The new buildings were formally dedicated that September. “The chapel renovation was not complete,” Athans noted, “but the choir stalls had been removed, a new granite floor installed, and the altar placed at the opposite end of the building under the rose window.” The dark, moody atmosphere that had characterized the interior was transformed by white paint on the walls. The ornate light fixtures that had hung from the ceiling were replaced by can lights, leaving the nave unobstructed. The website of the architects for the project, Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson Lindeke, notes that “the choir stalls were eliminated and replaced by movable benches, and a new altar platform was built. Underneath, a beautifully detailed granite floor was installed. . . . Above, the dark ceiling was repainted in a light red hue and was stenciled with a geometric pattern. The wood ceiling beams were sandblasted to reveal their natural beauty and new lighting was designed throughout.” A new organ was installed in 2000, replacing one dating from the 1920s, and “the organ pipes serve as a backdrop for the altar and sanctuary.”⁵⁹



Renovated chapel interior looking south at the former sanctuary (left) and north towards the altar in front of the former main entry (right). (<http://www.rrtlarchitects.com/religious/st-marys-chapel>)

⁵⁸ Froehle quoted in Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 341. The Adrian quote is in the same book on pages 341–342.

⁵⁹ Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 342–343; Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson Lindeke Architects website, <http://www.rrtlarchitects.com/religious/st-marys-chapel>.

A new rector, Phillip Rask, took the seminary's helm in 1993. One of his priorities was to improve the grounds, so gardens were planted around the chapel and the new buildings. He also wanted to create a new monument to replace the 15-foot-tall gilded cross that had topped the historic Administration Building and, according to Athans, "had been visible for blocks around the seminary, particularly from the Grand Avenue entrance." Rather than pull that cross out of storage, the seminary commissioned a 10-foot-high aluminum cross with a black anodized finish that rests on a gold-plated sphere measuring 20 inches in diameter. The cross and sphere are at the apex of a 27-foot-high stone obelisk, which is ringed by stone benches. The ensemble, located near the entry to the seminary complex, was dedicated in 1998.⁶⁰

Assessment of St. Paul Seminary Historic District

Three of the original seminary campus buildings survive today: North Dormitory (Loras Hall), South Dormitory (Cretin Hall), and the Gymnasium. The later St. Mary's Chapel and Grace Residence Hall are also extant. Loras, Cretin, and Grace Halls and the Gymnasium retain good integrity, although the function of these buildings changed after the seminary became affiliated with St. Thomas. Priests still occupied the residential buildings when the St. Paul Seminary National Register nomination was prepared in 1984. The chapel in Grace was an important spiritual center for the students and staff, and part of the first floor of Cretin continued its original purpose as an infirmary. Loras Hall is now offices, and Cretin and Grace are student housing for St. Thomas. A minor physical alteration to the exterior since 1984 is the removal of "plain cast iron fire escapes" from the ends of the residences that were noted in the nomination's description of these buildings; these were not, however, original to the buildings. The door openings to these fire escapes have been partially infilled. A penthouse rises above the roof of Loras for an elevator that was added after the building was converted into offices. Dormers on the roof's east slope were perhaps altered at the same time. A heating plant was still in the Gymnasium in 1984, but the gymnasium space was used for storage. The building now holds offices and services, and the impressive roof trusses in the gymnasium area remain exposed.⁶¹



The new monument, looking east, with Grand Avenue in the background.

⁶⁰ Athans, "To Work for the Whole People," 377–378.

⁶¹ Murphy, "St. Paul Seminary," 7:2.



Google map, 2016

The west side of the campus, however, has experienced more substantial changes since the St. Paul Seminary National Register nomination was drafted. The Administration Building, a major component of the campus both visually and functionally, has been demolished. The three-and-one-half-story brick structure had relatively good integrity in 1984, still holding offices on the first floor and apartments for professors above, although its “front” orientation had been changed from the west to the east, and an open porch on the building’s west side had been replaced by a large garage structure.⁶²

In its place, there is a new building for the School of Divinity, which extends along the east side of St. Mary’s Chapel. The north wall of the new building is set back from the front wall of the chapel, reducing the visual impact of the new construction from the perspective of Summit Avenue. The west wall of the new building is slightly set back from the east wall of the chapel. To the south, an extension from the Divinity School’s west wall connects with an addition on the south wall of the chapel, which contains the chapel’s new entrance. A link to the west from the chapel addition provides a connection to a pyramidal-roofed tower of another new building, the

⁶² Ibid., 7:1. It is not known when the stone marker was placed in front of the chapel; it is considered a noncontributing feature in the Summit historic district.

Seminary Residence. The tower is at the north end of one flat-roofed wing of the building's L-shaped plan. Another pyramidal-roofed tower is at its southern end, and the second flat-roofed wing extends easterly from that tower. The second wing has a smaller pyramidal-roofed tower attached to its east end, which is south of the Divinity School building. The wings of the residence, the chapel addition, and the south end of the Divinity School enclose a pedestrian courtyard. The east edge of the courtyard is further defined by a stone wall that continues north from a mechanical equipment enclosure situated east of the second wing. Another stone wall extends south from the Divinity School building. Pylons topped with ornamental light fixtures terminate the ends of these walls, demarking the opening into the courtyard. The courtyard has a grass lawn edged by trees and divided by linear paver-block walkaways edged with bands of concrete. A small, concrete-paved plaza in the southwest corner features a stone statue of St. Paul the Apostle on a tall base.

The wings of the Seminary Residence are aligned slightly off cardinal points, a deviation from the historic pattern of the campus's layout. The same is true of the Leo C. Byrne Residence, another newer building, just to the southwest. Built in 1995 and designed by Opus Architects, it was noted as noncontributing by the St. Paul Seminary and West Summit Avenue National Register nominations.

Archbishop Ireland Memorial Library is south of the Seminary Residence and east of Byrne. While the Divinity School and Seminary Residence were not in place when the seminary nomination was written, they had been built by the time the West Summit Avenue district was established. That nomination identified



The top view shows the chapel and the Seminary Residence to the south of it. The residence forms a wall between the campus and the Mississippi River gorge to the west.

Stone walls frame the entry to the new courtyard (middle), which is edged by the Seminary Residence and holds the new entrance to the chapel (bottom).

the “Administration Building and Campus Residence” as a single noncontributing structure. Also after the nomination was prepared, St. Thomas added twelve more classrooms to the Brady Center.⁶³

The landscape of the campus has also been altered since the St. Paul Seminary nomination was prepared. Photographs included with the nomination show that the landscape was very similar to Danehy’s description in the 1895 *Bulletin*, with walking paths crossing large lawns dotted with trees.⁶⁴ In the intervening decades, the need to accommodate cars has consumed much of the lawn. The Gymnasium is now an island in a sea of surface parking lots that fill the area east of Loras, Cretin, and Grace Halls. A landscaped berm at the north end of this parking lot, while having the benefit of obscuring the view of parked cars from Summit, is another change to the flat lawn that was historically in this location. There is also a parking lot wedged between Loras and Cretin, and more parking west of Cretin. The driveway from Summit Avenue has been widened and both sides of the road hold parking. The 1998 obelisk and cross are barely visible from Cretin Avenue.

By compromising the relationship between the historic buildings in this part of the district, the new construction compounds the damage to the district’s integrity that was caused by the demolition of the Administration Building. The new construction also blocks the relationship with the Mississippi River valley that the campus once had. As the nomination noted, “The



While a tree-filled lawn is directly west of the residential halls (top), the entrance drive between these halls and the Chapel/Divinity School (middle) is edged by parking and leads to a parking lot west of Grace. Surface parking extends along the west facades of all of the halls (bottom).

⁶³ Roberts and Zimniewicz, “West Summit Avenue Historic District,” 7:52 – 7:53; Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 187–189; Athans, “*To Work for the Whole People*,” 334.

⁶⁴ Murphy, “St. Paul Seminary,” 7:1.

wooded site slopes down gradually to Mississippi River Boulevard which sits on the east bank of the river.” The off-grid alignment of the Seminary and Byrne residences further degrades the historic character of the campus.⁶⁵

Considering these changes in light of the National Register’s seven aspects of integrity, there are some areas in which the St. Paul Seminary retains good integrity. The campus is in its original location but is now part of St. Thomas, resulting in the change of use of many buildings. The historically close relationship between these two institutions, though, helps to maintain integrity of association. Individual surviving buildings retain relatively good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These characteristics, however, have been lost for the demolished Administration Building and are compromised for the landscape. The design and setting of the district as a whole has been severely compromised by the demolition of the Administration Building, new construction east and south of St. Mary’s Chapel, and the intrusion of parking lots and expanded roadways in the campus landscape.

Individually, the surviving buildings are of historical interest (Criterion A) for their association with the seminary, but given their primary relationship to the campus, which lacks physical integrity, and changes to their setting, the argument for individual eligibility seems weak.

The remaining buildings are of architectural interest (Criterion C) individually, but not every building designed by Gilbert or Masqueray merits National Register designation. A case for designating the buildings based on their association with these architects needs to consider the place of the commissions in the overall oeuvre of these men. For Gilbert, the seminary buildings were an important job during a formative period of his professional life. As architectural historian Patricia Murphy observed, “Hill’s St. Paul Seminary was the first and probably most modest and severe of the several campus plans and school and college building designs that Gilbert completed in his career.” She notes, though, that “Hill was intimately involved with Gilbert and Archbishop Ireland in working out nearly every aspect of the design and construction of the seminary. . . . Several aspects of the project were hotly debated, including the use of sandstone as a foundation stone [and] the type of brick for the building exteriors.” It would take research in primary documents to determine—if, indeed, it is possible to determine—how much the appearance of the Loras and Cretin Halls and the Gymnasium is attributable to Gilbert’s design sensibilities and how much was dictated by Hill. “Gilbert despised the experience” of working with Hill, according to architectural historian Geoffrey Blodgett. “Never again, he vowed, would he be coerced into subservience by a powerful client.”⁶⁶

Grace Hall, erected in 1912–1913, came after Emmanuel Masqueray had received the commission for the St. Paul Cathedral in 1905 and for Minneapolis’s Basilica of St. Mary shortly thereafter. Between about 1907 and 1917, “through the patronage of Archbishop Ireland, he obtained two dozen parish church commissions . . . and also designed three more cathedrals,” according to architectural historian Alan Lathrop. In 1916, Masqueray drew up plans for the chapel at the College of St. Thomas, which still stands a few blocks northeast of Grace Hall. “Archbishop Ireland was once again the guiding force” in the selection of the architect, as he

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7:0.

⁶⁶ Murphy, “Architectural Education and Minnesota Career,” 41; Geoffrey Blodgett, *Cass Gilbert: The Early Years* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 115.

undoubtedly was for Grace Hall. Lathrop, however, did not mention Grace in a biographical sketch of Masqueray published in *Minnesota History*, and it was clearly a minor commission for him, so the building cannot claim significance under Criterion C for its association with that architect.⁶⁷

Regardless of the association to an architect, a case for designating these buildings might also be made under Criterion C based on aesthetics. Blodgett observed that Gilbert's seminary buildings "were models of unembellished re-brick severity, appropriate for the lives of their users. Taken together, those that survive reach well beyond the ordinary in proportion and minimalist dignity." Given their late nineteenth-century construction date, the stripped-down design of Gilbert's three surviving buildings is noteworthy. With its stone stringcourses and window sills, bracketed eaves, and projecting center and end bays, Masqueray's Grace Hall, erected almost two decades later, displays a more traditional and unoriginal design that cannot claim high artistic value.⁶⁸

Conclusions

The National Register nomination states that the district "obtains its character from the 200 properties built between 1900–1929. . . . The poorest years for building on west Summit were during and just after WWI and from 1930, the Great Depression, through WWII. During the 20-year period from 1930–1949, only 16 buildings were constructed on west Summit." The district's period of significance ends in 1938.⁶⁹

The historic district retains a strong residential character east of Cleveland Avenue, and St. Thomas's properties at 2045 and 2055 Summit reinforce that character. To the west, between Cleveland and Cretin, the two blocks on the south side of Summit have a varied collection of properties. Only one of the buildings on the East Block, 2110 Summit, was built during the period of significance and contributes to the historic district, although what was once its side yard, now a surface parking lot, is considered noncontributing. The William Mitchell College of Law building at 2100 Summit is also noncontributing to the district. It appears, though, to be of historical significance in its own right in the areas of education and law and potentially qualifies individually for the National Register and local designation.

The West Block contains ten contributing properties, two of which were built towards the end of the period of significance. The block also has one noncontributing property, 2166 Summit, which was built in 1950, after the period of significance.

To the north of Summit Avenue, Aquinas Hall (1932) dates from the last phase of construction in the district, while Albertus Magnus Hall (1946) and two more recent stone markers are noncontributing. The Anderson Student Center, constructed after the historic district was designated, is also noncontributing. The campus west of Cretin displays a similar pattern, with a large percentage of newer properties.

⁶⁷ Alan Lathrop, "A French Architect in Minnesota: Emmanuel L. Masqueray, 1861–1917," *Minnesota History*, Summer 1980, 42–56.

⁶⁸ Blodgett, *Cass Gilbert*, 114–115.

⁶⁹ Roberts and Zimniewicz, "West Summit Avenue Historic District," 7:5.

All in all, the physical integrity of the Summit historic district between Cleveland and Cretin is spotty. It holds a relatively high percentage of noncontributing properties, as well as several buildings from the 1930s that are contributing but were built after the character of the district had been established by a construction surge between 1900 and 1929. West of Cretin, the campus stretching along the south side of Summit has also experienced a good deal of change as the St. Paul Seminary and St. Thomas have evolved since the late nineteenth century. While there has been much change on the blocks west of Cleveland, though, the design of the new construction is generally compatible with the Summit Avenue National Register and local historic districts and does not detract from their overall character. This perspective can serve as a guide when assessing the potential impacts of alternatives that St. Thomas is considering in its master planning process.

On the other hand, demolition, new construction, and landscape alterations have severely compromised the integrity of the St. Paul Seminary Historic District since that nomination was drafted in 1984. The district no longer appears to qualify for the National Register under Criterion A (education and religion) or Criterion C (architecture). Individually, the surviving buildings are of historical interest for their association with the seminary, but given their primary relationship to the campus, which lacks physical integrity, and changes to their setting, the case for individual eligibility under Criterion A also seems weak in this context.

Under Criterion C, there might be a case for National Register eligibility for the three buildings that survive from the 1890s. The seminary was an early and important commission for Gilbert, so the buildings could represent a significant milestone in the development of his career. The spare design of the buildings in an era better known for ornamentation is also noteworthy, making the buildings potentially of interest for their aesthetic characteristics. Grace Hall cannot make the same claim, and does not appear to be eligible under Criterion C.

MACPHAIL BUILDING, MINNEAPOLIS

Historical Designations and Implications

National Register of Historic Places

The Minnesota Historic Preservation Office has evaluated the MacPhail Building and determined that it appears to qualify for the National Register. As noted earlier, National Register status usually does not restrict the actions of a property owner unless federal involvement triggers the Section 106 review process.

Substantial renovation projects of National Register-listed properties can qualify for 20-percent federal and 20-percent state historic tax credits. Work on both the exterior and interior must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. There are restrictions for tax-exempt organizations, so the transaction would have to be appropriately structured to take advantage of the credits. The federal historic tax credit application has three parts. Part 1 verifies that the property qualifies for the National Register. (The property must be officially nominated to the National Register and listed by the time that the renovation project is completed.) Part 2 is a detailed description of existing conditions and the work that is proposed, item by item (windows, HVAC, interior surface treatments, etc.). A developer can elect to complete Part 2 in phases, which allows up to sixty months to finish the rehabilitation; otherwise, the work must be finished in twenty-four months. Part 3 of the application is prepared when the renovation is done to prove that the work was carried out as approved in Part 2. All parts of the application are submitted to the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office, which forwards them to the National Park Service in Washington for a final decision. The state historic tax credit application dovetails with the federal application. Part A of the state application must be submitted at the same time as Part 2 of the federal application; the state Part B accompanies the federal Part 3.

Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Designation

The property was designated as an individual landmark by the Minneapolis HPC in 2001. The period of significance extends from 1923 to 2000. Because of this designation, changes proposed to the exterior of the building are subject to review by the HPC. Decisions of the HPC can be appealed and confirmed or overruled by the Minneapolis City Council.

Historical Overview

The MacPhail School of Music was founded in 1907 by William S. MacPhail, a member of the Minneapolis Symphony.⁷⁰ The school originally offered violin lessons, as well as music history and harmony classes. The program proved very popular and the school expanded the curriculum to include more instruments, vocal training, and the dramatic arts. In 1922, MacPhail hired local architects Magney and Tusler to design a four-story school building on the south edge of

⁷⁰ This section is excerpted from a cultural resources study prepared by Hess Roise as part of the environmental review for a proposed light-rail development (Charlene Roise, Elizabeth Gales, Stephanie Atwood, Linda Pate, and Penny Petersen, "Phase I/Phase II Architecture History Investigation for the Proposed Southwest Transitway Project, Hennepin County, Volume II," February 2012, 4:3-49 – 4:3-50, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and Metropolitan Council).

downtown Minneapolis. The school had one hundred instructors and four thousand students, and claimed to be the largest of its kind in the country. The building was completed in 1923 and included storefronts on the first story that the school could rent out for additional income. The school thrived in the new building and expanded its programs further to include popular music, like jazz, and college degrees.⁷¹

Through its instructors, the school maintained a relationship with the Minneapolis Symphony (later renamed the Minnesota Orchestra) and forged affiliations with other cultural organizations, such as the Minnesota Opera. MacPhail died in 1962. His family gave the school to the University of Minnesota in 1966, and its name was changed to the MacPhail Center for the Arts. Classes were still held at the building on LaSalle Avenue, as well as at satellite locations. New programs developed in the 1960s included Early Childhood Arts and Suzuki Talent Education programs. The Suzuki program was one of the first in the country.⁷²

In 1994, the MacPhail Center for the Arts separated from the University of Minnesota and became an independent, non-profit organization with its own board of directors. The organization continued to occupy the building on LaSalle until it constructed a new facility in Minneapolis at 501 South Second Street in 2006–2007.⁷³



*MacPhail School of Music and Dramatic Art building ca. 1923 (left) and in 2011 (right).
(1920s photograph from Minnesota Historical Society)*

Conclusions

The MacPhail Building is locally designated, so alterations are subject to review by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission. The commission is primarily concerned with exterior work. The building also appears to qualify for the National Register, so a substantial rehabilitation might be able to obtain historic tax credits that could help finance the project. The challenge would be to find a financial/ownership structure that could make use of the credits, which only have value to tax-paying entities. Tax credit reviews cover the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

⁷¹ “MacPhail Music School Has Over 4,000 Students,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 1, 1922; MacPhail Center for Music, “History,” <http://www.macphail.org/history.html>; Minneapolis Building Permit A16186 (dated November 3, 1922).

⁷² MacPhail Center for Music, “History.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

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