



**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**MATH BUILDING & MATH ANNEX**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

5 MAY 2017





Left Math Building; Right: Math Annex

# CONTENTS

There is sufficient shared history and physical similarity to the Math Building and Math Annex that a shared Statement of Significance seems appropriate. Small differences in their physical qualities make it appropriate to separate their character-defining elements lists. This Statement has been drafted in response to a proposed exterior re-painting, a review of the current buildings in their setting, research into their design, the use of them over their 92 year history, and the ways they are part of the visual history of the campus.

Because the painting of the buildings is part of the upcoming scope of work, this study includes an appendix on the colouring of the buildings, as can be inferred from archival photographs and on-site review. The early photographs show the cluster of simple buildings – dubbed the Semi-permanent Buildings – coloured probably identically, a situation that is no longer the case (all of the Semi-permanent Buildings are still standing).

CHRONOLOGY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR MATH BUILDING & MATH ANNEX	8
APPENDIX: COLOURING	12

## CHRONOLOGY



1923 Drawings prepared by the Public Works Department for the construction of the Semi-permanent Buildings on the new UBC campus on Point Grey near Vancouver, including the Arts Building (now the Math Building) and the Agriculture Building (now the Math Annex).



1924-5 Construction of the Semi-permanent Buildings on campus alongside the permanent Science Building (now the Chemistry Building, completed in 1923) and the Main Library (now the centre section of the Barber Learning Centre, completed in 1925).



1927 Semi-permanent Building cluster:  
 Front left: Agriculture Building (now the Math Annex)  
 Centre right: Arts Building (now Math Building)  
 Far right: Auditorium (now Old Auditorium)  
 Far left: Geography Building  
 (Out of picture frame, on right: Administration Building)  
 (Out of picture frame on left: Powerhouse and Old Fire Hall)



1972 Sedgewick Library construction, which took over most of the lawn that formed the grounds in front the Math Building and Math Annex but maintained the role of the Semi-permanent building cluster as the western edge of Library Garden.



1996 Walter Koerner Library constructed including pieces of the Sedgewick Library, which replaced the Math Building as the western edge of the central campus space, Library Garden.





## INTRODUCTION

### NOMENCLATURE

The Math Building (full current name: Mathematics Building) was, when first built, called the Arts Building; the Math Annex (full current name: Mathematics Annex) was called the Agriculture Building.

### HISTORICAL NOTE

The Math Building and Math Annex, both completed in 1925, are two of the earliest buildings on campus, part of the cluster termed the Semi-permanent Buildings, because of their status as temporary academic space that were to be replaced in relatively short order with buildings of stature equal to the Science Building (now Chemistry Building) and the Main Library (now the centre block of the Barber Learning Centre) when provincial funds were forthcoming. Designed in 1923 by the province's Department of Public Works, the buildings are lacking expensive stone detailing and lofty arch-work that characterized the permanent buildings designed by the campus architects Sharp & Thompson, and which were completed in the same first years of the campus. That the Math Building and Math Annex building replacement did not come to pass is an important reflection not only on the university's history of capital funding, but also the enduring value of these well-constructed and serviceable buildings.



## SITING

Along with the Old Administration Building, the Math Building and Math Annex formed the western boundary of the central open space of the campus – now called Library Garden – which was the central open space on campus, incorporating a section of Main Mall. Many early photographs of the campus feature a view from the central steps of the Main Library across Library Garden to the Semi-permanent Buildings. One of the best these photographs (UBC archive photo 1.1/1410 by Leonard Frank) is seen here:



The Math Building and Math Annex are integral to the early iconography of the university as an ordered, open place for unencumbered thought. Other arresting images (for example, the UBC Archive photo 1.1/2695 by Leonard Frank below) portray the buildings' roles as a part in forming the western wall line of Main Mall:





The campus has changed around the Semi-permanent Building cluster in the 94 years since their construction. The layout of the cluster, once so obviously helping form a refined landscape of the campus from the coastal landscape, lost much of its power first with the construction of Sedgewick Library and the resulting complication of the Library Square space, and then more drastically with the construction of the Koerner Library on the Sedgewick Library grounds, which blocked out the best views of the cluster.

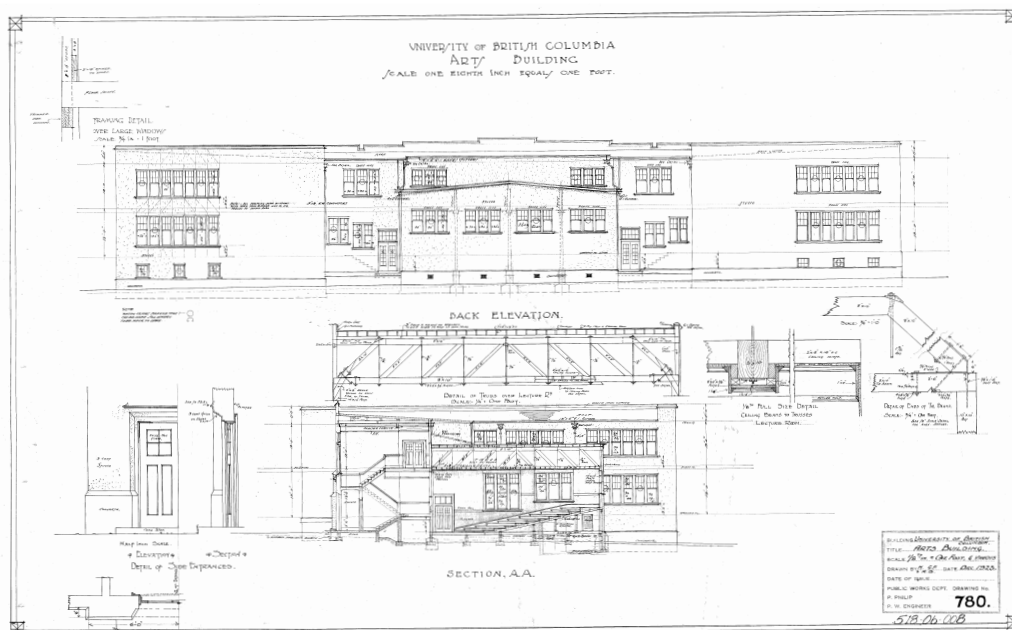
## DESIGN

The design of the Semi-permanent Buildings was the work of the provincial Department of Public Works, the branch of the provincial government given the task of building the provincial infrastructure. The department replaced the Lands and Works Department in 1908 with the enactment of the Department of Public Works Act (SBC 1908, c. 41). Its mandate included construction and maintenance of government offices and buildings, public highways, bridges, wharves, river-bank protection, and maintenance of ferry and steamboat services. In 1947 the work of the department was divided into district offices, an Architect's Branch, Accounting Branch, Engineering Branch, and Equipment Branch. The department was also responsible for boiler inspection and electrical energy inspection.

The design of each building is notable for restrained detailing in a vaguely Gothic-inspired details popular in the English-speaking world for institutions of higher learning, and which refer to the grander nearby permanent buildings – the Main Library and the Science Building. Minor flourishes around arched main exterior doors and porches come across as buildings with supporting roles in sympathy with the loftier permanent structures.

## MATERIALS

The material palette of the two buildings is typical for the Semi-permanent Building cluster: rough-cast stucco cladding, ganged or paired wood window openings with stucco jamb and head reveals and a projecting wood sill (perhaps flashed from the beginning), double-hung wood sash, and slightly ornamented roof parapet silhouettes, and lightly ornamented doorways, usually inset within arched openings in the building face.







Left Top: Agriculture Building (now Math Annex) Arts Building (now Math Building), 1927 (UBC 1.1/706)  
 Middle: Arts and Administration Buildings, 1929 (UBC 1.1/701)  
 Bottom: Rear of Arts Building with 250 Lecture Room, 1940s? (UBC 29.1/36)  
 Right Top: Arts Building, 1929 (UBC 1.1/867)  
 Middle: Arts and Agriculture Buildings framing Main Library, 1940s? (UBC 1.1/699)  
 Bottom: Arts, Administration and Auditorium Building under construction, 1925 (UBC 29.1/71)





## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### MATH BUILDING & MATH ANNEX

#### DESCRIPTION

The Math Building and Math Annex are two of the simple stuccoed two-storey buildings in the block of academic buildings between Agriculture Road and Memorial Road, and West and Main Malls. The Math Building is situated immediately west of the Walter Koerner Library; the Math Annex is immediately to its south.

#### VALUES

As two of the very earliest buildings on campus, the Math Building and Math Annex are valued for their historic role in helping form the central open space on campus in front of the old Main Library, their provisional nature as temporary buildings, and their sheer, enduring presence (together with the Geography Building, Old Administration Building and Auditorium) – a physical encounter with the earliest elements of the UBC campus and, by extension its foundational culture, at the heart of the ever-developing campus.



The Math Building and Math Annex are an integral part of iconic imagery of the early campus, most successfully conveyed in the photography of Leonard Frank. Frank's images that include the two buildings portray the campus as a manicured ideal place of open perspective set in a magnificent natural setting unsullied by the clutter and density of the city (see two of Frank's campus images on page 5 of this document). As part of those seminal cultural images of the university, the Math Building and Math Annex are central to its cultural identity.

A whiff of that early 20th Century manicured landscape can be seen in the foundation planting around each building, and the vines that have historically been a feature of their facades.

Designed and built within two years, the buildings are valuable as examples of the standard work of the 1920s by the province's Department of Public Works, the provincial department charged with building infrastructure throughout the province. The economy of the form and detailing convey the modest financial circumstances surrounding the University's beginnings. The buildings' public department design is evidence of the university being a fundamentally provincial initiative, subject to the financial constraints of the provincial budget.

The provisional nature and the label placed on the buildings ("Semi-permanent") is important example of the ad-hoc development of the early campus as funds and resources could be obtained. It was a culture most famously illustrated by the re-purposing of army huts for use as classrooms, offices and laboratories in the 1940s. That the buildings changed from being space for the Arts and Agricultural Faculties to Mathematics indicates the history of making-do as the campus grew and required more academic space.

As part of the cluster of Semi-permanent Buildings finished in 1925 to form the majority of the inaugural university campus, the Math Building and Math Annex are valuable as a physical record of the campus as it was first built. Simply-planned, durable wood frame constructions with simple wood and stucco detailing and a modest level of elaboration impart a collegiate atmosphere and serviceable classrooms, lecture halls and offices with an economy of means. The later, grander constructions around them only serve to underscore the modest beginnings of the university as seen in these buildings.

That the buildings now play a minor or almost negligible role in the definition of Library Garden is an important marker of the development of the campus at its centre. The space has been the subject of a succession of grand gestures that all but erased its original nature as simple plain bounded by an ensemble of sympathetically scaled and detailed buildings.

## CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

### Site

Spatial arrangement of the Semi-permanent Buildings

Foundation planting

Vines trained over entrances and up stucco walls

Proximity to Main Mall and Old Main Library



**Math Building**

Intangible: Present and past names of the building, and reference to it being part of the Semi-permanent Building cluster

Wood frame construction

Symmetrical horizontal form with central axis perpendicular to Main Mall axis

Main Entrance facing Main Mall (Koerner Library now blocking direct connection)

Simple decorative flourishes of building entrances

- Square moulded bosses above arched openings

- Stepped faux-buttressing

- Arched openings

- Glazed wood doors, and transom lites

- Covered porches

Stucco cladding with cavity (created by metal lath over strapping)

Wood windows

Angled stucco jambs and heads on east (front) facade; rectilinear profile on subordinate facades

Parapet with lightly crenellated form facing Main Mall, and its metal flashing

Rain water scuppers, leader boxes, leaders

Lecture Room with raked seating

Stair halls with archways, simple wood-capped bannisters and newels

Flexible generic naturally-lighted classrooms and offices





## Math Annex

Intangible: Present and past names of the building, , and reference to it being part of the Semi-permanent Building cluster

Wood frame construction

Symmetrical plan with central axis perpendicular to Agriculture Road

Entrances on all facades

Simple decorative flourishes of building entrances

Square moulded bosses above arched openings

Stepped faux-buttressing

Arched openings

Glazed wood doors, and transom lites

Covered porches

Stairs leading to the entrances, particular stair on West facade

Stucco cladding with cavity (created by metal lath over strapping)

Wood windows

Angled stucco jambs and heads on prominent facades; rectilinear profile on subordinate facades

Parapet with lightly crenellated form, and its metal flashing

Rain water scuppers, leader boxes, leaders

Stair halls with archways, simple wood-capped bannisters and newels

Flexible generic naturally-lighted classrooms and offices





# APPENDIX

## COLOURING

### Archival photographs

Black-and-white archival photographs have been used to comment on the original colour scheme's tonalities, if not actual hues: from these photos, the relative lightness of window sash, window trim and stucco has been determined: sash very light in tone, stucco a little darker in tone, and window trim, sill flashing and parapet flashing possibly a little darker again.

### On-site review

Careful on-site viewing of woodwork shows no layers of paint that were not a basic white or near-white. Aging of old paint layers obviously makes the original colouring unknown. The stucco appears to have a history of being painted light grey – cement colour. This would be in keeping with many rough-cast stucco buildings from the period. The trim and flashing appear to be of a slightly darker colour than the stucco.

### Proposed painting scheme

The proposed scheme appears to be a faithful rendition of the original tones/colours as seen in the archival photographs and reviewed on site:

Sash:	BM "White Heron"
Stucco:	BM "Sidewalk Grey"
Trim/Flashing:	BM "Sweatshirt Grey"

The doors might have been stained initially, although the doors appear to have been painted a variety of brown/grey colours in their lifetimes. If painting rather than stripping the doors is to be done, the proposed colour would not compromise the heritage value of the buildings:

Exterior door face: BM "Burnt Cinnamon"



*The Arts Building (now Math Building) in 1926 – one year after its completion (UBC 1.1/868)*



*The Arts and Agriculture Buildings (now Math Building and Math Annex) in 1936 UBC 1.1/700)*



*Current colouring:*



*Left: Math Annex  
Right: Math Building*