

The Elizabeths:  
Gender, Modernism, and Winnipeg's Built Environment, 1945-1975

Marieke Gruwel

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Marieke Gruwel

Entitled: The Elizabeths: Gender, Modernism, and Winnipeg's Built Environment, 1945-1975

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**Master of Arts (Art History)**

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Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Johanne Sloan

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Nicola Pezolet

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor  
Dr. Cynthia Hammond

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kristina Huneault, Graduate Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Rebecca Taylor Duclos, Dean of Faculty of Fine Arts

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ABSTRACT**

The Elizabeths:  
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This thesis examines the careers of Elizabeth M. Lord (born Crawford, 1918-1994) and Elizabeth M. Pilcher (later Causwell, 1920-1991?), two women architects who worked in Winnipeg, Manitoba during the post-war period. Lord received her Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Manitoba in 1939 and, in 1944, became the first woman to register with the Manitoba Association of Architects. For the majority of her career, Lord ran her own architectural practice in Winnipeg, taking on small-scale, often domestic, projects. Pilcher received her Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Sydney in 1945. She went on to complete studies at Harvard University and the Edinburgh College of Art. In December 1958, Pilcher arrived in Winnipeg to accept a position with the prominent architectural firm Green Blankstein Russell as chief of their planning department. Given the differences between Lord and Pilcher, the thesis asks: what can be learned about Winnipeg's built environment during the post-war period by looking at the lives and work of these two women architects? Grounded in empirical evidence, the thesis uses biography as a method to build a picture of Lord and Pilcher's contributions to post-war construction in Winnipeg. The thesis positions Lord and Pilcher within the history of women architects in Canada and within the climate of the architectural profession in Winnipeg. Fundamentally recuperative in nature, the thesis takes a feminist approach to the history of Winnipeg's built environment and demonstrates how Lord and Pilcher were active agents who created a lasting mark on the built landscape of their city.

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## Introduction

“Your decisions depend on your tastes and your training – there’s no defining line between thinking like a man or a woman. You think as a lawyer, or a doctor, or as in my case, an architect.”<sup>1</sup>  
Elizabeth M. Lord

“I find this distinguishing between men and women when both are equally suited for a job so stupid.”<sup>2</sup>  
Elizabeth Pilcher

On Thursday, March 10, 1955, *The Winnipeg Tribune* published a photograph of architect Elizabeth M. Lord (born Crawford, 1918-1994) working at her drafting table (fig. 1). She holds down a ruler that guides her pencil along a sheet of paper. She sits, smiling, surrounded by maps, publications, and rolls of drawings. Standing around her are her four children, Peter, Elizabeth, Richard, and Alison. The caption reads: “Watching mother build a house: Elizabeth M. Lord, practicing architect, works in a third-floor office of her home, 874 Grosvenor Ave.” The photograph accompanies an article, titled “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture A Profession Women Can Practice At Home,” and discusses both Lord’s architectural practice and the family home from which she worked.<sup>3</sup>

A few years later, in December 1958, a photograph was taken of architect and planner Elizabeth M. Pilcher (later Causwell, 1920-1991?) upon her arrival in Winnipeg, Manitoba (fig. 2). The photograph documents Pilcher being greeted on the tarmac of the Winnipeg airport by Cecil Blankstein (1908-1989), architect and principal of the prominent architectural firm, Green

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Gillies, “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, November 8, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> “She Left Because She Was a Woman,” *The Sun Herald*, October 28, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, March 10, 1955.



Blankstein Russell (GBR). Behind them, passengers continue to disembark the aircraft. The photograph, currently in the collection of the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, is accompanied by several others of Pilcher. All taken some time between 1958 and 1963, these photographs show Pilcher working in the GBR offices. In one, Pilcher can be seen using a long ruler to point to an area on a map of Winnipeg while two other staff, including Blankstein, look at her attentively (fig. 3). In others, Pilcher is seen working at a drafting table, often the only woman working in an office dominated by men (fig. 4 and 5).

The photographs of Lord and Pilcher, taken together, can offer us insights into what it might have been like to be a woman architect in Winnipeg during the post-war period. Most obviously, these photographs are tangible documents of women's participation in the architectural profession. They also tell us that women architects were acknowledged within the profession (either by their peers or the local press). And while one might be able to identify a collective experience, these photographs are also indicative of the differences in the careers of these two women. This thesis aims to explore these differences, asking what can be learned about Winnipeg's built environment by looking at the work and lives of these two women architects?

### **Methodology**

A large portion of this thesis is grounded in empirical evidence. To my knowledge, there has yet to be any scholarly documentation of either Lord or Pilcher, with the exception of a few footnotes.<sup>4</sup> Nor has there been much work to keep them in public memory via government

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<sup>4</sup> Brief mentions of Pilcher have appeared in texts, however they have yet to be afforded more than a few sentences or a footnote, see: Bronwyn J. Hanna, "Absence and Presence: A Historiography of Early Women Architects in New South Wales" (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 1999), p. 136, note 16; Appendix 1, p. 337; Appendix 9, p. 354.

initiatives or local historical organizations. As a result, the first task of this thesis was to retrace the biographies and professional careers of Lord and Pilcher. The most significant collection of primary sources consulted have been newspaper articles. These articles, published in newspapers including the *Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Winnipeg Tribune*, and the *Brandon Sun*, have served as critical tools for me as I developed my biographies of Lord and Pilcher, encompassing both their professional and personal lives, and forming an important base for this thesis. Additional primary source materials found largely at the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, the Archives of Manitoba, and the Archives and Special Collections at the University of Manitoba, include photographs, architectural drawings, agendas, meeting reports, and ephemera from architectural firms.

In addition to the above described archival materials, I rely on the work of feminist architectural historians, especially those dealing with the history of Canadian architecture and those focusing on gender and modernism. I am particularly indebted to the work of Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, whose book *Design Women: Gender and the Architectural Profession* laid the crucial foundation from which this thesis stands.<sup>5</sup> I adopt Adams and Tancred's biographical approach as a means to understand Lord and Pilcher's contributions to the built environment. This thesis also relies on recent scholarship dealing with gender and work in post-war Canada and the emerging literature on professionalism in Canada.

As this thesis is concerned with two women architects who worked in a male-dominated profession, I recognize that my methodology is "determined not only by the object of research but also, and inevitably, by the [my] position with respect to the debate on gender."<sup>6</sup> With this in

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<sup>5</sup> Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, *'Designing Women': Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

mind, this thesis aims to read the built environment as a living archive, an archive that has been collecting prior to its built form and continues to maintain an active acquisition policy as it adapts to new environments and inhabitants. This approach is a means to explore histories seldom represented and safeguarded in official institutional archives, and acknowledges the continued influence that we, as women, have on our surroundings. Our built environments are not designed and then become stagnant; they are continuously changed by the bodies that inhabit them and the environments that surround them. Nor are our built environments designed by the select few (white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, thin, and able-bodied men) who have been credited for their design. This approach acknowledges that the landscapes of our cities are continuously altered, supporting the notion that these spaces should be read as living archives.

While such an approach may suggest a broader terrain than the scope of this thesis, I find it valuable as it does not accept complete, authoritative histories. Instead, it embraces a plethora of stories and voices that together contribute to the ongoing dialogue that occurs between living beings and the environments they inhabit. This reading allows for an exploration of stories that have been overlooked, in this case those of Pilcher and Lord. However, it also stresses that theirs are singular stories and that every participant, from researched to researcher, brings their own set of privileges to this study.

### **Thesis Structure**

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to women's participation in the architectural profession in Canada, examining the national context before focusing on Winnipeg. In order to understand Lord and Pilcher's contributions to

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara Poggio, "Outline of a Theory of Gender Practices," *Gender, Work and Organization* 13:3 (May 2006), 230.

Winnipeg's built environment, the second chapter discusses the modernism that developed in the city during the post-war period and the context from which this modernism developed. The following two chapters explore the careers of Lord and Pilcher, with an examination of some of their design work but also how they navigated the architectural profession. The thesis concludes with a comparison of the careers of Lord and Pilcher in order to address the question posed at the beginning of this thesis.

## Chapter 1: Women and Architecture in Canada

Architect Blanche Lemco van Ginkel (b. 1923) argued that “women entered the profession of architecture in Canada very slowly and with great difficulty.”<sup>7</sup> In 1960, women made up 1.2% of registered architects in the country, the number only climbing to 6.6% by 1985.<sup>8</sup> As van Ginkel notes, the resistance to women in the field “was both overt and covert.”<sup>9</sup> Blatant examples of discrimination towards women include their rejection or increased difficulty when applying to architecture programmes and professional associations. Ramsay Traquair, the head of McGill’s School of Architecture from 1913-1939, stated outright that it was “impractical” to admit women and it was only in 1939, after much debate, that McGill had its first woman enroll in architecture.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, when Ethel Marjorie Hill first applied to the Alberta Association of Architects (AAA) in 1921, her application was denied. One of her examiners “did not approve of women in architecture,”<sup>11</sup> but the AAA claimed it was her “inexperience” that resulted in her application being rejected.<sup>12</sup> One year earlier, Hill had become the first woman to graduate from

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<sup>7</sup> Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, “Slowly and Surely (but Somewhat Painfully) More or Less the History of Architecture in Canada,” *SAAC Bulletin* (March 1991), 6/

<sup>8</sup> Ginkel, “Slowly but Surely,” 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ginkel, “Slowly but Surely,” 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ginkel, “Slowly but Surely,” 8. The first woman was accepted to McGill’s School of Architecture in 1939, see: Annmarie Adams, “Building Barriers: Images of Women in Canada’s Architectural Press, 1924-73,” *Resources for Feminist Research* 23:3 (Fall 1994), unpag. Joan Harland went to the University of Manitoba because at the time, McGill would not accept women students, see: Joan Harland Oral History Interview, Oral History Collection, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>11</sup> Ginkely, “Slowly but Surely,” 7.

<sup>12</sup> It was only after Hill’s rejection that the AAA changed the Architect’s Act, making it mandatory for graduates to work in an architect’s office for a year prior to obtaining registration. This, of course, affected women architects significantly as they experienced gender discrimination throughout the hiring process. Hill was eventually accepted to the AAA after applying again in 1925 after letters of support and experience working as a drafts person with Macdonald and Magoon Architects. See: “Breaking In: Four Early Female Architects,” *The Canadian Architect* 38:11 (November 1993), unpag.

the architecture programme at the University of Toronto. An article published in *Canadian Architect* written by employees of the firm Fercon Architects argued that C.H.C. Wright, chairman of architecture at the University, had so much disdain for Hill that he refused to attend the convocation of her graduating class.<sup>13</sup>

Manitoba holds an interesting place within the history of women architects in Canada. Adams and Tancred found that between 1920 and 1960 the University of Manitoba had the highest number of women graduates who went on to become registered architects—totalling one-third of the Canadian-educated women registrants of this time.<sup>14</sup> Their study also revealed that during the 1940s and 1950s there was a minimum of at least four women on faculty at the University's School of Architecture.<sup>15</sup>

This is not to say that the women who studied in Manitoba faced less discrimination than in other provinces. Joan Harland (1914-2016), for example, began her studies at the University of Manitoba after finding out that the Architecture School at McGill did not admit women. She graduated in 1938, with the Gold Medal in her class, but was unable to find a job in the field. It was, without a doubt, because she was a woman. When being interviewed for a job at a local

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<sup>13</sup> "Breaking In," unpagued.

<sup>14</sup> Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Adams and Tancred have noted that the number of women on faculty is most certainly related to the Department's program in interior decorating, see: Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 18-19. There are gaps in the collection of General Calendars for the University of Manitoba from this period and the ones that do remain only list the instructor's initials. The President's Reports of this time, for which there are also missing copies, do on occasion name the instructors in the Department of Architecture. Milton S. Osborne's report for the academic year of 1939-1940 mentions that Joan Harland joined the Department as Assistant in Interior Decoration. The report also mentions that Hellen Semmens, a graduate in Interior Decoration, replaced Joyce Varley, who graduated from the architecture program at the university in 1937, as librarian. Reports from the 1940s celebrate the work of Joan Harland and she is often credited, alongside John A. Russell, for the success of the program. In 1945, the department hired Marcia Roblin, a graduate of the school's programme in Interior Decoration. The report of 1947 mentions two other women on staff: Gladys Cuff and Elizabeth V. Spence. In 1948, Carol J. Feldsted was appointed Lecturer in Architecture and Interior Decoration. See: The University of Manitoba President's Reports, 1940-1947, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections. My sincere thanks to Librarian and Archivist James Kominowski at the University of Manitoba for his assistance in finding this information.

architectural firm, Harland was told that her experience would make her a good secretary.<sup>16</sup> Over 20 years later, architectural firms in Winnipeg were still suspicious of women's abilities. In her third year at the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture, Heather Cram (b. 1946) applied for design jobs at local architectural firms. Cram was unable to secure a job as a designer like her fellow male students, despite having higher marks than all of them. Instead, she worked with draftsmen in the technical department. Cram later found out that she was being paid less than her male colleagues and approached the office manager who denied the pay disparity. When the pay issue came up again, Cram was warned about getting a bad reputation.<sup>17</sup> Several of these barriers, informed and upheld by patriarchal beliefs and structures, were ones that both Lord and Pilcher faced during their careers.

### **Introducing the Elizabeths**

Elizabeth Lord was born in Fort Garry, Winnipeg in 1918 and spent the majority of her career working in the prairie city. She enrolled at the University of Manitoba and graduated in 1939 with a Bachelor of Architecture. She was among a graduating class of six: three women, and three men. Lord had been successful during her studies, receiving an Isbister scholarship and the Manitoba Association of Architect's (MAA) medal.<sup>18</sup> Lord's early career included employment at North American Lumber Co. (1939), Arthur Cubbidge Architect (1940), and Crawford

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<sup>16</sup> Joan Harland Oral History Interview.

<sup>17</sup> Heather Cram Oral History Interview, Oral History Collection, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>18</sup> Brown and Gold Yearbook 1939, University of Manitoba Archives.

Painting (1941).<sup>19</sup> She then took a break from the profession between 1942 and 1943 to work as an auditor in Ottawa, serving as a civilian employee with the naval treasury.<sup>20</sup>

In 1944, Lord returned to the architectural profession and became the first woman to register with the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA), also becoming a member of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). That same year, Lord began working at the local firm Moody and Moore Architects.<sup>21</sup> It is unclear how long Lord worked at Moody and Moore, and what her role was at the firm. However, by 1953, Lord had established her own architectural practice where she was responsible for designing homes, schools, and some commercial structures.<sup>22</sup> She worked largely from her home, but did, for a period, occupy an office in a commercial space.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to her work as an architect, Lord was an active participant in local politics, making her a public figure in the city.<sup>24</sup> In 1960, Lord ran for City Council in Metro Division 9. Lord's candidacy, while unsuccessful, marked only one instance of her political involvement: her service to various community and political groups is extensive, spanning the entirety of her

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<sup>19</sup> MAA Data Bank File, People and Firms Collection, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> "31 Candidates Seek Election in 10 Metro Divisions," *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 15, 1960 and "31 Hopefuls Seeking Council Seats," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, October 25, 1960.

<sup>21</sup> MAA Data Bank File.

<sup>22</sup> "31 Candidates Seek Election in 10 Metro Division" and "Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?"

<sup>23</sup> Lord had her own practice in St. James on Portage Avenue for a brief period, see: "31 Hopefuls Seeking Council Seats." Between 1950 and 1970, the only time that Lord was listed in the Business Directories of the Henderson Directories was when she occupied offices on Portage Avenue. In 1961 and 1962, Lord's office was located at 2031 Portage Avenue and between 1963 and 1965, her office was located at 2147 Portage Avenue. When Lord worked out of her home, she was not listed in the Business Directories. See: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1950-1970.

<sup>24</sup> Lord was described as St. James Architect and well-known social worker, see: "MEC Endorsation to 15 Candidates in Metro Election," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, September 30, 1960.



career. In 1976, Lord resigned as a practicing member of the MAA and retired in Antigua. She later returned to Manitoba where she passed on May 20, 1994 at 76 years of age.<sup>25</sup>

Elizabeth Pilcher was born on August 29, 1920 to an affluent family in Edgecliff, New South Wales, Australia.<sup>26</sup> Pilcher attended Frensham boarding school for two years before enrolling in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sydney on March 19, 1938. Pilcher had almost completed her studies when, in 1942, she was recruited by the United States government in the Army Service of Supply to work as a draftsman. In this role, Pilcher helped design prefabricated structures and drew invasion maps, some of which were “highly secret.”<sup>27</sup> Following the war, Pilcher returned to her studies for a final year, ultimately graduating on June 26, 1945 with a Bachelor of Architecture.<sup>28</sup> Her student card indicates that she took a variety of courses, from drawing and architectural history, to construction and structure theory. Pilcher also took a course on town planning, a subject in which she became increasingly interested.<sup>29</sup>

Documentation of Pilcher’s activities immediately following graduation remain unclear. A mention of Pilcher’s early work can be found in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, published on April 23, 1946. Pilcher, identified as both an architect and artist, was enlisted to design and paint a mural on a wall of the H.M.S. Vindex ship in preparation for its farewell party. According to

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Lord Obituary, People and Firms Collection, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>26</sup> Pilcher’s student card from the University of Sydney identifies her date of birth, see: Elizabeth M. Pilcher student card, The University of Sydney Archives. On occasion, Pilcher was mentioned in the social sections of local Sydney newspapers and magazines. In a couple of instances, she is identified as being from Edgecliff, a suburb of Sydney. See: “Social Roundabout,” *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, August 12, 1964 and “This Week in Town,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 28, 1947.

<sup>27</sup> “Architect Sees Scope For Planning,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 1, 1959.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth M. Pilcher student card. Pilcher was one of two women in her graduating class, see: Hanna “Absence and Presence,” Appendix 9, p. 354.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth M. Pilcher student card.

the newspaper article, Pilcher only completed the project “10 minutes before the party began.”<sup>30</sup> Pilcher worked on several other major projects in New South Wales, but the exact dates remain unknown. In an interview with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Pilcher mentioned working for two and a half years with the Cumberland County Council, “the overall planning board for the metropolitan area of Sydney.”<sup>31</sup> While in Australia, Pilcher also provided planning expertise to municipalities that could not afford to retain their own planners.<sup>32</sup> Pilcher is also documented to have worked for the Australian architectural offices Stephenson & Turner, but once again, it is unclear when and for how long she was on staff.<sup>33</sup>

This work in Australia may have been before or after Pilcher continued her education abroad. On August 31, 1947 Pilcher flew from Sydney to San Francisco, eventually arriving in Cambridge, Massachusetts to study architecture at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design.<sup>34</sup> There she studied under famed modernist architect Walter Gropius as a “special student,” to which she was later quoted saying there was nothing that “special” about it.<sup>35</sup> Shortly thereafter, following very brief employment in Boston and Montreal, Pilcher went to London, England and worked under the London County Council of the design of the Festival Hall.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “Ship’s officers entertain,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 23, 1946.

<sup>31</sup> “Architect sees scope for planning”.

<sup>32</sup> “Architect sees scope for planning”.

<sup>33</sup> Hanna, “Absence and Presence,” p. 136 note 16.

<sup>34</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Pilcher would be leaving Sydney to continue her studies at Harvard University and would later be travelling to England, see: “This Week in Town.” A passenger list from the British Commonwealth Pacific Air Lines lists Pilcher as a passenger and her occupation as “architect.” The record of her entry into the United States lists her final destination as Harvard University. See: Elizabeth M. Pilcher, People and Firms Collection, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>35</sup> “She left because she was a woman”.

<sup>36</sup> Joyce Meyer, “Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, February 6, 1959.

Pilcher, who wanted to do more planning, then moved to Edinburgh where she completed a two-year post-graduate degree in town planning at the Edinburgh College of Art. It was at that time that Pilcher met David Buchanan, who was also a student at the school. Their friendship is noteworthy as Buchanan later became an architect with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the two would once again meet in Winnipeg.<sup>37</sup>

Following the completion of her studies in Edinburgh, Pilcher worked and travelled before returning to Australia. She continued to work in Sydney, but became frustrated when her gender “was constantly getting in the way” of securing a good town planning position.<sup>38</sup> It was reported by the *Winnipeg Free Press* that, just at the time that Pilcher was writing her friend Buchanan about wanting to work in planning, she received a call from Cecil Blankstein.<sup>39</sup> Blankstein had read Pilcher’s qualifications and asked if she would accept a position as head of planning at his Winnipeg-based architectural firm GBR. Pilcher arrived in Winnipeg in December 1958 but, by 1963, had moved to Chicago. There she worked as the Assistant Director of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago where she participated in the research and designing of schools and community centres for the local Jewish community. It was in Chicago that Pilcher married Joe Causwell, and shortly after their marriage in 1964 the couple moved to Kingston, Jamaica. Pilcher became employed by the government as a planner. In 1974, the *Kingston Daily Gleaner* reported that Pilcher (then referred to as Causwell) was one of six

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<sup>37</sup> “Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness”.

<sup>38</sup> “She left because she was a woman”.

<sup>39</sup> The newspaper article refers to Blankstein’s call as a “strange coincidence,” see: “Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness.” However, it could be that Buchanan mentioned Pilcher’s qualifications to Blankstein. As an architect with the CMHC, it is highly likely that Buchanan crossed paths with Blankstein and other staff at GBR.

women architects practicing in Jamaica.<sup>40</sup> Pilcher worked in Jamaica until 1980, eventually returning to Australia in 1989.<sup>41</sup> A death notice for an Elizabeth Mary Pilcher appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on March 23, 1991.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Personal Mentions: Female Architects,” *The Daily Gleaner*, May 31, 1974.

<sup>41</sup> “Early Women Students,” University of Sydney Archives, Online Exhibition, accessed March 1, 2019, [http://sydney.edu.au/arms/archives/history/senate\\_exhibitions/students\\_women\\_history\\_architecture.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/arms/archives/history/senate_exhibitions/students_women_history_architecture.shtml).

<sup>42</sup> I was unable to confirm this as Pilcher’s date of death as the death notice does not provide enough information, see: “Death Notices,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 23, 1991. Further, there was another Elizabeth M. Pilcher who was of a similar age and lived in the same area.

## Chapter 2: Modernist Winnipeg, 1945-1975

If the story of women's role in the architectural histories of Canada is one lacuna, then there is certainly another: the history of Winnipeg's built environment, and more specifically, its modernist architecture, which remains on the periphery of architectural history in this country. At the turn of the twentieth century, Winnipeg was one of the nation's fastest growing cities. The Exchange District in downtown Winnipeg is home to an important collection of heritage buildings, standing as a testament to the city's former title as Western Canada's largest metropolitan area.<sup>43</sup> It was the construction of these buildings, which were stylistically informed by the Chicago School, that landed Winnipeg the title "Chicago of the North." This area has since been designated a National Historic Site of Canada and its heritage buildings have become the most beloved, and protected, in the city.<sup>44</sup> And yet, Winnipeg's architectural legacy encompasses more than just this heritage. Serena Keshavjee argues that the city is home to "one of the richest stocks of Modernist architecture in Canada."<sup>45</sup> However, this fact has yet to be reflected in the City of Winnipeg's list of municipally-designated sites.<sup>46</sup> Following the demolition of the Winnipeg Eaton's building in 2002, Keshavjee identified modernist buildings as the most endangered in the city.<sup>47</sup> Subsequent to the publication of Keshavjee's edited volume, *Winnipeg Modern*, the Winnipeg International Airport, designed in in the International Style by GBR and

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<sup>43</sup> "Exchange District National Historical Site," Designations of National Historic Significance, Parks Canada, accessed April 20, 2019 [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=1775](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=1775).

<sup>44</sup> The exchange was designated on September 22, 1996, see: "Exchange District National Historical Site".

<sup>45</sup> Serena Keshavjee, "Modified Modernism," in *Winnipeg Modern: Architecture, 1945-1975*, ed. Serena Keshavjee (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>46</sup> "List of Historical Resources," Planning, Property & Development, City of Winnipeg, accessed April 20, 2019, <https://www.winnipeg.ca/ppd/Heritage/ListHistoricalResources.stm>.

<sup>47</sup> Keshavjee, "Modified Modernism," 3.

constructed between 1961-1964, was closed in 2011 and later demolished. Currently, the city awaits the forthcoming demolition of the Public Safety Building, one of the most notable examples of brutalist architecture in the city, designed by Libling Michener and Associates and constructed in 1966.

The precarity of Winnipeg's modernist legacy is reflected in the scholarship on Canadian architecture.<sup>48</sup> Harold Kalman's 1994 survey of the developments of architecture in Canada was the first collection of its kind. The already small section of the two-volume publication that is dedicated to modern architecture focuses on developments in Canada's major metropolitan centres: Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.<sup>49</sup> Further, Kalman argues that Canadian architects were "never completely sold on the International Style."<sup>50</sup> Kalman's claim suggests that his survey did not adequately consider Winnipeg, where the architects who trained at Manitoba's School of Architecture embraced the modernism of the Bauhaus and International Style.

A recent survey by Rhodri Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History*, does offer a more thorough discussion of modernist architecture on the prairies.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, also not without fault. David Theodore notes that, like Kalman's text,

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<sup>48</sup> This lack of scholarship can be attributed to the fact that there are few architectural historians working in the province and that the primary source material is often difficult to obtain, as it is either stored in the basements of retired architects or has been disposed of. See: Keshavjee, "Modified Modernism," 17-18. Many archival institutions in Winnipeg are unable to accept material from architects as they are at capacity and understaffed. In recent years, the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation has been accepting material from retired professionals or their surviving family members. This includes drawings, photographs, and ephemera from GBR, hundreds of drawings by Roy Sellors, and drawings, films, and ephemera from Dennis Carter's family. In other cases, the personal archives of professionals have been discarded following their death, as was the case for Joan Harland.

<sup>49</sup> Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto, New York: Oxford University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 779-844. Within this 65-page section on modern architecture, only a few pages discuss Winnipeg examples, see: pp. 811-12, 818-23.

<sup>50</sup> Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, 815.

<sup>51</sup> Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016).

*Canada* fails to connect Canadian architecture to social and cultural histories, including women's history. He further questions the authors' decision to call male architects simply architects, while women architects are called "acclaimed female architects."<sup>52</sup>

### **The University of Manitoba's School of Architecture**

Established in 1913, the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba was the second of its kind in Canada and the first west of Toronto.<sup>53</sup> At the time, Winnipeg had already developed an impressive architectural landscape, with buildings designed by firms including McKim, Mead & White as well as Warren and Wetmore.<sup>54</sup> The first director of the School, Arthur Stoughton, was American, as were his successors Milton Osborne and John A. Russell. When Osborne came to the University of Manitoba, he brought with him a Beaux-Arts training that ultimately influenced the pedagogy of the School. In 1945, Osborne left his position to take a post at the Pennsylvania State College. Russell, who had been working at the School since 1928, was officially appointed Director.<sup>55</sup> It was this new leadership that many identify as a turning point for the School.<sup>56</sup> At this time, the School embraced the modernist architecture of the Bauhaus and the International Style, to which Russell was exposed to during his studies at the Massachusetts

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<sup>52</sup> David Theodore, "Review of *Canada: Modern Architectures in History*, Rhodri Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino," *JAE Online*, February 9, 2018, <http://www.jaeonline.org/articles/reviews-books/canada-modern-architectures-history#/>.

<sup>53</sup> Kelly Crossman, "North by Northwest: Manitoba Modernism, c. 1950," *JSSAC* (1991), 62.

<sup>54</sup> These include the Bank of Montreal (335 Main Street) designed by McKim, Mead and White in 1913 and the Union Station (123 Main Street) designed by Warren and Wetmore and constructed between 1908-1911.

<sup>55</sup> Crossman, "North by Northwest," 63.

<sup>56</sup> Kelly Crossman, "The Meaning of White," in *Winnipeg Modern: Architecture, 1945-1975*, ed. Serena Keshavjee (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 137.

Institute of Technology in Cambridge right around the same time.<sup>57</sup> A testament to the influence of modernist ethos at the School are two important buildings located on the University of Manitoba campus, designed by firms established by former graduates: the Elizabeth Dafoe Library (designed by GBR in 1951) and the new John A Russell architecture building (designed by Smith Carter in 1959) (fig. 6 and 7).

It should be noted, though, that the change in pedagogy at the School cannot be explained so simply. Joan Ockman argues that the development of architectural education in North American “was considerably less straightforward than ‘Beaux-Arts to Bauhaus’”—and the School of Architecture in Winnipeg was no exception.<sup>58</sup> Architectural historian Jeffrey Thorsteinson has convincingly argued that Osborne had also been interested in modernism and, as a result, the change in pedagogy at the School cannot be attributed solely to Russell’s leadership.<sup>59</sup> Further, in crediting such a change only to Russell, Harland’s contributions to the curriculum have also gone overlooked.

During and after the Second World War, the University of Manitoba produced some of the country’s most notable modernists, including John C. Parkin and Douglas C. Simpson.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> According to the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, Russell “studied architecture at the Massachusetts Inst. of Technology in Cambridge where he graduated in 1928. That same year, he was appointed as a new Assistant Professor of Architecture at the Univ. of Manitoba in 1928 (R.A.I.C. Journal, v, Dec. 1928, xxx). He returned to Boston in 1930 and continued his studies at M.I.T., obtaining a Masters Degree in Architecture in 1932. That same year, he was awarded a scholarship from the École de Beaux Arts in Paris to study at the School of Fine Arts at Fontainebleau.” See: “John Alonzo Russell,” Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, accessed July 27, 2019, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2508>.

<sup>58</sup> Joan Ockman, “Introduction: The Turn of Education,” in *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, ed. Joan Ockman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012), 11. For more information specifically on the influence of the Bauhaus in America, see: Margret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts 1919-1936* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001).

<sup>59</sup> Jeffrey Thorsteinson, “A Forgotten Figure: Milton S. Osborne and the History of Modern Architecture in Manitoba” (paper presented at the 45<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, Halifax, Canada, May 28-31, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> Keshavjee, “Modified Modernism,” 3.



Harry Seidler, who went on to become one of Australia's most celebrated modernist architects, was also a graduate of the School. It is important to note that it was not just the education students received at the School that resulted in the adoption of modernism. Russell actively encouraged his students to further their studies outside Canada, and several graduates went on to obtain post-graduate degrees from universities in the United States. Importantly, several of them returned to Winnipeg to work, establishing their own architectural firms.<sup>61</sup> Encouraging post-graduate studies was somewhat unique for those studying architecture in Canada at the time, as many students studying elsewhere were encouraged to enter the workforce following the completion of their bachelor's degree.<sup>62</sup>

### **Women at the School**

As previously mentioned, between 1920 and 1960 the School had some of the highest numbers of women graduates who went on to become registered architects, and there were several women faculty members.<sup>63</sup> In a letter dated 1937, Osborne responds to an inquiry regarding the admittance of women in architecture programmes. He writes: "In answer to [the] question regarding women students in Architecture, I would say that women have entered the

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<sup>61</sup> A few of these figures include Ernie Smith, Isadore Coop, Morley Blankstein, and Roy Sellors. Smith studied at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology in the mid-1940s and came back to Winnipeg to establish the architectural Smith Carter (now Architecture49). Coop and Blankstein, founding partners of Blankstein Coop Gilmore Hanna (now Number TEN Architectural Group), completed Master's programmes at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (1953) and the Illinois Institute of Technology (1949) respectively. Sellors, who served as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba between 1967 and 1972, received his Master of Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute for Technology in 1939. I was unable to trace any women who graduated from the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture in the 1940s and 1950s who pursued further studies in the United States.

<sup>62</sup> Crossman, "North by Northwest," 63.

<sup>63</sup> Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 16, 18-19.

profession of architecture probably because they feel that it is a field for which they are qualified.”<sup>64</sup> He explains that in both England and the United States, women have been successful in becoming general practitioners. However, Osborne does write that “There is little doubt but that the most of them will be more interested in domestic architecture than in any other phase of architectural design.”<sup>65</sup> He concludes his commentary on women architecture students by stating that “there seems to be no tendency on the part of architects to discriminate against them.”<sup>66</sup>

The number of women students and faculty was not necessarily indicative of a progressive and inclusive culture at the School, and there was certainly a variation regarding the acceptance of women students from the male faculty.<sup>67</sup> Adams and Tancred note that the unusually high numbers of women students and faculty was influenced by the School offering the country’s first course in interior decorating, and a few years later, establishing the first diploma course in the subject.<sup>68</sup> Harland, who graduated from the School of Architecture just a year before

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<sup>64</sup> Response from Milton S. Osborne, University of Manitoba, December 1, 1937, Faculty of Engineering, Women’s Admission into Architecture, McGill University Archives. Osborne was responding to a letter sent to him by a committee at McGill University, formed to examine the “issue” of women architecture students. The committee, struck by Ernest Brown, dean of the Faculty of Engineering, was made up of five members. These members sent letters to universities across North America, including the University of Manitoba, asking questions about the acceptance of women in architecture, see: Annmarie Adams, “‘Archi-ettes’ in Training: The Admission of Women to McGill’s School of Architecture,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21: 3 (1996), 71.

<sup>65</sup> Response from Milton S. Osborne.

<sup>66</sup> Response from Milton S. Osborne.

<sup>67</sup> Heather Cram was encouraged by some of her male professors and discriminated against by others, see: Heather Cram Oral History Interview.

<sup>68</sup> Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 18-19, 55. The department, under the direction of Osborne, celebrated the integration of a three-year course in Interior Decoration within the department. In the President’s Report from 1941, Osborne noted that the field does not adequately recognize the work of interior decorating, but happily reported that their graduates are finding work. He writes that “there is every reason to believe that a good designer, familiar with the great variety of new decoration materials, should be valuable to both the producer and consumer of these materials.” See: The University of Manitoba President’s Report For the Year Ending 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1941, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections. Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to

becoming an instructor at the School, was instrumental in the development of their interior decoration programme. It would come as no surprise if Harland had brought her background in architecture into her teaching.<sup>69</sup>

### **Winnipeg's Regional Modernism**

Winnipeg's growth at the turn of the twentieth century ended abruptly. This sudden change was the result of a combination of events that included the onset of the first World War and the 1919 General Strike, a collective city-wide strike responding to stagnate wages, poor working conditions, and loss of employment opportunities. These events were then followed by the Great Depression.<sup>70</sup> Winnipeg would never regain its status as a major Canadian metropolitan centre, but it did benefit and grow as a result of the economic boom that followed the Second World War. This post-war boom resulted in an influx of new construction, aided by the Canadian Centennial celebrations of the country, province, and city. The outcome was the development of a distinctively modernist architectural landscape: a regional modernism that, according to Kelly Crossman, was not a generic replication of modernist ideals but instead an architecture that "could connect with the culture and context of their own place."<sup>71</sup> Crossman defines this regional modernism as one that was "largely public, and rooted in an expression of the cage and the

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Librarian and Archivist James Kominowski at the University of Manitoba for his assistance in finding this information.

<sup>69</sup> Harland was an active instructor in the architecture department. In the academic year of 1942-1943, Harland lectured 6 hours a week, taught free hand drawing 9 hours a week, and was an instructor of design criticism 12 hours a week. The only instructor who surpassed her in hours that year was Russell. It is unclear what her teaching schedule was every year, as most of the President's Reports do not offer such a comprehensive breakdown. See: The University of Manitoba President's Reports, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>70</sup> Keshavjee, "Modified Modernism," 6.

<sup>71</sup> Crossman, "North by Northwest," 66.

legacy of the Chicago School.”<sup>72</sup> Elaborating on this idea, Crossman claims that for these new architects, “the prairie was the grid, the grid was modern, and the grid was now.”<sup>73</sup>

This embrace of modernism by Winnipeg architects resulted in a period of great success for their firms. In the 1950s, Manitoba-based architectural firms were “consistently ranked among the best in the country.”<sup>74</sup> This is made clear by the fact that in the 1953 design competition for the National Gallery of Canada, Winnipeg firms GBR and Smith Carter took first and third place respectively.<sup>75</sup> Five local architectural firms—GBR; Smith Carter, Waisman, Ross and Associates, Libling, Michener and Associated; and Moody, Moore Architects—were responsible for the design of much of the post-war construction in Winnipeg, from government structures to schools and churches. By the 1960s, new figures had come into the mix, including Étienne Gaboury, Gustavo da Roza, and the Number Ten Architectural Group. By this time, Winnipeg had developed to become an “important centre of Canadian Modernism.”<sup>76</sup> Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this thesis, the following chapters will explore the lives and work of Lord and Pilcher to develop a deeper understanding of Winnipeg’s post-war construction.

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<sup>72</sup> Crossman, “North by Northwest,” 68.

<sup>73</sup> Crossman, “North by Northwest,” 68.

<sup>74</sup> Crossman, “North by Northwest” 61.

<sup>75</sup> “The National Gallery of Canada Competition,” *RAIC Journal* 30:4 (April 1953), 108 and Crossman, “North by Northwest” 61.

<sup>76</sup> Crossman, “The Meaning of White,” 132.

### **Chapter 3: Elizabeth Lord**

Lord's architectural education, training, and career took place exclusively in Winnipeg, with the exception of a two-year position in Ottawa during the second World War. Lord enrolled in architecture at the University of Manitoba in the mid-1930s, where there had already been at least two other women in the programme. While Lord was at the School, there was a growing interest in the modernist developments taking place overseas. Some of this influence can be seen in Lord's 1939 graduation thesis project that proposed a new, two-storey College Library designed in the Collegiate Gothic Style.<sup>77</sup>

#### **Lord's Graduation Thesis Project**

Lord's thesis consists of 10 sheets, comprising a site plan (fig. 8), floor plans (figs. 9-11), elevations (figs. 12 and 13), longitude and transverse sections (fig. 14), as well as exterior, interior, and structural details (figs. 15-17). The proposed site of the library, as depicted on the site plan, is situated on the grounds of the University of Manitoba, in close proximity to the administration, arts, and horticulture buildings. The site plan also features a three-quarter aerial drawing of the library, with a view of the front façade and north exterior wall (fig. 8).

The library's basement, first, and second floor plans demonstrate Lord's knowledge of the facilities required by library's staff and patrons. Several rooms accommodate the needs of librarians, including a cataloguing room, a book binding room, two general work spaces, four photostatic film showing rooms, a film vault, a board room, and multiple offices (figs. 9-11). The first floor contains a large reading room and an auditorium with 466 seats, with a note indicating

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<sup>77</sup> I would like to extend my thanks to Archivist Nicole Courier at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections for her assistance in finding Lord's thesis project, which had only recently been acquired (along with several other years' worth of student projects from the period) by the institution.

that the seats can be removed for art exhibitions (fig. 10). Both of these spaces feature high ceilings that extend to the top of the second floor (fig. 11). In addition to the main reading room, the library contains several spaces to accommodate the university's student body, such as a browsing library room, a study hall, and two smaller study rooms (figs. 10 and 11). The main stacks of the library are spread across all three floors and the periodical and file stacks are found on both the basement and first floors (figs. 9-11).

As seen in the front and rear elevations, the library sits heavy and low to the ground (fig. 12). The façade is symmetrical, with long narrow windows topped with arched hood moldings. The windows feature heavy, molded mullions with the glass panes separated by simple muntins. The aerial drawing of the library shows that the main entrance protrudes only slightly from the exterior wall and features a recessed doorway (fig. 8). A detail of the library's main entrance depicts a series of steps leading to three doors with an arched transom window. Located at the center top of the doorway is the University of Manitoba's armorial bearings, flanked on either side by an open book representing the arts and a lantern signifying the sciences (fig. 15). A second entrance is located on the north wall, which accommodates a direct entry into the building's auditorium (fig. 10 and 13). The north entrance is similar to the main entrance, with a small staircase leading to three doors. However, unlike the main entrance, each door is topped with its own arched transom window and there are no decorative motifs (fig. 12).

On several of the sheets, Lord made notes about materials. The elevation drawings indicate the cladding as mill rubble and the arched hood moldings as cut stone (fig. 12). Within the floor plans, Lord specified the flooring to be used for every room. Many of the working rooms were to have terrazzo floors, with the exception of the offices for which, like the auditorium, she planned oak flooring. Rooms containing the stacks and periodicals, as well as the main reading room and group study areas, were to have had cork tile floors. A selection of rooms,

including the hall and the entrance to the auditorium, feature marble borders and bases (figs. 9-11).

Lord's College Library is a modest example of the Collegiate Gothic Style, possibly indicative of the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture gradually shifting towards a modernist ethos. Ornamentation on the exterior of Lord's library is kept to a minimum, with elements, like the structure's cornice, lacking any ornamentation at all. As for the interior, details of the mouldings, handrails, and library tables display a restrained ornamentation, while the reading room clock and card catalogue unit lend themselves more towards a modern aesthetic (figs. 16-17).

### **Lord's Career and Known Projects**

After Lord graduated, she spent nine months trying to find a job in the field.<sup>78</sup> She eventually found employment working in an architect's office, where she earned 40 dollars a month.<sup>79</sup> As she entered the workforce, Lord said she "expected nothing but smacks, shouts and disapproval."<sup>80</sup> However, she was happy to have secured employment and gain the experience necessary to receive her license. Lord was granted her license to practice as an architect the same day her first child, Richard, was born.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?"

<sup>79</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home." Lord's pay is equivalent to less than 700\$/month in 2019.

<sup>80</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home".

<sup>81</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home." Lord must have taken a leave from the profession when her children were of a young age as her MAA file says she was reinstated as a member in 1953, see: MAA Data Bank File.

Tracing Lord's architectural practice has been challenging, in part because Lord worked for herself for the majority of her career. There remains no surviving archive of her work and no architectural firm that lived on following her retirement. Further, Lord took on small projects that she could manage herself and consequently did not take on larger-scale, public projects that would be easier to trace. Data collected from the MAA lists only one of Lord's architectural projects: a renovation done to the Winnipeg residence of a Dr. Sterling Orr Dowling.<sup>82</sup>

Newspaper articles, however, confirm that Lord worked on more than just one project. One of Lord's designs that she particularly enjoyed was a home at 385 Kingston Crescent, constructed in 1946. A year prior, in 1945, Lord designed her own family home at 582 McNaughton Avenue, one of her earliest projects.<sup>83</sup> Commenting on the home, Lord stated:

We dug, we poured concrete, laid the floors, packed the insulation. The house had solar windows and a serpentine wall. *The Tribune* took a picture one Saturday because it was one of the first with glass to the ground. Sunday about 20 people came and looked in. We lived there till we bulged at the seams, with four children.<sup>84</sup>

Over the course of her career, Lord designed a minimum of four homes for her family.<sup>85</sup>

In December 1958, Lord submitted an entry to the Winnipeg City Hall design competition. Her design was among 91 entries submitted by architects and architectural firms across the country. Only a small, black and white photograph of Lord's model remains, published

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<sup>82</sup> The renovations were at 530 Basswood Place in 1950, see: MAA Data Bank File. Dowling was a medical doctor, who graduated in 1938 from the faculty of medicine at UM, see: Dowling Obituary, *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 3, 2001.

<sup>83</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home." The article says this home was on McNaughton Drive, however this is incorrect. The home was located on McNaughton Avenue. The Henderson Directories from 1947 confirm this, as only a McNaughton Avenue is listed. Further, the Henderson Directories list Murray Lord, Lord's husband, as the homeowner of 582 McNaughton Avenue. See: Henderson's Winnipeg Directory 1947, p. 192.

<sup>84</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home".

<sup>85</sup> "Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?"



in the *Report on the Competition: A City Hall for Winnipeg* (fig. 18).<sup>86</sup> What can be deciphered from the image shows an approximate 10-storey office tower that curves to follow an angular plot. In front of this tower appears to be a second structure with three sharp corners. To the left of this structure is likely a public plaza and what could be a reflecting pool. Finally, a treed area can be seen to the left of the complex. Lord's entry did not make it past the first round. The winning design was submitted by GBR.

In the spring of 1959, Lord had a model of an old post office turned library on display at the Eaton's department store in Winnipeg. The design saw the conversion of the post office building into a library. The design allocated fourth-floor rehearsal space to both the Winnipeg Ballet and the Manitoba Theatre Centre. The model, which was reported to have attracted many visitors, was not done for a client but as a personal project.<sup>87</sup>

### **Lord's Community and Political Involvement**

With limited documentation of Lord's design work, I turn to her community and political involvement to better understand her career. An examination of Lord's professional affiliations indicates that she was an active and engaged citizen. Prior to the 1960s, Lord had already sat on the executives of the Winnipeg Council of Women; the Welfare Council of Greater Winnipeg; the Manitoba Provincial Council of Women; and the Young Women's Christian Association. In her roles with the Winnipeg Council of Women and the Young Women's Christian Association, Lord also acted as chairman of their respective Housing and Town Planning Committee and

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<sup>86</sup> *Report on the Competition: A City Hall for Winnipeg*, Vertical Files, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>87</sup> "Model Library in Downtown Store," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, March 15, 1959.

Building Committee. By the mid-1960s, Lord had become the spokesperson for the Manitoba Division of the Community Planning Association of Canada and eventually its part-time Executive Director.<sup>88</sup>

In 1960, Lord ran for city council in metro division 9 (fig. 19). On September 30, 1960, *The Winnipeg Tribune* reported that Lord failed to receive the endorsement of the Metro Election Committee (MEC). Lord said she was “sidelined” by MEC but claimed that “it is almost definite I will be a candidate in spite of my failure to get a MEC endorsation”—and she was.<sup>89</sup> Lord became one of 31 candidates seeking election in 10 metro divisions, and one of five candidates seeking election in Metro Division 9.<sup>90</sup> The only other woman candidate was Fern E. Wilson, a real estate agent, who was also running in Division 9. Like Lord, Wilson did not receive endorsement from MEC.<sup>91</sup> While Lord was not successful in her candidacy, she continued her political advocacy and remained a strong voice for women.

Lord argued that discrimination against women’s abilities begins early in their lives, pointing out that “girls are still being pushed into traditional female fields” and that there is a failure to point out career possibilities to “brilliant youngsters with talent in sciences and in languages.”<sup>92</sup> When women do make it into male-dominated professions, like architecture, they

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<sup>88</sup> “31 Hopefuls Seeking 10 Council Seats”; “31 Candidates Seek Election in 10 Metro Divisions”; “May Be Cheaper To Rent Home,” *The Brandon Sun*, October 28, 1967; “Decter of NDP Joins Keep-LaMarsh Campaign,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 8, 1968; “LaMarsh Petition Starts Circulating,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 23, 1968; “More About Parking,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, February 4, 1964.

<sup>89</sup> “MEC Endorsation To 15 Candidates In Metro Election,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, September 30, 1960.

<sup>90</sup> The Metropolitan Winnipeg Act, Notice of Poll Being Granted and of Candidates Nominated, Election Preparation, 1960, Election Records, City of Winnipeg Archives.

<sup>91</sup> “31 Candidates Seek Election in 10 Metro Divisions”; “31 Hopefuls Seeking 10 Council Seats”; and “Map Shows Boundaries, Candidates In Metro’s 10 Divisions,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 15, 1960.

<sup>92</sup> “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?”

face many “invisible stumbling blocks”—including patriarchal attitudes.<sup>93</sup> With these realities in mind, Lord believed that “every woman must contribute to society by participating in organizational work concerning women.”<sup>94</sup> However, she made sure to clarify that women should be financially compensated for all of their labour, which to Lord included volunteer work.<sup>95</sup> She argued that talented women were having to give their skills for free, “doing things which otherwise wouldn’t get done,” intelligently pointing out that “private agencies couldn’t operate on existing budgets without them.”<sup>96</sup>

### **Lord on Housing**

Much of Lord’s political advocacy was centred around housing. Two major themes that Lord returned to often over the course of her career can be identified: 1) designing spaces to meet the needs of every member of the family and 2) every citizen’s rightful access to proper housing facilities. And while the planning and design of housing was such a critical component of Lord’s career, these themes also confirm the sentiment that “Lord loves people more than she loves houses.”<sup>97</sup>

Early in her career, Lord claimed that a couple will need a minimum of three homes in their lifetimes: a starter home, a large home with plenty of space to accommodate a growing

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<sup>93</sup> “Own Practice Long, Hard Pull Local Woman Architect Feels,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, April 16, 1971.

<sup>94</sup> “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?”

<sup>95</sup> “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?”

<sup>96</sup> “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?”

<sup>97</sup> “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home”.

family, and a final, small home, for after one's children move out.<sup>98</sup> In 1955, Lord had 10 people living in her home, which she argued was achievable as a result of the following plan:

A family area with acoustic control, hard surface for square dancing. We're very sociable, usually have more people here than ourselves. I'd have a flexible space, no partitions—perhaps a track in the ceiling for curtains, inconspicuous and so useful. Screens and furniture could be grouped to make the area needed. I'd like four different places to eat, from a formal dinner to a snack. I wouldn't seal off the kitchen—teenagers bringing in the gang need to use the kitchen. And I'd want a quiet little place to retire to.<sup>99</sup>

Ensuring that each member of the family had a space for themselves was something that Lord mentioned often. Discussing modern housing design, Lord claims that “the only space allotted to a mother is the open kitchen so that she will not feel isolated from the family... a nice concession to our modern slave labor.”<sup>100</sup> The statement, while brief, is a powerful one, indicative of the many tensions between the ‘ideal’ and the ‘real’ of a home. The trend towards open-concept design resulted in the removal of one of the few spaces, if not the only space, women were guaranteed: the kitchen.<sup>101</sup> This, of course, did not mean Lord was opposed to an open-concept kitchen and living area—as just quoted above, the plan for her own home included one. But, Lord's plan also included a quiet place where she could retreat, “a room of one's own.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home”.

<sup>99</sup> “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home”.

<sup>100</sup> “Mortgage Outlives Modern House,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 8, 1964.

<sup>101</sup> Following World War I, architects became increasingly interested in the kitchen. The open concept kitchen-living space was favored by architects in Europe and the United States. The kitchen became a “central concern of modernism” and was “radically altered by the technological, social, and aesthetic revolutions of the twentieth century.” See: Juliet Kinchin and Aidan O'Connor, *Counter Space: Design and the Modern Kitchen* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 5.

<sup>102</sup> Lord's sentiment that women must have a space for themselves in their own home strongly reflect Virginia Woolf's seminal work, *A Room of One's Own*. See: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 2005).

To Lord, it was not just the mother that required their own space in a home. Lord also believed that teenagers were not being given adequate space for themselves, stating that many teenagers had to find space in their cars, where “the upholstery is better than most of us can afford on our own chesterfields, a radio provides the music they want to hear, hot dog stands provide refreshment and they have complete privacy which they can’t get at home—lovemaking is important.”<sup>103</sup> In this same interview, Lord claimed that “feeling is more important than structure...it does something to you inside when there is no privacy, no place for personal intellectual growth or hobbies.”<sup>104</sup>

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention of the Canadian Home Economics Association, Lord, with teacher Mrs. Carl Ingalls, debated Earl Simpson, director of the housing and urban renewal branch at the City of Winnipeg, and George Gordon, an architect and planner with a private firm.<sup>105</sup> During the debate, Lord openly criticized how women were not given the opportunity to engage in discussions on the planning and design of Winnipeg’s homes and communities, let alone given space on planning commissions. The women were also critical of the lack of public engagement and consultation. According to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Lord and Ingalls “won the battle hands down,” with both Simpson and Gordon admitting that there is a “lack of aesthetic and emotional amenities as well as individualism in modern design.”<sup>106</sup>

In Lord’s 1960 annual report to the Manitoba Provincial Council of Women regarding its Housing Committee, she writes that “shelter is one of the common basic needs of human beings”

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<sup>103</sup> “Mortgage Outlives Modern House”.

<sup>104</sup> “Mortgage Outlives Modern House”.

<sup>105</sup> “Mortgage Outlives Modern House”.

<sup>106</sup> “Mortgage Outlives Modern House”.

and that it is especially necessary in Canada's climate. The report outlines some of the work the committee had done over the year, including supporting a change in the Manitoba Housing Act that would allow any municipality in the province to apply for assistance in a cost-sharing plan for subsidized public housing. Lord concluded the report with two recommendations: 1) that a group study of the housing situation in the province be undertaken and 2) that the government establish a Ministry of Housing.<sup>107</sup>

### **The “At Home” Professional**

The architectural profession in Canada changed significantly at the end of the nineteenth century, and this change had a lasting effect on architects practicing in the country. Crossman argues that it was developments in the architectural profession in the United States that “set in motion a chain of events which, quite unexpectedly, pushed Canadian architects towards professionalism.”<sup>108</sup> For the better part of the nineteenth century, any person in Canada could identify and work as an architect. This changed when the Ontario Architects Act, put forward by the Ontario Association of Architects, was passed in 1890. The first section in the act required that a person may only take the title ‘architect’ when registered, which required examination by the OAA or proof of previous professional training. The passing of the act had a tremendous effect on the profession in Canada, with other provinces quickly following suit.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Manitoba Provincial Council of Women Annual Meeting February 24-25 1960, Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba and Council of Women of Winnipeg fonds, Archives of Manitoba.

<sup>108</sup> Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 9. Crossman attributes this to “the fear of American competition” p. 38. For more on the how the developments in the United States influenced the Canadian architectural profession, see pp. 9-50.

<sup>109</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 36-38. Professionalization also led to changes—and regulations—in architectural education and training. For more on these changes, see: Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 51-63.

Professionalization of the field certainly had an effect on women. As discussed in Chapter 1, women had a harder time accessing professional education and training, and some women experienced discrimination when applying for registration. The shift has also influenced histories of Canadian architects and their careers, as they have since been told largely through a lens of professionalism. In the case of Lord and many other women architects, this has resulted in a significant portion of their contributions, if not their entire careers, being overlooked.<sup>110</sup> Kristina Huneault, writing on women and art in Canada, suggests that “to tell a story of professionalism is to reinforce a narrative of margins and peripheries.”<sup>111</sup> Adams and Tancred express a similar concern, asking if professionalism is too “profoundly masculine that we enter male priorities by using the term.”<sup>112</sup> I also grapple with the issue of professionalism, acknowledging its barriers and how it has shaped exclusionary histories. However, like Huneault, Adams, and Tancred, I see value in repositioning and redefining the concept of professionalism, while always questioning and considering the work that took place beyond its boundaries.<sup>113</sup>

In many ways, Lord was seen as a professional within the field of architecture: she had received formal training in architecture and was registered with professional associations. However, Lord was also a mother and a volunteer, and she did not separate these roles from her professional career. The photograph discussed at the beginning of this thesis, along with its

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<sup>110</sup> Adams and Tancred argue that women made contributions to the built environments from the peripheries, often “outside the boundaries” of professional organizations, see: Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 36. Unregistered professionals, architectural critics, heritage conservators, advocates, policy developers—to name only a few—all made contributions to the field. Women also made contributions by way of homemaking and personal interventions to the spaces they inhabited.

<sup>111</sup> Kristina Huneault, “Professionalism as Critical Concept and Historical Process for Women and Art in Canada,” in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, eds. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2012), 43.

<sup>112</sup> Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 122.

<sup>113</sup> Huneault “Professionalism as Critical Concept,” 43 and Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women*, 123.

accompanying article, was one of the first instances in which Lord's private practice was introduced to the public via the popular press (fig.1). In this article, Lord presented herself as an architect—but an architect that worked from a home office, simultaneously taking care of her family. As her career progressed, these lines would continue to blur as Lord worked with organizations like the provincial and municipal councils of women, where she brought her professional expertise into philanthropist activities.

Several parallels can be drawn between Lord and Marjorie Hill, Canada's first registered woman architect. Like Lord, Hill's life and career remains relatively unknown within architectural discourse. Both women worked alone, within the field of domestic architecture which has often been seen as less significant than public and commercial projects. In her study on Hill, Adams demonstrates how her networks largely existed within an informal setting, developed through her membership with the Victoria Handweavers' and Spinners' Guild in Victoria, British Columbia.<sup>114</sup> Lord would have also developed networks on the edges of the architectural profession through her community and social service. In this way, both women blurred the boundaries between the amateur and the professional.

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<sup>114</sup> Annmarie Adams, "'Marjorie's Web': Canada's First Woman Architect and Her Clients," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, eds. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2012), 380-399.



## Chapter 4: Elizabeth Pilcher

While Elizabeth Pilcher's time in Winnipeg was short-lived, she made a lasting mark on the city through her role at GBR. She was recruited by the firm to act as chief of their planning department and was immediately thrown into several of their most significant projects. By the time she arrived, GBR had already established itself as one of the city's most prominent architectural firms. Founded in 1932 by Lawrence Green and Cecil Blankstein, the firm's early years were impacted by both the Great Depression and the Second World War.<sup>115</sup> Work picked up in the post-war period, and by the late 1940s the firm had received several important commissions.<sup>116</sup> Their success continued. In 1953, GBR took first place in the National Gallery of Canada design competition and shortly thereafter were chosen as the winning firm of Winnipeg's City Hall design competition.

Noteworthy in the context of this thesis is the significance of GBR's architectural projects, and their workplace culture. Engineer Easton Lexier, who worked at the firm for fifty years, refers to GBR as a family, describing the work culture as "challenging and caring."<sup>117</sup> Several photos document the firm's social activities, including a bonspiel in which Pilcher was on the winning team (figs. 20 and 21). In addition to fostering a healthy workplace culture, GBR was known for their diverse hiring practices. Blankstein's sister, Evelyn Blankstein, worked at

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<sup>115</sup> Blankstein and Green were joined shortly thereafter by Leslie Russell, Ralph Ham, and Herbert Moody. By 1936, Moody went on to establish his own firm with Robert Moore while Ham died unexpectedly in the early 1940s. In 1944, the firm's three principals were Green, Blankstein, and Russell and their firm held the name GBR until the firm was acquired by Stantec in 2004. For an extensive history of the firm, see: Jeffrey Thorsteinson and Brennan Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell: An Architectural Legacy* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, 2017).

<sup>116</sup> Examples include the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue (561 Wellington Crescent) built between 1948 and 1950 as well as the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba (25 Chancellors Circle) built between 1951 and 1952.

<sup>117</sup> Thorsteinson and Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell*, vii.

the firm briefly following her graduation in 1935. She was followed by: architect Ruth Scott, who worked at the firm between 1944-1947; architect Patricia Kettner, who began her employment at GBR in 1948, and; Eleanor Brown, who worked as a draftsman beginning in 1955.<sup>118</sup> In 1946, GBR hired interior designer Marjorie Mutch. Lexier wrote in a private letter that Mutch was “the first interior designer to be retained on staff by an architectural firm (GBR) anywhere in the West and probably in all of Canada.”<sup>119</sup> GBR continued to employ interior designers in the post-war period, including Debbie Lexier, Marjorie Pritchard, and Margaret Stinson.<sup>120</sup>

### **Pilcher’s Work in Winnipeg**

Coinciding with Pilcher’s arrival, GBR released the first of several newsletters. Of the eight-page document, an entire page was dedicated to the Australian architect. This report, titled “Best Procurable”, demonstrates that the principals of GBR were eager to have Pilcher as part of their team. The report introduces Pilcher as “quick moving, quick witted, [and] quick with an engaging smile” but it is immediately clear that the firm was impressed with Pilcher’s education and experience, expressing satisfaction that she had trained and worked all over the world. Pilcher came to Winnipeg by herself, allowing her to dedicate a significant portion of time to her work.

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<sup>118</sup> Thorsteinson and Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell*, 21.

<sup>119</sup> The internal letter was addressed to a JCP and dated November 6, 1996. Attached to the letter is a copy of Mutch’s obituary, see: Marjorie Mutch, Vertical Files, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation. The local press reported that Mutch was the first interior designer in Canada in 1946, but an article published in 1947 reports that Mutch was the second woman to be hired by an architectural firm in Manitoba. See: “Winnipeg Girl Holds Unique Post As Interior Designer,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 26, 1946 and “Professional Decorator’s Work Is Satisfying and Exciting—Says Miss Marjorie Mutch,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 7, 1947.

<sup>120</sup> Thorsteinson and Smith have written about GBR’s diverse hiring practice. It is clear that GBR valued the work of women interior designers, acknowledging that their contributions were important to the overall design of a building. Thorsteinson and Smith also note that in the 1940s, several Jewish architects and engineers were employed by the firm. In the post-war period, GBR continued their diverse hiring practices, employing people who lived and trained all over the world, including, but not limited to, Eastern Europe, Australia, and Japan. See: Thorsteinson and Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell*, 15-23.

Pilcher's work ethic was celebrated in the GBR newsletter, which stated that she had already become "one of the most active members of that teaming, hustling world which is GBR" and that "late evenings and Sundays will find her at her drawing board deep in calculation and bold plans."<sup>121</sup> Only a few weeks into her tenure with GBR, Pilcher accompanied Blankstein on a trip to Duluth as the firm had been enlisted to design a multi-million-dollar port terminal and industrial development in the American city.<sup>122</sup>

As chief of GBR's planning department, Pilcher represented the firm across the continent. She attended the annual convention of the Community Planning Association in 1958, as well the annual convention of the American Society of Planning Officials and the International Federation of Housing and Planning in 1960.<sup>123</sup> Pilcher was also tasked with travelling to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington to research co-operative housing in preparation for a similar project being designed by GBR in Winnipeg.<sup>124</sup> This directly connects Pilcher with the design of Willow Park, Canada's first permanent housing co-operative for families. The planning, design, and construction of Willow Park took place over several years. And even though the project was only completed in 1966, Pilcher's research and influence as chief of GBR's planning department most certainly influenced the project's early developments.

### **The Winnipeg International Air Terminal**

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<sup>121</sup> Green Blankstein Russell Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, Green Blankstein Russell fonds, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>122</sup> Pilcher was tasked with designing the transport routes, see: "Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness".

<sup>123</sup> "Social Notes," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, May 29, 1960.

<sup>124</sup> "Social Notes".

In 1958, GBR had just begun planning Winnipeg's new International Air Terminal and Pilcher was enlisted to work on the high-profile project (fig.22). The terminal, built by the Canadian Department of Transport, was one of eight being built in the country. The project saw the construction of a main air terminal building, a powerhouse building, and an air control complex. The lead designers on the project were Bernard Brown and David Thordarson. Pilcher, working with engineers Skapti Borgford and Art Piercy, worked on the "coordination of planning, drainage, engineering conception and town planning aspects."<sup>125</sup> When the airport opened in 1963, it was met with praise. An article in *The Winnipeg Tribune* called it "a tonic for anyone who sweeps in across the prairie," writing that the airport "has an atmosphere of being built for people, an elementary concept often forgotten by those who plan public buildings."<sup>126</sup> Of the project, Brown said that GBR wished to create a "calm environment to counteract the rush of travel."<sup>127</sup>

An early drawing of the airport, done by Brown in 1958, demonstrates a playful approach, influenced by the designs of architect Frank Lloyd Wright (fig. 23).<sup>128</sup> The final scheme, drawn by Brown in 1960, displays a change in both the planning and design of the airport, reflecting a more Miesian approach (fig. 24). As opposed to the rounded shapes of the earlier 1958 drawing, the resulting design favours rectilinear forms. The three buildings can be read from left to right

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<sup>125</sup> Green Blankstein Russell Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 2, Green Blankstein Russel fonds, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

<sup>126</sup> "Most exciting building in town," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, November 21, 1963.

<sup>127</sup> Thorsteinson and Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell*, 115.

<sup>128</sup> Thorsteinson and Smith, *Green Blankstein Russell*, 113 and Flaman, Bernard, "The Winnipeg Airport: Modernism, Culture, and the Romance of Air Travel," in *Winnipeg Modern: Architecture, 1945-1975*, ed. Serena Keshavjee (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 187.

on the drawing: the arrival and departure lounges, the concourse building, and the administration building. Each building is connected, ensuring smooth and easy passage between the structures. The arrival and departure lounges are connected to the concourse building through three walkways, separated by two courtyards. The concourse building, in turn, is connected to the administration building by means of a skywalk.<sup>129</sup>

Pilcher, who was tasked with designing the approach to the airport, had to ensure that the airport could accommodate 2,000 cars an hour.<sup>130</sup> Brown's 1960 drawing depicts an attention to the overall planning of the airport, including vehicular traffic. A wide thoroughfare between the concourse and administration buildings allows for the easy pick-up and drop-off of travelers. As an architect and planner, Pilcher was concerned with "convenient, fast, and safe lines of communications between home and place of work."<sup>131</sup> These concerns are reflected in the airport's planning, where close attention has been given to ensuring the easy flow of travelers.

The Winnipeg International Air Terminal is an articulation of the International Style with its vast glass curtain walls and exposed steel structure (fig. 25). However, the architects were also concerned with the building's integration into the prairie landscape and, as a result, incorporated traditional, Manitoba-sourced Tyndall stone into the design.<sup>132</sup> The interior furnishings complemented the modernist structure (fig. 26). Most notable were two large-scale pieces of public art by Eli Bornstein and John Graham, titled *Structuralist Relief in Fifteen Parts* and

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<sup>129</sup> Incorporation of skywalks were still relatively new in Winnipeg – only the Eaton's building had, in 1957, connected its parking garage to its store with a skywalk. Businesses in downtown Winnipeg did not start constructing skywalks until the late 1960s, and the Winnipeg skywalk system only officially opened in 1988.

<sup>130</sup> "Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness".

<sup>131</sup> Green Blankstein Russell Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1.

<sup>132</sup> Flaman, "The Winnipeg Airport," 189.

*Northern Lights* respectively (figs. 27 and 28). Responding to the terminal's modernist design, both art works were highly abstract.<sup>133</sup>

Bernard Flaman has described the Winnipeg International Air Terminal as “spacious, sophisticated, and modern,” declaring that “it fed the romantic expectations of air travel in the early days of the jet age.”<sup>134</sup> Despite the structure's significance as an outstanding example of the International Style on the Prairies, the structure was demolished following its closure in 2011. The structure's absence is a loss for Winnipeg's modernist legacy, but it is also a loss of Pilcher's contributions to the built environment, and more generally, women's architectural history in Canada. The structure was replaced by the Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport, designed by Stantec and Pelli Clarke Pelli and constructed between 2007 and 2011.

### **Pilcher on Housing**

As a town planner, Pilcher was also interested in housing and she engaged in public discourse regarding the subject. Pilcher wished to see people live in inspiring and pleasant surroundings, and, as previously mentioned, believed that individuals should be able to easily commute between their place of work and their home. To Pilcher, it was important that families be able to plant roots in a community. With proper transit, a family would not have to resettle if a member

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<sup>133</sup> Unlike the airport, the abstract art was not as well received as the building, being called modernist blobs by the press, see: Flaman, “The Winnipeg Airport,” 193. The work of Bornstein is also significant, in that it connects to discussions happening in Europe and elsewhere on the “synthesis” of abstract art to modern architecture. On this facet of Bornstein's career, see: Jonneke Jobse, *De Stijl Continued: The Journal Structure (1958-1964): An Artists' Debate* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005).

<sup>134</sup> Flaman, “The Winnipeg Airport,” 183.

of the family changed jobs or if their offices relocated.<sup>135</sup> It is clear that Pilcher was concerned with how one's home was situated in relation to the spaces of one's public life.<sup>136</sup>

In the spring of 1960, Pilcher was invited to speak at a symposium on housing, organized as part of the Provincial Council of Women's semi-annual meeting. She spoke alongside three others in the profession: Hugh Malcolmson, from the Department of Health and Public Welfare; T. W. Robinson, President of the Co-Operative Housing Association of Manitoba, and; David Buchanan, architect with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Lord was the chair of the symposium, which confirms that Lord and Pilcher met on at least one occasion. Reports of the symposium make it clear that Pilcher, like Lord, believed that housing is a basic necessity then not available to all Winnipeg citizens. These reports claim that Pilcher was critical of the current state of housing in Manitoba. This was reflected in the coverage of the event, with local headlines citing Pilcher's comments that "it was shocking that government mortgages were tools in the manipulation of the economy."<sup>137</sup> Pilcher urged that housing conditions must be improved, arguing that low-income people are like everyone else, just with less income, and that they too are influenced by their surroundings.<sup>138</sup>

### **A Nuclear Shelter in Winnipeg**

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<sup>135</sup> Green Blankstein Russell Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1.

<sup>136</sup> The lines of communication between one's home and one's work is a concept that Pilcher was concerned with throughout her career. Commenting on homes for seniors, Pilcher said that elderly people still like to work and as such, retirement villages or building should be built near a source of employment. See: "She Left Because She Was a Woman".

<sup>137</sup> "Mortgage Handling Called 'Shocking' by Architect," *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 7, 1960 and "Packed Two-Day Agenda of Council Covers Many Matters of Concerns," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, May 11, 1960.

<sup>138</sup> "Mortgage Handling Called 'Shocking' by Architect" and "Packed Two-Day Agenda of Council Covers Many Matters of Concerns".

Pilcher's approach to town planning can be further discerned through news coverage of a project for which she was hired to work on. Pilcher was commissioned by then conservative MP Laurier Régnier to design an underground car park that could act as a nuclear shelter. The proposal saw the car park extending from the Portage and Main intersection to the downtown Hudson's Bay building, burrowing approximately 1.6 kilometers below one of Winnipeg's main traffic arteries. When the project was proposed in 1960, Pilcher was interviewed by the *Winnipeg Tribune*, stating: "Unless present trends in housing and provision of other functions of a city are drastically altered, underground parking seems to be the only way out of our present difficulties."<sup>139</sup> A year later, Pilcher was interviewed by the local press again when Alderman Mark Danzker announced that he would be asking Winnipeg's city council to consider building the underground shelter. Pilcher argued that that the project would solve some of the major issues facing the city, including its disintegrating downtown that was gradually being taken over by surface area parking lots.<sup>140</sup>

Pilcher saw the duality of the project as a "happy coincidence," but it is clear that she was more interested in bringing people back to Winnipeg's downtown than she was in the construction of a nuclear shelter.<sup>141</sup> Reflecting on her first impression of the city's downtown, Pilcher said: "I looked out my hotel room and all I could see was flat areas of dirty snow and

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<sup>139</sup> "Nuclear Shelter Plan Unveiled: They'd Also be Parks for Autos," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 20, 1960.

<sup>140</sup> When the project was proposed a second time, Pilcher suggested the city build the parking lot under Broadway, see: "Planner Sees Shelter as Cash or Death Issue," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 19, 1961. Alderman Danzker did bring a motion to City Council on August 21, 1961. On September 5, 1961, it was moved that the motion be referred to the Special Committee on New City Hall, as parking facilities would be needed by city employees. No reference to the project was made in the existing documentation of this committee. See: Council Minutes, City of Winnipeg Archives.

<sup>141</sup> "Planner Sees Shelter as Cash or Death Issue".



billboards.”<sup>142</sup> Lack of parking was (and continues to be) a reason many avoided visiting the city’s core. Pilcher believed that the construction of a nuclear shelter that would otherwise function as an underground parkade would allow Winnipeggers to get out of their cars, walk around, and enjoy their surroundings. The project was never realized, and many of Pilcher’s comments regarding the state of Winnipeg’s downtown are echoed by urban planners today, almost sixty years later.<sup>143</sup>

### **Issues of Authorship and Collaboration in Architecture**

Elizabeth Darling has argued that the act of drawing is too often conflated with the act of designing. She proposes, instead, that the act of designing (read: creating) is a collaborative effort, encompassing the ideas that came before the drawings to the influences of those who later engage with the built space.<sup>144</sup> The field of architectural history has long prioritized drawings as one of the most significant methods in the study of the built environment. This emphasis has been in play in the existing scholarship on the Winnipeg International Air Terminal. The lead designers on the project, Brown and Thordarson, are the two names most frequently associated

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<sup>142</sup> “Planner Sees Shelter as Cash or Death Issue”.

<sup>143</sup> Winnipeg’s dependency on cars was heavily addressed in the 2018 mayoral election as there was also a plebiscite asking voters if the downtown Portage and Main intersection should be opened to pedestrians. The intersection had been closed for 40 years following the construction of an underground walkway system. Sixty-five percent of voters voted no, with the reasoning that it would slow down traffic. Further, Pilcher’s comments on surface area parking lots and lack of parking still ring true today. Winnipeg’s core is dominated by surface area parking lots and many Winnipeggers complain about the lack (and cost) of parking, especially in the Exchange District. For more information on these issues, see: Bartley Kives, “No Cause for Panic—or Celebration,” *CBC News*, July 13, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-downtown-construction-analysis-1.5208967>; Bartley Kives, “Portage and Main Plebiscite: 8 Things to Know Before you Vote,” *CBC News*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/portage-main-winnipeg-vote-analysis-1.4873778>; and Stephanie Tsicos, “‘A Pain in the Butt’: Where You’re Most Likely to Get a Parking Ticket in Winnipeg,” *CTV News Winnipeg*, February 14, 2019, <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/a-pain-in-the-butt-where-you-re-most-likely-to-get-a-parking-ticket-in-winnipeg-1.4296106>.

<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth Darling, “Elizabeth Denby or Maxwell Fry? A Matter of Attribution,” in *Women’s Places: Architecture and Design 1860-1960*, ed. Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 145.

with the terminal's design. However, as I demonstrated above, the project was successful due to the work of an entire team. While Pilcher did not sign her name on any of the drawings that remain of the project, her expertise in planning influenced the airport's overall design.

The tradition of ascribing the authorship of a building to a specific person often perpetuates the exclusion of the women who contribute so much to the built environment. Few women in post-war Canada registered as architects, a fact that meant that they were unable, legally, to sign a project's final drawings even if they were involved in its design. Many women, including Lord and Pilcher, made their contributions not only through the design of buildings but also through research, advocacy, and serving their communities as public figures. For example, in the case of Willow Park, Pilcher conducted some of the preliminary research on housing co-operatives that influenced the project that was eventually built in Winnipeg. I align myself with feminist architectural historians like Adams, Tancred, and Darling, who argue that dominant understandings of the terms "architecture" and "architect" are insufficient in that they continue to model single-author myth of architecture, a myth that does much to perpetuate exclusionary histories.<sup>145</sup> Expanding the frame of reference in this thesis, to lateral areas of influence, such as politics and the media, has allowed me to highlight Pilcher's contributions and more fully acknowledge her significance.

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<sup>145</sup> Adams and Tancred, *Designing Women* and Darling, "Elizabeth Denby or Maxwell Fry?".

## Conclusion

From the age of 16, Elizabeth Lord knew she wanted to be an architect. But she also knew that she wanted to have a family and be a mother. In 1971, Lord was interviewed by *The Winnipeg Tribune* and asked to reflect on her 25-year career as an architect. When asked if she had been successful, Lord responded: “Yes and no. Financially, no. But professional, yes. I set a landmark for women architects in Manitoba.”<sup>146</sup> This statement speaks significantly to Lord’s career: it was not simply about designing a great structure; it was about creating spaces, metaphorically and physically, for those who were often overlooked. Lord was not just an architect; she was a matriarch, a politician, a volunteer, and an activist. And in all aspects of her life, she advocated for women.<sup>147</sup>

Lord’s commitment to women’s rights is made clear by the topics Lord chose to discuss with reporters. In the local press, Lord’s work was almost always discussed in terms of her gender. Headlines included “Where Did all the Bright Young Women Go?”; “Own Practice Long, Hard Pull Local Woman Architect Feels”; and, of course, “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture A Profession Women Can Practice at Home.”<sup>148</sup> When Marcel Breuer was infamously quoted in the *New York Times* saying “how much is tradition and how much is

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<sup>146</sup> “Own Practice Long, Hard Pull Local Woman Architect Feels”.

<sup>147</sup> It is important to note that not all women were represented in Lord’s advocacy, or the advocacy of other settler women’s rights activists from this time. Much of Lord’s efforts benefitted middle-class, white, settler women. That being said, advocating for abortion rights and housing would benefit different populations. However, I never found any discussion on the part of either Lord or Pilcher that highlighted how a woman’s situation could be different based on other identifiers.

<sup>148</sup> “Where Did All the Bright Young Women Go?”; “Own Practice Long, Hard Pull Local Woman Architect Feels”; and “Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture A Profession Women Can Practice at Home.”.

biology, I don't know, but so far we just don't have great women architects," *The Winnipeg Tribune* turned to Lord for her opinion.<sup>149</sup>

Pilcher, on the other hand, was linked almost exclusively to her career as an architect and planner, a fact that was reflected in her portrayal in Winnipeg's popular press. Pilcher's gender was not addressed in any significant capacity. Headlines included "Architect likes Winnipeg Spaciousness"; "Australian Planner Sees Scope for Planning"; and "Planner Sees Shelter as Cash or Death Issue."<sup>150</sup> Unlike Lord, Pilcher was never called a homemaker or a woman architect; she was an architect, a town planner, and a consultant. The only instance in which Pilcher's gender is discussed is in an article published in the Australian newspaper *The Sun-Herald*, with the headline "She Left Because She Was a Woman."<sup>151</sup> Even then, the majority of the article focuses on Pilcher's education and training, not her gender.<sup>152</sup>

This difference in the media treatment of the two Elizabeths begs the question, why was Lord's gender a focus, and Pilcher's not? Several hypotheses present themselves. First, the spaces in which these two women architects conducted their work were gendered. Lord worked from home, a space where, traditionally, a woman's labour would take place. In contrast, Pilcher worked in what was seen as a professional setting: the male-dominated office. The projects they designed were also gendered. Lord worked on small-scale, domestic projects whereas Pilcher

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<sup>149</sup> "No Great Women Architects So Far Says Marcel Breuer," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, April 6, 1971. Lord's interview on Breuer's comments took place on the same page, see: "Own Practice Long, Hard Pull Local Woman Architect Feels".

<sup>150</sup> "Architect Likes Winnipeg Spaciousness"; "Australian Planner Sees Scope for Planning"; and "Planner Sees Shelter as Cash or Death Issue".

<sup>151</sup> In this interview, Pilcher comments on how it is "evil" and "hurtful" that there is a "distinguishing between men and women when both are equally suited for a job" The article explains that Pilcher left Australia because her gender "was constantly getting in the way of her being accepted for a good job in town-planning" but that she had no issue finding employment in Canada and the United States, see: "She Left Because She Was a Woman".

<sup>152</sup> "She Left Because she was a Woman".

contributed to the design of commercial and public buildings, like the Winnipeg International Air Terminal. And finally, their personal lives were gendered. In addition to her work, Lord worked at home as a way of taking care of her family, yet also gave her time and labour to organizations like the women's councils. Pilcher, alternatively, did not have a family while living in Winnipeg and spent much of her time dedicated to her paid work at the GBR office.

These factors influenced how Lord and Pilcher were perceived by the architectural profession and the popular press (and by extension the public). However, that is not to say that Lord and Pilcher did not have agency in how they were perceived. Lord wanted a career and a family; she was passionate about residential design, and she strongly believed in her advocacy work. Gender was not a topic of conversation that was forced upon Lord, she actively engaged with the subject. Pilcher approached her work differently. She presented her identity as one that was closely linked to her career as an architect and planner.

This thesis has demonstrated that women faced many barriers when entering the architectural profession in Canada. Nevertheless, there were many women, like Lord and Pilcher, who made significant contributions to the field. Yet, they, like many other women, remain overlooked by dominant architectural histories. Winnipeg, a city whose architecture of this period also gets overlooked, offers an interesting place to examine the work of women architects working in the post-war period.

During this time, Winnipeg developed an impressive stock of modernist buildings. The architects and designers of these buildings were influenced by the modernism of the Bauhaus and International Style but adapted these expressions so that their designs would respond appropriately to the prairie landscape. The School of Architecture in the city had a major influence on the architects who shaped Winnipeg in this period. However, the School is also noteworthy for having a woman on staff as early as 1939 and a minimum of at least five other

women staff in the subsequent decade. The School also had the highest number of women graduates who went on to become registered architects between the 1920s and 1960s—Lord being one of them.

Lord's 1939 thesis project (figs. 8-17) reflects the developments that occurred at the School through its gradual adoption of a modernist architectural pedagogy. As a result, it also foreshadows the modernism that would ultimately flourish in Winnipeg. The projects Lord designed have been difficult to document, and as a result this thesis has traced Lord's career largely through her political involvement and work advocating for proper housing. Through this analysis, it has been made clear that Lord was primarily concerned with how the spaces she designed would affect those who inhabited them. This echoes the aforementioned quote claiming that Lord cares more about people than homes.<sup>153</sup> She was especially concerned with how spaces had the potential of hindering the lives of women and used her position to assert that women ought to be part of the design process of residential developments.

If Lord's career could be defined by her interest in housing, Pilcher's could be defined by her interest in town planning, and more specifically, designing spaces that allowed for people to access resources and their places of employment. Pilcher worked collaboratively with other staff at GBR, and as a result, issues of authorship complicate the process of identifying a complete list of projects. However, her work on the Winnipeg International Air Terminal allows for a conclusion that she was concerned with how people move to and from, and within, spaces. Pilcher also participated in larger discussions regarding issues facing the city's downtown—once again indicative of her concern with how people move within spaces.

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<sup>153</sup> "Elizabeth M. Lord Finds Architecture a Profession Women Can Practice At Home".

This thesis has shown how Lord and Pilcher were active participants in both the discourse and design work that greatly influenced Winnipeg's built environment in the post-war period. Lord and Pilcher navigated their careers differently, but they both were able to negotiate their own place within the architectural profession largely according to their terms. Through their work, Lord and Pilcher made a lasting mark on the city's urban landscape.

## Figures

Figure 1. Photograph of Elizabeth M. Lord taken by *The Winnipeg Tribune* photographer Hugh Allan Fonds. The photograph was published in *The Winnipeg Tribune* on March 10, 1955. Hugh Allan fonds. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.





Figure 2: Elizabeth M. Pilcher is greeted by Cecil Blankstein at the Winnipeg Airport, December 1958. Green Blankstein Russell fonds. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 3: Elizabeth M. Pilcher working at the GBR offices, c. 1960. Green Blankstein Russell fonds. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 4: Elizabeth M. Pilcher working at the GBR offices. Green Blankstein Russell fonds. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 5: Elizabeth M. Pilcher working at the GBR offices. Green Blankstein Russell fonds. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

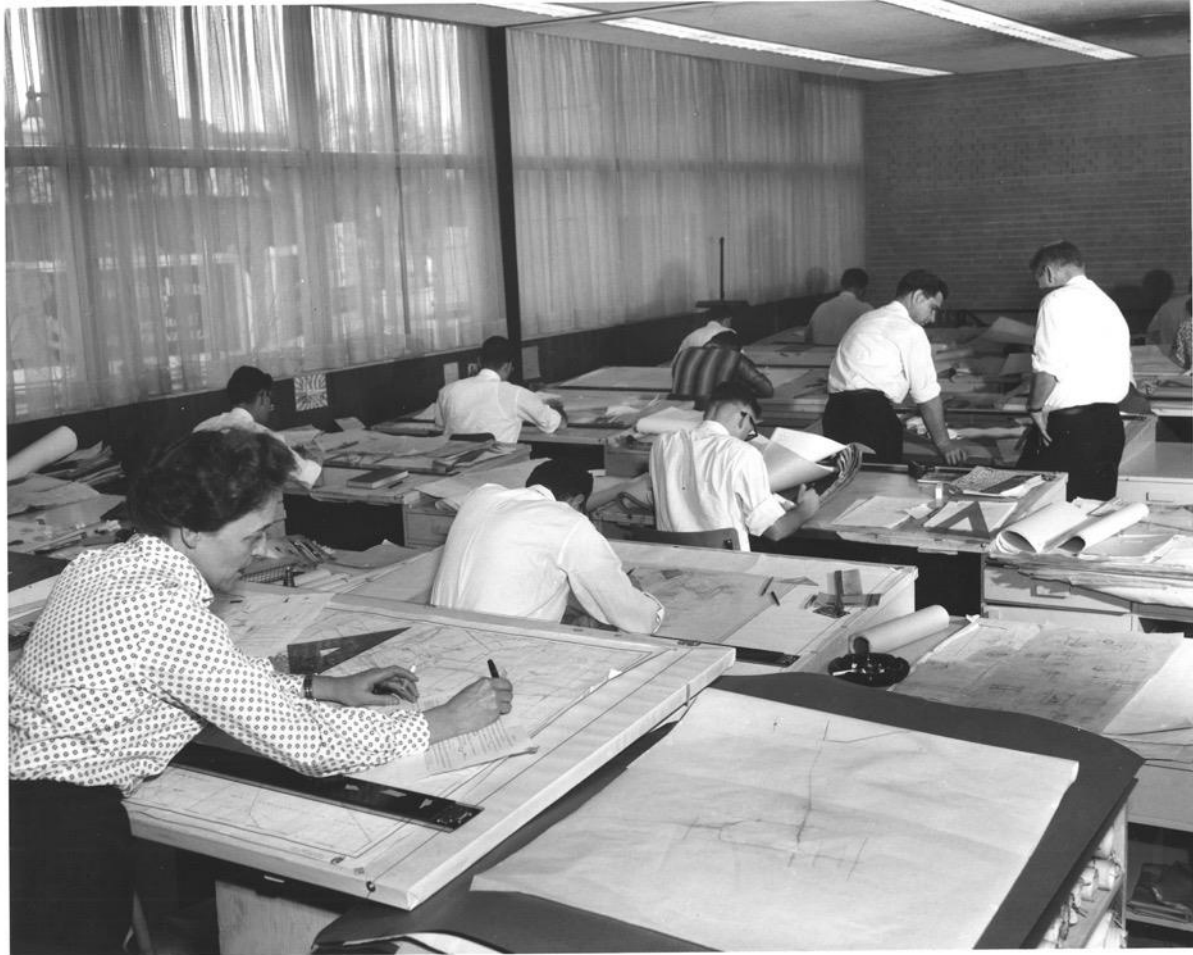


Figure 6: Entrance to Elizabeth Dafoe Library, November 1953. University Relations and Information Office fonds. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Figure 7: John A Russell Building, 1969. University Relations and Information Office fonds. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Figure 8: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 1. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

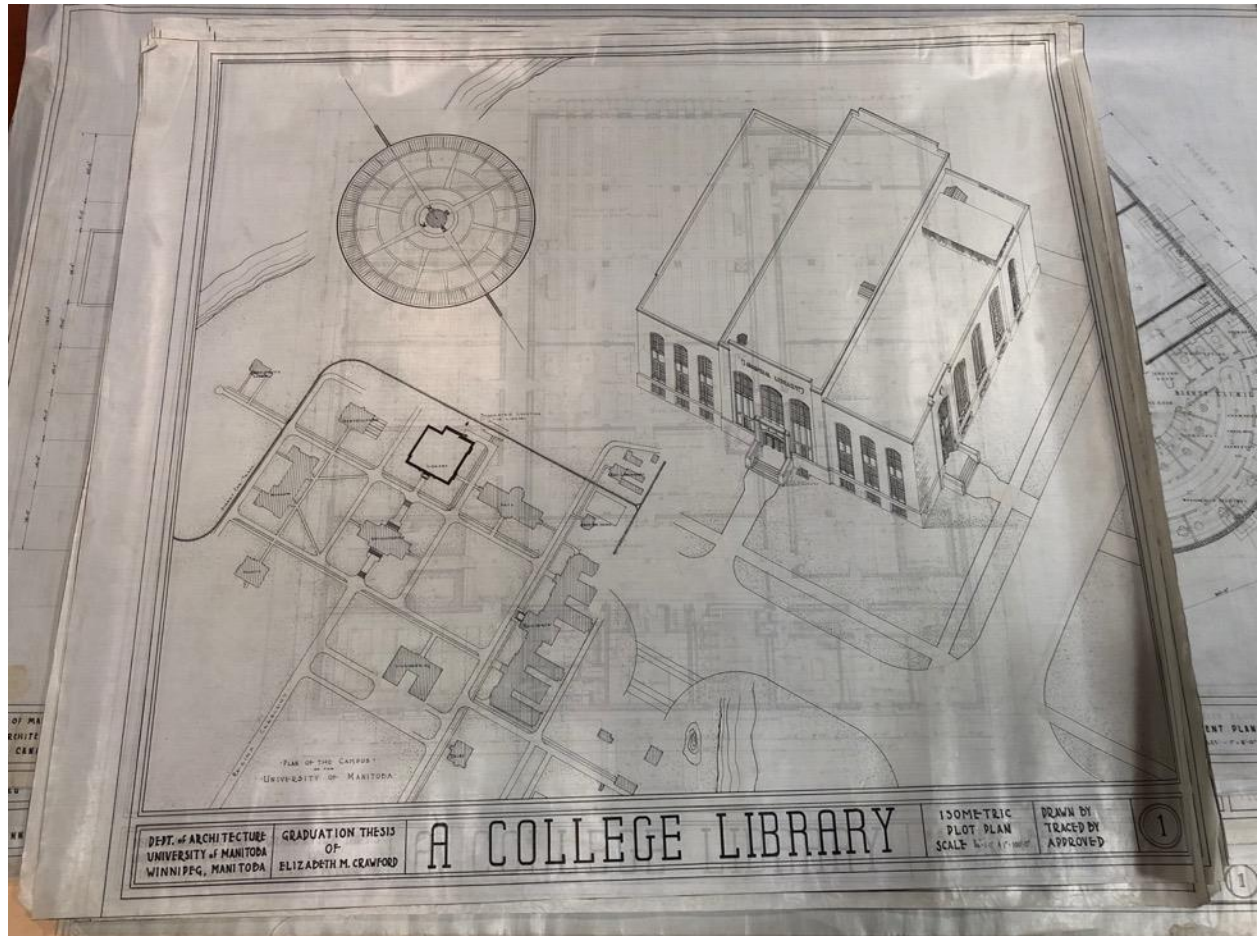






Figure 10: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 3. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

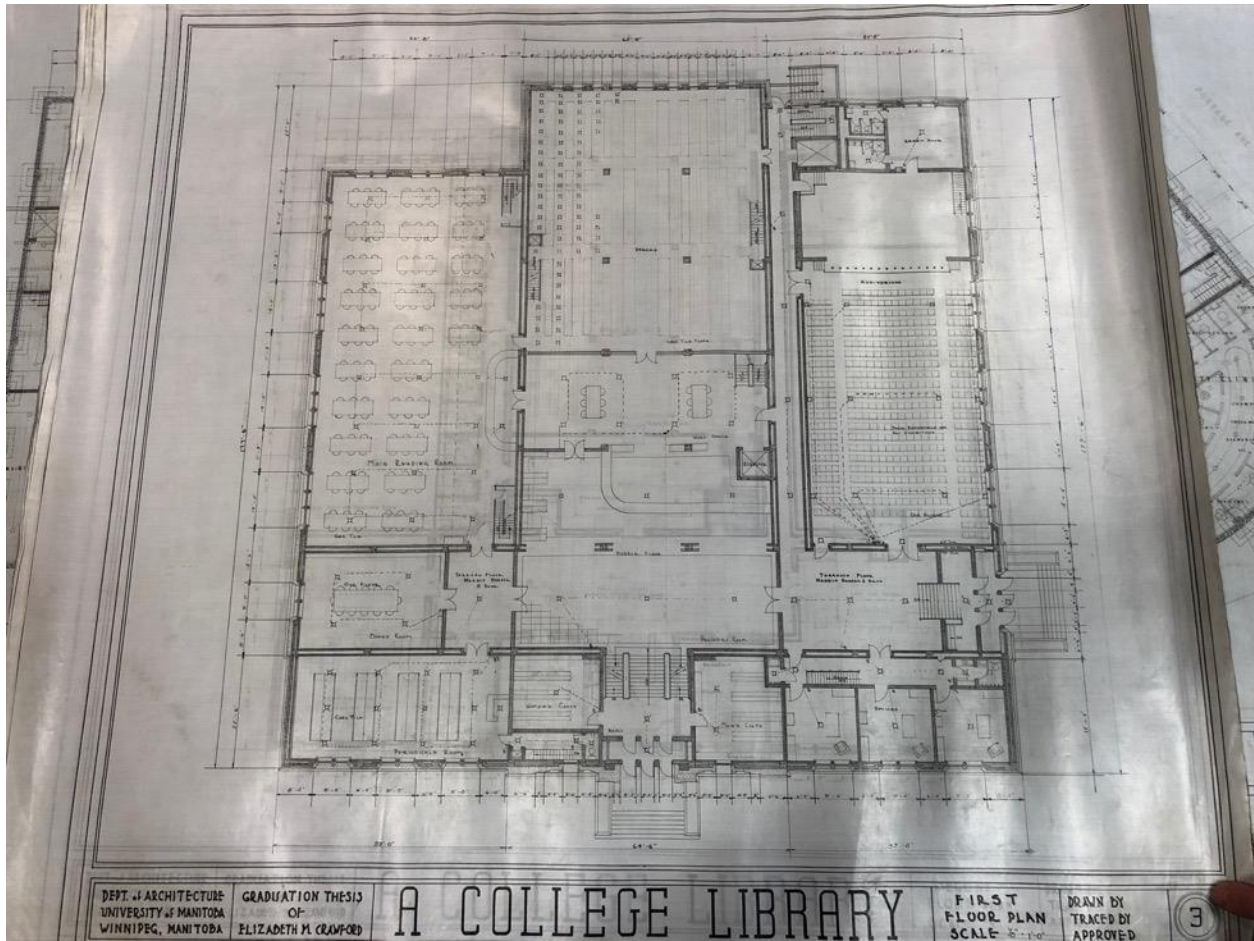


Figure 11: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 4. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

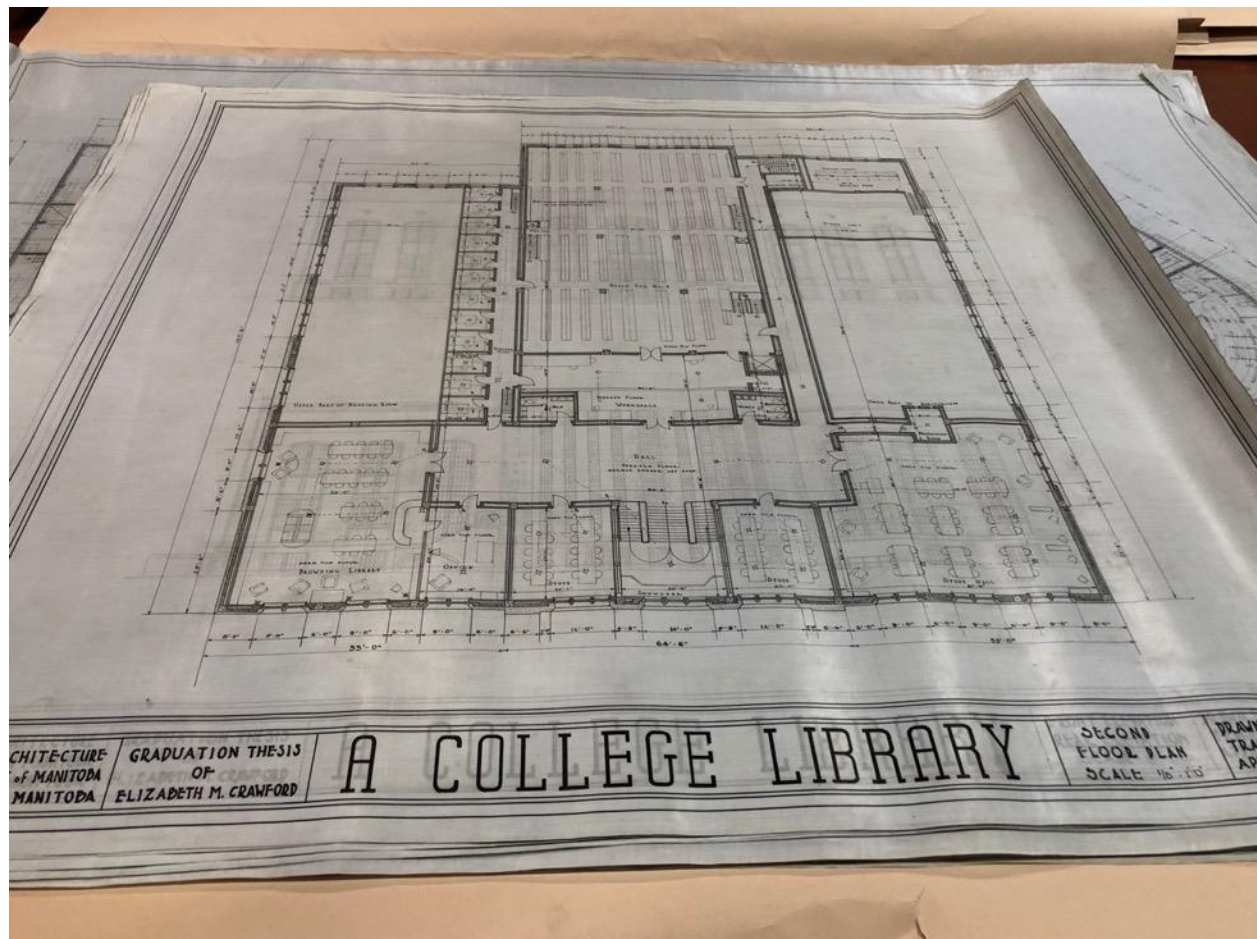


Figure 12: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 5. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

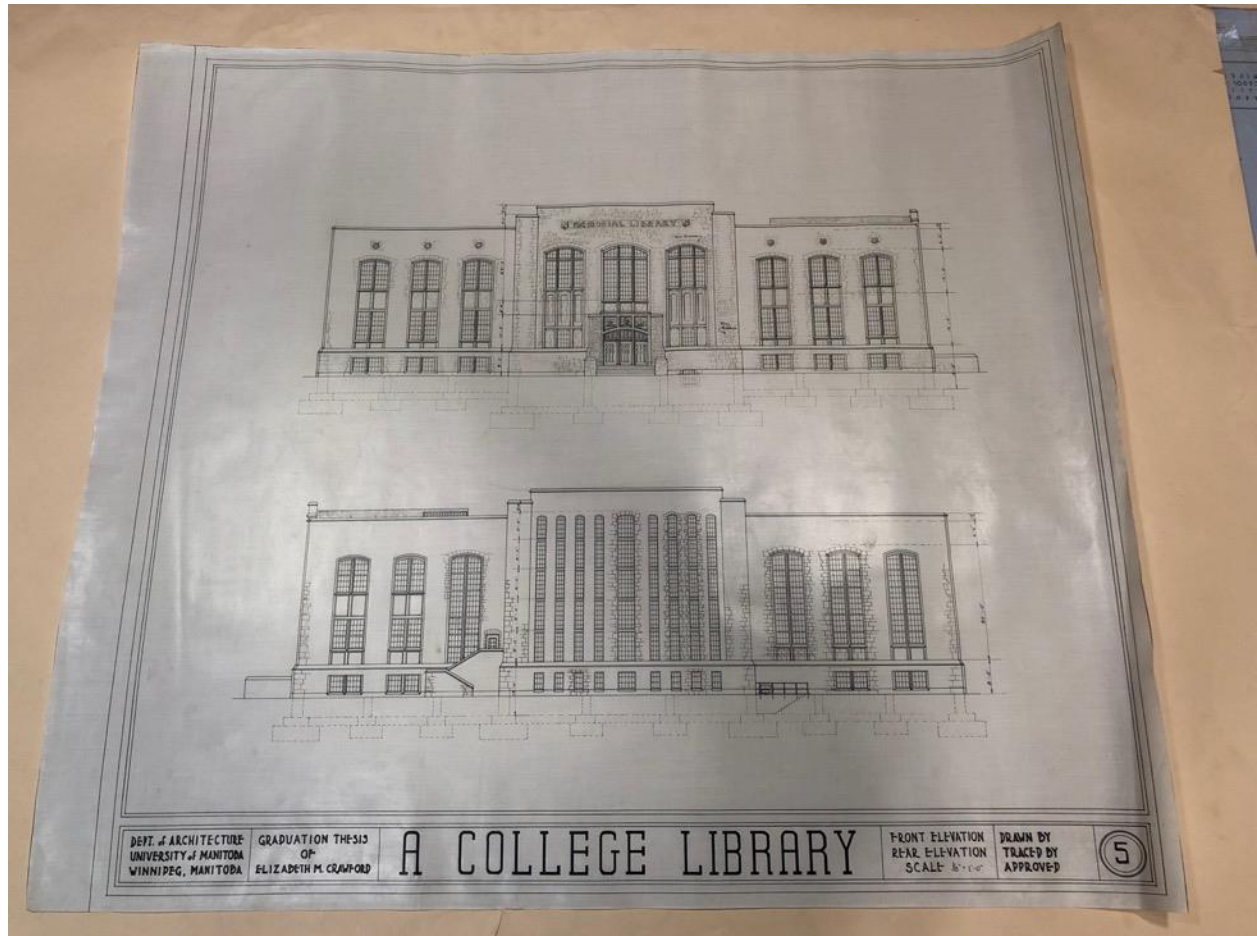


Figure 13: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 6. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

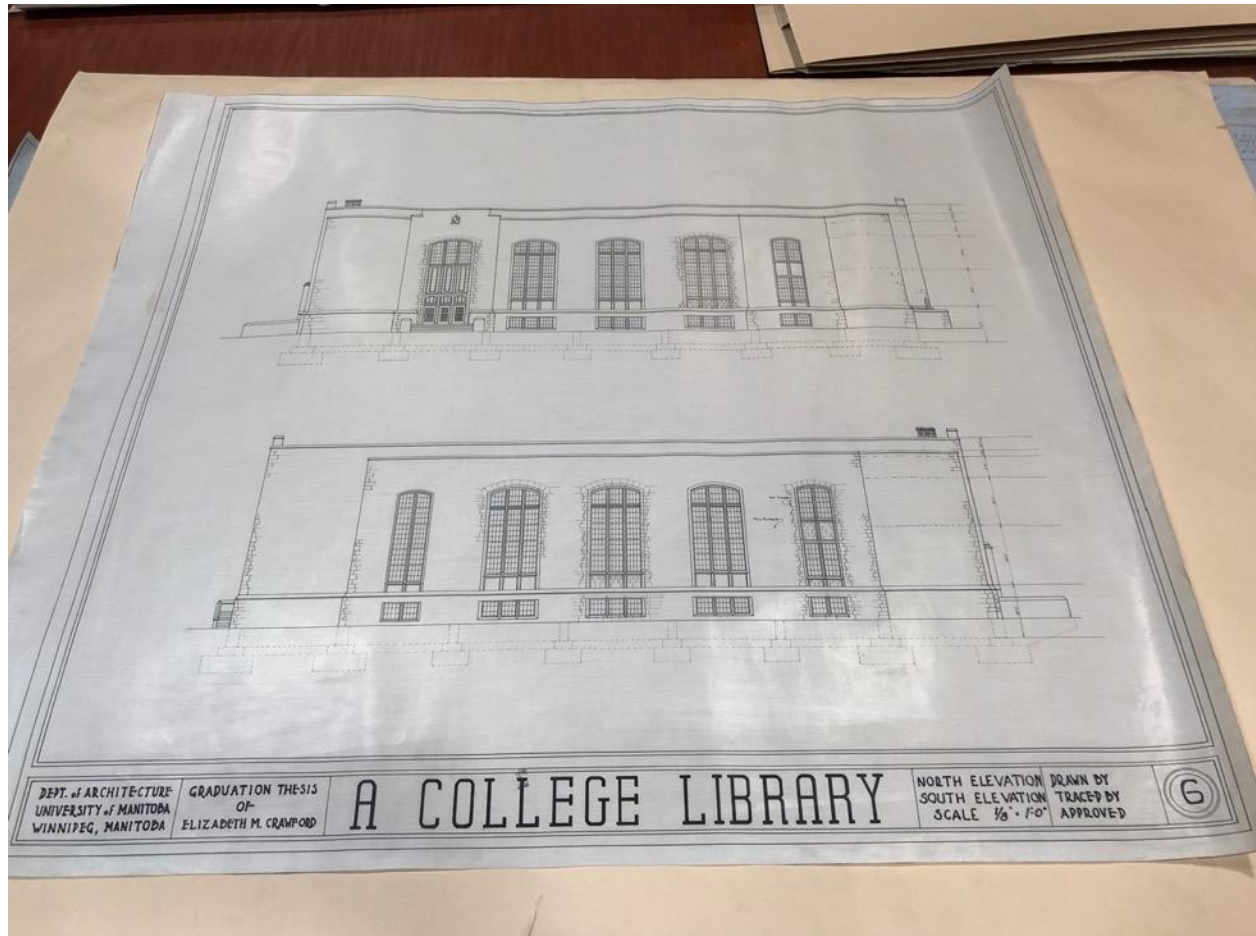


Figure 14: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 7. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

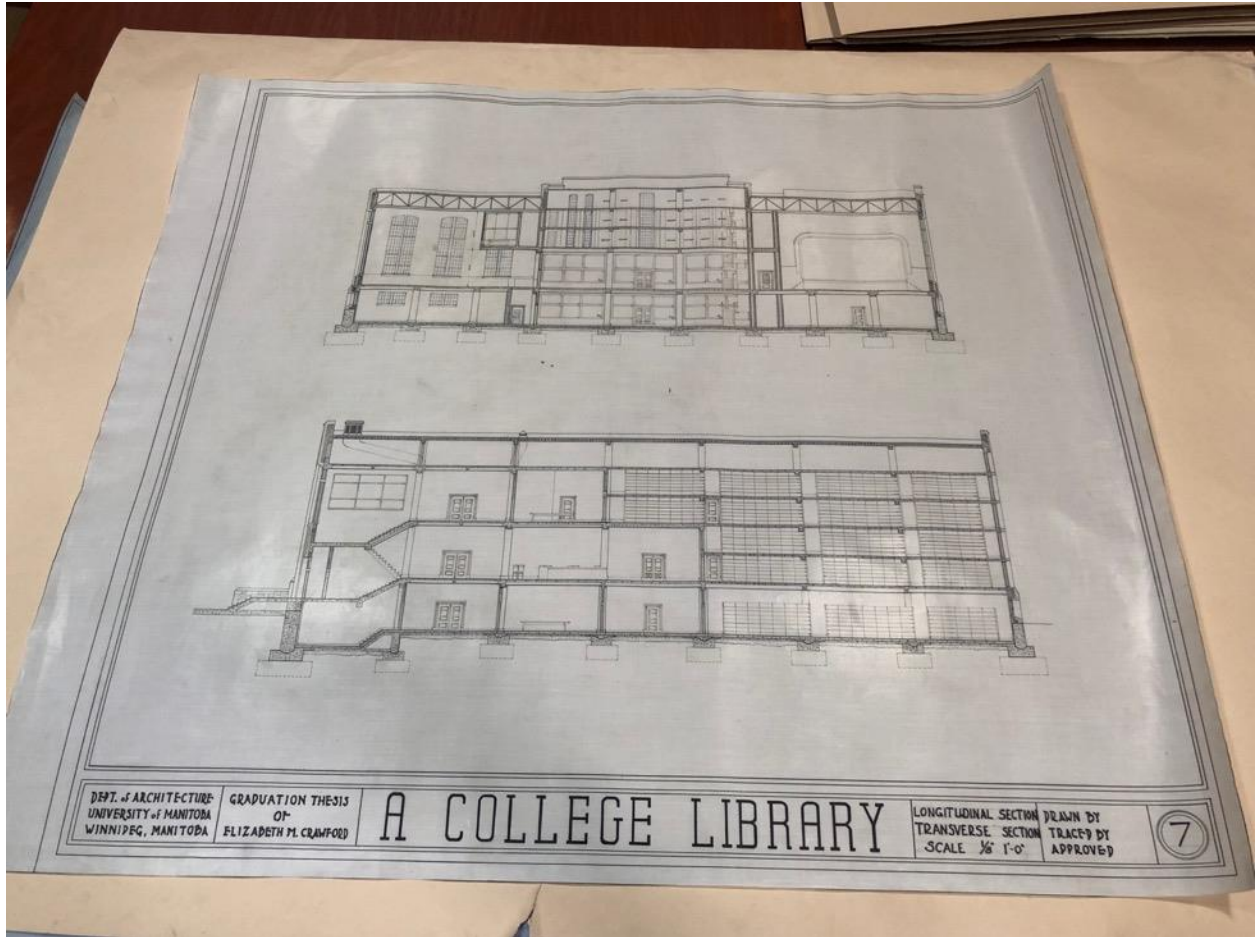


Figure 15: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 8. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

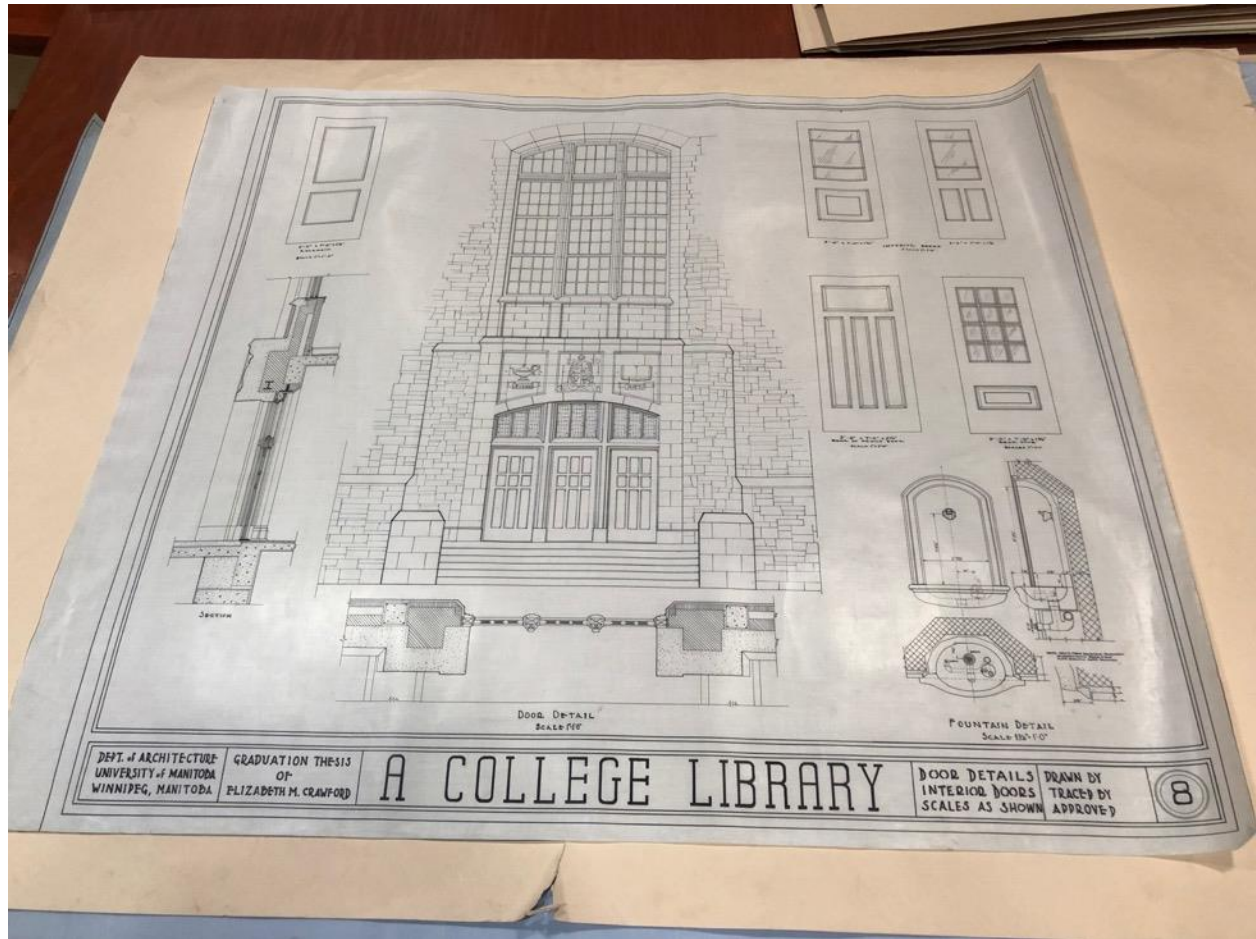


Figure 16: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 9. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

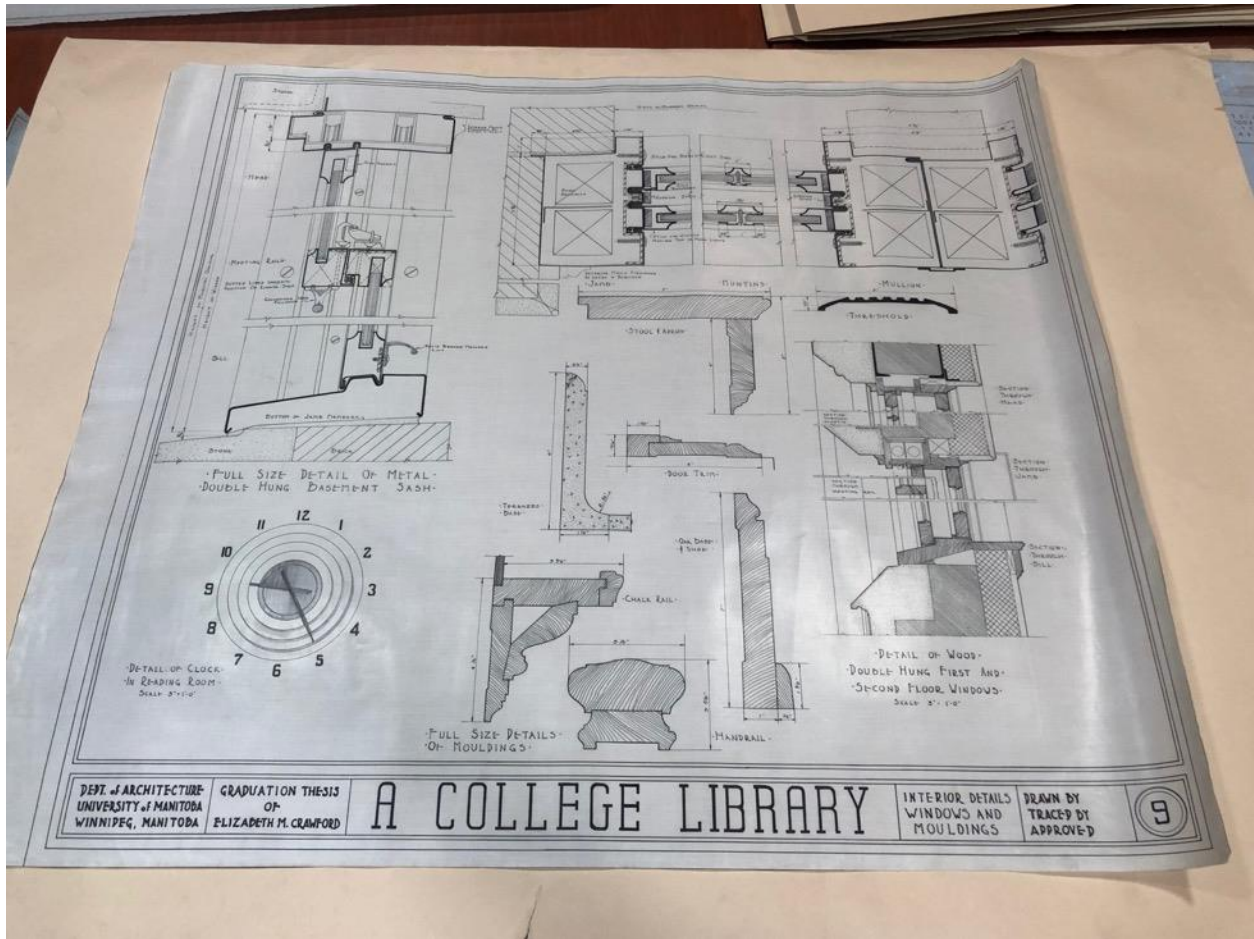


Figure 17: Elizabeth M. Lord's 1939 Thesis Project. Sheet 10. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

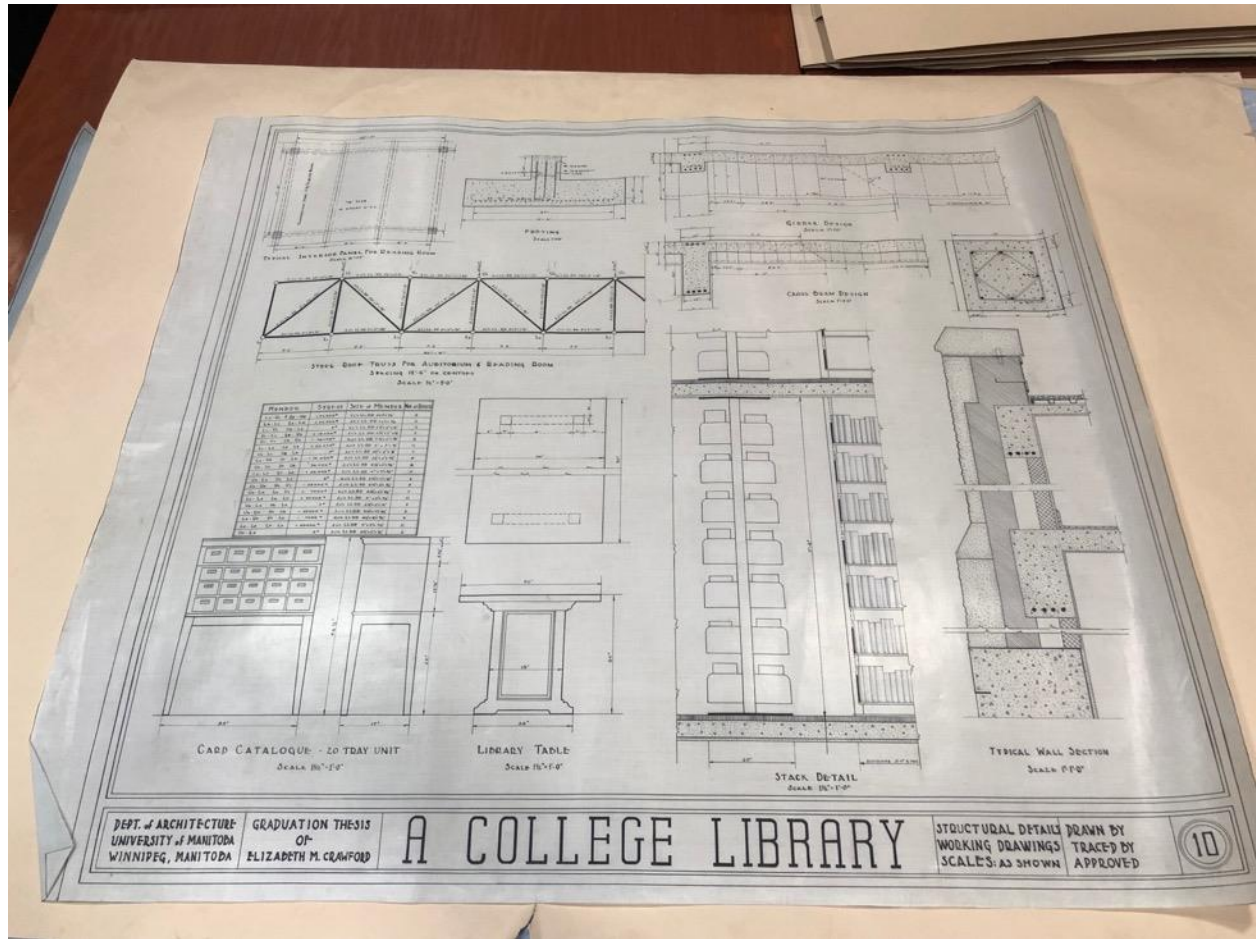




Figure 18: Photograph of Elizabeth M. Lord's model for the Winnipeg City Hall Competition. *Report on the Competition: A City Hall for Winnipeg*, n.d. Vertical Files. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

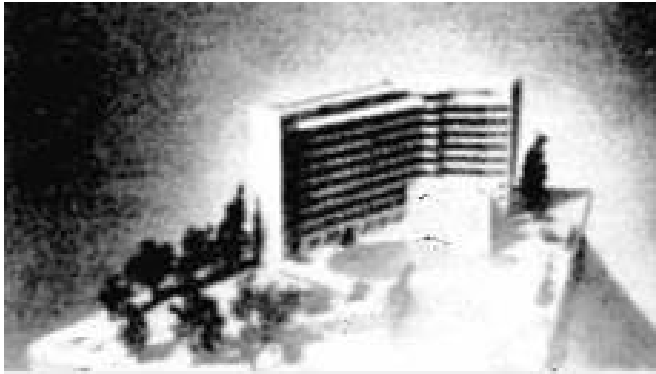


Figure 19: Map of the boundaries and candidates in the Winnipeg Election of 1960. "Map Shows Boundaries, Candidates In Metro's 10 Divisions." *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 15, 1960.

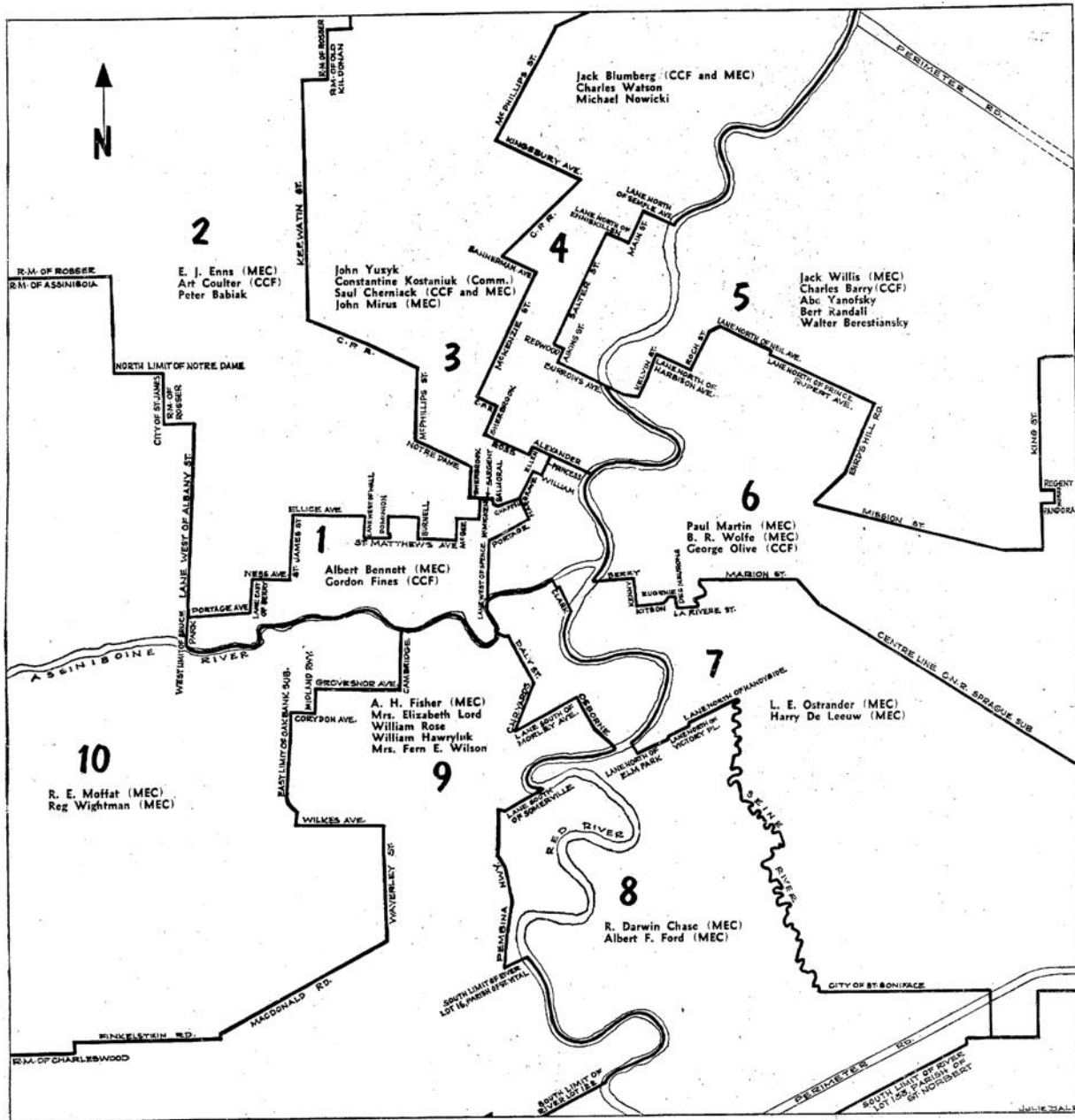


Figure 20: Elizabeth M. Pilcher curling in Winnipeg, c. 1960. Green Blankstein Russell fonds. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 21: The winners of the GBR Bonspiel, c. 1960. Green Blankstein Russell fonds, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 22: Photograph of the Winnipeg International Airport, n.d. Vertical Files. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



Figure 23: Winnipeg International Airport, drawing by Bernard Brown, 1958. GBR fonds. Stantec.

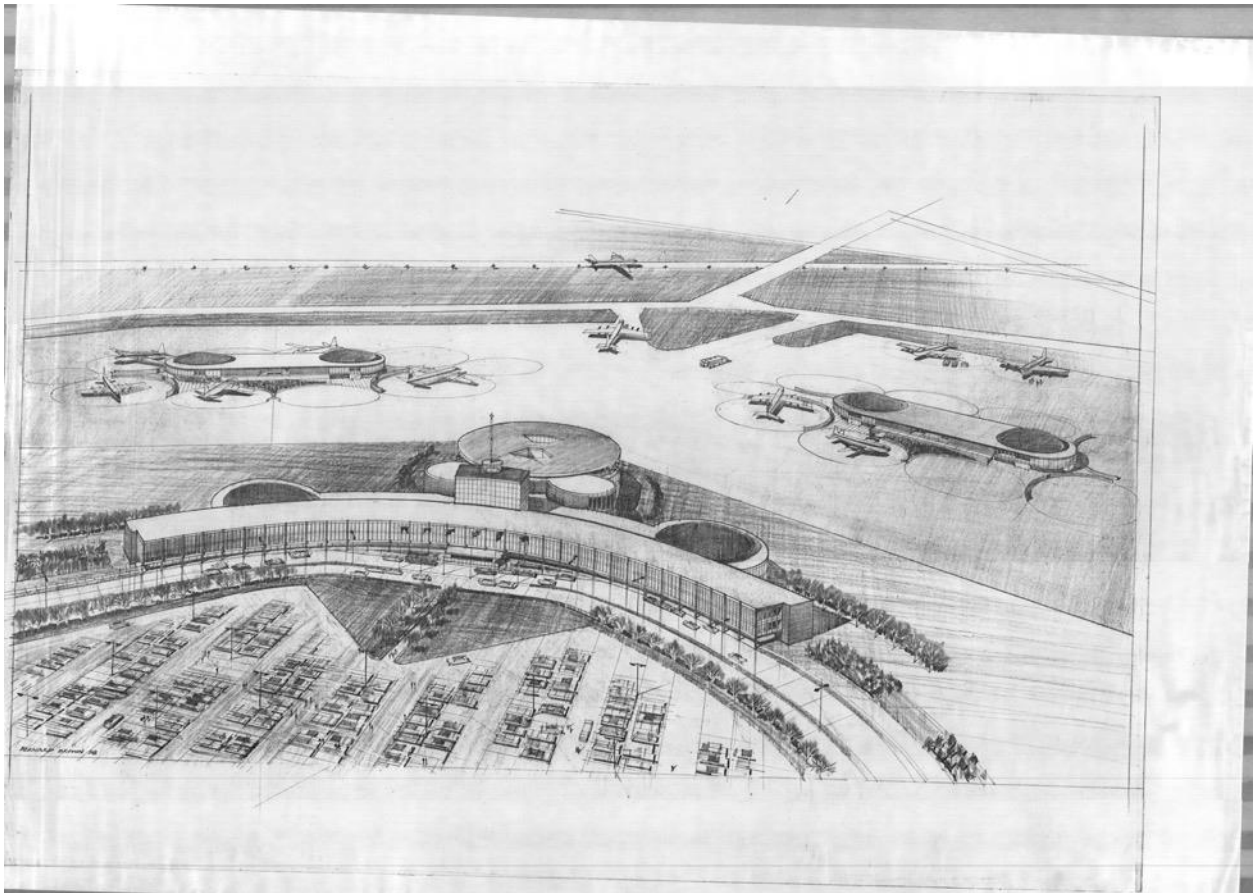


Figure 24: Winnipeg International Airport, drawing by Bernard Brown, 1960. GBR fonds. Stantec.

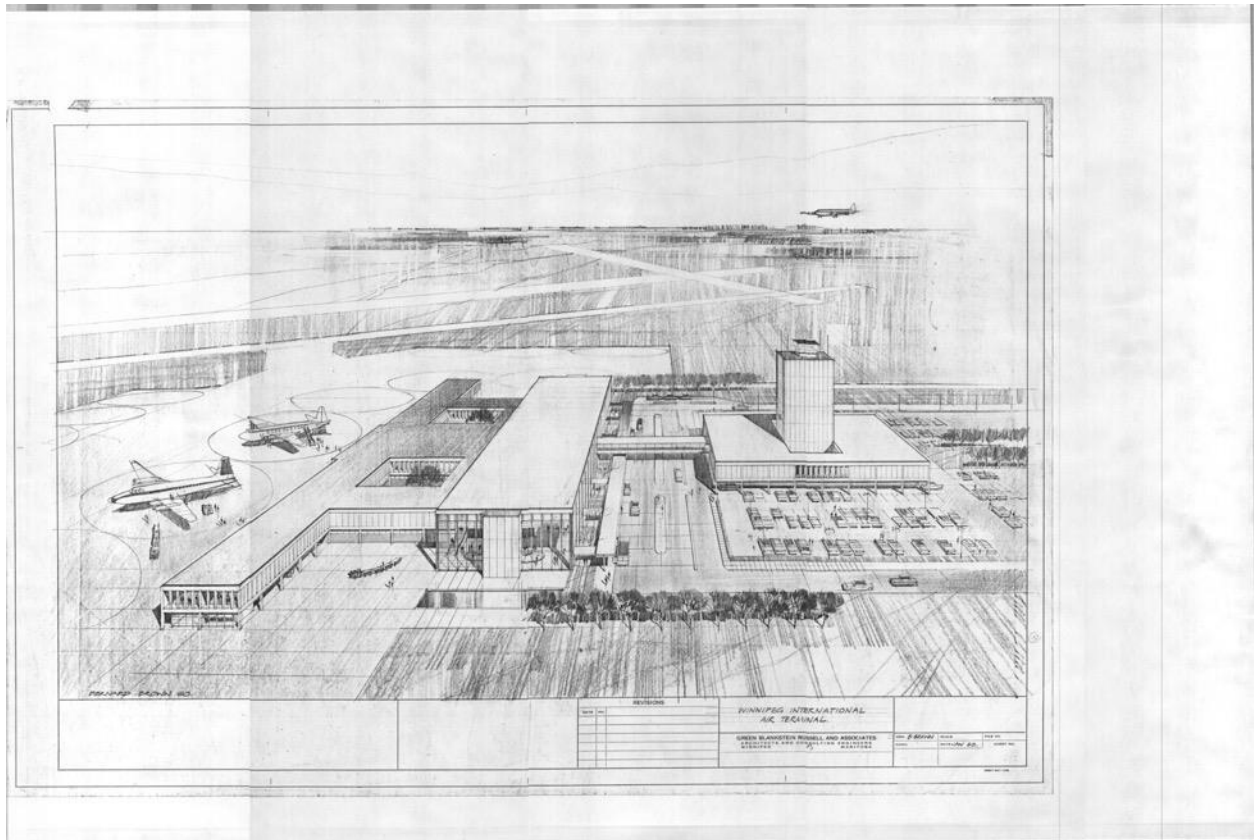


Figure 25: Exterior of Winnipeg International Airport, c. 1964. Vertical Files. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.





Figure 26: Interior, Winnipeg International Airport, n.d. Henry Kalen fonds. University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.



Figure 27: Eli Bornstein's work titled *Structuralist Relief in Fifteen Parts* installed at the Winnipeg International Air Terminal, n.d. "U of M Seeks City Funds to Display Old Airport Artwork." *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 5, 2012.

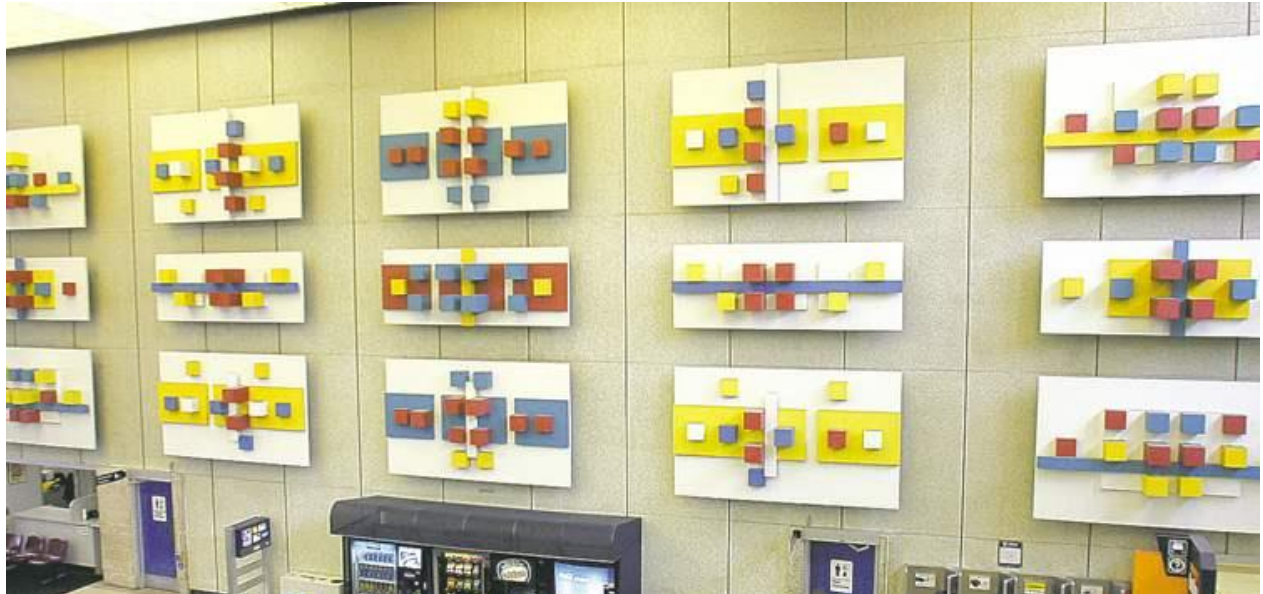


Figure 28: John Graham's work titled *Northern Lights* can be seen in the background. Interior of the Winnipeg International Airport, n.d. Vertical Files. Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.



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