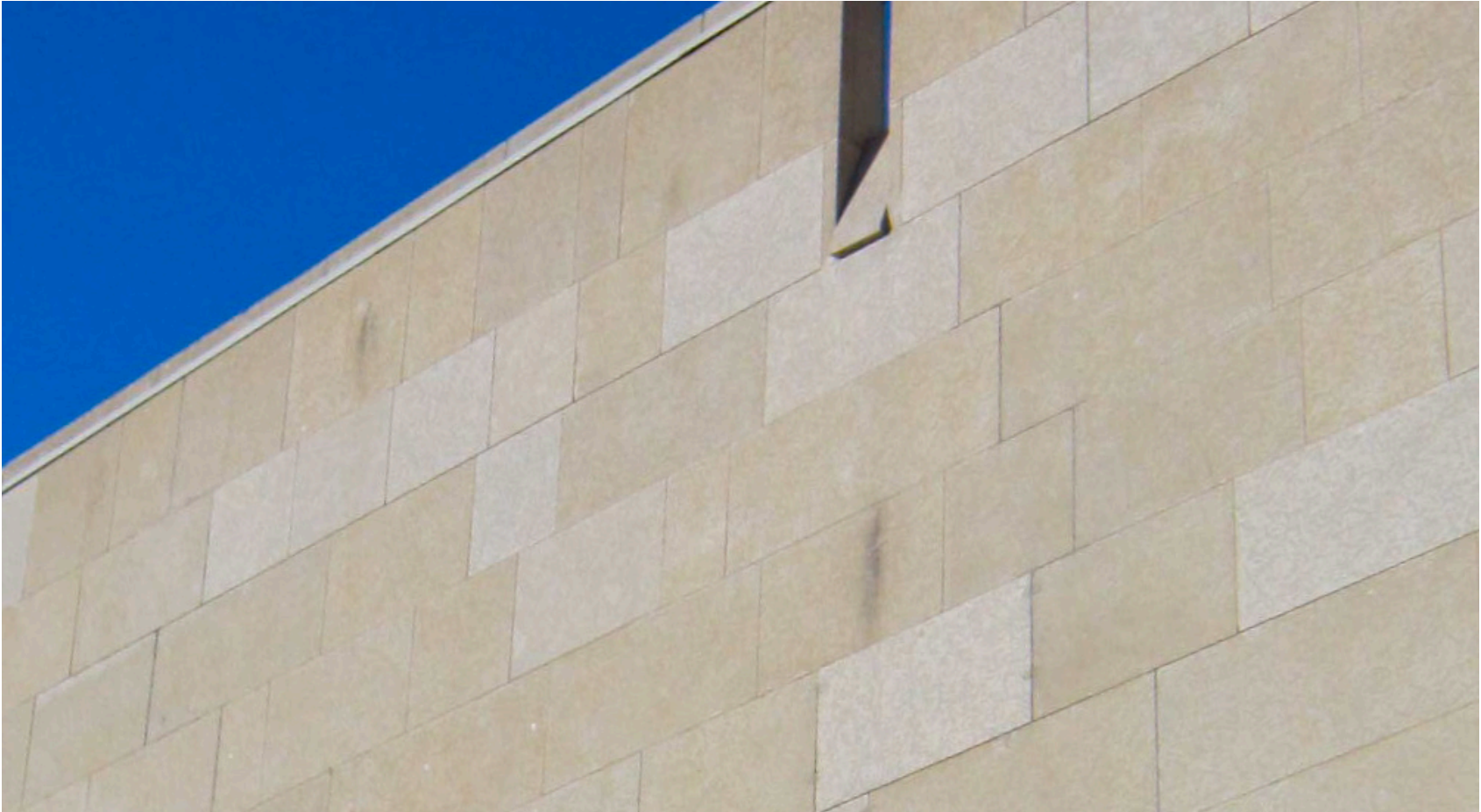


TYNDALL STONE





Cover: Winnipeg Art Gallery, Gustavo da Roza, 1971. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013. Left: Garson, Manitoba Tyndall stone quarry. Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

No other building material is as synonymous with Manitoba architecture as Tyndall stone. A form of mottled, cream-coloured limestone, Tyndall stone is quarried near Garson, Manitoba, about 45 kilometres from central Winnipeg. The stone is typified by the visible presence of fossilized nautilus, trilobites, coral and other ancient animal life, which make even its most contemporary uses distinctly rooted in the past.



*Lower Fort Garry
exterior walls, 1832.
Photo: Parks
Canada.*

Tyndall stone's historical character is also attributable to its deep historical roots in Manitoba construction. Indeed, the material has been a common feature of the province's architecture since the earliest days of European settlement. One of the first examples of its use is at Lower Fort Garry, of 1832, where the stone is found in such elements as the thick encircling walls and in the governor's residence. Other notable early Tyndall stone structures include St. Andrew's-on-the-Red Anglican Church, of 1845, where Tyndall stone is formed into a simplified type of Gothic revival architecture.



Manitoba Legislative Building, Frank Worthington Simon and Henry Boddington, 1920. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013

In the years since, Tyndall stone has continued to hold a central and characteristic place in the architecture of the province. The stone has frequently been the material of choice for significant civic structures, lending a sense of dignity, resilience and localism. One of most prominent examples of Tyndall stone in this respect is the Beaux-Arts 1920 Manitoba Legislative Building (450 Broadway, Frank Worthington Simon and Henry Boddington). Here, the stone was used comprehensively throughout the interior and exterior.



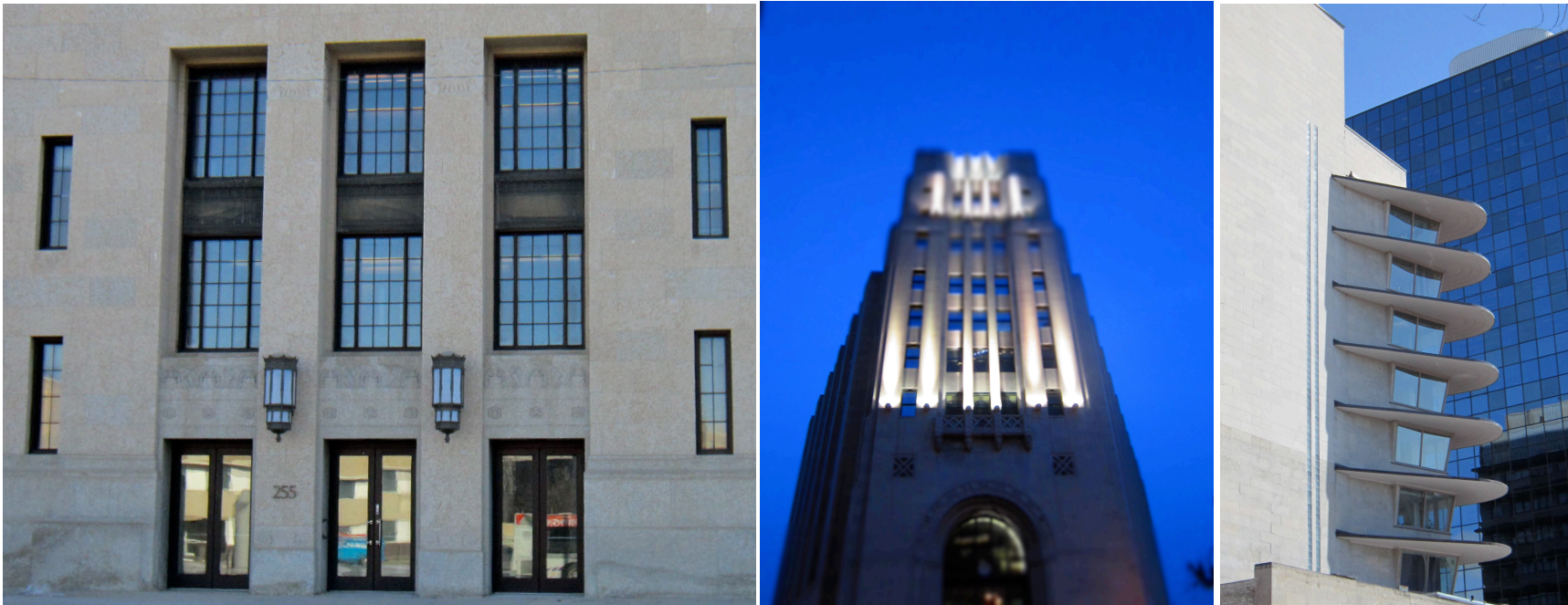
Left: St. Norbert Trappist Monastery chapel, 1903-07. Right: Westminster United Church, J. H. G. Russell, 1910-12. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2012.

Tyndall stone, however, has not only been used for prominent governmental building but also appears in a wide variety of types of structures and historic styles. Indeed, the use of Tyndall stone forms a through-line connecting a number of examples of local architecture to each other, to historic precedents elsewhere and to the regional terrain. For instance, following the example of local nineteenth century churches, the material was a frequent choice in the design of Winnipeg places of worship. Early twentieth century precedents include parts of the Romanesque revival St. Norbert Trappist Monastery chapel (1903-07) and the Gothic revival Westminster United Church (J. H. G. Russell, 1910-12). The stone was also a frequent choice to accent academic, commercial and residential buildings of brick, stucco and wood.



Left: Broadway Disciples Church, Moody Moore and Partners, 1969-70. Above: Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, 1965-67) Photos: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

A great number of other early Winnipeg religious buildings make use of Tyndall stone, including the 1906 St. Boniface Cathedral (Marchand and Haskell) and Augustine and Knox United Churches (also by J. H. G. Russell, 1903-04 and 1914-18). The material appears, as well, in such post-war modernist spiritual buildings as Shaarey Zedek Synagogue (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, 1950), Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, 1965-67) and Broadway Disciples Church (Moody Moore and Partners, 1969-70; formerly St. Stephen's Broadway).



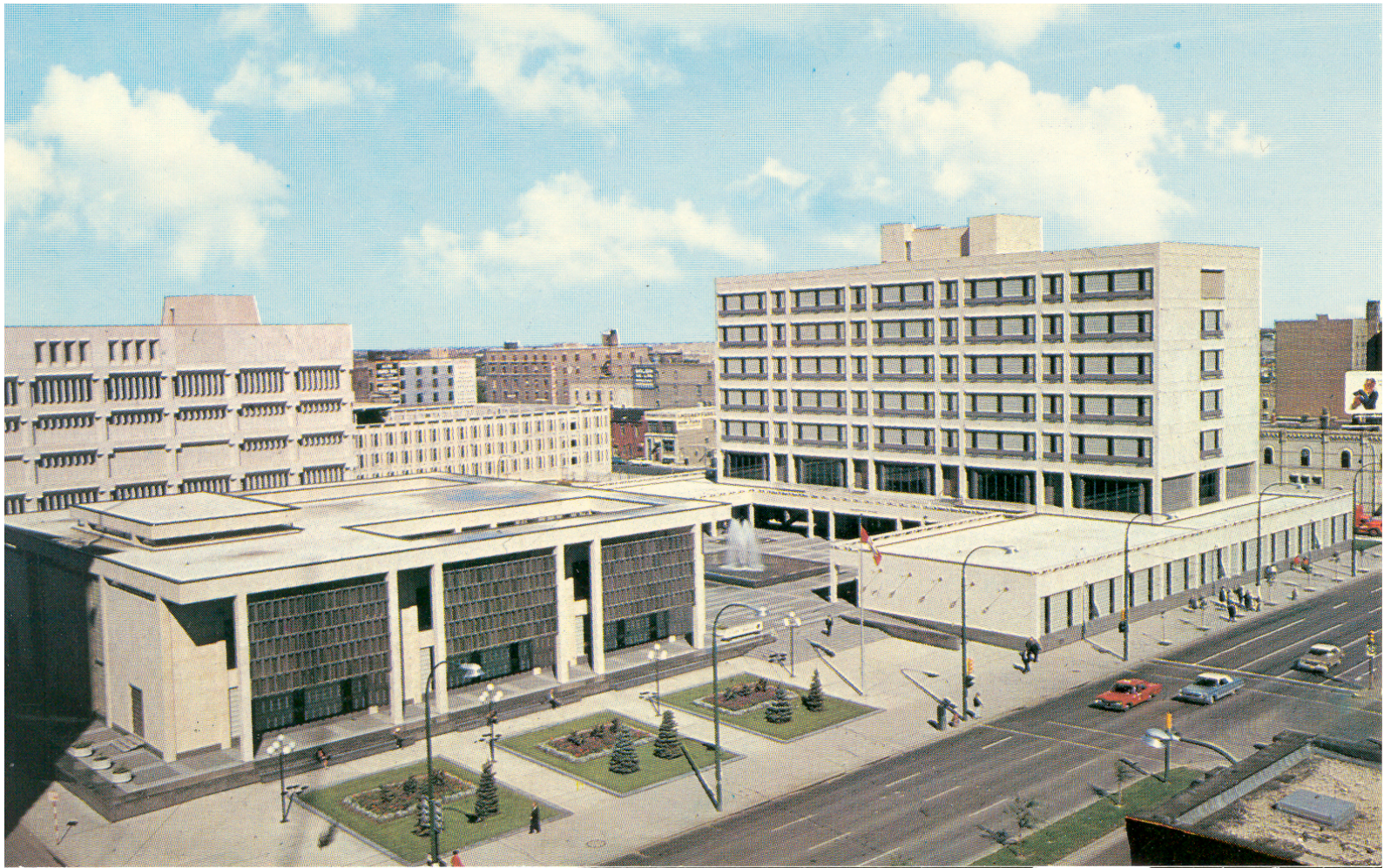
Left: Winnipeg Civic Auditorium, Northwood & Chivers, Pratt & Ross, J.N. Semmens, 1932. Centre: Federal Building, Northwood & Chivers, 1935. Right: Winnipeg Clinic, Frank Lount, 1942-1961. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2012-13.

Early models for how Tyndall stone might be used in a modern fashion came with the art deco Winnipeg Civic Auditorium (Northwood & Chivers, Pratt & Ross, J.N. Semmens, 1932) and the Federal Buildings (Northwood & Chivers, 1935) – both the result of Depression relief efforts – and the Winnipeg Clinic (Frank Lount, 1942-1961). The first of these is referenced in the 1937, essay “The Architectural History of Manitoba” (in *Manitoba Essays*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1937) by Milton S. Osborne, second dean of the University of Manitoba School of Architecture. Here – having spoken of the “plain wall surfaces, the simple masses and the horizontal lines of the [Tyndall stone] Winnipeg Civic Auditorium” – Osborne states: “Our local building materials are most beautiful and effective when used in the plain, broad wall surfaces of the modern style.” In this way Osborne interprets this modern example of Tyndall stone construction as both connected to a tradition of local stone architecture and as an illustrative work of modernist design.



Elizabeth Dafoe Library, Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, 1952. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index.

The use of Tyndall stone in Manitoba mid-century, modernist Manitoba building is explored by architectural historian Kelly Crossman in his article “North by Northwest: Manitoba Modernism, c.1950.” (*Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 22 4, 1999). Here Crossman argues that by this period in Winnipeg, in concert with an early predominance of International Style modernism, a clear belief had emerged in “the existence of a strong and identifiable tradition of building in the local Tyndall limestone, a tradition that ran unbroken from the earliest days of European settlement to the present.” This belief is seen to inform contemporary practices, creating “not a generic Miesian modernism, but an architecture that could connect with the culture and context.” The conclusion reached is in part based on a 1954 article by University of Manitoba students and faculty in the *Journal* of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada entitled “Red River Skyline.” One important structure cited by Crossman as an example of this development is the 1952 Elizabeth Dafoe Library (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates). Tyndall stone had been used in many earlier University of Manitoba buildings, such as the 1932 Collegiate Gothic Tier Building (Arthur A. Stoughton).



Winnipeg City Hall, Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, 1964. Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

The modernist use of Tyndall stone continued with the Winnipeg Civic and Centennial Centre developments of the 1960s. Here the use of such masonry struck a local tone and lent a sense of stateliness. The use of Tyndall stone here unites the 1964 Winnipeg City Hall (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates), the 1966 Public Safety Building (Libling Michener and Associates) and the 1968-70 Manitoba Museum (Associated Architects for the Manitoba Centennial Centre: Green, Blankstein, Russell Associates; Moody, Moore & Partners; Smith, Carter, Searle Associates).



Left: Provincial Law Courts Building, Samuel Hooper and Victor Horwood, 1912. Right: Hudson's Bay Company, Barott and Blackader, 1926. Below: Provincial Land Titles Building, Samuel Hooper, 1904. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

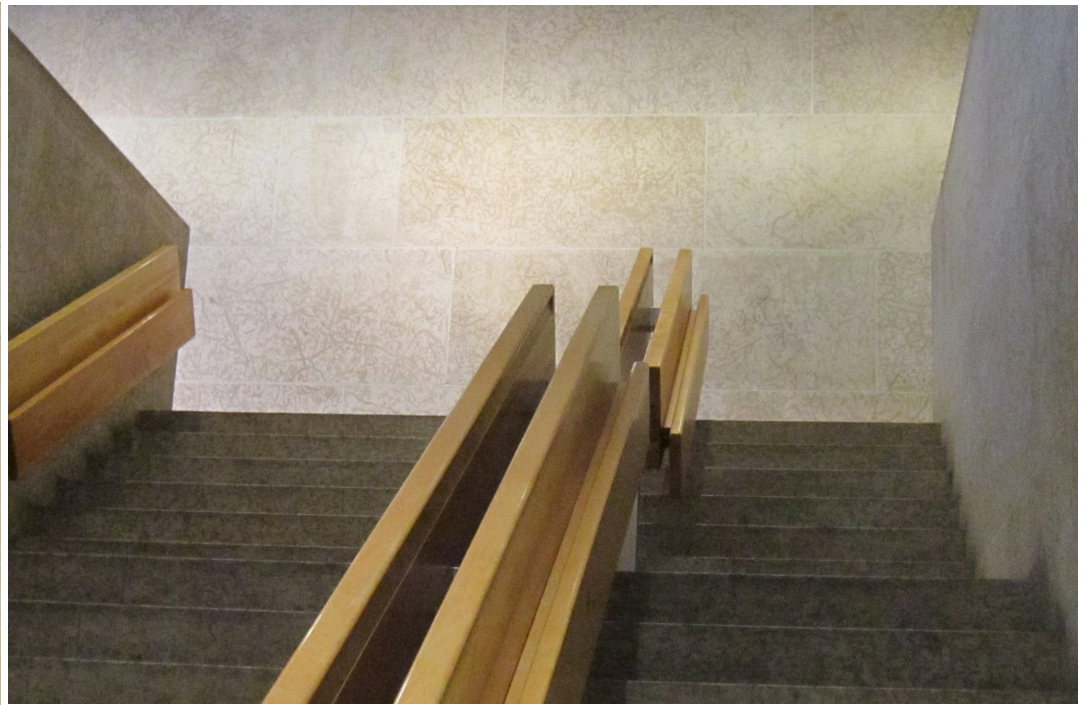
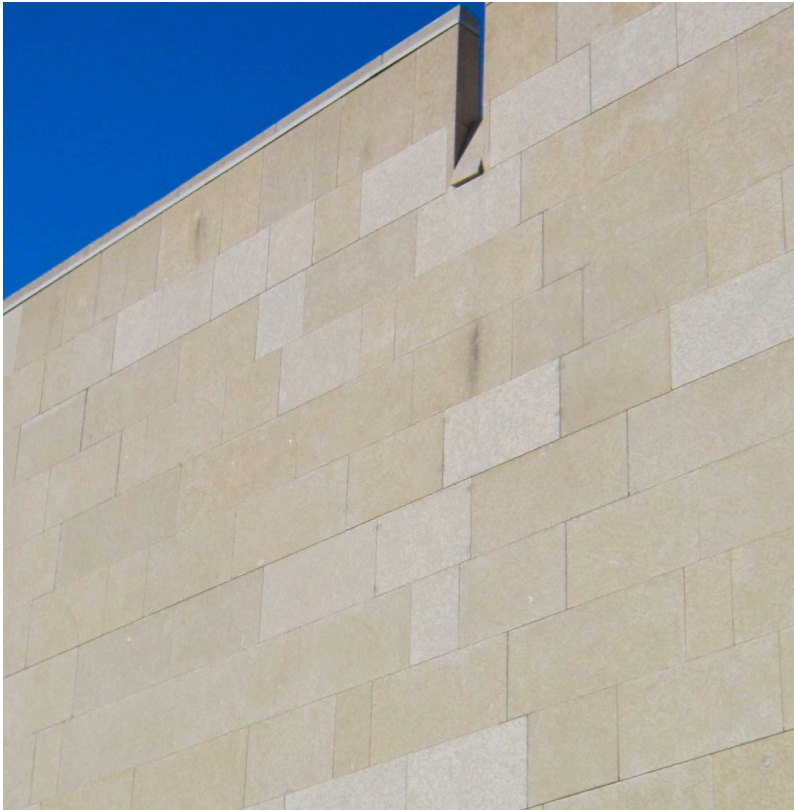
The use of Tyndall stone is also a motif in the area around the Manitoba Legislative Building. The stone can found on such neighbouring government facilities as the Provincial Land Titles Building (Samuel Hooper, 1904), the Provincial Law Courts Building (Samuel Hooper and Victor Horwood, 1912) and down Memorial Boulevard – once known, grandly, as “The Mall” – the Hudson's Bay Company (Barott and Blackader, 1926).





Great West Life Assurance, Marani & Morris (Toronto) and Moody & Moore (Winnipeg), 1957-59. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

Directly across Osborne Street North from the Legislative Building stand the offices of Great West Life Assurance, which also demonstrate the large-scale use of Tyndall stone. This usage appears in both the modernist 1957-59 head office building by Marani & Morris (of Toronto) and Moody & Moore (of Winnipeg) and in the 1983 late modern Great West Life Building II, by Smith Carter Architects. The latter of these also stands across Broadway from the Tyndall stone All Saints Anglican Church (1926). To the north of All Saints, Tyndall stone appears in nearly every neighbouring building as far as Portage Avenue, including, the modernist Manitoba Medical Service Building (210 Osborne Street North, Northwood and Chivers, 1952), the former Red Cross Centre (222 Osborne Street North, Moody Moore and Partners, 1948), the former St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance (270 Osborne Street North, Mood Moore and Partners, 1954). The material is also present in nearby jails and government office towers from the second half of the twentieth century.



Winnipeg Art Gallery, Gustavo da Roza, 1971. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2012-13.



Beyond the Legislative Building itself, the apex of this Broadway-Memorial area use of Tyndall stone came with the 1971 Winnipeg Art Gallery (Gustavo da Roza). Here, opposite the gallery's former home – the Tyndall stone Civic Auditorium – the new building presented the stone in extraordinarily vast expanses, creating a distinct, sculptural effect. This effect echoes Milton Osborne's 1937 characterization of the material: "Its mottled surface produced a beautiful tapestry effect, and its range of warm colouring gave it a pleasing variation of tone quality when used in large wall surfaces."



Winnipeg Union Station, Warren and Wetmore, 1912. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index. Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Antoine Predock, 2013. Photo: Anotine Predock Predock Architect PC.

The use of Tyndall stone forms a link between Winnipeg architecture of divergent eras, uses and styles: from the Gothicism of St. John's Cathedral (Gilbert Parfit and Edgar Prain, 1926), to the Beaux-Arts approach of the Manitoba Legislative Building and Winnipeg Union Station (Warren and Wetmore, 1912); from the art deco details of the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium, to the modernist composition of the Elizabeth Dafoe library. In recent years Tyndall stone has found its home on tall apartment blocks, schools and office buildings. At the same time, the use of this unique stone has found popularity beyond Manitoba and can be found in such notable structures as the Canadian Parliament Buildings in Ottawa and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec.

Author: Jeffrey Thorsteinson
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